

# The Modified Dispensationalism of Greg Loren Durand Exposed

[Brian Schwertley](#)

## Chapter 1: Durand's Errors

In 2007 this author did a series of lectures on the judicial laws of Israel in which a number of comments from Greg Loren Durand's book and e-mails were criticized as "a modified form of dispensationalism." These criticisms of Loren's teachings on the law have caused great ire on his part and I have been accused of misrepresenting his positions. Mr. Durand has even devoted a section of his website claiming that I have committed a "grievous sin" against him.<sup>1</sup> Since I still regard Durand's views to be outside the pale of Reformed orthodoxy, I would like to lay out some of his ideas and let the reader decide if they indeed are orthodox. After a look at some of his strange heterodox teachings, there will be a section on the abiding validity of the Old Testament moral laws. This section alone refutes his doctrine on the law.

### Durand's Erroneous Understanding of the Second Giving of the Law

One of Durand's strangest teachings is the idea that the second giving of the law was radically different from the first law given to Moses; that as a consequence of their idolatry the second law was "a localized codification of the Covenant of Works." Durand writes,

Paul wrote that the Mosaic law "*was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made*" (verse 19), which was apparently a reference to Israel's making and worshipping of the golden calf during Moses' first sojourn on Mount Sinai (Deuteronomy 9:12). The first covenant which God had made with the children of Israel bound them to observe the moral law written on the stone tablets (Deuteronomy 5:22). God's promise to them was as follows: "*Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation*" (Exodus 19:5-6). However, when the Israelites rebelled and broke this covenant, God placed them under a *second* covenant containing far greater restrictions and obligations—613 in all (Deuteronomy 12-27). It was this second covenant that was temporary and served to "*shut up*" the Hebrew people until the object of the promise—Christ—should be revealed: "*But before faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed. Wherefore*

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<sup>1</sup> After my sermon series on the judicial law, Durand accused me of lying regarding his views, obtained two witnesses (i.e. two poor, deluded fellows who appear to have bought into Durand's unique type of dispensational thought) and brought charges to the session of the church I pastor. Our session was willing to examine his case and asked Durand which church he was a member of, but Durand refused to tell us the name of the church. Durand said he was a member of a church, but was no longer attending that particular and that he was in transition. Given fact that Durand was unwilling to provide any proof that he was a member in good standing of a Bible-believing church, our session refused to take the case. Durand then sent his accusations to all the members of the WPCUS Presbytery. A few members of the Presbytery read all the materials presented and do not think that I misrepresented Durand's views. There is no question that Durand's views are explicitly contrary to the Westminster Standards. In this monograph, I will give lengthy quotes of Durand's position so that he cannot accuse me of misrepresenting his positions or quoting him out of context.

*the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith*  
(verses 23-24).<sup>2</sup>

There are a number of serious problems with this statement. First, Durand interprets Paul's statement in Galatians, "It [the law] was added because of transgressions" (3:19), as meaning a second, more restrictive version of the law was given to Israel as a direct consequence of their worshipping of the golden calf. The implication is that the second giving of the law is a punishment or at least a judgment against Israel for its idolatry. (Durand in an e-mail vigorously denies this, but then quotes in support of his position Johannes Cocceius, who says "the ceremonial law was added to the Decalogue, *as a punishment inflicted on them* by the Supreme Being." Cocceius' view is nonsense.)

Durand's interpretation that the law refers to a second, much more restrictive and *different* law has no support whatsoever from modern expositors. His view should be rejected for the following reasons. First, the plural "transgressions" is used and thus Paul is not referring to one major incident in Israel's history. In fact, this author could not find one Old Testament scholar that believed the second giving of the law was a completely new or different law and covenant. Writing of the second giving of the law in Exodus 34:1 Matthew Poole states, "The words that were in the first tables; to show God's reception of Israel into his favour, and their former state, and that the law and covenant of God was neither abolished nor changed by their sin."<sup>3</sup> John Gill writes, "...the same being written on these tablets, as on the former, shows the unchangeableness of the law of God, as given to the people of Israel, that he would have nothing added to it, or taken from it."<sup>4</sup> Regarding verse 10 Gill writes, "Or renew the covenant before made the people had broke; whish on his part was, that he would, as Moses had entreated, forgive the sin of the people, go along with them, and introduce them into the land of Canaan, and drive out the inhabitants of it before them..."<sup>5</sup> W. H. Grispen writes, "It is clear that a renewal of the covenant and a new theophany were imminent [cf. v. 5]."<sup>6</sup> John I. Durham writes "Yahweh's response to this second request becomes in turn not only the exegesis of the revelation of his name, given in response to the first request, but also the preparation for the renewal of the shattered relationship by the instructions given Moses concerning (1) the provision of two new stone tablets and (2) the separation and reascension of Mount Sinai, and by (1) the new descent of Yahweh onto the mountain, and (2) the new revelation of his name and his nature there. With the conclusion of this sequence, all is in readiness for the renewal of the covenant between Yahweh and Israel."<sup>7</sup> R. J. Rushdoony writes, "Moses is again summoned to the mountain for the renewal of the covenant."<sup>8</sup> Paul E. Kretzman writes, "The covenant relation between God and the people having been restored by the Lord's pardon, the giving of the covenant ordinances could now be resumed."<sup>9</sup> C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch write, "When Moses had restored the covenant bond through his intercession (chap. xxxiii.14), he was directed by Jehovah to hew out two stones, like the former ones which he had broken, and to come with

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<sup>2</sup>Greg Loren Durand, *Judicial Warfare: The Christian Reconstruction Movement and Its Blueprint for Dominion* (Dahlgonega, GA: Crown Rights Books, 2003), 33.

