



FROM SERVITUDE TO SONSHIP

The Law of God and the Covenants

ABSTRACT

Many Christians become confused about which parts of the Old Testament Mosaic Law are still in force today. My purpose here is to take a few small steps towards identifying the source of our 'rule of life', thus providing us with a sound biblical basis for Christian ethics in our time, while hopefully dissolving the divisive acrimony and the many misunderstandings which have prevailed for so long in this vexed subject area.

Alan Morrison
diakrisis-project@outlook.com

From Servitude to Sonship

The Law of God and the Covenants

॥॥॥॥

Dedicated to my Divine Master
The Christ
who walked this earth in the flesh
fulfilled His mission
defeated the forces of darkness
and who will come again
with power and great glory

॥॥॥॥



This eBook was first published on February 1st, 2024, by Under the Radar Publications.
For further information, you can contact:
diakrisis-project@outlook.com

Written and designed by: Alan Morrison.

Website link: <https://diakrisis-project.com/>

Text copyright © 2024. Under the Radar/ Alan Morrison.

Although copyright, this eBook is a labour of love and may be freely distributed, on condition that such distribution keeps the same title, PDF file format and design in which it was published, that nothing is added to the text and nothing taken away from it, and that it carries a link to its original source.

The main text of this eBook is set in Book Antiqua at 11 pts.

This is v.1.0 of this eBook. Check on the website for new versions. If you spot a typographical error, please report it using the email address above.

This is an 'interactive' PDF document, containing the following mouse-clickable or touchscreen elements: All bookmarks, headings on the Contents pages, email addresses and weblinks in both the main text and footnotes. It can be read in any PDF 'reader', such as Adobe Acrobat Reader, Google Drive PDF reader, etc. You can also easily import it to your Kindle reader or into the Kindle programme on your desktop/laptop computer, tablet or phone. A good-sized smartphone will work for reading, but it will look its best on a desktop/laptop computer or tablet.

Bible references in this eBook can be from a variety of translations, but often the Berean Standard Bible is used verbatim. The author also always consults the Hebrew or Greek texts and uses his own personal translations of them in order to get as close to what he believes to be the best meaning possible.

“Because you are sons, God sent the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, ‘Abba, Father’. So that you are no longer a slave, but a son; and if you are a son, you are also an heir of God through Christ” (Galatians 4:6-7).

“So I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh... if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law” (Galatians 5:16,18).

“If the ministry of death, which was engraved in letters on stone, came with such glory that the Israelites could not gaze at the face of Moses because of its fleeting glory, will not the ministry of the Spirit be even more glorious? For if the ministry of condemnation was glorious, how much more glorious is the ministry of righteousness! Indeed, what was once glorious has no glory now in comparison to the glory that surpasses it. For if what was fading away came with glory, how much greater is the glory of that which endures!” (2 Corinthians 3:7-11).

Table of Contents

PREAMBLE	9
PROLOGUE.....	12
Some Tantalizing Questions.....	15
1) The Differences Between 'Canonical' Scripture and 'Inspired' Scripture.....	16
2) The Distinction Between Eternal Moral Law and Covenantal Law	19
i. The Eternal Moral Law of God	19
ii. The Law of God Covenantally Considered	20
God Works Through Progressive/Accumulative Revelation	20
All Law is Related to the Redemptive Deeds of a Personal God.....	23
Part 1: THE REVELATION OF GOD'S LAW IN THE OLD COVENANT.....	25
1) The Foundation of the Sinaitic Covenant	25
2) The Essence of the Sinaitic Covenant	26
3) The Characteristics of the Sinaitic Covenant.....	31
i. It Was Made Only with One Nation in History	32
ii. It was to Last Only for a Brief Period of History	32
iii. It was Given Primarily for Custodial Purposes	33
iv. It was Given to Increase Sin.....	34
v. It was Deficient in the Conviction of Sin.....	34
vi. It Was Pre-eminently Typical	36
vii. It was Holy and Spiritual	38
viii. It was Wholly Inferior to the New Covenant.....	38

The Water and Wine at Cana Contrasts the Two Covenants.....	39
EXCURSUS ON THE IDEA OF A SUNDAY SABBATH.....	42
Part 2: THE REVELATION OF GOD'S LAW IN THE NEW COVENANT.....	48
1) The Foundation of the New Covenant.....	48
The Covenantal Symbolism in the Transfiguration of Christ	49
Examples of the New Covenant 'Exodus Principle'	51
The Rule of Life for the Disciple of Christ is Christ!	53
2) The Essence of the New Covenant	53
An Illustration About which Covenant to Adhere to....	55
No Place for Antinomianism in the New Covenant	55
3) The Characteristics of the New Covenant	57
i. The New Law of Love.....	57
This Has Nothing Whatsoever to Do with Hippie Love 'n Peace	59
The Movement from Infancy to Maturity, Servitude to Sonship	61
ii. The New Administration of the Holy Spirit.....	61
The Progressive Sanctification of the Believer (Adult Style)	62
Even Jesus' Disciples Needed Persuasion to Change....	63
A Satanic Attack on New Covenant Christians.....	64
The Two Falsely Perceived Options.....	65
The Third Option	65
A Righteousness Exceeding that of the Pharisees.....	66
The Law is Written on the Hearts of Believers	67

Many Believers are Afraid to Live a Life in the Spirit ...	68
Being 'Led by the Spirit' is not at all Mysticism or 'Enthusiasm'	69
The 'Eschatological Tension' of Being a New Creation in the Midst of a Fallen Creation.....	70
EPILOGUE.....	73
To Magnify Old Covenant Law is Ironically a Form of Disobedience.....	73
Is the Rejection of a Life in the Spirit a Blasphemy Against the Spirit?	74
Walking in the Spirit Undermines Those Who Seek to Control You.....	74
Living Wholly in the New Covenant Would Clean Out the Churches!.....	75
The <i>Real</i> Antinomianism.....	76
Could This Be the Reason There Are So Many Nasty 'Christians'?	76
Doubly Rejoicing in the Lord Always.....	77
Time to Get In-Step with the Spirit.....	78
SUGGESTED FURTHER READING.....	79

PREAMBLE

Many Christians become confused about which parts of the Old Testament Mosaic Law are still in force today. Are believers today required to avoid certain foods or clothing materials? Is it mandatory for believers today to keep a weekly Sabbath – either on Saturday or Sunday? Is it right to divide the laws of Moses into moral, ceremonial, and judicial categories? If so, how do we assign them? Is a Christian supposed to keep certain Jewish festivals, avoid certain clothing fabric combinations, wear a Jewish prayer shawl (tallit) or attach fringes (tzitzit) to their clothing, blow a shofar, or give money to the modern secular state of Israel?

One of the primary reasons why so many Christians are so bewildered by such matters is because there has been a widespread failure to identify the criteria necessary for correctly discerning from Scripture what it is that constitutes the ‘rule of life’ – or the underlying ethic for living – for the disciple of Christ today.

This study has been written as a companion paper to my recent critique of “Dominion Theology” or so-called “Christian Reconstructionism”, entitled *“Backward, Christian Soldiers”*. **This little book is designed to dissolve the confusion which seems to prevail in the church scene due to the large number of legalists, Judaisers and Israel-idolizing impostors who have crept into so many churches during recent decades as part of the apostasy-via-the-back-door strategy maintained by the forces of darkness.**

My purpose here, therefore, is to take a few small steps towards identifying the source of the “rule of life” for the disciple of Christ, thus providing us with a biblical basis for Christian ethics in our time, while hopefully dissolving the divisive acrimony and untaught misunderstandings which have prevailed for so long in this vexed subject area.

An unfortunate problem today is that to *“walk by the Spirit”* (Galatians 5:16) or be *“led by the Spirit”* (Galatians 5:18) are Scriptures which have been hijacked by the wayward sect known as the Charismatic Movement. But their idea of those texts is merely an obscene caricature of a life in the Spirit which has served as a

'double-whammy' for Satan because on the one hand he has led the unfortunate souls in the Charismatic Movement away with the fairies, and on the other hand it has given genuine Spirit-filled living such a bad name that it deters many from leading a New Covenant life. **So let me say right at the outset: Walking by the Spirit or being led by the Spirit have nothing whatsoever to do with the New Age occult mysticism of the Charismatic Movement.**¹ For to be led by the Spirit means leading a Christ-centred life of practical morality. The Holy Spirit is very self-effacing and does not draw attention to Himself but, as the Lord Jesus said, "*He will glorify Me by taking from what is Mine and disclosing it to you*" (John 16:14). So please do not allow the Charismatic Movement's satanic caricature of a genuine New Covenant life in the Spirit deter you from exploring what I have carefully expounded in the pages of this little treatise.

I know from much experience that there are many in the Christian scene today whose blood will boil when they read the words in this little treatise. Among them there will be those who will seek to discredit what is written here, and to vilify the author in the vain hope that this will somehow vindicate their own position. All they will have succeeded in doing is demonstrating that their resistance to the freedom in the Spirit which all disciples can enjoy renders them prone to misplaced anger, a controlling spirit, a display of ignorance, and the cavalier willingness to bear false witness. I have seen this repeated many times by lesser men who are essentially bullies who have wheedled their way into positions of leadership in the Church. So inured and submissive have so many become to these hollow people that they have managed to cut a broad swathe across the churches with their Old Covenant anachronism. By the time you have completed this paper, you will understand the full

¹ If you take offence at, or are puzzled by, what I call "the New Age occult mysticism of the Charismatic Movement", please read my free-to-download book, "[Signs, Wonders, and Divine Revelation](#)". It will prove to you the truth of that statement. Just click on the title to go there.

meaning of that last sentence and also this whole paragraph of which it is a part.

So, please allow the teachings in this paper to reach into your heart. They have enormous implications for the progression of our sanctification. In some people, there will doubtless be resistance after years of conditioning and the prevalence of subtle and not-so-subtle forms of legalism and a rule-bound mindset. The alternative to that legalism is not the 'straw-man' of antinomianism but it involves being set free through the truth of being 'in-lawed' to Christ.²

Are you now intrigued? Then please read on... and please do carefully check out all the Scripture references which have been given, as they provide the necessary corroboration for the theses which I have presented, while also hopefully convincing you of their veracity.

This little treatise comes with much love from me to you. 

² The word, 'Antinomianism', refers to the denial to have any obligation to observe God's moral law. It is a word which has been falsely and scurrilously applied (by those who are threatened by it) to those who advocate New Covenant living, such as I have put forward in this little book.

PROLOGUE

Before we embark on this study it is important for us to acknowledge two preliminary factors:

First, we are entering on holy ground and, therefore, I do not write these words lightly or without due consideration of the full substance involved. The correct identification of what it is that God requires of His people, at any point in history, is crucial if we are to establish the foundation of ethics and moral behaviour in our lives and in the churches, both for the sake of the churches and as an example to the world.

Second, I acknowledge that there is much controversy on this vast and awesome subject, with an historical pedigree going back even to the time of the Apostles. It is not my intention to provoke unnecessary contention, but to clear away misunderstandings and promote a vital awareness of the issues involved.

Faithful reverence for the Scriptural data, coupled with a willingness to face up to the challenges thrown up by the disputes in the “nomian-antinomian” controversy will, therefore, form the foundation-stones of this study. The response of Christians to difficult questions often resembles that of the Ostrich in the face of danger, when it immediately resorts to the instinct of head-in-the-sand denial and self-delusion. In typical human terms, that means falling back on tradition. This is not to say that all tradition is worthless. I recognise that sometimes things become established as patterns because they are thoroughly Bible-based, as well as being good for *all* times and seasons. However, holding on to tradition *merely because it is tradition* will inevitably lead to stagnation and the inability to absorb fresh ideas and unfamiliar ways of thinking.

The primary question of our study is this: What is the rule of life – the underlying ethic for living – for the Christian believer during the present age? In other words, where in the Word of God do we find expressed that which is binding – i.e. morally and ethically obligating – on the Christian? Before I proceed to the main area of my argument, it is necessary to clarify some areas which have provided a seedbed of confusion in terms of correctly identifying what is the believer’s rule of life, conduct and

behaviour in regard to his relationship with God and his fellow-believers.

To demonstrate the complexity of this, let me ask some provocative questions: First, is the whole Bible canonical, i.e. is **every** word of the Bible legally and ethically obligating on the Christian? If not, then how do we pick and choose those things which are? What criteria do we use, without indulging in mere 'situation ethics'?

For example, the fact that the prophet Samuel "*hacked Agag to pieces before the Lord*", and with His approval (1 Samuel 15:32-33), does not make such an action normative for every believer! This would be universally acknowledged. So it cannot be that every word of the Bible provides a rule by which the believer must live. I am not being frivolous or superficial in saying this; I am simply trying to show the considerations involved by beginning with the lowest common denominator and moving up from there, in our search for the underlying ethic for living for the believer. Taking this process further, we see that there are a great many laws and precepts which are explicitly stated throughout the Old Testament. But even these cannot all — without exception — be ethically obligating on the Christian (cf. Mark 7:19, where Mark interprets Jesus's words as indicating all foods are clean; Acts 10:15; 15:5,10,19-20). It is evident, therefore, that there has to be some clear method of identifying what is the rule of life for the believer. To this end, various strategies have traditionally been used.

Some have attempted to resolve this difficulty by categorizing the laws of the Old Testament Scriptures under the labels of *ceremonial*, *moral* and *judicial*, a device which has its historical origins in Thomas Aquinas.³ At first this may appear to be the perfect solution and I have previously used it myself. Since it is very obvious — and universally agreed by all Christians of whatever

³ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, PS. q.89. art.4. It should be acknowledged that the Alexandrian fathers, e.g., Origen, (unlike the fathers of Antioch) had also attempted to make an arbitrary distinction between the ceremonial and moral aspects of the Mosaic Law.

sect (unless they are part of the lunatic fringe ‘Christians’ one finds on social media) — that the blatantly ceremonial laws of the Old Testament have found their fulfilment in the supreme sacrifice of Christ and are therefore no longer in force, a whole range of Old Testament laws connected with ceremonial sacrifice can be safely disposed of as not being morally and ethically obligating on the Christian. However, while that is true, after deeper meditation, one begins to see that there are some problems standing in the way of any attempt to divide up the Sinaitic Lawcode in this way.

First, one could say that **all** the Mosaic laws were moral, in the sense that they were all a requirement of God at that time. **Second**, the Sinaitic Law was always considered by the Israelite to stand or fall *as an entire unit*, as the Bible amply shows (Galatians 5:3; 3:10; James 2:10; cf. Deuteronomy 27:26; Romans 2:25). Professor G.B. Stevens correctly points out, with many other theologians: “*The division of the law into moral and ceremonial portions is not made in Paul’s writings and is a modern classification*”.⁴ Indeed, attempting to divide up the Sinaitic Lawcode in this manner in order to ascertain which statute belongs to which category, becomes a very erratic, arbitrary, and idiosyncratic procedure in which many variations can occur, leading to confusion and even sectarian confrontation.

Additionally, a certain degree of doublethink has often been applied to any assessment of which of the so-called “judicial” laws of the Old Covenant (if any) remain in force today for the Christian. The English Puritans, for example, made it an article of the “Westminster Confession” that the “judicial” laws of Moses had indeed been abolished (Chap. XIX, §4). Yet, elsewhere in that same Confession (Chap. XXIII, §3), it is boldly decreed that all blasphemies and heresies must be suppressed by the civil powers — an edict which was based primarily on the very Old Testament “judicial” statutes which they claimed had already been abrogated (e.g., Leviticus 24:16; Deuteronomy 13:5-6,12)! As an attempted antidote to such contradictory confessionalism, the “Christian

⁴ G.B. Stevens, *The Pauline Theology: A Study of the Origin and Correlation of the Doctrinal Teachings of the Apostle Paul*, (Richard D. Dickinson, 1892), pp.165, 166.

Reconstructionists" argue that **all** Old Testament case law is still morally and ethically obligating today. So even among the Reformed sects, there have been age-long bitter and divisive controversies over which elements of the Mosaic or Sinaitic Lawcode are still morally and ethically obligating today.