<sup>3</sup>Matthew Poole, *A Commentary on the Holy Bible* (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, [1985] 1962), 1:192.

<sup>4</sup>John Gill, *An Exposition of the Old Testament* (London: Matthew and Leigh, 1810), 1:522.

<sup>5</sup>*Ibid.* 1:524.

<sup>6</sup>W. H. Grispen, Ed van der Mass translator, *Exodus* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1982), 311.

<sup>7</sup>John I. Durham, *Exodus* (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1987), 455.

<sup>8</sup>Rousas J. Rushdoony, *Exodus* (Vallecito, CA: Ross House Books, 2004), 490.

<sup>9</sup>Paul E. Kretzman, *Popular Commentary of the Bible* (St. Louis, MO: Concordia, 1923), 1:175.

them the next morning up the mountain, and Jehovah would record.”<sup>10</sup> R. Alan Cole in a section entitled “The Renewed Covenant” writes, “This chapter covers the giving of the new stone tablets; the proclamation of God’s name; the making of the covenant; and the listing of demands that spring from the covenant.”<sup>11</sup> This makes sense given the fact that after the incident with the golden calf we read, “And the LORD said to Moses, ‘Cut two tablets of stone like the first ones, and I will write on these tablets the words that were on the first tablets which you broke’” (Ex. 34:1). In Exodus 34:27 we read, “Then the LORD said to Moses, ‘Write these words, for according to the tenor of these words I have made a covenant with you and with Israel.’” Matthew Henry writes, “With these laws, here repeated, it is probable all that was said to him when he was before upon the mount was repeated likewise, and the model of the tabernacle shown him again, lest the ruffle and discomposure which the golden calf had put him into should have bereaved him of the ideas he had in his mind of what he had seen and heard.”<sup>12</sup> In addition, apparently Durand assumes that the expression “the law” (*ho nomos*) in Romans 3:19a, refers *only* to what is written *after* Exodus 34:1 and does not include Exodus 20-24. Thus, he apparently believes there were two distinct Mosaic covenants instead of *renewals* of the original covenant at Sinai.

Second, contrary to Durand’s interpretation the statement in Galatians 3:19 (“It [the law] was added because of transgressions”) is best understood (given the context and grammar) in one of two different ways. Some interpreters (John Peter Lange, Neander, Olhausen, Baur, DeWitte, John Brown, James D. G. Dunn) believe the Mosaic law was added to *deter* transgressions (Dunn focuses on the need for sacrifices to deal with sin). In this case, Paul would be pointing out a positive purpose of the law which was to restrain evil activity within society. (The Reformers referred to this as the second use of the law). With the law people can see that God has set boundaries over which men are not to go and it shows the dire consequences of breaking laws that are crimes. The law, taught and enforced, helps keep a social order from breaking down and becoming chaotic. Although this is a legitimate use of the law, this view does not suit the context. Paul is discussing a use of the law that leads men to Christ.

Another view, which fits the context perfectly, is that the law was added to provoke or multiply transgressions (i.e. “chiefly by detecting them and bringing men to a knowledge of them”). This is the interpretation of John Calvin, Matthew Poole, Matthew Henry, John Gill, John Bunyan, C. H. Spurgeon, Ernest DeWitt Burton, R. C. H. Lenski, Ralph Earle, F. F. Bruce, James Montgomery Boice, H. D. Belz, William Hendriksen, Ben Witherington III, Richard Longenecker, Ronald Y. K. Fung, Philip Graham Ryken, G. Walter Hansen, John R. W. Stott, Max Anders, A. R. Fausset, William Perkins, Martin Luther, Winer, John Eadie, Matthies, Ellicott, Windischman, etc. If we accept this interpretation, then we have a clear parallel with Paul’s thought in Romans 5:20, “the law entered that the offense might abound.” The law increases transgressions in two distinct ways. The revelation of law makes one’s knowledge of God’s will more comprehensive and more explicit. Before the law was given at Sinai, men had “the work of the law written on the heart” (Rom. 2:15). Thus, they had a general sense of right and wrong and consequently were guilty of sin against God. But with the detailed codification of law under Moses, men now had an explicit, unambiguous, unquestionable revelation of law. The more explicit the revelation of God’s law is, *then the more obvious and heinous are the violations against it*. In other words, the law makes sin a clear transgression for “where there is

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<sup>10</sup> C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1981), 1:239.