Some Tantalizing Questions

Another traditional approach involved in identifying the rule of life for the believer has been the separating out of "The Ten Commandments" from the Mosaic Lawcode. These are then claimed to be a rewriting on stone tablets of the same eternal, moral law which was originally "written on man's heart" (i.e. put in his mind) at creation. **Apart from the fact that such a claim has no foundation in Scripture, can we really be certain that all of the Ten Commandments – as set out in Exodus 20 and Deuteronomy 5 – are the equivalent of the whole sum of God's perpetual, moral law?** To answer immediately in the affirmative brings some difficulty. Is it a part of God's perpetual, unchanging moral law for an animal to have to observe the Sabbath on pain of death (Exodus 20:10)? Furthermore, is it possible that an eternal, unchanging moral law could be legitimately broken through obedience to another law (Numbers 28:9-10; cf. Matthew 12:5)? I will not answer these tantalizing questions at this point, as I am merely identifying some of the introductory problems involved. But they are worthy of some meditation if we are to appreciate the complexity and ramifications of this whole subject area.

It is no exaggeration to say that this entire province of biblical Law, insofar as it may be morally and ethically obligating on the Christian, has become a veritable theological minefield – not to mention the regular vitriolic bombardments of one schismatic camp on another! I believe that this state of confusion has arisen primarily because of a widespread failure to make a correct identification of the *criteria* by which one judges what is the rule of life for the believer today – i.e. what is legally, morally, and ethically obligating. A major contention of this study is that there are two fundamental reasons for this confusion:

1. The failure to discern the difference between the 'canonical' (i.e. rule-making) and the 'inspired' factors of Scripture.

2. The failure to identify the essential distinction between that law which is revealed in God's word as being merely covenantally-based and that law which is the perpetual, unchanging, moral law of God.

In the following two subsections of this Prologue, I will elaborate on these two basic roots of confusion, thus building a strong foundation for a real understanding of the outworking of God's Law in cosmic history.

1) *The Differences Between 'Canonical' Scripture and 'Inspired' Scripture*

A vital element of evangelical Christianity is that "*all Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for instruction, for conviction, for correction, and for training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be complete, fully equipped for every good work*" (2 Timothy 3:16-17). I uphold this absolutely. However, we must make a distinction between **a)** the Divine inspiration of the Scriptures (which applies to every word in all the books of the Bible) and **b)** the binding elements of Scripture (which, as we shall see, are either covenantally-based or are elements of eternal moral law).

To develop this further: The fact that the above verses in the Second Letter to Timothy say what they do about the Old Testament Scriptures does not mean — by almost universal consent — that the Christian has to slaughter bulls, go to a temple made with hands, marry his brother's widow to raise up an offspring for him, and many other things that were part of the regulatory system of the Old Covenant. **Therefore, *ipso facto*, if a portion of Scripture is inspired by God in its transmission, this does not necessarily mean that it is legally, morally, or ethically binding on the Christian.** There is a vast difference between simply applying the Old Testament Scriptures to Christian living (as we are encouraged to do in, e.g. 2 Timothy 3:16-17 and 1 Corinthians 10:11), and actually making them legally binding on Christians. This concept is well stated by Meredith Kline when he says:

"Our thesis is that there is a distinction between the Scriptures and the canon [i.e. rule] of the Christian church. This involves no... denial of biblical infallibility.

It simply asserts that the treaty canon that governs the church of the new covenant as a formal community is the New Testament alone, while Scripture is the broader entity consisting of the canonical oracles of God communicated to His people in both Mosaic and Messianic eras, the Old and New Testaments together".⁵

This is not to say that there are no elements of God's eternal, unchanging moral law in the body of the Mosaic Law-Covenant. Actually, there are a considerable quantity. As you will see, I am not claiming that the elements of eternal, moral law in the Sinaitic Covenant are no longer legally binding on the Christian; but, rather, that **the authority and structure of the entire body of the Old Covenant lawcode, as it is presented in the Pentateuch, no longer applies with legal force to the people of God today.**

This needs some clarification: As a part of the Scriptural revelation, the Old Testament is able to make us wise unto salvation through faith in Jesus Christ. It is profitable for instruction, conviction, correction, and training in righteousness (2 Timothy 3:15ff.). As part of the God-breathed, authoritative Scriptural revelation, the Old Testament provides norms for faith. Its entire record is absolutely trustworthy and truthful. Moreover, the revelation in the New Testament Scriptures cannot properly be understood without the revelation given to us in the Old Testament. As Augustine of Hippo put it: *"In the Old Testament the New Testament is latent – in the New Testament the Old Testament becomes patent"*. That which is normative for faith in the Old Testament is absolutely authoritative for faith in every age.

However, it is the deceptive use of the term "*canon*", in reference to the Scriptures, which has introduced much confusion into the church throughout this age. The word canon is derived from the Greek word *kanon*, which means measuring rod, rule or standard. We see the term used, for instance, in the phrase '*Canons of Dort*'

⁵ M.G. Kline, *The Structure of Biblical Authority*, (Eerdmans, 1972), pp.100-101. This interesting book contains many valuable insights.

— rules laid down for the churches in the Netherlands by an assembly of State-Church leaders. In the Church generally, the phrase “Canon Law” has traditionally referred to *“the body of ecclesiastical rules or laws imposed by authority in matters of faith, morals, and discipline”*.⁶ The use of the term “canon” to refer to the whole of Scripture is somewhat confusing because it could be made to imply that the Bible, as a whole, constitutes the rule of life for the believer, which we have already seen cannot be so. In fact, when it is made to refer to the Scriptures — the canon of Scripture — the word “canon” is being used in its secondary sense of a list or catalogue, rather than as an actual set of rules.

What is morally and ethically obligating on the believer at any period of history is not determined by what is normative merely for faith (i.e., to make us wise unto salvation) — which is supplied in abundance in the Old Testament — but it is determined by the life-norms which are grounded in God’s eternal moral law as well as being rooted in the covenants. We have become so accustomed to describing the Old Testament as “canonical”, which carries the suggestion that it is in some sense legally binding, that the crucial difference between a “faith-norm” and a “life-norm” is obscured. If this difference had been properly understood, such sectarian developments as Sabbatarianism, Seventh-Day Adventism, the ‘Hebrew Roots Movement’ (aka ‘Torah-Observant Christianity’), or Christian Reconstructionism/ Dominion Theology would never have been able to flourish as they have done today — not to mention the subtle, legalistic ‘pharisaism’ pervading so many churches in one form or another.

Therefore, rather than embark on the arduous task of creating arbitrary scholastic divisions of the Mosaic covenant under moral, judicial or ceremonial law (a systematic view which was surely incompatible with the workings of the first century Hebrew mind), it would be far more profitable to turn ourselves now to discovering a) What is purely eternal, moral law (i.e. legally, morally and ethically obligating on **all** people at **all** times) and

⁶ F.L. Cross and E.A. Livingstone, *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, (O.U.P., 1983 edition), p.231.

b) What is covenantally-based law (i.e. legally, morally and ethically obligating on those who are the subjects of the covenant of which that law is a part). With this distinction we are beginning to get to the heart of the matter.

It is this vital concept of “covenantal canon” which I wish to explore in this study. For in order to discover what is the rule of life, the underlying ethic of living for the believer, we must turn ourselves to an exposition of the actual covenant under which the believer is living. In other words, **the covenant-norm is the life-norm for the believer living under that covenant**. Please take this important criterion to heart.

2) The Distinction Between Eternal Moral Law and Covenantal Law

In the same way that there has been an obscuring of the crucial difference between the inspiration of the Scriptures and their canonicity, there has also been a confusion between **a)** that law which is essentially the absolute, eternal, moral law of God applicable in all ages to all people and at all times and **b)** the various bodies of law which are essentially covenantally-based, and therefore wedded to a specific period of history and to a specific body of people who live under that covenant. Let us examine the differences between these two dynamics of law under two further subheadings.

i. The Eternal Moral Law of God

What, exactly, do we mean by “the law of God” in Scripture? Do we mean the perpetual, universal, unchanging moral law of God; or are we referring to the temporary, covenantally-based body of laws which we call the Mosaic Law, which was given to the ancient, Old Testament nation of Israel? It is most important that we distinguish between these two elements, for they are by no means exactly synonymous. The Mosaic Law was a covenantally-based body of laws which were morally and ethically obligating specifically on a people redeemed by God, at a specific point in history, out of Egypt; whereas the perpetual, moral law of God refers to those laws which are universally binding on **all** people at

all times, and which, in great measure, can be understood by human beings through the light of nature (see Romans 2:14-15).

One of the simplest and most succinct summations of God's moral law is to be found in Matthew 22:37-40, when the Lord Jesus tells the testing lawyer that he is to "*love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind... and... you shall love your neighbor as yourself*". **This is the true and eternal divine rule for righteousness for human beings of all times and nations if they want to be conformed to the will of God.** That we worship Him and love one another is a fair summary of God's absolute moral law, which is eternal and unchanging. It is this law – characterised as righteousness and true holiness – which was placed in the minds and hearts of our first parents in Eden (we see the reverse of that in Ephesians 4:24, where righteousness and holiness are restored in the faithful), and which was broken by them, thus shattering the human being's relationship with God, besmirching His image in us, and, ultimately, devastating interpersonal relationships between all men and women.

ii. The Law of God Covenantally Considered

One of the major contentions of this paper is that the revelation of God's Law to His people on a covenantal basis has not been given in the same form at all times of history. **This is not to say that the revelation of God's Law has been arbitrary or capricious, but rather that it has been given progressively and in conformity with the overall flow of redemptive history.** A full grasp of this is vital if we are to discern what is the underlying ethic for living for the believer today. This progressive nature of God's dealings with man is highlighted in the first two verses of Paul's letter to the Hebrews:

"On many past occasions and in many different ways, God spoke to our fathers through the prophets. But in these last days He has spoken to us by His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, and through whom He made the universe" (Hebrews 1:1-2).

God Works Through Progressive/Accumulative Revelation

Here we see clearly that although God communicated His revealed will in times past through the prophets, **the authoritative source of**

revelation for us today is found in the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. This provides us with an important template through which we must view redemptive history. For, in just the same way that God's redemptive plan has been progressively revealed in different ways at different times, so God's Law has similarly been manifested among us progressively. Our gracious God works through progressive revelation: *"First the stalk, then the head, then the mature grain in the head".*⁷ It has been this way with the revelation of His Law also; and this has profoundly affected the nature of the covenants made between God and man. It is most important for us to understand this fact which undergirds the process of history, and it has been well summed up by Steele and Thomas in their excellent study manual on Romans:

"Although all of God's people... have been freed from the law in relation to salvation, they have never been free from God's law as a rule of duty. The saints of all ages have been under law to God, but they have not all served under the same revelation of the law. From Adam to Moses the rule of duty for the saints living during this time seems to have been primarily the law of conscience (written on man's heart). Some additional laws are recorded in the biblical record, but little is revealed concerning them. From Moses to Christ the rule of duty for God's people living during this period was the Law of Moses, with its many detailed regulations, which was abolished by Christ at His death. From Christ to the end of the age the rule of duty for believers today is contained in the New Covenant. Though the laws of the Old Covenant are profitable for study, they are no longer binding on God's people. However, many of the moral principles contained in the law of Moses (the Old Covenant) have also been included in the New Covenant Law (e.g. the laws forbidding murder,

⁷ One could perhaps more accurately call this "accumulative revelation", as each aspect of revelation has built on the one before.

adultery, etc.), and thus the two codes of law, though different, have much in common".⁸

The fact that believers are covenantally involved in the "*Law of Christ*" (Galatians 6:2; 1 Corinthians 9:21) rather than the Law of Moses is a concept most vital for the healthy development of our Christian lives and the blossoming of our spirituality. Whereas the Law of Moses consisted of the Ten Commandments plus the ceremonial and civil laws contained in the Pentateuch, the Law of Christ "*contains a clearer revelation of God's law and a higher standard of conduct for His people than the law of Moses*".⁹ I will go into these matters more deeply as our study progresses. Here, as part of this introductory Prologue, I am merely noting that **God's Law has been progressively revealed to His people on a covenantal basis**. Three important themes, vital to this study, emerge from this mighty fact:

1. God's perpetual, moral law is not exclusive to any one covenant, precisely because it is perpetual. In other words, **its legal force spans all times and all covenants**.
2. Any law which is actually rooted in a revealed covenant **applies only to those who are living under that covenant**.
3. Most important of all, Law in Scripture is not merely an abstract code of ethics; **it is inextricably linked with the One who has made the covenant** in the first instance.

Here, in these three simple themes, we have those elusive criteria for identifying **what is the rule of life – or underlying ethic for living – for the believer**. Please note all this carefully, because the diligent disciple of Christ really wants to get all this right so that he or she will become "*holy and pleasing to God*", which is our "*spiritual service of worship*" (Romans 12:1). *Firstly*, the rule of life for the believer consists of **those perpetual moral precepts and principles which span all times and covenants** – which all men understand by nature, having been put in Adam's mind by God at creation. *Secondly*, the rule of life for the believer consists of **the precepts and**

⁸ David N. Steele & Curtis C. Thomas, "*Romans: An Interpretive Outline*" (Presbyterian & Reformed, 1963), p.55.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p.54.

principles embodied in the covenant under which he or she lives. And the profound implication of this gives us a *third* criterion: **That a person must look to the One who has established the covenant under which s/he lives, if s/he desires to ascertain what is his or her rule of life.** Thus, if you were an Israelite living three thousand years ago, you would look to the Lord and His earthly mediator, Moses, for your rule of life. If you are a Christian living in the 21st century, you look to the God-Man and mediator of the New Covenant, Jesus Christ, for your rule of life. I will develop these crucial criteria throughout the remainder of this study. In this introductory Prologue, I am simply setting the scene.

All Law is Related to the Redemptive Deeds of a Personal God

Not only are these facts obvious and logical deductions from Scripture, but they are very lovely also. For the Bible is not an impersonal book of rules for the dictatorial governance of human behaviour. Neither is it an abstract philosophical treatise on law and morality – the minutiae of which can be trotted out in a needy moment as if straining out a gnat. **In Scripture (all of which is 'God-breathed'), all Law is intimately related to the saving deeds of a personal God.** These redemptive acts of God are purposely called “covenants” because they are special contractual arrangements in which God rescues man in order to bring him into relationship with Himself. **Because of this, biblical Law is always inseparable from the covenant to which it applies.** This is the crucial component which needs to be grasped. Indeed, in a number of instances in the Bible, the words “*law*” and “*covenant*” are used interchangeably (e.g., Psalm 78:10; 2 Kings 17:15).

There are two great redemptive acts of God in the Bible: The Exodus from Egypt in the Old Testament, and the cross at Calvary in the New Testament. The whole of Scripture is caught up with expounding these two titanic milestones in redemptive history – referred to by Paul as “*the two covenants: the one from Mount Sinai*” and the other as “*the Jerusalem above*” (Galatians 4:24,26). These are not merely two different “administrations” of some nebulous, extra-biblical, overarching covenant. They are distinct covenants in their own right – the principal Law-covenants of Scripture – and identified as such by the Apostle above. Covenants in Scripture are

always rooted in actual historical events of mighty cosmic significance. It is clear, therefore, that it is **the Law-Covenant in which one is redemptively involved which provides the standard for identifying the rule of life for the believer of any era. So, which one are you under?** I will develop this concept in greater detail as our study progresses. For now, please just take great note of it all.

Having now paved the way in this necessarily large introductory Prologue with a number of thoughts on this vast subject, let us now examine the revelation of God's Law as it has been given in each of these two covenants — the Sinaitic Covenant and the New Covenant in Christ.

Part 1:

THE REVELATION OF GOD'S LAW IN THE OLD COVENANT

In this section, Part 1, we shall determine, from Scripture, what it is that forms the foundation of the Sinaitic (Old or Mosaic) Covenant — the covenant made by God with ancient Israel through Moses on Mount Sinai. We will then examine its core essence and identify its leading qualities. We will also use the same pattern in discovering the revelation of God's Law in the New Covenant in Christ in the following major section, Part 2. In this way we will come to appreciate what is the true continuity between the two covenants, New and Old, and also discover where the vital discontinuity lies — a discontinuity which has been ignored by far too many in the churches over the centuries.