<sup>11</sup> R. Alan Cole, *Exodus* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1973), 226.

<sup>12</sup> Matthew Henry, *Commentary on the Whole Bible*, 1:428.

no law there is no transgression” (Rom. 4:15) and “sin is a transgression of the law” (1 Jn. 3:4). As Paul says, “...by the law is the knowledge of sin” (Rom. 3:20). Once again, it is important to note that evil deeds have always been sinful, even before the law was given; but, with the law, men’s sins are shoved right in front of their faces. The law performs a very important and necessary service in leading men to Christ. It imparts knowledge of our sin. It makes sin exceedingly sinful. It reveals to us that, by the works of the law, we cannot be justified. It shatters all our excuses and shuts our mouths. It shows us that, apart from the blood of Christ, we are doomed. God’s judgment rests upon us because we have flagrantly, repeatedly and boldly trespassed against Him. The law was given to people hardened by sin to bring about a consciousness of sin. As Calvin says, “The law was published in order to make known transgressions, and in this way to compel men to acknowledge their guilt. As men naturally are too ready to excuse themselves, so, until they are roused by the law, their consciences are asleep.”<sup>13</sup>

There is simply no better way to make sin explicit and obnoxious than to put God’s will down on paper in black and white. With the law revealed and enscriptured, it cannot be denied or circumvented without obvious and gross deception. Revealed law renders us without excuse—with capital letters and an exclamation point. It is for this reason that good evangelistic preaching usually contains some exposition and discussion of the moral law. The law is a good friend who reveals our sickness, misery and desperate condition so that we will turn to the great Physician of souls.

Another way that the law increases transgressions is the way that it shows us our inner depravity. Paul elaborates on this in Romans 7:8 where he says that “sin, taking opportunity by the commandment, produced in me all manner of evil desire.” Because of man’s sinful nature inherited from Adam, when his unregenerate heart comes in contact with God’s holy law it is aroused to transgression. The natural man rebels against the law by nature. Murray writes, “The purpose of law in man’s original estate was not to give occasion to sin but to direct and regulate man’s life in the path of righteousness and, therefore to guard and promote life. By reason of sin, however, that same law promotes death, in that it gives occasion to sin. And the wages of sin is death. The more law is registered in our consciousness the more sin is aroused to action, and law, merely as law, can exercise no restraining in our consciousness the more sin is aroused to action, and law, merely as law, can exercise no restraining or remedial effect.”<sup>14</sup> A person who is not justified by Christ and filled with the Holy Spirit can study the moral law all day long and strive to obey it. But he will soon realize, if God opens his eyes, that rather than giving him life and holiness it only bears the opposite fruit of increased sin, misery and death. The problem is not with the law, but with unregenerate man’s heart. Paul is not saying that God gave the law because he wanted man to sin even more. But that the law would reveal to man both his wicked abysmal record before Jehovah and his own rebellious heart that, by nature, is enmity toward God. The law properly understood from every conceivable angle leads us by the hand to Christ. The law shows us what we have done wrong and exactly who we are.

The law was never intended to justify man or make him holy apart from Christ; but, it still serves a crucial purpose. It is both a light on our abysmal failure and a mirror that reveals our true selves. It says that we are guilty of sin and are slaves under its power. It reveals our complete hopelessness apart from a Savior. As Luther wrote,

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<sup>13</sup> John Calvin, *Commentaries on the Epistles of Paul to the Galatians and Ephesians*, 100.

<sup>14</sup> John Murray, *The Epistle to the Romans* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1968), 1:252.

The law then can do nothing, saving that by his light it lighteneth the conscience that it may know sin, death, the judgment and the wrath of God. Before the law come, I am secure: I feel no sin: but when the law cometh, sin, death and hell are revealed unto me. This is not to be made righteous, but guilty and the enemy of God, to be condemned to death and hell-fire. The principal point therefore of the law in [true Christian] divinity is to make men not better but worse; that is to say, it sheweth unto them their sin, that by the knowledge thereof they may be humbled, terrified, bruised and broken, and by this means may be driven to seek grace, and so to come to that blessed Seed.<sup>15</sup>

Third, the absurdity of Durand's interpretation is demonstrated by Deuteronomy chapter 5 where we read about the covenant renewal that occurs with Israel before they enter the promised land. It is obvious that this covenant renewal includes the first giving of the law (read especially 5:2-6, 22-27). P. C. Craigie notes the significance of Deuteronomy 5:6 (which, in Durand's mind, is part of the second giving of the law and is a Covenant of Works) when he writes,

*I am the Lord your God*—these opening words are a declaration at the head of the Decalogue and form a context for what follows, rather than being simply a part of the first commandment. The words indicate the nature of the speaker of the commandments and give divine authority to the commandments themselves. *Who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage*—it was because of what God had done for his people that he was in a position to lay upon them certain obligations. But the initiative of God in participating in the lives of his people came prior to the obligations contained in the Decalogue, and this sequence provides an important principle for interpreting law and the requirement for obedience. The law was not an arbitrary prescription placed randomly on a group of people. God had delivered or redeemed (Exod. 15:13) his people from a situation of slavery; then, at Horeb, he enacted with them the covenant. Thus the Exodus is the “gospel” place at the head of the law. In the language of treaty and covenant, his people had formerly been vassals subject to the suzerain authority of the worldly power of the pharaoh; the liberation of the Exodus took them away from the subjection to the old suzerain authority, but introduced them to a new suzerain authority, God himself. The new authority, however, had acted in love for the people and the obligations imposed upon them in the covenant reflected no less the love of God. This, then, is the context in which the Decalogue is to be understood; it was law for a people already redeemed, not designed per se to redeem the people. It was, nevertheless, at the heart of the covenant relationship, for the health and the continuity of the covenant depended on the relationship of the people to their God and to their fellow men, and it was to this end that the Decalogue gave direction to the people.<sup>16</sup>

If the “second giving of the law” is a “Covenant of Works” as Durand insists then why, we ask, is God's grace and mercy in redemption emphasized and placed at the forefront? Would not the opening words of verse six be absent?

In addition, Durand needs to explain why throughout “the second giving of the law,” which he calls (see this quote in context below) “a local codification of the Covenant of Works,” the reason that is repeated over and over again for Israel's obedience is the fact that God redeemed them from their slavery in Egypt. After a set of commandments we often see, “For I am the LORD who brings you up out of the land of Egypt...” (cf. Lev. 11:45; 19:36; 22:33; 23:43; 25:38, 42, 55; 26:13, 45; Deut. 4:20, 34, 37, 45, 46; 5:6; 6:12, 21, 22, 20-25; 8:14; 10:19;

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<sup>15</sup> Martin Luther, *A Commentary on St. Paul's Epistle to the Galatians*, 316.

<sup>16</sup> P. C. Craigie, *The Book of Deuteronomy*, 151.

13:5, 10; 15:15; 16:12; 20:1; 24:18, 22; 26:1-11). It was God's saving acts of the Exodus that established a special relationship between the Israelites and God. They must obey Him, not to be saved and begin a relationship, but because God has already established a relationship. They needed to obey God's law in order to be sanctified and the only way that they could lead holy lives was *to look with faith on the past act of redemption*. Durand teaches a view of the law virtually identical with the Pharisees and the Judaizers, with one important exception. He acknowledges the fact that it is impossible to obey the law. He should read Galatians 3:21, "Is the law against the promises of God [i.e. the promises to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob]? Certainly not! For if there had been a law given which could have given life, truly righteousness would have been by the law." According to Durand, God gave the second law to Israel as a means of achieving life even though God knew it was impossible. According to Durand, God was the first Pharisee.

### Durand and the Law as a "Covenant of Works"

Durand's bizarre and highly unusual interpretation of the second giving of the law would not be so bad, except that it takes him down a path very similar to classic dispensationalism. Both Durand and the original dispensationalists teach that the Mosaic law has absolutely nothing to do with the covenant of grace, but truly was a covenant of works. Durand writes,

Following the death of Joseph, the Israelites were enslaved for four hundred years in Egypt. During that time, they abandoned the faith of Abraham and substituted the worship of the Egyptian sun-god for that of the true God. By the time God raised up Moses as their deliverer, the Israelites were thoroughly pagan. At the exodus, God directed them to Horeb, where He entered into covenant with them, reaffirming and expanding the covenant previously made with Abraham. This was a blood covenant, sealed by a ceremonial sprinkling of the people (a clear symbol of Christ's death in behalf of His elect), and it included the "first edition" of the Decalogue, written on stone tablets by the finger of God Himself. During Moses' lengthy absence on the mountain-top, the Israelites grew impatient and quickly reverted back to their former worship of the sun-god (symbolized by Apis, the golden calf), to which defection Moses responded by smashing the stone tablets to pieces. I have come to the conclusion that this action was a public declaration that that specific covenant had been abolished as far as they were concerned, and the fact that Moses was required to go back up the mountain to receive a new set of commandments (this time dictated to Moses rather than being written with the finger of God Himself) lends support to my claim that the covenant thereafter made with Israel was substantially different from the initial one. The second covenant was also not ratified by the sprinkling of blood, as had been the first. Whereas the first covenant had been a continuation of the Abraham Covenant, the second was nothing more or less than the placing of the Israelites under the heavy yoke of a localized codification of the Covenant of Works, consisting of 613 statutes which regulated even the most mundane aspect of life, an intricate sacrificial system, an establishmentarian joining of the religious element to the civil, and, most importantly, clearly enumerated positive and negative sanctions for obedience and disobedience. This is the covenant which dominates the rest of the Old Testament and is the basis of all of God's lawsuits against Israel through His prophets. This is the covenant which the unbelieving Jews, particularly the Pharisees, later came to believe would lead them to favor with God. This is the covenant referred to as a "parenthesis" between the Abrahamic Covenant and its fulfillment in Christ (Galatians 3:15-18). Even though it demanded perfect and perpetual obedience, and pronounced death and damnation for even the slightest infraction of its precepts, *the Mosaic Law was nevertheless a gracious gift of God to His people* [emphasis added] because through it

the elect within the nation would be driven to despair of their own righteousness and thus to faith in the promised Redeemer as He was foreshadowed in the ceremonies (Galatians 3:24). Other than testifying to the absolute holiness of God, this was the purpose of the Mosaic Law – it was never intended to be a "model" for the rest of the world. In fact, the Gentile nations were left by God under the broader, and unwritten, Adamic Covenant of Works and deprived of any true knowledge of a Redeemer (Ephesians 2:12). (Sept. 24, 2007 e-mail to B. Schwertley)