1) The Foundation of the Sinaitic Covenant

The foundation of the Sinaitic Covenant is the redemption out of Egypt of the nation Israel by the Lord. The Sinaitic Covenant was the Law-covenant in which the children of Israel were redemptively involved and which therefore provided them with their rule of life, their fundamental ethic for living. Redemption (as always) was the starting point of the covenant, and it is heralded as such in Scripture, being proclaimed by God through Moses to the people with these words:

"You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to Myself. Now therefore, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be a special treasure to Me above all people; for all the earth is Mine. And you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation" (Exodus 19:4-6).

We have here a statement of the power of the Lord and all that He had done for His people, Israel, followed by a pronouncement of the terms of the Covenant which grew out of that saving act of God. Similarly, at the very opening of the statement of the Law itself, God solemnly enunciates:

"I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. You shall ... You shall not..." etc., etc. (Exodus 20:2).

The entire foundation of the Sinaitic Covenant rests in the fact that the nation Israel is completely in the hands of, and utterly indebted to, the One who has rescued them from the dominion of Pharaoh. Here is embodied the foundation of "*covenant*" in Scripture: **It is always rooted in an act of redemption which renders those redeemed by it in absolute subjection to the Redeemer.** "*I am the Lord your God who has redeemed you...therefore you will obey Me*". That is essentially what is being said in the Lord's introduction to His covenant laws, and it forms the foundation of all Law-making and Law-keeping — a fact which we will also see echoed in the New Covenant by its Redeemer-Maker, the Lord Jesus Christ.

We can, therefore, describe this covenant deliverance foundation as the 'Exodus Principle'. This principle shows that the ethical behaviour required of the Lord's Old Covenant people, Israel, was intimately linked with their departure from Egypt under the power of God. Time and time again, this fact was reiterated to them:

"...because...He brought you out of Egypt with His presence, with His mighty power... you shall therefore keep His statutes and His commandments which I command you today" (Deuteronomy 4:37-40).

"*Because God did that, you shall therefore do this*". This is the foundation of the Sinaitic Covenant. And in Part 2 **we shall see this exact "Exodus" covenant principle replicated in the outworkings of the New Covenant in Christ** which also brings with it a new (and much improved!) revelation of God's Law — thus providing us with that much sought-after rule of life for the Christian believer.

2) The Essence of the Sinaitic Covenant

The commonly-held view of the Old Covenant is that it consisted essentially of all the ceremonial laws — the Levitical code of sacrifices and regulations, etc. — and that only these (plus some of the judicial laws) are now abolished in the wake of the New Covenant. However, although it is generally overlooked, **the essence of the Old Covenant was the actual content of the two**

tablets of stone, namely, the Ten Commandments, also known as the Decalogue. This is expressly and undeniably stated in a number of places in Scripture:

“The LORD also said to Moses, “Write down these words, for in accordance with these words I have made a covenant with you and with Israel.” So Moses was there with the LORD forty days and forty nights without eating bread or drinking water. He wrote on the tablets **the words of the covenant—the Ten Commandments”** (Exodus 34:27-28) [Emphasis added].

“When I went up on the mountain to receive the tablets of stone, **the tablets of the covenant that the LORD made with you**, I stayed on the mountain forty days and forty nights. I ate no bread and drank no water. Then the LORD gave me the two stone tablets, inscribed by the finger of God with the exact words that the LORD spoke to you out of the fire on the mountain on the day of the assembly. And at the end of forty days and forty nights, the LORD gave me **the two stone tablets, the tablets of the covenant”** (Deuteronomy 9:9-11) [Emphasis added]

It is crystal clear from these verses that the Ten Commandments themselves actually formed the essence of the Old Covenant — for they constituted “*the words of the Covenant*” (Exodus 34:28) and “*the tablets of the Covenant*” (Deuteronomy 9:9). The rest of the Mosaic Law was enshrined in what was called the “*Book of the Covenant*” (Exodus 24:7). The two tablets of the covenant were to be placed in the appropriately named “*Ark of the Covenant*” (Exodus 40:20a; Deuteronomy 10:5) which would be in the Tabernacle. The Ark of the Covenant was actually built to house the two tablets on which the finger of God had written, not because they were the Ten Commandments, **but because they constituted the Covenant with Israel**. The Book of the Covenant was also to be placed in the Tabernacle by the side of the ark, as Moses commanded the Levites (Deuteronomy 31:26). There is yet further confirmation to be found in the Old Testament Scriptures that the content of the two tablets

of stone (i.e. the Decalogue) was actually the essence of the Sinaitic Covenant. In 1 Kings 8:9, in the recounting of the dedication of the temple, we read that

"There was nothing in the ark except the two tablets of stone which Moses put there at Horeb, when the Lord made a covenant with the children of Israel, when they came out of the land of Egypt". [Emphasis added]

A few verses further on, Solomon states:

"I have built a house for the name of the Lord God of Israel. And there I have made a place for the ark, in which is the covenant of the Lord which He made with our fathers, when He brought them out of the land of Egypt" (1 Kings 8:20-21). [Emphasis added]

The Holy Spirit could not make it any clearer: The Old Sinaitic Covenant was actually the Ten Commandments engraved on stone, and placed in the Ark which was provided to house the writings of the Covenant. This fact is upheld in the Letter to the Hebrews when it states that the tabernacle contained "*the tablets of the covenant*" (Hebrews 9:4). The Sinaitic Law-covenant, therefore, consisted essentially of the Ten Commandments written on the two tablets of stone, plus the auxiliary "*Book of the Law/Covenant*" (Exodus 24:7; Deuteronomy 29:21), which contained the other laws given to Israel.

The various ceremonial Sabbaths laid down for observance in the Sinaitic Lawcode — one of which was enshrined in the Fourth Commandment of the Decalogue — constituted the sign of the Old Covenant between God and the Children of Israel (Exodus 31:13-18; Ezekiel 20:12). All these Sabbaths (Exodus 31 shows that they all stood together as a unit), as shadows and types of that which was to come, have been done away with as binding law on the Lord's people in the wake of Christ's victory on the Cross, which alone gives true rest to believers (Colossians 2:13-17; Hebrews 4:1-11). **In other words, Christians do not need to keep any form of Sabbath or other ceremonial Jewish festival and should not be judged for not doing so.** Thus, the Apostle writes with absolute clarity:

"So let no one judge you in food or in drink, or regarding a festival or a new moon or sabbaths, which are a shadow of things to come, but the substance is of Christ" (Colossians 2:16-17).

One does not need to chase after shadows when the One by whom they were cast has come! This is why Paul can also speak of the covenant which came "*from Mount Sinai which gives birth to bondage*" (Galatians 4:24). Here he is referring, not merely to the "ceremonial" elements of the Sinaitic Law, as some would say, **but to the entire body of Law given on Sinai – the Decalogue included.**

We shall discover the sweeping implications of all this as we go through this study. But I can ask a leading question at this point in our journey: *Where exactly does this place us in terms of our relation to the law of God, and especially to the laws of the Old Covenant?* As we shall shortly come to understand, comparison of Scripture with Scripture demonstrates clearly that **the entire content of the Old Covenant Law as a written code – including the Decalogue, which was the centrepiece of the Old Covenant – has been made obsolete as a body of law legally binding on the Christian.** This is the very basis of the apostle Paul's reasoning in 2 Corinthians 3:3-11, when he asserts that the Decalogue has been superseded for the Christian by the indwelling Holy Spirit. I will write out those words here so that you can see the clarity of Paul's thinking:

"It is clear that you are a letter from Christ, the result of our ministry, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts. Such confidence before God is ours through Christ. Not that we are competent in ourselves to claim that anything comes from us, but our competence comes from God. And He has qualified us as ministers of a new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life. Now if the ministry of death, which was engraved in letters on stone, came with such glory that the Israelites could not gaze at the face of Moses because of its fleeting glory, will not the ministry of the Spirit be even

more glorious? For if the ministry of condemnation was glorious, how much more glorious is the ministry of righteousness! Indeed, what was once glorious has no glory now in comparison to the glory that surpasses it. For if what was fading away came with glory, how much greater is the glory of that which endures!" (2 Corinthians 3:3-11).

Now, before you blow a fuse, this passing away of the Ten Commandments as a body of legally binding law on the Christian does not mean that he or she is now free to be an idolater, to murder, lie, steal, covet or commit adultery, etc. **As I shall shortly show, all the moral principles intrinsic to the Old Sinaitic Covenant are now part and parcel of the New Covenant in Christ, and it is to this that we should turn for our rule of life.** However, those moral principles do not come to us as written statutes on stone. Rather, they have now been written on our hearts, as I shall show in more detail in Part 2 of this paper.

Many Christians place the Decalogue on a pedestal that is far higher than that given to it by Scripture for the New Covenant redeemed, despite the obvious morality ensconced in its words. They seem to ignore the fact that there has been a change in Covenants and that the written code of the decalogue, with a sabbath at its heart, was for the children of Israel based on their Exodus from Egypt.

It is highly significant that the Lord Jesus Christ did not respond with any of the individual Ten Commandments when He was asked what is the greatest commandment but, rather, He cited two relatively obscure Bible verses from Deuteronomy 6:4 ("*You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength*") and Leviticus 19:18 ("*You shall love your neighbor as yourself*"), and said that it was on these two commandments that the entire Old Testament Law hung (Matthew 22:40)! Meditate on that very carefully. We will later appreciate what an important spiritual insight this gives us in terms of the true nature of the Law of God and its foundation of love rather than legalism when fully revealed, as it is in the New Covenant especially.

To sum up: The essence of the Mosaic Covenant was the temporary, covenantally-based Decalogue which, along with the rest of the Mosaic Law, has been abolished as a body of legally binding law on believers. But the true heart which lay at the back of the Mosaic Law — surpassing even the Decalogue — was contained in the two verses quoted by Christ which summarized the eternal, absolute moral law, and which straddles **both** Covenants (cf. Galatians 5:14) as well as being relevant at all times and for all people.

I fully recognise that it is at this point in our study that the greatest controversy has occurred. But, for those readers who may be having difficulty accepting this position, I plead with you to exercise a Berean spirit and bear with me until I am done, reading carefully all the Scriptures which I am presenting. **I am not saying these things as an act of thoughtless rebellion or blatant unholiness, but as an encouragement to reason our way out of human thought-systems and sectarian straitjackets into a deeper understanding of the Word of God and a more profound development of our spiritual life.** I believe that I have given ample Scriptural testimony of my position as it has so far been given.

Far from leaving us without any law in our lives or in direct danger of debauchery, this doctrine is so lovely, so God-honouring and so conducive to a closer walk with our Redeemer, that we will rejoice to read these things and desire a life of holiness as we have never done before. So let us plough on together.

3) The Characteristics of the Sinaitic Covenant

Having looked at the essence of the Sinaitic Covenant, let us now discover its leading qualities. There is actually some ambiguity in the verdict of Scripture on the Sinaitic Law. There was much that could be praised about it — indeed it can even be said to have been “glorious” (2 Corinthians 3:7). Yet, it was wholly inadequate in many essentials and had to give way to a new and infinitely better covenant. This accounts for the fact that Paul could make such positive statements about the Sinaitic Law in his letter to the Romans and yet be so negative about it in his letter to the Galatians. Working now through the leading qualities of the Sinaitic Lawcode will give us a penetrating insight into the nature of that covenant,

together with a deep understanding of its purpose in the great redemptive plan of God.

The first characteristic of the Sinaitic Covenant is that

i. It Was Made Only with One Nation in History

There is a very just reason for believing that the entire Mosaic Law, as a written code, is not morally and ethically binding on the Christian today. For the Bible is clear that the Sinaitic Covenant was made by the Lord with the children of Israel, **and with them only**. In a rhetorical question, the Scripture says:

“And what great nation is there that has such statutes and righteous judgements as are in all this law which I set before you this day?” (Deuteronomy 4:8).

The unspoken answer is, of course, “*none*”. Only the earthly nation of Israel was a party to the Sinaitic Covenant and the body of law which was wedded to it, for only that nation had been redeemed out of Egypt by God. This is important, because some people mistakenly believe that the entire Decalogue — the essence of the Sinaitic Covenant — has been morally and ethically obligating on all people at all times. **But the Lord Himself states that His Sabbaths had been especially given to Israel as a covenantal sign between that nation and Himself (Ezekiel 20:12).**

Furthermore, Moses says plainly to the children of Israel: “*The Lord did not make this covenant with our fathers, but with us, those who are here today, all of us who are alive*” (Deuteronomy 5:3). This surely proves two profound facts: **firstly**, that the Sinaitic Covenant, as a body of law (including the Decalogue), was made only with Israel, and, **secondly**, that it was not in existence before it was made with the children of Israel at Sinai. Are you grasping the implications of this? The Scriptures are infinitely more compelling than tradition or humanly-received beliefs.

The second characteristic of the Sinaitic Covenant is that

ii. It was to Last Only for a Brief Period of History

The above point that the Sinaitic Law-Covenant was made only with the children of Israel, is doubly confirmed by a passage in Paul’s letter to the Galatian churches, in which the apostle plainly

states that it was first revealed four hundred and thirty years after the Abrahamic Promise-Covenant, and that it was to be in force only until the promised “Seed” (i.e. Jesus Christ, the Messiah) had come (Galatians 3:17,19). **This shows that the Sinaitic Law-Covenant (including the Decalogue) lasted as a legally binding arrangement only for as long as the children of Israel were constituted as the people of God – that is, until Christ came to inaugurate the progressive change from *Israel* to *Ekklesia*, the natural progression from the Old Covenant earthly nation of Israel to the New Covenant spiritual nation, the Church. This was the context of Jesus’ words in Matthew 21:43 to those sitting in Moses’ seat at the time: “*Therefore, I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken from you [Old Covenant Israel] and given to a nation bearing the fruits of it [New Covenant Ekklesia].*” Really, this is all ‘basic Christian teaching 101’. Yet, how often do you hear it being preached from the pulpits of churches?**

The Scriptures also confirm the **temporary** binding nature of the Sinaitic Covenant in other places in Scripture, such as Ephesians 2:15; Colossians 2:14 and 2 Corinthians 3:3-11. I will go into these texts more fully later in our study; but for now I note them here to show that **the coming of Christ brought an end to the entire Law of Moses** (cf. Romans 10:4), as expressed in the many commandments and ordinances in which it consisted. **Thus, the New Covenant of grace in Jesus Christ made the Mosaic Covenant, as a statute body of law, entirely obsolete (John 1:17; Romans 8:2; Hebrews 8:13).**

Another characteristic of the Sinaitic Covenant is that

iii. It was Given Primarily for Custodial Purposes

An important factor which arises out of the national exclusivity of the Sinaitic Covenant is that it provided the very life of the nation, thus serving the purpose of preserving Israel’s identity until the Christ came – a necessary facet of redemptive history. One of the main purposes of the Sinaitic Law, as a temporary legal arrangement, was therefore to keep Israel under restraint as a *pedagogue* – a strict disciplinarian and custodian – until the Christ

should come (see Galatians 3:22-25) with His New Covenant of love and liberty.¹⁰

Another characteristic of the Sinaitic Covenant is that

iv. It was Given to Increase Sin

The apostle Paul makes the statement that the Sinaitic Lawcode was added “so that transgression would increase” (Romans 5:20). In other words, the Old Covenant Law actually served the purpose of increasing man’s desire for that which the Law itself forbade (Romans 7:5, 8)! This, in turn, increased the need for forgiveness, thereby cultivating the Messianic hope (Romans 3:19-20; 7:7-25). The Old Covenant was always forward-looking in earnest expectation, awaiting the event which would render it obsolete by fulfilling everything that it could not do (Romans 8:3).