This statement contains a number of serious errors. First, he says the Mosaic law (what Durand calls the second giving of the law, including all the laws from Exodus 34:1 to the end of the book of Deuteronomy) has nothing to do with the covenant of grace or the covenant given to Abraham, but is rather “a localized codification of the Covenant of Works.” If one defines the expression “the Covenant of Works” in its traditional Reformed sense, then according to Durand the second giving of the law was a body of law given to Israel to obey if they were to achieve eternal glorified life. As he himself says, “It demanded perfect and perpetual obedience, and pronounced death and damnation for even the slightest infraction of its precepts.” Note, however, that the covenant of works is defined by the Westminster Confession as follows: “The first covenant made with man was a covenant of works, wherein life was promised to Adam, and in him to his posterity, upon condition of perfect and personal obedience” (7:2). According to confessional Reformed thought, if Adam had obeyed the covenant of works, he would have (according to the gracious promises set before him by God) merited or earned the title to eternal life. Adam had to do something to attain glorified life. He had to perfectly obey God for a fixed period of probation. The Westminster Standards teach a bi-covenantal view of history. The covenant of works *does not apply* directly to men after the fall, as a method of attaining eternal life. The covenant of grace is the only way that men can approach God after the fall. Durand’s idea that the Mosaic law (the second giving of the law; Ex. 34:1ff) is a new covenant of works is explicitly unconfessional. (Those “Reformed” elders and laymen [e.g., Thos. Minsel, PhD.; Corey Graff] who have endorsed Durand’s view are not competent to serve on any Presbyterian court.) The covenant of works, as a system of achieving glorified life, has nothing to do with the Mosaic law. The Jews were expected to look to Jesus Christ (who was to come) by faith alone and were not required to obey the law to achieve salvation; but, rather, were to obey God’s law as a way to be holy (sanctification). This was to be done out of gratitude for their prior redemption accomplished by Jehovah. Those Jews who apostatized and rejected God for idolatry and a habitual life of immorality were rejected by God because they never had true saving faith to begin with. Durand cannot argue that the Jews were under a covenant of works and simultaneously claim that they were saved by Jesus Christ. Adam was under the covenant of works before sin entered the world. Immediately after the fall, God introduced the covenant of grace (cf. Gen. 3:15). (When Durand appeals to some of the Puritans who used the expression “covenant of works,” he does not seem to understand that they were merely describing the moral law, or the ten commandments, that were part of natural law in the beginning. The Puritans were only speaking about a common, universal standard of behavior. They were not saying that the Mosaic covenant was a covenant of works that actually required law-keeping for salvation.)

Durand’s view regarding the law has much in common with classical dispensationalism. Note the similarities with C. I. Scofield: “The Dispensation of Promise ended when Israel rashly accepted the law Exodus 19:8. Grace had prepared a deliverer (Moses), provided a sacrifice for the guilty, and by divine power brought them out of bondage Exodus 19:4 but at Sinai they

exchanged grace for law.”<sup>17</sup> The noted dispensational theologian Lewis Sperry Chafer adds, “When the Law was proposed, the children of Israel deliberately forsook their position under the grace of God which had been their relationship to God until that day, and placed themselves under the Law...The children of Israel definitely chose the covenant of works, which is law, as their relationship to God.”<sup>18</sup> The only difference that we can tell between Durand and old style dispensationalism is that dispensationalists include all the law (Exodus 20 through Deuteronomy) while Durand posits a second, different law. On this matter (i.e. the definition of the law) the dispensationalists are more consistent and biblical than Durand.

Durand could respond to the analysis above by arguing that the Mosaic law showed the Israelites their sin and taught them about the Messiah to come through the types and ceremonies and, thus, the Jews during this time were justified by faith and not by the law. Note, however, that if he argues in this manner, then he has explicitly contradicted his own idea that “the second giving of the law” is “a localized codification of the Covenant of Works.” If Durand defends himself in this manner, then his doctrine of the law would be irrational and virtually incomprehensible. He would be better off simply repenting of his bizarre modified dispensationalism and, in its place, adopting the orthodox Reformed understanding of the law, as taught by solid scholars such as O. Palmer Robertson. Note the radical difference between Robertson’s teaching and Durand’s assertions. Robertson writes,

This phrase “covenant of law” must not be confused with the traditional terminology which speaks of a “covenant of works.” The phrase “covenant of works” customarily refers to the situation at creation in which man was required to obey God perfectly in order to enter into a state of eternal blessedness. Contrary to this relation established with man in innocence, the Mosaic covenant of law clearly addresses itself to man in sin. This latter covenant never intended to suggest that man by perfect moral obedience could enter into a state of guaranteed covenantal blessedness. The integral role of a substitutionary sacrificial system within the legal provisions of the Mosaic covenant clearly indicates a sober awareness of the distinction between God’s dealings with man in innocence and with man in sin.