Another characteristic of the Sinaitic Covenant is that

v. It was Deficient in the Conviction of Sin

Although the Sinaitic Law could increase the *knowledge* of sin, it was intrinsically deficient in its ability to *convict* of sin effectually. An illustration of this is provided in the account of the rich young ruler who told Jesus that he had kept the Ten Commandments (Mark 10:17-22). They had not given him any cause for conscience, neither had they convicted him of his sin although he obviously felt his actions were somehow inadequate for the provision of eternal life. What is most interesting and revealing about this confrontation is that Jesus did not contradict the man’s claim that he had kept the commandments but, instead, showed him the true inadequacy of his spiritual life which, clearly, was inherently the inadequacy of the Sinaitic Law. As one commentator puts it:

“Keeping the individual commandments is no substitute for the readiness for self-surrender to the absolute claim of God imposed through the call of the

¹⁰ For a fine exposition of this text in Galatians 3:19 – 4.7 which deals masterfully with this whole issue of the *pedagogue*, see Richard Longenecker, *The Pedagogical Nature of the Law in Galatians*, Journal of the Evangelical Society, 25/1, March 1982, pp.53-61.

gospel. Jesus' summons in this context means that true obedience to the Law is rendered ultimately in discipleship. This man will achieve the perfect obedience of the Law when he surrenders himself and follows Jesus".¹¹

Here we are given more than a hint of what the keeping of God's law is really all about: **Obedience from the heart to the spirit of His law, rather than the observance of externally imposed regulations, which can so easily fool a person into thinking that s/he has "performed" all that is necessary to fulfil the law of God.** This is why the apostle, Paul, could say with all honesty that "*concerning the righteousness which is in the law*", he was "*blameless*" (Philippians 3:6). As far as the *letter* of the Law was concerned, the rich young ruler and Saul the Pharisee had "*kept*" the Law. But it did not really convict them of sin. Here we see that one of the great deficiencies in the Sinaitic Covenant was that the ethics and spirituality of those serving under it repeatedly degenerated into a "*checklist morality*" to which people could smugly adhere. This is inevitably the case when there is merely an adherence to a *written* code of law. Such is the case today in those circles in which confessions, catechisms, and creeds (and often the Sinaitic Law), rather than the Scriptures, dictate the thinking and behaviour of the Christian. What happens then is that the "*letter*" then takes precedence over the Spirit which then leads to that loveless, tyrannical, pharisaic regime in which Satan has a field day, and which we find in so many churches of a 'reformed' disposition.

This factor of the inadequacy of the Sinaitic Lawcode – which can be summed up by saying that 'God desires mercy from the heart rather than *rote sacrifice*' (Matthew 12:7, 33) – was well understood during the Old Testament era by those individuals who were spiritually-minded enough to see beyond the outward statutory requirements which constituted the Sinaitic Lawcode (e.g., 1 Samuel 15:22-23; Psalm 50:8-11; 51:16-17; Proverbs 21:3; Isaiah 1:11-17; Jeremiah 7:22-23; Micah 6:6-8; Hosea 6:6; Ecclesiastes 5:1; cf. Matthew 5:24; 9:13; Hebrews 10:4-10).

¹¹ William Lane, *The Gospel of Mark*, (Eerdmans, 1974), p.367.

The Law, as a written code, was inadequate in its ability to convict a person of sin effectually. It is precisely for this reason that the Holy Spirit was given. As the Lord Jesus said, "*He [the Holy Spirit] will convict the world in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment*" (John 16:8). **It is massively important to grasp the fact that the Holy Spirit is the divinely-appointed substitute for the Sinaitic Lawcode in the Gospel Age (Galatians 5:18; cf. Romans 8:2-3).** We shall see the profound implications of this when we examine the revelation of God's law in the New Covenant in Part 2 of this paper.

Another characteristic of the Sinaitic Covenant is that

vi. It Was Pre-eminently Typical

I acknowledge that there have been many over-fanciful attempts at expounding on biblical typology, but this does not negate its reality in the Word of God. A succinct definition of a 'type' is "*an event, person or object which, by its very nature and significance, prefigures or foreshadows some later event, person or object*".¹² There are many aspects of the Sinaitic Law which are most instructive in typological terms.

Apart from the obvious, and almost universally acknowledged typology of the various sacrificial ordinances finding their fulfilment in the supreme sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ, there are many other typological aspects of the Law and the redemptive 'Exodus event' from which it springs. The Sinaitic Covenant itself, written by the finger of God on the two tablets of stone, was a type of the fact that in the New Covenant in Christ (a better covenant), God would actually write His law on the hearts of His people (cf. Jeremiah 31:31-34; Hebrews 8:6-13; 2 Corinthians 3:3-11).

Another typological aspect of the Sinaitic Law involves the fact that the temporal elements – those pertaining to earthly existence in the Old Covenant – have their antitype in the eternal. Thus, the Old Covenant land promise of Canaan for those obedient to the Law has its fulfilment in the New Testament promise of eternal life

¹² J.D. Douglas, (ed.), *The New International Dictionary of the Christian Church*, (Zondervan, 1974), p.990.

for those who obey the gospel, for the gospel must indeed be obeyed (1 Peter 4:17; 2 Thessalonians 1:8).

Similarly, the Old Covenant threatenings of physical death for transgressing certain of the statutes (e.g., sodomy, incest, sorcery, idolatry, blasphemy, false teaching, filial disobedience, etc.) find their spiritual fulfilment in the New Testament threatenings of eternal punishment (known as the 'second death') for very similar offences (cf. Revelation 21:8; 22:15).

Likewise, when the Old Covenant people were taken out of Egypt, away from the burdensome clutches of Pharaoh, by the mighty hand of God (Exodus 12:40-42), this finds its New Covenant antitype in the fact that the Christian is taken out of the world from the burdensome clutches of Satan by the power of God's Spirit (Colossians 1:13) and given rest.

There is so much more that I could uncover here if I had the space to develop this exhilarating theme. **The entire thrust of the redemption ethos underpinning the Exodus from Egypt, and its associated covenant, is that it foreshadowed Christ and is, therefore, ultimately Christ-centred.** That is why He is the fulfillment of both the Old Testament prophets and the Old Testament Law (Matthew 5:17). Not only did the prophets prophesy of Christ, but the Sinaitic Covenant did also (Luke 24:27,44). *"For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John the Baptist!"* (Matthew 11:13).

Without Christ, who would bring rest from the bondage of the Law (Matthew 11:28-30; Hebrews 4:9-10), the Sinaitic lawcode would have been meaningless and, above all, hopeless. **This is yet another reason why it is so important to ensure that one is adhering to the right covenant for one's rule of life.** It is so perverse and retrogressive to immerse oneself in types and shadows of the Old Covenant when that Good Thing which they prefigured typologically has already come. **It would be just as absurd for someone to prefer a photograph of his or her spouse instead of the real thing!**

Another characteristic of the Sinaitic Covenant is that

vii. It was Holy and Spiritual

The fact that grace and law are contrasted in John 1:17 does not negate the fact that there was a measure of grace in the very giving of the Sinaitic Law. It was given within a loving, merciful and covenantal context, and was designed to keep the Lord's people "*held in custody under the law, locked up until faith should be revealed*" (Galatians 3:23), until the awaited Messiah should come. God only knows what circumstances would have befallen the Children of Israel had they not been given a lawcode to keep them in check and point them towards Christ in shadows and types. Moreover, as the apostle states, "*the law is holy, and the commandment holy and just and good... The law is spiritual*" (Romans 7:12,14), in that it was given by Divine decree. The great problem with the Sinaitic Law was not with the contents of the lawcode itself (in spite of the fact that it was an immature revelation of God's law) but with the carnality and unruliness of the men and women for whom it was in force (Romans 8:3).

The eighth characteristic of the Sinaitic Covenant is:

viii. It was Wholly Inferior to the New Covenant

Whereas the Old Covenant Lawcode – as "*the basic principles of the world...weak and worthless principles*" (Galatians 4:3, 9) – brought with it servitude and enslavement (Galatians 4:3), sin and death (Romans 8:2; 7:10; 2 Corinthians 3:7), the New Covenant was the law of liberty (James 2:12) and of sonship to God through Christ (Galatians 4:4-7; Romans 8:15-16). As such, it was infinitely superior to its predecessor.

The message of the New Testament Scriptures is that the Sinaitic Covenant was an arrangement between the Lord and His people when the latter, from an historical standpoint, were still at an immature stage of their development. **The Law was given to Israel as a temporary custodian, whereas the New Covenant believer has the superior element of the indwelling Holy Spirit as the centrepiece of his or her sanctification (Galatians 5:18; Romans 6:14; Romans 7:4; 8:14-15).** In Romans 6:14, the subject under discussion by the apostle is that of sanctification, which, under the ministry of the Law was wholly inferior to that of the Spirit. This

was the progression in God's dealings with His people — one with which we should "keep in step" (Galatians 5:25). Yet, how many do?

The Water and Wine at Cana Contrasts the Two Covenants

The fact that the New Covenant eclipses the Old, and that there is this progression in the revelation of God's law to His people, is entirely in line with the way that God works in every other respect. As said earlier, much of the confusion about the law of God has arisen because there has been a failure to comprehend the nature of progressive revelation: *"First the stalk, then the head, then the mature grain in the head"*. This is not at all the way that the world operates; but it is always the way of our gracious God. We see this fact set out in parable fashion in the miracle of water turned into wine at Cana, which our Lord performed. This water was the purification water prescribed for use under the Sinaitic Law (John 2:6). Jesus turned it into the fine-tasting wine of the New Covenant (symbolically understood). And the manner of God's dealings is proclaimed figuratively by the master of the feast to the bridegroom:

"Every man at the beginning sets out the good wine, and when the guests have well drunk, then that which is inferior. But you have kept the good wine until now" (John 2:10).

One could write an entire book on the profundity of this statement in which the Lord is typified as operating counter to worldly norms. A great hallmark of the Lord's purposes in redemption and revelation is that He does not reveal all at once — but in stages, according to the capacity to receive it. And, as any one of His people can testify, this is how He works with us individually also. The failure to perceive this Divine dynamic has led to an inflated view of the Sinaitic Law — in particular the Decalogue — in which the covenantal procedure of God is virtually inverted so that the New Covenant becomes, as it were, an "add-on feature" to the Old, which is regarded by many as the begetter of the New and the mightier of the two. But the Word is abundantly clear that it is the best wine which has been kept till the end! **The inferior wine was served first (representing the Old Mosaic Covenant), and the best**

wine has been saved till the last (representing the New Covenant in Christ).

Such complete eclipsing of the Old Covenant by one which was infinitely superior was prefigured in the Old Testament Scriptures with unambiguous clarity:

“Behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah. It will not be like the covenant I made with their fathers when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt—a covenant they broke, though I was a husband to them’, declares the LORD. ‘But this is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the LORD. I will put My law in their minds and inscribe it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they will be My people. No longer will each man teach his neighbor or his brother, saying, ‘Know the LORD,’ because they will all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest, declares the LORD. For I will forgive their iniquities and will remember their sins no more” (Jeremiah 31:31-34).

We clearly see here how the prophesied New Covenant people (disciples of Christ in the Gospel Age) are the new “Israel of God” (see also Galatians 6:16). The new Israel is the *Ekklesia* — a truth which a vast number of the wayward Christians of today simply refuse to accept.¹³ This eclipsing of the Old Covenant by the New was subsequently confirmed when the apostle writes: “In that He says, ‘A new Covenant’, He has made the first obsolete. Now what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away” (Hebrews 8:13). Furthermore, Paul explicitly states that whatever glory was in the Decalogue on the two stone tablets of the Old Covenant — a

¹³ For much information about this, please download my free book, “[Abraham our Father: Jerusalem our Mother](#)”, a biblical analysis of Judaism & the modern state of Israel in relation to the Church of Jesus Christ. Just click on the title to download it.

ministry of death and condemnation — is utterly outshone by the glory of the New Covenant through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit:

"It is clear that you are a letter from Christ, the result of our ministry, **written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts**. Such confidence before God is ours through Christ. Not that we are competent in ourselves to claim that anything comes from us, but our competence comes from God. And He has qualified us as ministers of a new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life. Now if the ministry of death, which was engraved in letters on stone, came with such glory that the Israelites could not gaze at the face of Moses because of its fleeting glory, will not the ministry of the Spirit be even more glorious? For if the ministry of condemnation was glorious, how much more glorious is the ministry of righteousness! Indeed, what was once glorious has no glory now in comparison to the glory that surpasses it. For if what was fading away came with glory, how much greater is the glory of that which endures!" (2 Corinthians 3:3-11).

You clearly see here that the New Covenant in Christ is a superior covenant in every way and renders the Old Israelitish Covenant obsolete.

Before going on to examine the revelation of God's Law in the New Covenant, a much-needed "Excursus on the Idea of a Sunday Sabbath" will now be inserted.

EXCURSUS ON THE IDEA OF A SUNDAY SABBATH

When there was a concerted snubbing of the Sunday Trading Laws in the 1990s by major retail companies in the United Kingdom, the spectacle of vicars on soapboxes accompanied by chorus-singing groups in supermarkets on Sunday afternoons became a regular feature of media reporting. The motivation behind these tumults was the underlying notion that there is an incitement to the breaking of a Divinely appointed universal moral law by those who encourage the carrying on of weekday business on Sundays. Those who oppose Sunday Trading, therefore, consider themselves to occupy the high moral ground and – in common with most other religious *causes célèbres* – believe themselves to have God on their side.

Now, there is certainly a sound, logical, commonsense, natural rationale in advocating the voluntary use of a “one-in-seven” rest principle in many areas of human and agricultural existence. But those who oppose Sunday Trading do not do so from such a perspective. Rather, they claim a theological and biblical backing for their position. The question must therefore be asked: Can the foundation of a universal *“Keep Sunday Special”* campaign honestly be supported from a sound biblical and theological standpoint? The primary contentions of those who believe in a Sunday Sabbath are as follows:

- That there was a Divine law instituted at creation which made the religious observance of one-day-in-seven mandatory on all human beings of whatever time and place.
- That this so-called “Creation Ordinance” was reiterated in the Ten Commandments of the Law of Moses given on Mount Sinai to ancient Israel, for the Lord said: *“Remember the Sabbath Day”* (Exodus 20:8).
- That the Saturday Sabbath which was legally binding on ancient Israel was officially changed to a Sunday Sabbath by the Divinely appointed apostles of Christ in the wake of His Resurrection.
- That this alleged “Christian Sabbath” is now called “The Lord’s Day” and must be observed in a similar manner to the Saturday Sabbath of the Old Testament.

In response to these concepts, it can be said, first, that there is no record in the Biblical creation narrative of any Divinely instituted law concerning man's observance of a Sabbath. The entire concept of a "Creation Ordinance" for mankind to observe perpetually until the end of the world must, by way of definition, involve a clear Biblical statement of principle regarding a specific area of focus. Such a clear statement can definitely be observed in the creation narrative in relation to work (Genesis 1:28; 2:15,20), marriage (Genesis 2:18), family (Genesis 2:24) and the so-called 'cultural mandate' to subdue the earth and rule over the animals (Genesis 1:28); but there is nothing whatsoever regarding the universal human observance of a divinely-appointed Sabbath. It is true that there is a mention of God resting from his creative endeavours on the seventh day, and that basic principle was used to affirm a sabbath for the children of Israel. But if we attempt to apply this to a universal human Sabbath for all time for all people born into this world as a result of an alleged 'creation ordinance', it will prove far too much, because God's rest was permanent, not cyclic! Furthermore, the Sinaitic covenantal sabbath was ultimately designed to point Israel forward to the eternal rest that one has in Christ (as shown in Hebrews 4). Thus, while the Sinaitic Covenant did set aside the seventh day as a Sabbath for the children of Israel, in the New Covenant in Christ that Sabbath is shown to have pointed towards the 'rest' that we have in Him (Colossians 2:15-17), both now through deliverance from sin and death and eternally in the new heaven and new earth. **In the New Covenant, there is no other sabbath than Christ.**

Second, the law concerning Sabbath observance in relation to ancient Israel is the first mention of the binding necessity for sabbath-keeping in the Bible (Exodus 16:23). When the text records God's injunction to the Israelites to "*Remember the Sabbath Day*" (Exodus 20:8), this is not a reference to an earlier giving of the Sabbath law (e.g., at the creation, as some cavalierly claim), for the Hebrew text clearly implies that the Israelites must ensure that they remember to observe the Sabbath **from that time forth**. That is, they must remember to keep it in mind for the future, not remember it from the past!

Tied in with this first mention of a law about sabbath-keeping, one cannot ignore the fact that this law was not given to all mankind — as many Christians claim — but **to ancient Israel alone** (see Deuteronomy 4:7-8). The entire body of the Law of Moses was made on a Covenantal basis between God and His chosen people, Israel, while the individual regulations regarding the Sabbath were an express **sign** of that specific Covenantal arrangement **only with those particular people** (cf. Ezekiel 20:12-13). This is obvious to anyone with the courage to perceive it.

When the Lord Jesus Christ ministered on earth He observed the Sabbaths of Israel because He was born under the Law of Moses, under the Sinaitic Covenant; but the New Testament makes it clear in a number of significant texts that the sacrifice of Christ on the Cross cancelled out the requirements of the Law of Moses and therefore made the Mosaic Sabbaths null and void (please see Colossians 2:13-17; Ephesians 2:15; Hebrews 7:18; 8:13; 9:9-10; Romans 14:5-6, etc.). **In the clearest of all such texts, 2 Corinthians 3:1-11 shows that the function of the externally-imposed Laws of Moses (including the Sabbaths) have been superseded by the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit in believers under the New Covenant in Christ.** As Paul the Apostle puts it: *"If you are led by the [Holy] Spirit, you are not under the law [of Moses]"* (Galatians 5:18). This is a powerful fact with which many Christians, for some extraordinary reason, just will not reckon.

It is true that there was an initial tendency on the part of the early Christians to meet together for worship and the breaking of bread on Sunday, the first day of the week (e.g., Acts 20:7; 1 Corinthians 16:2). This was understandable, considering the significance of Jesus' Resurrection which had taken place on that first day. However, it was not only on Sunday that the disciples in the early Church met together for fellowship and worship: The Bible also refers to them as meeting *daily* in Acts 2:46 and Hebrews 3:13.

Ironically — given the focus of the "Keep Sunday Special" debate — **Sunday was a normal working day in the time of these meetings in the early Church!** This was more than likely why the disciples met in the evening in the account in Acts 20:7. Furthermore, note that when the Scripture texts use the phrase "*the*

first day of the week", the literal translation of the Greek here is actually "*the first from the Sabbath*". This demonstrates that there was a clear differentiation between the day of 'the Sabbath' and the day on which the disciples met, which was obviously not the Sabbath. Can you see this clearly, with its implications? Therefore, there can surely be no greater oxymoron in the English language than the phrase "*Christian Sabbath*".

The Sabbaths given to ancient Israel were ceremonial regulations which foreshadowed the "rest" which believers would find in the Lord Jesus Christ (cf. Matthew 11:28-30; Hebrews 4). Whereas ancient Israel was ceremonially required to live wholly to the Lord for a mere one day in seven, the Christian believer must be a disciple of Christ *every waking moment of his or her life* (Luke 9:23). **The Old Covenant involved a servitude to regulations; the New Covenant is a relationship of sonship to God in Jesus Christ (Galatians 3:23 – 4:7).** Therefore, it is totally unreasonable to expect people to affirm a Sabbatarian significance to a Sunday even before they have become Christians. **Instead of hectoring non-Christians on a Sunday into submitting to a hyped-up version of an ancient Israelitish law, Christians should be calling them in love to full repentance before God and a permanent, daily discipleship to Christ.** Loving God, one's neighbour and one's enemies has never been a one-day-a-week affair.

It is true that there can be times appointed when Christians may meet for fellowship and worship and to break bread together; but this does not occur as the result of a binding regulation but out of a real sense of voluntary devotion and the practical need for a uniformity of order. It is not without significance that the use of Sunday as a special "Day of Rest" was unheard of before the Roman Emperor Constantine issued an edict in AD 321 requiring "*rest on the venerable day of the Sun*". The phrase, "*Christian Sabbath*", never occurred until the twelfth century AD.

What many do not realise is that there is a hidden agenda behind the bid to enforce Sunday observance on non-Christians. For some years now, a rapidly-growing movement called Christian Reconstructionism (also known as "Dominion Theology") has been advocating the enforcement of the entire system of Mosaic

regulations on the human race, including the reintroduction of the death penalty for adultery, homosexuality, idolatry and Sabbath-breaking. Their onetime Presidential candidate in the U.S. some years ago was Pat Robertson, and they have made considerable headway in some States by taking over the local government political machinery. These days, Donald Trump is seen as their natural selection. But it goes way further than that, being advocated by Evangelicals, Pentecostals and Charismatics (e.g., Latter Rain, New Apostolic Reformation and Seven Mountains Mandate).

In seventeenth and eighteenth century Britain, the Puritans, and their Westminster Confession of 1648 (the harbingers of modern Christian Reconstructionism) made this land a semi-Reconstructionist country, complete with a compulsory Sunday Sabbath in which all unbelievers were expected to sit by force under the sermonic teaching. In common with Calvin's Geneva, such a hybrid system failed — as will all such theocratic attempts during the New Testament side of the Cross of Christ. **The Body of Christ is not nationally-based but is a trans-cultural, trans-national people, whose kingdom is not of this world.** In order to avoid a return to such a deluded co-mingling of religion and politics, Christians today would do well to embark on an unprejudiced study of the Bible instead of making a spectacle of themselves by protesting in the 'shopper's paradises' of the world. Such study would show that the entire concept of an imposed Sabbath 'day of rest' is part of a temporary, ancient legal order in Israel which Paul the Apostle actually described in Greek as σκύβαλον, *skubalon* — literally what we today would call bulls--t (though polite translators use the words "dung" or "garbage" instead), in comparison with the New Covenant in his beloved Lord Jesus Christ (Philippians 3:8) and which the Lord Jesus Himself came to render obsolete (Hebrews 8:13).

Thus, while it is good to have a collectively agreed day on which Christians can meet for corporate worship and 'Word of God' services, there is no biblical mandate to do so and certainly no justification to force non-Christians (with the threat of imprisonment) to "sit under the preaching" and engage in Divine worship in churches, no matter how romantic one may think that

to be. Such enforcement would not be revival but would be similar to the impressment imposed by 'press gangs' which operated in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in Britain to force eligible males into the navy. Such coercion is not what the Gospel of Jesus Christ is about.

In short, despite it being good to meet together on an agreed day (usually Sunday), the compulsory Sunday Sabbath as a law of God is a chimera based on the Old Covenant and has no place in the churches today.

Part 2:

THE REVELATION OF GOD'S LAW IN THE NEW COVENANT

In this section, we shall examine the foundation and essence of the New Covenant in Christ, together with some of its leading characteristics. As I lay open the facts of this section, we will come to appreciate the movement of redemptive-history and our own place in it, as those who have been saved from eternal death by the grace of God in the Lord Jesus Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit.

1) The Foundation of the New Covenant

In just the same way that the foundation of the Old Covenant was the 'Exodus Principle', so it is also the foundation of the New. But it is not the Exodus out of Egypt that is the foundation of the New Covenant; for **a new covenant involves a new 'exodus', a new deliverance, as its foundation. In this case, it is deliverance from the dominion of sin and Satan through redemption in Christ (Romans 6:14a; Colossians 1:13)**. The 'exodus' foundation of the New Covenant is the love of Christ for His people, epitomized in His work on the Cross and throughout His life as He steadfastly set His face towards Jerusalem with the sole intent of being able to cry out across the cosmos: "*It has been accomplished!*" (John 19:30; cf. 17:4). Whereas the Sinaitic Lawcode threatened death to the one who did not obey its requirements, the Law of the New Covenant appeals to its disciples on the basis of love:

"For the love of Christ constrains us...that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again" (2 Corinthians 5:14-15).

"The love of Christ constrains us". Do you see the massive significance of this? Because Christ has died for us — that great expression of His love for us — we are 'kept in check' by that relationship. **It is this love of Christ, this being 'in Christ', that constrains us from sinning and that determines all our ethical behaviour rather than being compelled by any written lawcode.**

It is this that keeps us on 'the strai(gh)t and narrow'. That is the significance of the passage in which Christ washes the feet of the disciples and then commands them to love one another **as He has loved them** (John 13:34). "*A new commandment I give to you*". This is the law of radical discipleship, our new commandment which comes not as a threatening written statute but in the spirit of love.

"The love of Christ constrains us...that those who live should live no longer for themselves". That is the essence and foundation of New Covenant Law, which is what the rich young ruler, mentioned in the previous section, could not take. Jesus, in asking him to give away all that he had, was not — as some have claimed — commanding poverty or frugality for every Christian. **It was instead the proclamation of a far more radically ethical basis for the Lord's people than that provided by the external code of the Old Covenant Decalogue, which the young man had in fact kept since his youth.**

Christ is therefore, as He Himself states, our example (John 13:15) whom we are to follow. But, more than that, **He is our lawmaker and lawgiver — *He is our very Law!*** The Scriptures make it quite clear that Jesus Christ is to be **the** authority for the Christian in this present age. Moses himself had prophesied about this future covenantal authority of the Lord Jesus when he said that the Lord had told him that eventually there would come a Prophet like Moses (i.e. a mediator and deliverer), and whoever would not hear the words which the Lord would place in that Deliverer's mouth would be held to account for it (read Deuteronomy 18:17-19). And this is the authority referred to in the opening words of Hebrews, where Paul tells us:

"God, who at many times and in many ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things..." (Hebrews 1:1-2).

The Covenantal Symbolism in the Transfiguration of Christ

This supreme covenantal authority of Christ is the primary thrust of a well-known New Testament scene: the Transfiguration on the Mount. The true significance of this event for the revelation of

God's law is rarely heard from the majority of pulpits of this world. One is forced to wonder why this would be when it is so plain and obvious. Here we see Christ discussing His forthcoming "exodus" with Moses and Elijah who are, respectively, the Law-mediator and the chief prophet of the Old Covenant era. The Greek word ἔξοδος, *exodus*, usually translated as "departure", or "decease", is the word that is actually used in this Transfiguration passage to refer to Christ's death: "[Moses and Elijah] appeared in glory and spoke about His exodus, which He was about to accomplish at Jerusalem" (Luke 9:31). Then, with great significance, a divine voice comes out of the cloud which had enveloped them, saying: "This is My beloved Son. Hear Him!" (Luke 9:35). This is in fulfilment of that passage in Deuteronomy 18:17-19 in which Christ is shown to be the ultimate Lawmaker who will supersede Moses ("Him you will hear"). As if to emphasise the significance of Christ as **the** authority in this age in the Transfiguration scene on the mount, "when the divine voice from the cloud had ceased..... they saw **no one but Jesus only**" (Luke 9:36; Matthew 17:8). Moses and Elijah had simply disappeared. The symbolism is obvious: The canonical (morally and ethically obligating) status of the Old Covenant, personified in Moses and Elijah, was giving way to that of the Lord Jesus Christ. who was the fulfilment of the Law and the end of it (Romans 10:4), bringing in a new canon ("rule", Galatians 6:16). "They saw no one but Jesus only" because He was the fulfilment of the Law and the Prophets. Moses and Elijah... gone. This is also why the last Old Testament prophet, John the Baptist, said "He must increase, but I must decrease" (John 3:30). Historically, the Old Covenant was becoming obsolete and the New Covenant was being established (Hebrews 8:13). And just to ensure that no one could miss the point being made in this Transfiguration scene, it all took place on a mountain (just like Sinai) which was enveloped in a cloud (just like on Sinai, Exodus 19:18). We see here the profundity of the Scriptures! The clarity and significance of this passage brings tears to my eyes.

"This is My beloved Son. Hear Him!" We are, therefore, to behave in accordance with the gospel, teaching, life, and example of the Lord Jesus Christ, because it is He who has delivered us out of the kingdom of darkness and the authority of Satan, of which "Egypt"

as the “*house of bondage*”, and its slavemaster Pharaoh, were Old Covenant types of spiritual realities. In other words, our ethics are governed by all the elements of Christ’s sacrificial deliverance of us. **Thus, the rule of life for the believer is Christ** – a fact which Paul underscores when he explicitly states that the “*rule*” (Greek: *kanon*) by which the Christian must now walk is as “*a new creation*” in Christ (see Galatians 6:15-16). **A life lived in Christ is the foundation of the New Covenant.** This is a most beautiful and liberating concept which, once grasped, can never be forgotten or taken away.

Examples of the New Covenant ‘Exodus Principle’

Let us appreciate this fact now with some concrete examples of the New Covenant ‘Exodus Principle’ in practice – our rule of life being governed by our having been made a new creation in Christ through all that He has done for us, in dying for us and redeeming us and, ultimately glorifying us:

- We abstain from sexual immorality because we were bought at a price. A rule of life governed by our deliverance in Christ.
☒ Example: “*Flee sexual immorality. Every sin that a man does is outside the body, but he who commits sexual immorality sins against his own body. Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God’s*” (1 Corinthians 6:18-20; cf. Ephesians 5:2-3).
- We must be prepared to lay down our lives for our brethren because Christ laid down His life for us. A rule of life governed by our deliverance in Christ.
☒ Example: “*By this we know what love is: Jesus laid down His life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers*” (1 John 3:16).
- The requirement for our forgiveness towards one another is absolutely rooted in our deliverance in Christ.
☒ Example: “*...forgiving one another...even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do*” (Colossians 3:13; cf. Ephesians 4:32).

- We are to humble ourselves as servants of our brethren because Christ humbled Himself for us and delivered us through the Cross – that ‘Exodus Principle’ again.

Example: “*...in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others. Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus...who made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a servant...became obedient to death, even the death of the Cross*” (Philippians 2:3-8).
- We are always to please the brethren (Romans 15:1-3). Why? Because Christ did not please Himself, but, as it is written: “*The insults of those who insult You have fallen on Me*”.
- We are to comfort one another. Why? Because Christ has given us immeasurable comfort by giving Himself for us and obtaining our deliverance (1 Thessalonians 5:9-11).
- We are to love one another, as Christ has loved us.

Example #1 : “*A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, as I have loved you, that you also love one another*” (John 13:34). Example #2: “*Walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma. But fornication and all uncleanness or covetousness, let it not even be named among you, as is fitting for saints*” (Ephesians 5:1-3ff).
- Husbands must love their wives “*just as Christ also loved the Church and gave Himself for it*” (Ephesians 5:25). Another rule of life for the married male believer.
- When Paul says: “*Bear one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ*” (Galatians 6:2), this surely has its roots in Isaiah 53:4: “*He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows*”. If He has borne all the griefs, sorrows, and sins of the saints, we also must bear those of one another.

All these examples – and I could cite many more – clearly show that our ethics are governed by our deliverance in Christ. That ‘Exodus Principle’ again. Wherever one turns in the New Testament, it is not the Sinaitic Lawcode which is put forward as being ‘binding’ on the Christian but a new creation in Christ (Galatians 6:14) whose love for us constrains us. **He is our all in all!**

The Rule of Life for the Disciple of Christ is Christ!

The Law of Christ is the fulfillment of the Law of God in all its parts and expressions: It is the Law of Love. Just as the ethical requirements of the Israelites were rooted in their deliverance from Egypt by God, so the ethical requirements of Christians are rooted in their deliverance from the power of Satan by Christ. **Thus, the rule of life for the believer is none other than Christ Himself.** He, alone, is the Light of the world, and whoever follows Him will never walk in darkness (John 8:12). He, alone, is the Good Shepherd and the sheep listen to **His** voice (John 10:14). He, alone, knows them and they follow **Him** (John 10:27). He, alone, is **the Way and the Truth and the Life** (John 14:6). So He does not at all destroy the law but He fulfils it in Himself, exactly as He said He would (Matthew 5:17).

We are, therefore, to be “*looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith*”, and to no other, including Moses. It was “*for the joy that was set before Him*” (namely, for our deliverance) that “*He endured the cross*”. What a constraint on sin and an inducement to holiness that is! “*Therefore we are to lay aside the sin which so easily ensnares us and run with endurance the race that is set before us*” (Hebrews 12:1-2).