As already indicated, God’s covenantal commitment to redeem from the state of sin a people to himself was in effect prior to the giving of the law at Sinai. Israel assembled at Sinai only because God had redeemed them from Egypt. For the covenant of law to function as a principle of salvation by works, the covenant of promise first would have to be suspended.

The concrete externalization of covenantal stipulations written on tables of stone never was intended to detract from the gracious promise of the Abrahamic covenant, as Paul argues so aptly. The covenant of law, coming 400 years after promise, could not possibly disannul the previous covenant (Gal. 3:17).

Not only did the covenant of law not disannul the covenant of promise; more specifically, it did not offer a temporary alternative to the covenant of promise. This particular perspective is often overlooked. It is sometimes assumed that the covenant of law temporarily replaced the covenant of promise, or somehow ran alongside it as an alternative method of man’s salvation. The covenant of law often has been considered as a self-contained unit which served as another basis for determining the relation of Israel to God in the period between the Abrahamic covenant and the coming of Christ. In this scheme, the covenant of promise is treated as though it had been set aside or made secondary for a period, although not “disannulled.”

However, the covenant of promise made with Abraham always has been in effect from the day of its inauguration until the present. The coming of law did not suspend the Abrahamic

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<sup>17</sup> C.I. Scofield, editor, *The Scofield Reference Bible*, 20, note 1 on Genesis 12:1.

<sup>18</sup> Lewis Sperry Chafer, *Systematic Theology*, 4:162-164.



covenant. The principle enunciated in Genesis 15:6 concerning the justification of Abraham by faith never has experienced interruption. Throughout the Mosaic period of law-covenant, God considered as righteous everyone who believed in him.

For this reason, the covenant of law as revealed at Sinai would best be divorced from “covenant of works” terminology. The “covenant of works” refers to legal requirements laid on man at the time of his innocency in creation. The “covenant of law” refers to a new stage in the process of God’s unfolding the richness of the covenant of redemption. As such, the law which came through Moses did not in any way disannul or suspend the covenant of promise.<sup>19</sup>

There are a number of other problems with Durand’s complete separation of the Mosaic law from the covenant of grace and the covenants of promise.

(1) In passages which explain the reason for the exodus of Israel, as well as passages within the law itself (i.e. after Ex. 34:1), we have clear references to God’s covenant with Abraham as still abiding and applicable to Israel. For example, Moses under divine inspiration introduces the history that begins with Israel’s exodus from Egypt with these words, “So God heard their groaning, and God remembered His covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob. And God looked upon the children of Israel, and God acknowledged them” (Ex. 2:24-25). Durand could argue that this does not apply to the second giving of the law because it occurred before the first law in Exodus 20. Durand, however, cannot apply such an argument to passages such as Leviticus 26:41-42 which occur in Durand’s so-called different second law: “...if their [the people of Israel who have sinned] uncircumcised hearts are humbled, and they accept their guilt—they I will remember My covenant with Jacob, and My covenant with Isaac and My covenant with Abraham I will remember; I will remember the land.” This passage and others like it totally repudiates Durand’s idea of the second law as “a Covenant of Works” or a “parenthesis” between the covenant of promise and the coming of Christ. (Note how Durand’s teaching that the Mosaic law is a “Covenant of Works” parenthesis between the Abrahamic covenant and the coming of Christ is virtually identical to classical dispensationalism. Lewis Sperry Chafer writes, “Since the covenant of grace which is based on human faith was established in the promise made to Abraham, the covenant of law, made four hundred years later, and added only for a temporary purpose, cannot disannul it. The reign of law, with its covenant of works, ceased with the death of Christ. Its purpose had been accomplished, and its appointed time had expired. Thus the by-faith principle which was announced in the Abrahamic covenant is brought again into force, through the death of Christ.”<sup>20</sup>) Matthew Henry’s comments on this passage well represent the Reformed position:

*I will remember my covenant* (v. 42), which is repeated, v. 45. God is said *to remember the covenant* when he performs the promises of it, purely for his faithfulness’ sake; not because there is any thing in us to recommend us to his favour, but because he will be as good as his word. This is the church’s plea. Ps. 74:20, *Have respect unto the covenant*. He will remember the constitution of the covenant, which is such as leaves room for repentance, and promises pardon upon repentance; and the Mediator of the covenant, who was promised to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and was sent, when the fulness of time came, in remembrance of that holy covenant. The word covenant is thrice repeated, to intimate that God is ever mindful of it and would have us to be so. The persons also with whom the covenant was made are mentioned in an unusual manner, *per modum ascensus—in the ascending line*, beginning with Jacob, to lead

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<sup>19</sup> O. Palmer Robertson, *The Christ of the Covenants*, 173-175.

<sup>20</sup> Chafer, *Systematic Theology*, 4:229; cf. 6:104-105; 7:225-226.

them gradually to the most ancient promise, which was made to the father of the faithful: thus (Mic. 7:20) he is said to perform the *truth to Jacob*, and the *mercy to Abraham*. He will for their sakes (v. 45), not their merit's sake, but their benefit's sake, remember the covenant of their ancestors, and upon that score show kindness to them, though most unworthy; they are therefore said to be, *as touching the election, beloved for the fathers' sake*, Rom. 11:28. Note, When those that have walked contrary to God in a way of sin return to him by sincere repentance, though he has walked contrary to them in a way of judgment he will return to them in a way of special mercy, pursuant to the covenant of redemption and grace. None are so ready to repent as God is to forgive upon repentance, through Christ, who is given for a covenant.<sup>21</sup>

(2) If Durand's position is true and the Mosaic law (Durand's second/new law) is "a localized codification of the Covenant of Works," then how were the Jews redeemed during the period between Exodus 34:1 and the coming of Christ? Durand says that "the elect within the nation would be driven to despair of their own righteousness and thus to faith in the promised Redeemer as He was foreshadowed in the ceremonies (Galatians 3:24)." If, by this statement, Durand means that the ceremonies in the Mosaic law instructed the Jews about the perfect sacrifice of the coming Messiah and the elect Israelites were saved by their faith in the Christ to come, then he cannot also argue that the law was "a Covenant of Works" and was "a [works] parenthesis" between Abraham and Jesus. In other words, the Mosaic law taught salvation in the same manner as the covenant with Abraham: faith in the promise which equals faith in the Seed to come—who is Jesus the Messiah. The sacrificial system within the Mosaic law proves that the Jews were instructed in the true gospel of justification by faith in Christ *everyday*. Therefore, the idea that the Mosaic law was "a localized codification of the Covenant of Works" is complete nonsense. Indeed, Rahab the harlot, Ruth, Uriah the Hittite and many other Gentiles were saved under the Mosaic administration of the covenant of grace. They were saved in the same manner as Father Abraham—by the imputed righteousness of Christ (Gal. 3:6). As Paul says, "So then those who are of faith are blessed with believing Abraham" (Gal. 3:9). Obviously, Durand has not carefully considered the logical implications of his system.

(3) If one accepts Durand's view that the Mosaic law was "a localized codification of the Covenant of Works," then Paul's condemnation of the Jews in Romans 9 and 10 for turning the Mosaic law into "a covenant of works" is misguided and inappropriate. One would expect Paul to say the law as a means of attaining life has come to an end with the coming of Jesus; therefore, it is time to turn from the covenant of works to Christ and the covenant of grace. Instead, Paul condemns the Jews for pursuing righteousness (i.e. a forensic righteousness) by the law instead of through faith (Rom. 9:31, 32). They were guilty of pursuing righteousness by the works of the law (Rom. 10:32). Their *unbiblical* understanding of the Mosaic law as a covenant of works caused them to reject their Messiah (Rom. 9:32c-33). Even though the Jews acted extremely zealous for God, their zeal was not according to knowledge (Rom. 10:2). In other words, the Jew's doctrine of the law was not in accord with truth. Because the Jews looked at the law as a covenant of works and were ignorant of God's righteousness (i.e. an imputed righteousness received only by faith), they tried to establish their own righteousness (Rom. 10:3). If Durand's doctrine is correct and the Jews were under "a localized Covenant of Works" from Exodus 34:1 (1462 B.C.) until the death of Christ (c. A.D. 30), a period of almost 15 centuries, would it be reasonable for Paul to condemn them so strongly for doing what they had been expected to do by God for one thousand four hundred and ninety-two years? Once again,

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<sup>21</sup> Matthew Henry, *A Commentary on the Whole Bible*, 1:558.

Durand's position is complete nonsense. Durand needs to understand that Paul does not have an ax to grind against the law *as properly understood*, but against legalism; that is, turning the law into a means of salvation.

## Durand's Irrational Understanding of Deuteronomy 4:5-8

Durand's statement that the Mosaic law "was never intended to be a 'model' for the rest of the world" is misleading and erroneous. In one sense, it is certainly true that the nations around Israel were never expected to build a sacrificial cultus and adopt laws that could only be applied to Israel. But the Bible is quite clear that if the Israelites faithfully kept God's law, the surrounding nations would see the superiority of this system of law and the superiority of the God who gave this law. If the covenant people did not become corrupt, Israel's justice system would serve as an advertisement for the true religion. Note Deuteronomy 4:5-8,

Surely I have taught you statutes and judgments, just as the LORD my God commanded me, that you should act according to *them* in the land which you go to possess. Therefore be careful to observe *them*; for this *is* your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the peoples who will hear all these statutes, and say, "Surely this great nation *is* a wise and understanding people." For what great nation *is there* that has God *so* near to it, as the LORD our God *is* to us, for whatever *reason* we may call upon Him? And what great nation *is there* that has *such* statutes and righteous judgments as are in all this law which I set before you this day?