In other words, “*sin shall not have dominion over you, For you are not under law but under grace*” (Romans 6:14). We lay aside the sin which ensnares us **because we are constrained by His love for us** (rather than any mere written code) and enabled by the Holy Spirit who He has given to us (rather than the coercive force of the Decalogue). All that we are and that we do has its roots in His love for us, which was demonstrated in His death for us on the cross. “*We love [Him] because He first loved us*” (1 John 4:19). **His loving deliverance of His people is the very fountainhead of their ethics.** The Law of Love is the royal pattern. This is the foundation of the new covenant – a *new exodus*, leading to a *new creation!* It is based on a wholly different relationship to that of the Sinaitic Covenant.

2) The Essence of the New Covenant

If the foundation of the New Covenant is Christ’s death, so the essence of the New Covenant is the law which He constitutes through that death. It is to this law that Christians are covenantally

bound. This is the 'Law of Christ', already alluded to in the previous section of our study.

The New Covenant Law of Christ consists of a new covenantally-based principle which is morally and ethically obligating on a people redeemed by the incarnate Christ. But this does not mean that the Christian has simply been given a new set of regulations — another statute-based lawcode to which he or she must adhere. **Although the Sinaitic Covenant was statute-centred, the New Covenant is Christ-centred.** This Law of Christ, which replaces the regulation-based Law of Moses, has been aptly defined as "*The whole tradition of Jesus' ethical teaching, confirmed by His character and conduct, and reproduced within His people by the power of the Spirit*".¹⁴ A further elaboration defines the Law of Christ as

"Prescriptive principles stemming from the heart of the gospel (usually embodied in the example and teachings of Jesus), which are meant to be applied to specific situations by the direction and enablement of the Holy Spirit, being always motivated and conditioned by love".¹⁵

Although Christ fulfilled the requirements of the Mosaic Law in His life (John 8:29,55; 14:31; 17:4) and death (Galatians 3:13), and thereby annulled its legal force, He did not destroy it insofar as its true intentions were concerned. In fact He came to fulfil that, to bring it to fruition in Himself (Matthew 5:17). Part of that fulfilment (and herein lies the continuity in the Covenants) means that **all that was essential and permanently useful in the Mosaic Law under the Old Covenant has now been incorporated into the more glorious Law of Christ under the New Covenant.** In other words, all the elements of God's perpetual, moral law which were embodied in the Sinaitic Lawcode — which, in any case, were written on man's heart at creation and should still be understood

¹⁴ F.F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Galatians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, (Paternoster, 1982), p.261.

¹⁵ R.N. Longenecker, *New Testament Social Ethics for Today*, (Eerdmans, 1984), p.15.

by the natural man through the light of nature (Romans 2:14-15) – are taken up into the essential principles of the New Covenant. One can see this explicitly borne out in a number of New Testament Scriptures (e.g., Acts 15:28ff; Matthew 5:27-37; Ephesians 6:1-3, Matthew 19:18; Romans 13:8-10; 1 Timothy 1:5-8).

An Illustration About which Covenant to Adhere to

As an illustration of this, imagine that you are a member of a local church called “Little Hulton Very Strictly and Particularly Reformed Baptist Church” which decides, by mutual consent, to form itself into a new fellowship called “Little Hulton Community Church”. In the process, a new constitution is drawn up with a number of new principles appropriate to the new situation. However, a number of the elements of the constitution of the former church – being sound principles – are brought over into what is otherwise a wholly new constitution. Now, if you wanted to raise a point of order at a meeting, you would not refer to the old constitution, even if the point to which you were appealing was one of the parts brought into the new one from that old constitution. Naturally, you would appeal to the new for your principles *because it is the current constitution*. So it is with the Old and New Law-Covenants of Scripture. **That which is perpetual, moral law in the Old Covenant has been brought into the New Covenant in Christ, and it is to the New Covenant in Christ that we turn to discover that which is morally and ethically obligating for us.**

No Place for Antinomianism in the New Covenant

Thus, I can emphatically affirm that there is no possibility of loose or wanton living for the faithful believer living a New Covenant life in the leading of Spirit, even if he or she does not regard the Ten Commandments as a legally binding body of law for the Christian today. This may come as a surprise for many people. But the fact that Paul can legitimately assert (as can all believers), “*All things are lawful for me*” (1 Corinthians 6:12), is not indicative that it is lawful for him to sin.

I cannot over-emphasise the fact that whatever elements there were of the Mosaic covenantally-based law which contained any of the eternal, unchanging moral law of God, these have now been taken

up into the essence of the New Covenant as part of the believer's rule of life today. **It is for this reason that the desperate, "straw-man" characterization of this paper's position on the law as being 'antinomian' (lawless) is both scurrilous and utterly unfounded, not to mention offensive to the Holy Spirit who applies the New Covenant to believers.**

All Christians are "*in-lawed*" to God in Christ (1 Corinthians 9:21). The fact that the Sinaitic Lawcode, as prescribed for the nation Israel, has been done away with as a legislative canon does not mean that God's moral law has been abolished. **On the contrary: The revelation of God's law comes to its substantial fruition in the New Covenant in Christ, rather than remaining wrapped up in the types, shadows, and pedagogic statutes of the Old Covenant.** As the apostle plainly says: "*Do we then make void the law through faith? Certainly not! On the contrary, we establish the law*" (Romans 3:31; cf. Matthew 5:17). **Far from being abolished in the New Covenant, the essence of the law of God actually comes into its fullness in the covenant of Christ with believers.** As Peter Rideman (1503-1556) writes:

"Therefore, the law, insofar as it is spiritual, is not made void, but its true spiritual nature is established and ordained and it is led to true fulfilment and perfection in accordance with God's will by the Spirit of Christ (Romans 7:14-16). Therefore it is only the law as summed up in writing...which is done away with by Christ (Ephesians 2:8-16), because the letter killeth; for Christ hath given us His Spirit, who performeth within us all that God willeth with joy, and not from the coercion and force of the commandment (2 Corinthians 3:6-9). Thus, we are no more **under** the law, and yet we are **not without** God's law".¹⁶ [Emphasis added]

¹⁶ Peter Rideman, *Confession of Faith: An Account of our Religion, Doctrine and Faith*, (Plough Publishing, 1970; first published in 1545), p.66.

That is the true extent of the believer's position in relation to the law of God. One is not under any part of the law of Moses as a *written code*; **but neither is one in any sense lawless**. In fact, one is involved in a far more glorious covenant to God than the Sinaitic Covenant ever was. This is a dynamic arrangement which binds the believer wholly to the Law of Christ as expressed in the New Covenant Scriptures, the New Testament.

In other words, **the essence of the Law of Christ is the revelation of the Law of God for the post-Resurrection of Christ people of God; and it is based on the knowledge of the work that Christ has accomplished for them in His life, death, and resurrection**. Just how this works itself out in the day-to-day life of the believer, we will now explore in the next section.

3) The Characteristics of the New Covenant

Just as there were certain characteristics of the Sinaitic Covenant which demonstrated its distinctive place and purpose in the redemptive plan of God, so there are manifest qualities of the New Covenant between the Lord and His people — the knowledge of which will bring us into an intimate understanding of the movement of progressive revelation.

The prophet Jeremiah, under direct revelation from the Lord, made it clear that the conditions of the New Covenant in Christ would be radically different from those of the Sinaitic Covenant (see Jeremiah 31:31-34). Instead of the revelation of God's Law consisting of an externally enforceable written code, it would now actually be placed within the very spirit of those who came under the jurisdiction of the New Covenant — i.e. believers in, and disciples of, the Lord Jesus Christ. This would mean the advent of a completely new law and an entirely new form of covenantal administration. Let us now look into these.

The first of the two main characteristics of the New Covenant between Christ and His disciples is

i. The New Law of Love

The Lord Jesus Christ did not merely bring about an intensification of the Old Covenant lawcode, as many appear to believe — which is just a cop-out so as to cling to that old written code. The

establishing of a new covenant necessarily involves a new law to replace the old one (cf. Hebrews 7:12). This new law was revealed by the Lord Jesus Christ at the last supper shortly before He went to the Cross. After washing the disciples' feet, He said to them:

“So if I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another’s feet. I have set you an example so that you should do as I have done for you... A new commandment I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you also must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are My disciples, if you love one another” (John 13:14-15, 34-35).

The commandment to love was not initiated here by the Lord Jesus; for even the Sinaitic Lawcode commanded the Israelite to love his neighbour (Leviticus 19:18). But the new element here was **the historical reference point of that love**. Whereas the historical reference point of the Old Covenant was the deliverance out of Egypt of the Children of Israel, out of the hand of Pharaoh by the mighty hand of God, in the New Covenant it is the deliverance of His people out of the dominion of Satan in the wilderness of this world by the sacrificial death of the Lord Jesus Christ on the Cross. *“As I have loved you... you also love one another”*. It is this law-context of the New Covenant which sets it apart from the Mosaic Covenant. As one writer astutely observes:

“Moses could not command this kind of love, and therefore his law is totally inadequate, now that the new (and final) manifestation of love has been given in the Christ event”.¹⁷

As an illustration of this inadequacy, **Moses only commanded Israel to love his neighbour; but Jesus commands believers to love their enemies too** (Matthew 5:43-48)! That is progression: The progression in the Divine revelation of the true meaning, depth and intensity of love. **Those born under the Law of Moses were**

¹⁷ Robert D. Brinsmead, *Verdict*, October 1981, article entitled “*Jesus and the Law*”, p.19.

controlled, like children or slaves, by mere external regulations; but disciples of Christ in the New Covenant are constrained by their relationship of love with their Redeemer Christ, (2 Corinthians 5:14) and the leading of the indwelling Holy Spirit (Galatians 5:18; Romans 8:2). Whereas under the Sinaitic Covenant the Law came with threats of death (and promises of **earthly** life), the Law of Christ in the New Covenant is founded on the innate principle of love (and the promise of **eternal** life). In other words, whereas the Sinaitic Law said "*Do this, or else die...*", the Law of the Lord Jesus says, "*Just as I have loved you, so you must love others*" (cf. John 13:34-35). **The love of Christ constrains us by appealing through the Divine principle of love rather than any statute-based coercion.** Christ's love for His people involved great sacrifice, even unto death, embracing forgiveness, long-suffering, burden-bearing, comfort, peacemaking and, thereby, the profoundest love — all of which, as we have already seen, are foundation-stones, blueprints, and starting-points for our code of ethics and moral behaviour in the world as His disciples.

This Has Nothing Whatsoever to Do with Hippie Love 'n Peace

The Spirit-indwelt Christian believer does not need death-threatening externally-enforced regulations to keep him on the King's Highway, **for he has a powerful Spirit-implanted appetite for truth and ethical integrity — a newly imbued capacity to act with faith working through love which comes to him or her naturally, out of the heart** (see 1 Thessalonians 4:9; Galatians 5:6). This biblical fact, which is the crucial foundation of a life in Christ in the Spirit, is much overlooked in the Christian scene today and is even bitterly scoffed at by those of a more statute-based persuasion as being akin to the "*love 'n peace*" formula of the hippie which was so prevalent in the 1960s.¹⁸ But these brethren appear to misconstrue the teaching of Christ and Paul and thereby turn away from the very foundation of the New Covenant ethos. In Paul's day, too, there were those who desired to be teachers of the Law, but who did not really understand the things that they were saying

¹⁸ See, as an example of this, the *Banner of Truth Magazine*, article by E. Reisinger, Issue No.313, October 1989, pp.24-27.

(1 Timothy 1:7). For God's law has a perpetual purpose; and it is this: "*The purpose of the commandment is love from a pure heart, from a good conscience and from unhypocritical faith*" (1 Timothy 1:5). **These arresting words were not spoken by a hippie, but by a Holy Spirit inspired Apostle of Jesus Christ.**

One certainly does not want to emulate the 1960s hippie, who merely sloganizes an ethereal, idealistic "*love 'n peace*" (which never works out in practice, as the present writer, a former hippie, can testify!). But the qualities of "love" and "peace" which characterize the true Christian are very different from those of the hippie, for they are naturally effected in him as the "*fruit of the Spirit*" (Galatians 5:22). **When we fully realise that in the New Covenant, Christ Himself, through the ministry of the Holy Spirit, takes the place that the Sinaitic lawcode occupied in the Old Covenant, we will understand why the law which Christ has come to establish cannot consist in a written set of legal statutes.** It is so sad that people should be afraid of this simple Law of Love which Christ came to deliver, and in which redemptive history has its fulfillment. Apparently, such alarm is not new:

"This insistence on the Law of Love, instead of prudential rules and regulations, was felt by many of Paul's Christian contemporaries to come unrealistically near to encouraging moral indifferentism; and many Christians since his day have shared their sentiments. But, unlike Paul's contemporary critics, Christian moralists since Paul's day have tended to hold that, in insisting on prudential rules and regulations, they are following the implications of his teaching, if not his express judgements. But we should appreciate that Paul conforms no more to the conventions of religious people today than he conformed to the conventions of religious people around AD 50; so it is best to let Paul be Paul. And when we do that, we shall recognise in him the supreme libertarian, the great herald of Christian freedom, insisting that man has reached his spiritual majority and must no longer be confined to the

leading-strings of infancy but enjoy the birthright of the freeborn sons of God".¹⁹

The Movement from Infancy to Maturity, Servitude to Sonship

So believers are under the Law of Love, founded in the love of Jesus Christ for them, rather than a written code of rules and regulations. Nothing to do with being a hippie but everything to do with being led by the Spirit. This movement from infancy to maturity – from servitude to sonship – is radiantly set forth by Paul in Galatians 3:21 – 4:7 (please read it). **From the context of this passage, it is clear that the vital element in the possession of this birthright of freeborn sons of God, which believers enjoy in the New Covenant, is the wholly and permanently indwelling ministry of the Holy Spirit – a benefit which was not enjoyed by those living under the Old Covenant.** This new covenantal administration we shall now examine under the second of our New Covenant characteristics.

ii. The New Administration of the Holy Spirit

Just as a new law was given, so there also had to be a new administration of that law – a new way of securing its manifestation among the Lord's people. **Whereas the administration of the law was provided by an enforceable written code in the Old Covenant, in the New Covenant this is carried out by the ministry of the indwelling Holy Spirit.** Although the Spirit of God had, from time to time, "*come upon*" those living under the Old Covenant in order to empower them for special service to God (e.g. Exodus 31:1-5; Numbers 11:17, 25-29; Judges 3:10; 1 Samuel 16:13-14; 2 Chronicles 15:1; Ezekiel 11:5; etc.), the indwelling Holy Spirit had not yet been given to God's people in His fullness (John 7:37-39). But when the Lord's people came into maturity in the New Covenant, and thereby into their birthright as sons of God, the holy Spirit was given as a "deposit" or "downpayment", "the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory" (Ephesians 1:14).

¹⁹ F.F. Bruce, *Paul: Apostle of the Free Spirit*, (Eerdmans, 1980), p.202.

The Progressive Sanctification of the Believer (Adult Style)

It would, therefore, be pertinent here to discuss the relevance of the Holy Spirit in terms of the Christian's relationship to the law and his being under the New Covenant. The great change under this New Covenant in Christ, in respect of the believer's relationship to the Law of God, is that our Lord no longer treats us as children and servants but as heirs and even as friends (Galatians 3:23 – 4:7; John 15:15). We are, as Paul says, "*in-lawed to Christ*" (1 Corinthians 9:21) – a vivid witness to the intimacy of our relationship with Him (cf. again Jeremiah 31:33-34).

The progressive sanctification of the believer, therefore, involves an ongoing **adult** interaction with the Spirit of Christ, through which he works out his own salvation with fear and trembling but always in loving obedience to the One who has redeemed him (Philippians 2:12, 13). The believer is actually a "work-in-progress" under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, rather than under the compulsion of the Mosaic Law. "*If you are led by the Spirit you are not under the Law*" (Galatians 5:18; cf. 2 Corinthians 3:2-8) – for justification **or** for **sanctification** (cf. Romans 6:14). You had better believe that, for your Christian life depends on it!

The Holy Spirit was given to the Church on the Day of Pentecost. The symbolic significance of this should be seen in the fact that Pentecost (the Feast of Weeks) was actually a Jewish festival reaffirming the Sinaiitic Covenant (Exodus 34:10,22) and commemorating the giving of the Law on Mount Sinai (Deuteronomy 16:9-12).²⁰ **We see here that the Holy Spirit, given to the Church at Pentecost in Jerusalem, was a replacement for the Law given to Israel on Sinai.** Yes, that's right! It's another beautiful kind of 'replacement theology'! If you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the Law (Galatians 5:18). Do I have to keep saying this? For it is as simple as that. The one replaces the other in its entirety (Romans 8:2; 2 Corinthians 3:17; Galatians 5:1). That, again, is the significance of the passage in 2 Corinthians 3:3-11, in

²⁰ See F.L. Cross & E.A. Livingstone, *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, (Oxford University Press, 1983), p.1062.

which Paul says that the Decalogue has been replaced by the more glorious ministry of the Spirit, which is the heart of the New Covenant in Christ.

Even Jesus' Disciples Needed Persuasion to Change

The title of this study, "*From Servitude to Sonship*", precisely sums up the transition which takes place in the believer's relationship to his Lord and Master, as a result of the progression from the Old Covenant to the New. Yet, it is a transition which many resist. Even the Lord Jesus' disciples had to be persuaded to accept the new order of things.

"The next day at about the sixth hour, as the men were approaching the city on their journey, Peter went up on the roof to pray. He became hungry and wanted something to eat, but while the meal was being prepared, he fell into a trance. He saw heaven open and something like a large sheet being let down to earth by its four corners. It contained all kinds of four-footed animals and reptiles of the earth, as well as birds of the air. Then a voice said to him: 'Get up, Peter, kill and eat!' 'No, Lord!' Peter answered. 'I have never eaten anything impure or unclean'. The voice spoke to him a second time: 'Do not call anything impure that God has made clean'" (Acts 10:9-15).

Peter was being shown very clearly that the body of Old Covenant law relating to 'unclean food' restrictions had been lifted in the New Covenant, and there would be no more division with the Gentiles who had also previously been regarded as unclean (see Acts 10:27-28). **So, yes, to all those who keep asking me about it, you are free to eat pork if you so wish. No constraints one way or the other.** Choose your food, free from condemnation. Anyone who condemns is resisting the Divine will. This covenantal change had already been foreshadowed by the Lord Jesus during His earthly ministry when He expounded in a revolutionary manner (which must have caused the Pharisees to suffer apoplexy!) on what it really is that defiles a person:

"Once again Jesus called the crowd to Him and said, 'All of you, listen to Me and understand: Nothing that enters a man from the outside can defile him; but the things that come out of a man, these are what defile him'. After Jesus had left the crowd and gone into the house, His disciples inquired about the parable. 'Are you still so dull?' He asked. 'Do you not understand? Nothing that enters a man from the outside can defile him, because it does not enter his heart, but it goes into the stomach and then is eliminated' (Thus all foods are clean.)" (Mark 7:14-19).

As if to emphasise the obvious for those who were still "dull", and bring home to them the clear inference of the Lord Jesus' teaching here, you can see that Mark helpfully added the parenthetical comment "*Thus all foods are clean*" (end of verse 19). How much clearer could it be? The resistance by the apostles at that early stage of this age is understandable; though it has to be said that when they were shown by God that it had happened, they accepted it. Now, two thousand years later, there can be no excuse for believers to deny such a covenantal change while continuing to create a sort of hybrid covenant consisting of old and new according to their own desires.

A Satanic Attack on New Covenant Christians

Yet, the so-called 'Hebrew Roots Movement' (also oxymoronically known as 'Torah-Observant Christianity') and all the other Judaizers still insist on imposing the Old Covenant on disciples of Christ. I cannot possibly see this as anything other than a satanic attack on New Covenant Christians. Every day I see professing Christians on social media insisting that it is unlawful to eat pork or wear linen and wool together, while decrying those who do so as being disobedient or heretical, "because it's in the Bible". It has now become very trendy for untaught people to latch on to these movements which are based on a very superficial and selective reading of Scripture texts. This is part of the dumbing-down of so many professing 'Christians', which must be resisted and exposed at all costs.

The Two Falsely Perceived Options

So, why the huge resistance to the changes from Old Covenant to New, whether it is the ‘Hebrew Roots’ Judaizers or those who have made an idol out of the Reformation and its confessions? A great problem is that many of those who profess to be ‘Christians’ can (falsely) perceive of ethics as being rooted in only one of two options: **1)** A lifestyle governed solely by written regulations or, **2)** A lifestyle of hedonistic debauchery. For them, there is no third way. **That is why those who hold the view that all of the Sinaitic Covenant statutes have been fulfilled in Christ and are therefore no longer applicable to the Christian (as in the present paper), will be slanderously derided as “antinomians” by those who are too afraid to live a life wholly in the Spirit.**

Because of the general nomistic adherence to the “regulative principles” of the Old Covenant in certain Christian circles, the shaping of moral behaviour under the New Covenant has come to be perceived by them as operating in the same way as the administration of the Sinaitic Law statutes (the so-called ceremonial laws excepted, of course!). For it is generally assumed by them that in the absence of an externally imposed codified set of regulations, a person will start to behave in a debauched, degenerate manner.

The Third Option

In the secular world, it is generally true that the complete withdrawal of an externally imposed codified set of regulations would lead to chaos and licentiousness. However, although that is the case with the unbelieving world, it is not the case at all with those who are genuinely the Lord’s people under the New Covenant. For, quite apart from the two above-mentioned options of either ‘statutes’ or ‘licentiousness’ (which represent a false “either-or” situation for the Christian), there is, as Prof. Richard Longenecker rightly points out, another way of life altogether which is completely transformative,

“a third way of life that is distinct from both nomism and libertinism... [It is] not one that takes a middle course between the two, as many try to do in working

out a Christian lifestyle on their own... The antidote to license in the Christian life is not laws, as the Judaizers argued, but openness to the Spirit and being guided by the Spirit. **For being 'in Christ' means neither nomism nor libertinism, but a new quality of life based in and directed by the Spirit**.²¹ [Emphasis added]

Unless this fact is grasped, one is missing out on a vitally important part of the Christian life. Perhaps we can now understand why the apostle contrasts being "*under the law*" with being '*led by the Spirit*' (Galatians 5:18). The one lifestyle replaces the other in the New Covenant. The option in the Christian life is not between governance by external regulations on the one hand or licentious behaviour on the other. **For these are both false options.** The only real option is living wholly in the Spirit and placing yourself under His loving guidance while being "*in-lawed*" to Christ. This has nothing whatsoever to do with being a Charismatic, whose wacky idea of being "*led by the Spirit*" has more in common with the occult than with the Bible.²²

Although the power of the Holy Spirit is irresistible in terms of regeneration (John 3:8), His effects can easily be quenched in terms of the lifelong process of Christian sanctification (1 Thessalonians 5:19). He responds very much to the overtures and petitions of the believer, who often does not have what s/he needs because s/he does not ask (James 4:2b). Invite Him to lead you into all truth! Plead with Him to testify to you of Christ! Appeal to Him to enable you to exercise your faith so that it works through love!

A Righteousness Exceeding that of the Pharisees

This is the context in which Jesus said that His disciples must have a righteousness that exceeds that of the Pharisees (Matthew 5:20).

²¹ R.N. Longenecker, *Word Biblical Commentary*, Vol. 41, Galatians, (Word Books, 1990), p.246.

²² Please see my free-to-download book, "[Signs, Wonders and Divine Revelation](#)", for full details of the ways in which the Charismatic Movement has slandered the Holy Spirit and twisted Scriptures to its own ends by emulating occult/New Age practices.

The Pharisees adhered rigidly to a legalistic and nomistic (i.e., statute-based) lifestyle, but they ignored the real issues which have always been at the spiritual heart of the law such as justice, mercy, faithfulness and love (Matthew 23:23). The Christian disciple has the indwelling Spirit of God as the “engine” influencing all his or her ethical and moral behaviour, and s/he knows that the law is not fulfilled through a statute-based “checklist morality” but through faithfulness, love and discipleship to Christ. **When you, as true Christians, cease to live a statute-based life, you will find that you are led by the Holy Spirit (Galatians 5:18).**

The Law is Written on the Hearts of Believers

This is also what is meant in the Jeremiah New Covenant oracle when the Lord prophesied that this New Covenant would not be remotely like the Old (i.e., statute-based coercion), but that under this New Covenant the Lord’s people would not need a coercive lawcode commanding them to “know God”, for they would all know Him from the least to the greatest (see Jeremiah 31:31-34). In fact, far from needing an external code of statutes and regulations written on tablets of stone, they would actually have the Law **written on their hearts**. As the 19th century Presbyterian expositor, John Brown of Edinburgh, puts it in his excellent commentary:

“They who are led by the Spirit spontaneously — by ‘a law written on their hearts’ — follow that course which God approves and have no need of the pedagogy of the law from which the church has been delivered”.²³

Therefore, those teachers who tell believers that the laws of the Old Covenant are their rule of life today — whichever hybrid or combinations of laws they advocate — are, in spite of their good intentions, actually misleading them into adhering to a covenant lawcode designed by God for an earlier era of spiritual immaturity, thereby depriving them of a life in the fullness of the Spirit. In a rebuttal of this retrogressive stance, Prof. E.D. Burton writes:

²³ John Brown, *An Exposition of the Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Galatians*, (Klock & Klock, 1981), p.298. This is a wonderful work!

"Clearly, therefore, life by the Spirit constitutes for the apostle a third way of life distinct both on the one hand from legalism and on the other from that which is characterised by a yielding to the impulses of the flesh. It is by no means a middle course between them, but **a highway above them both**, a life of freedom from statutes, of faith and love".²⁴ [Emphasis added]

Freedom from statutes; a life of faith and love: that is the essence of the Christian life — walking in the Spirit, in-lawed to Christ. This is why the apostle Paul, when admonishing the Corinthians to avoid fornication, does not appeal to the statutes of the Mosaic Law in order to rebuke them, but rather argues on the basis that their bodies belong to Christ and constitute the temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 6:12-20). He rightly argues covenantally. In other words, **he draws their attention to the Person of Christ as their rule of life rather than the Torah of ancient Israel.**

The morality of the Old Covenant consisted of enforceable statutes written by God on stone. Whereas the morality of the New Covenant is written on the hearts of all true disciples of Christ by the Holy Spirit. They instinctively know how to behave and so long as they conduct their lives in the Spirit and do not give Satan any kind of foothold in their lives (Ephesians 4:27), they will do what is right. "*Walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh... if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law*" (Galatians 5:16,18). **Right there is the crucial difference between the Old Covenant and the New. If only those who profess to be Christians would live this out, then they would truly be "a new creation" rather than something in-between the old and the new.**

Many Believers are Afraid to Live a Life in the Spirit

For some reason, many people find it scary not being under a pile of written regulations. Thus, many believers are afraid to live a non-statute-based lifestyle under the power of the Holy Spirit. It is as if they need a checklist to make sure they have got it right. But

²⁴ Ernest De Witt Burton, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Paul's Epistle to the Galatians*, (T. & T. Clark, 1921), p.302.

they utterly underestimate what it means to be “in-lawed” to Christ with the indwelling Holy Spirit. For them, living in the Spirit seems very fearful or even ‘hippyish’. However, it involves faith, work, and the mature exercising of personal responsibility. In contrast with this, living a statute-based lifestyle — despite the fact that it involves, e.g., the needless, burden-bearing struggle of Sabbath-keeping, etc. — is actually a lazy option, which is far less rewarding because it is an incomplete foundation for a full-orbed morality.

Instead of all those written regulations, we who are Christ’s disciples have the Holy Spirit leading us, if we will place our trust in Him. The reality is that people are afraid to conduct their lives wholly according to the Spirit. One can understand the reason for this: For a lifestyle which is led by the Spirit runs entirely counter to that of the world. But the Christian is exhorted to refrain from being governed by the same principles as the world (c.f. Romans 12:2; Revelation 18:4). *“Those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit”* (Romans 8:5). Christians are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in them (see Romans 8:1-11). It is not, therefore, to the written Law that Christians should turn for their moral instruction but to the Holy Spirit. As E.F. Scott puts it:

“As contrasted with all morbid types of belief, the gospel is healthy... Law is a sort of medicine, only to be applied where the moral nature is diseased [1 Timothy 1:8-10]; Christian teaching is a healthy food for healthy people, a means of joy, freedom, larger activity”.²⁵

Being ‘Led by the Spirit’ is not at all Mysticism or ‘Enthusiasm’

The cry will be raised by some, at this point, that I am advocating a woolly form of mysticism, involving a nebulous lifestyle governed by inner voices, dreams, visions, hunches, and intuitions. **Having written very much against such a lifestyle, I believe that making such a subjective mystical lifestyle one’s norm would be even less desirable than living by any objective written code!** This kind

²⁵ E.F. Scott, *The Pastoral Epistles*, (Harper, 1936), p.10.

of “enthusiasm” is a dangerous perversion and also a complete caricature of true New Testament guidance.²⁶ **A lifestyle which seeks to operate outside any servitude to statutes and instead to walk in the Spirit, must still be governed at all times by the authority of the Word of God and a sense of order.** God still reveals His will through His written revelation. When the apostle calls believers to “*live in the Spirit*”, he is not calling them to live the life of a Mystic or Charismatic. “Walking by the Spirit” has nothing to do with love ‘n peace ‘hippiedom’ or the typical lifestyle of the Charismatic with the hypnotic arm-waving, speaking in pseudo-tongues, indulging in phony words of knowledge, false prophecies, psychosomatic ‘faith-healing’, and so on. **That is merely a hideous caricature of what it means to be “led by the Spirit”.** Being led by the Spirit intuitively involves a courageous, uncompromising, Christ-centred, ethical way of life in which one works out one’s own salvation with fear and trembling, confident that it is God who is in the driving seat and that apart from Christ one can do nothing of any spiritual significance (John 15:5).

The reason that living in the Spirit actually means living a more Christ-centred life is because the Spirit specifically “*testifies of [Christ]*” (John 15:26), through which the ministry and example of the Lord Jesus Christ becomes the focal point of the believer and the source behind all his thinking and activities. **It is His love for us which secures our salvation, our gratitude for that love which compels us to “live devoutly in Christ Jesus”, and the Holy Spirit who seals that work within us.**

The ‘Eschatological Tension’ of Being a New Creation in the Midst of a Fallen Creation

Perhaps we can now understand the context in which the apostle Paul asserts that the Christian is to “*work out his own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure*” (Philippians 2:12-13). **When you live a Christ-**

²⁶ “Enthusiasm” was the name given in earlier times to those who exhibited “extravagant or unbalanced religious fervour” or “prophetic frenzy”, such as many in the Pentecostal-Charismatic movement.

centred, Spirit-inspired lifestyle free from all coercive written statutes, you are engaged in a dynamic, “hands-on”, lifelong, maturing, ethical learning experience which you would never know through mere obedience to rules and regulations. As F.F. Bruce puts it:

“Walking by the Spirit, the antidote to nomism of every kind, calls for resolution and staying power, as is made plain by Paul’s frequent use of athletic metaphor for the Christian life. The struggle between flesh and Spirit is bound up with that ‘eschatological tension’ – arising from belief in Jesus’ resurrection as an event of the past and the experience of the Spirit as already given – with which Christians are compelled to live so long as they exist on earth in mortal bodies”.²⁷

An important point arises here: For some readers may say that if we are not under any kind of statute-based lawcode, then why does the New Testament present us with moral and ethical exhortations? **The reason for this is that, in spite of the fact that we are led by the Spirit rather than living under a written code of law, we have not yet reached the fullness of perfection – a state which awaits the return of the Lord (1 John 3:2).** The kingdom of God has come in grace, but it has not yet come in the fullness of glory. From a purely anthropological standpoint, we are still “*in the flesh*” – although in spiritual terms this is not the case at all (Romans 8:9a). There is a “not-yetness” as well as an “alreadyness” to the coming of the kingdom. We are, indeed, the sons of God, but “*we still groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body*” (Romans 8:23). Consequently, although “*those who are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires*” – in that their “*old man*” was crucified with Christ (Galatians 5:24; cf. Romans 6:6) – they are still exhorted to “*put to death the deeds of the body*” (Romans 8:13) and to “*put off the old self*” (Ephesians 4:22). That is the tension right there.

²⁷ F.F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Galatians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, (Paternoster, 1982), p.246.

Because there remains a possibility — this side of the New Heavens and the New Earth — that the immature, tempted Christian may use his or her liberty *“as an opportunity for the flesh”* (Galatians 5:13), we are given these exhortations, and many others, in the New Testament. This does not present us with a new pedagogical set of written statutes to replace the old. Neither does it represent a contradiction in the Christian life. It is all a part of the *“eschatological tension”* referred to above by Prof. Bruce. For these exhortations are not pedagogical but are always a pastoral reminder of our love relationship with Christ, and that it is not by the law that we *“put to death the deeds of the body”*, but *“by the Spirit”* (Romans 8:13). **It is not through the law but through the enabling ministry of the Holy Spirit that one is empowered to deal with one’s sin in the New Covenant — a privilege which was never enjoyed by even the most righteous believer living under the Old Covenant, who had to rely instead on obedience to a written code.**

The Law of Christ in the New Covenant, the Law of Love, is administered by Christ’s love-gift to his church: the Holy Spirit. These are the primary characteristics of the blessed New Covenant in Christ.

EPILOGUE

Is the monumental significance of everything that has been said in this paper beginning to shine its light into your mind? There is something utterly galvanizing in all this which, once grasped, will have a totally transforming effect on one's Christian walk and mindset. It is, in fact, life-changing. For we can then truly begin to live a life in the Spirit and grow into a deepening relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ. The entire body of the Sinaitic Covenant legislation has found its fulfilment in Christ. He has taken away all that "*handwriting*" which was against us (Colossians 2:14-15). The tablets of stone have been replaced by the more glorious life in the Spirit who writes the Law of God on our hearts. For the letter kills but the Spirit gives life (2 Corinthians 3:6-8). The Lord Jesus Christ is the fruition of all the types, symbols, and shadows. **He gives us a new commandment (John 13:34-35).**

To Magnify Old Covenant Law is Ironically a Form of Disobedience

The **real** law which lay behind the Sinaitic Lawcode has not changed in the New Covenant (2 John 5). Love has always been the true aim and fulfillment of God's Law (Romans 13:10). **For it is love that fathers obedience, whereas bare obedience can never breed unfeigned love.** Indeed, the love at the heart of God's Law now has the opportunity to flower in a manner hitherto unknown; because it is the relationship which has changed. The relationship under the Old Covenant was between the Israelite and the Lord, who had revealed Himself as their Redeemer out of Egypt, the house of bondage. The relationship under the New Covenant is between believers and their Saviour Christ through the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit (Romans 8:1-8). **If we constantly refer back to the Old Covenant for our rule of life, this actually undermines the final authority of Christ in our lives, whom we should now be hearing authoritatively (please see Deuteronomy 18:18-19; Luke 9:35-36; Hebrews 1:1-2).** The undermining of such authority is no small matter. Ironically, it actually constitutes disobedience.

By returning to the Sinaitic Lawcode for our ethics we are neutralising the benefits of the indwelling Holy Spirit to which

believers in this Gospel Age are privy. If you place yourself under Moses, you are not submitting to the leading of the Holy Spirit (Galatians 5:18; Romans 8:14-18) but are instead putting yourself in bondage to “*the basic principles of this world*” (Galatians 4:3). It is a solemn fact that through keeping just one part of the Sinaiitic Law one then becomes a debtor to that entire body of Law (Galatians 5:3; 3:10; James 2:10). It is therefore unfortunate that so many today choose to live by the letter of the Law of Moses (the revelation of God’s Law under the Old Covenant), instead of living in the Law of the Spirit of Christ (the revelation of God’s Law under the New Covenant), which is so much better (Hebrews 8:6-13).

Is the Rejection of a Life in the Spirit a Blasphemy Against the Spirit?

Having said all the above, let believers not fall to blows on this vast and important issue! For the New Covenant brings not only an expectation of liberty (John 8:34; Galatians 5:1), but also a unity in the Spirit which can never be manifested outside of the true *Ekklesia* (John 17:20-23; Galatians 3:28). Whatever our standpoint on biblical law, hopefully we all surely desire “*to live devoutly in Christ Jesus*”. Tragically (and ignorantly), it is often claimed in certain circles that if one holds to the view on biblical Law on which I have expounded in this study, then a laxity of morals will inevitably abound. **What a travesty such a claim is, which must surely verge on blasphemy against the Holy Spirit who, in this New Covenant, not only writes the Law on our hearts but also leads us into all truth and glorifies Christ to us, disclosing what is His to us (John 16:13-15)!**

Walking in the Spirit Undermines Those Who Seek to Control You

I have come to the conclusion that the reason why so many pastors and others want to turn back the Covenant-clock and anachronistically put you under a statute-based yoke is so that they can more easily control you. They just do not want a congregation full of free souls who walk in the Spirit, who are mature and maturing all the time, who ardently do the necessary sanctifying work themselves (i.e. work out their own salvation with fear and trembling), “*who belong to Christ Jesus [and] have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires*” (Galatians 5:26), and who know that “*it*

is for freedom that Christ has set us free" and who therefore "stand firm" and ensure that they are not "*encumbered once more by a yoke of slavery*" (Galatians 5:1).

Immature controlling pastors and others do not want free spirits in their congregations. They want only those who submit to a statute-based 'checklist Christianity' and who – being so infantilised – can therefore more easily be under their control. Genuine mature Spirit-filled pastors desire to see a congregation full of Spirit-filled souls who are growing in their war against the works of the flesh through their own walk with the Spirit. **Mature pastors are not threatened by mature congregants who are led by the Spirit.**

Living Wholly in the New Covenant Would Clean Out the Churches!

In the context of walking with the Spirit and not gratifying the desires of the flesh, and being led by the Spirit and therefore not under the Mosaic Law (Galatians 5:16,18), Paul stated that "*the works of the flesh are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity, and debauchery; idolatry and sorcery; hatred, discord, jealousy, and rage; rivalries, divisions, factions, and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like*" (Galatians 5:19-21). Let me ask you a serious question: How many churches do you know that are free from all the above hideous catalogue of woes?

So many of those controlling churches are riddled with the above-stated discord, jealousy, idolatry, rivalries, divisions, factions, orgies, envy and even rage (as I have witnessed on a number of occasions). So many churches practice what amounts to sorcery (Charismatic or 'prosperity theology' churches). Roman Catholic, Anglican and Greek/Eastern Orthodox churches are full of what amount to idols (Mariolatry, transubstantiation, statues, icons of revered 'saints', etc.). As for debauchery and sexual immorality, the establishment denominations are riddled with paedophilia in the priesthood, as has increasingly been exposed in recent years. Monasteries of all denominations are hotbeds of homosexuality. Many charismatic assemblies have practices which amount to orgiastic happenings. A definition of an orgy is "*a frantic unrestrained celebration*". It doesn't have to be sexual, just chaotic. Many churches are full of that orgiastic chaos which

blasphemously masquerades as “the work of the Spirit”. If they truly walked by the real Holy Spirit, consciously bound by the New Covenant in Christ, such works of the flesh would rarely occur and would then be dealt with. The churches would be cleaned out! No wonder judgement begins with the household of God (1 Peter 4:17) when so many parts of it are fleshly rather than spiritual.

We can also see that even a rigid adherence to the Decalogue as a body of Law is no safeguard against libertinism and immorality. Even the Puritans and Reformers were prepared to transgress the Sixth Commandment of the Decalogue and put to death their theological opponents by the sword, or by burning or drowning, purportedly in the cause of Christ, in spite of their position on the Law which was enshrined in their confessions! Such antinomianism should never occur, insofar as the New Covenant Christian is concerned.

The Real Antinomianism

In reality, the *real* antinomianism in the Gospel Age is far more about *practical* lovelessness than about *theoretical* lawlessness (see Galatians 5:6,14-15; 1 Corinthians 13:2,13; Matthew 22:35-40; James 2:17,24-26). Please meditate on that last sentence. For love is the spirit and aim of God’s Law. Under the Sinaitic Covenant, the full weight of the Lord’s earthly judgement on Israel fell on those who did not keep the covenantal sign of the Sabbaths (Ezekiel 20:12-13). Now that the New Covenant has been ratified in history, His eternal judgement will fall on those who do not keep Christ’s covenantal love commandment (Mark 12:30-31; Matthew 25:31-46; 1 John 3:14-15). This is a sobering thought indeed.

Could This Be the Reason There Are So Many Nasty ‘Christians’?

Earlier today, after a worship service, I was in conversation with a pastor’s wife about the fact that there are so many “nasty Christians” in churches, as we had both encountered. I refer to cultishly bullying behaviour which is far nastier than either of us have ever encountered even in non-Christian circles. Many will be shocked to read this, either because they live in a cloistered little bubble or because that nastiness – which mostly takes place

‘behind closed doors’ – is covered up in public with smarmy smiles and a pseudo-pietist image. **Could it be that there are so many nasty, lying, conniving, blustering, unreasonable, manipulative, hypocritical, heartless, hardnosed people in the Christian scene because they are inappropriately and anachronistically stuck in servitude to the Old Covenant rather than in the Divine sonship of the New?** For they know very well how to condemn, but they haven’t got a clue about how to love, either vertically or horizontally (despite their unctuous claims to the contrary). They know very well how to gossip, slander and lie about others, but yet they profess to be lovers of truth. I can assure you that when they read this little treatise those lies, slander and gossip will start and they will think that they are doing God a favour... just like the Pharisees. I and many others have witnessed it all before – many times. One doesn’t really notice it until one is on the receiving end of it. It is just one more thing that is deeply awry in today’s churches.

Doubly Rejoicing in the Lord Always

So let us turn ourselves to a profound and prayerful consideration of what it means to be one of Christ’s brethren and ‘sistren’ in this present age. We have our supreme Sabbath in Him (Hebrews 4:10). He has done all the Law-keeping necessary for us to receive eternal life (Galatians 3:13). **Our purpose is to be “in-lawed” to Him, under His covenant, adopted by God as His children, empowered by His Holy Spirit, and delivered forever from all forms of bondage, with an abhorrence of any works of the flesh.**

Under the Sinaitic Lawcode, the Israelite was commanded to rejoice in the Lord only at certain times of the Hebrew calendar and in certain prescribed situations (e.g., Leviticus 23:40; Deuteronomy 12:7,12,18; 14:26; 16:11, 14-15; 26:11; 27:7). But the Christian living in the New Covenant is **doubly** called to rejoice in the Lord at **all** times and in **all** situations (Philippians 4:4).

If you do not agree with everything that I have said in this little paper, you are free to do so. You can try and live according to the Sinaitic Covenant if you wish, or some hybrid which you have concocted for yourself. I will continue to walk by the Spirit who guides me into all truth and discloses everything about Christ that

I need to know. If you want to argue about all this, I will not do so. I have made my case and I believe after many decades of study and meditation that it is supported from the Scriptures.

Time to Get In-Step with the Spirit

I honestly believe that if you take wholly to heart what is written in this little treatise, you will find it to be extremely liberating. So many of those who profess to be 'Christian' have sadly made themselves unready to receive the truth about the covenants. **I suspect that this is because it involves stepping out of a rule-bound religious childhood into a Spirit-inspired devotional adulthood.** "*Since we live by the Spirit, let us walk in step with the Spirit*" (Galatians 5:25). **That is not as scary as many seem to believe.** We are not at all meant to be infants, which leaves us vulnerable and open to being "*tossed about by the waves and carried around by every wind of teaching and by the clever cunning of men in their deceitful scheming*" (Ephesians 4:14). But we are to be "*transformed by the renewing of our minds*" (Romans 12:2). **That involves liberation from mere statutes and walking in the Spirit.**

If you dig deep, determined to grow in your faith, you will find that "*you have not received a spirit of bondage again to fear, but you have received the Spirit of divine adoption as sons, by whom we cry, 'Abba! Father!'*" (Romans 8:15). It is time to take our place as those adopted offspring — the Spirit of the living God having written God's law on our hearts. We have moved from being merely in servitude to regulations to being in sonship to God in Christ! Ω

© Copyright, Alan Morrison, 2024

[The copyright on my works is merely to protect them from any wanton plagiarism which could result in undesirable changes (as has actually happened!). Readers are free to distribute my work, so long as it is in the same format and with the exact same content and its origin is acknowledged]

Email address: diakrisis-project@outlook.com

Website: <https://diakrisis-project.com>

Please see the next page for a suggested further reading list...

SUGGESTED FURTHER READING

- A.J. Bandstra, *The Law and the Elements of the World*, (Kok, 1964), 290pp.
- John Brown, *An Exposition of the Epistle to the Galatians* (Klock & Klock, 1981), 420pp. This is a tremendous commentary. In common with all Prof. Brown's expository works, it is warm and masterfully organised.
- F.F. Bruce, *Paul: Apostle of the Free Spirit*, (Eerdmans/ Paternoster, 1977), Chapter 18, "What the Law Could not do", pp.108-203.
- E.D. Burton. *Commentary on Galatians*, (T. & T. Clark, 1921), 541pp. A real old classic, crammed with historical and exegetical data, plus many great insights.
- R.N. Longenecker, *Paul, Apostle of Liberty*. (Baker, 1964), 310pp. A brilliant treatment of Paul's doctrine of the Law, A model of good theological writing. Not to be missed.
- R.N. Longenecker, *Galatians*, This is Volume 41 in Word Biblical Commentary, (Word Books, 1990), 323pp. Although "scholarly", this is a warmly evangelical work.
- Albertus Pieters, *The Seed of Abraham*, (Eerdmans, 1963), 243pp. One of the most insightful works on this subject. Read especially pages 26-40 and 115-121.
- G.B. Stevens, *The Theology of the New Testament*, (T. & T. Clark, 1918), Chap.2, "The Gospel and the Law", pp.17-26. Concise, but radical teaching.
- G.B. Stevens, *The Teaching of Jesus*, (Macmillan, 1907), Chap.4, "Jesus' Attitude Toward the Old Testament", pp.47-57. Some relevant, basic pointers.
- *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*, March 1982; Article by Richard N. Longenecker, "The Pedagogical Nature of the Law in Galatians 3:19 - 4:7", pp.53-61. A brilliant exposition of a much misunderstood (and much misused) text.
- *Scottish Journal of Theology*, March 1960; Article by Ragnar Bring, "Preaching the Law", pp.2-38. There are many great insights in this study, which shows clearly that true preaching of the Law means "preaching Christ crucified".
- *Verdict*, October 1981. Great article by Robert D. Brinsmead, "Jesus and the Law".

From Servitude to Sonship

The Law of God and the Covenants

Many Christians become confused about which parts of the Old Testament Mosaic Law are still in force today. Are believers today required to avoid certain foods or clothing materials? Is it mandatory for believers today to keep a weekly Sabbath – either on Saturday or Sunday? Is it right to divide the laws of Moses into moral, ceremonial, and judicial categories? If so, how do we assign them? Is a Christian supposed to keep certain Jewish festivals, avoid certain clothing fabric combinations, wear a Jewish prayer shawl (tallit) or attach fringes (tzitzit) to their clothing, blow a shofar, or give money to the modern secular state of Israel?

This little book is designed to dissolve the confusion which seems to prevail in the church scene due to the large number of legalists, Judaisers and Israel-idolizing impostors who have crept into so many churches during recent decades as part of the apostasy-via-the-back-door strategy maintained by the forces of darkness.

The purpose here, therefore, is to take a few small steps towards identifying the source of the “rule of life” for the disciple of Christ, thus providing us with a biblical basis for Christian ethics in our time, while hopefully dissolving the divisive acrimony and untaught misunderstandings which have prevailed for so long in this vexed subject area.

Alan Morrison is a writer, poet, songwriter, Bible teacher and counsellor. Describing himself as “*a cosmic warrior with nothing left to lose*”, he has been a disciple of Christ for many decades, including several years as a pastor, which gave him a steep learning curve in both his knowledge of the Sacred Texts and the fascinating vagaries of human nature.