Although the covenant established a relationship with the Lord, which distinguished Israel from her neighbors, this section of Scripture makes a number of things clear. (1) The covenant nation was to be a witness to the surrounding nations. (People who came to believe in Jehovah could join themselves to the covenant people.) (2) The law of Israel was distinctive. It was the most just, equitable and righteous body of law in the whole world. Matthew Henry writes,

*What nation is there so great, that hath statutes and judgments so righteous? Observe, First, That all these statutes and judgments of the divine law are infinitely just and righteous, above the statutes and judgments of any of the nations. The law of God is far more excellent than the law of nations. No law so consonant to natural equity and the unprejudiced dictates of right reason, so consistent with itself in all the parts of it, and so conducive to the welfare and interest of mankind, as the scripture-law is, Ps. 119:128. Secondly, The having of these statutes and judgments set before them is the true and transcendent greatness of any nation or people. See Ps. 147:19, 20. It is an honour to us that we have the Bible in reputation and power among us. It is an evidence of a people's being high in the favour of God, and a means of making them high among the nations. Those that magnify the law shall be magnified by it.*<sup>22</sup>

John Gill notes that the Jews "had such a body of laws, in which they were instructed, and according to which they were governed, and in which they walked; that were so agreeable to reason, truth, justice, and equity; insomuch that so far as they became known they were admired and copied after, both by Greeks and Romans; and hence it was that the oracle declared, that only the Chaldeans and Hebrews were a wise people; the Hebrews came from Chaldea, as Abraham the father of them."<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Matthew Henry, *Commentary on the Whole Bible*, 1:744.

<sup>23</sup> John Gill, *An Exposition of the Old Testament*, 2:18.

This section of Scripture raises the question: If the moral law (the Ten Commandments) and the moral case laws within the judicial law (e.g., laws against murder, manslaughter, rape, incest, homosexuality, bestiality, theft, adultery, fornication, mistreating a wife, etc) are said by God Himself to be superior, wiser, more just and righteous, etc., than the laws of pagan nations, would it be *wrong, unwise, unjust or unbiblical* for a heathen nation to replace their laws that are defective and unjust with moral laws out of the Torah? The answer to this question is obvious. Of course not! Would the modern United States with its pro-abortion laws, homosexual marriage, sodomite rights, fractional reserve banking (i.e. “legal” counterfeiting), parole for murders, no fault divorce, women in the military, state schools, rampant pornography and prostitution, etc., be better off (i.e. be more just and equitable) if it *modeled* its civil laws after the moral law (the Ten Commandments) and the moral case laws that explain and apply the Ten Commandments in the sphere of criminal law? The answer to this question is also obvious. Our nation would be far more just and a much safer place to live.

But according to Durand it would be wrong, for the Mosaic law is “a localized codification of the Covenant of Works.” Even though Durand admits the law has “righteous judgments,” and is the “wisdom and understanding” of the Hebrew people, he notes that “nothing is ever said about the obligation of the Heathen to adopt the Mosaic code within their own respective nations” (*Judicial Warfare*, 41). He adds this rather odd comment: “The Gentiles’ admiration of the Israelites for their just laws simply does not equal an obligation to enact these same laws in their own countries. If therefore follows that the law of Moses is not now the legislative standard for modern America or any other nation on earth” (*Judicial Warfare*, 42). There are a number of problems with Durand’s attempt to circumvent the obvious implications of Deuteronomy 4:5-8.

(1) No Reformed person has ever argued that the pagan nations should simply adopt the whole Mosaic law. That assertion is a straw man that has nothing to do with this debate. Everyone familiar with the Bible knows that the ceremonial laws and the laws peculiar to national Israel have been abrogated or set out of gear. The Westminster Standards state that the moral law continues and the general equity (i.e. the moral laws or principles) within the civil code continues (*WCF* 19:4). A common Puritan and Presbyterian view is set forth by the Westminster Divine George Gillespie:

It will be asked, But how doth it appear that these or any other Judicial Laws of *Moses* do at all appertain to us, as rules to guide us in like cases? I shall wish him who scrupleth this, to read *Piscator* his *Appendix* to his Observations upon the 21-23 Chapters of *Exodus*, where he excellently disputeth this question, Whether the Christian Magistrate be bound to observe the Judicial laws of *Moses*, as well as the Jewish Magistrate was. He answereth by the common distinction, he is obliged to those things in the Judicial law which are unchangeable, & common to all Nations: but not to those things which are mutable, or proper to the Jewish Republic. But then he explaineth this distinction, that by things mutable, and proper to the Jews, he understandeth the emancipation of an Hebrew servant or handmaid in the seventh year, a man's marrying his brother's wife an raising up seed to his brother, the forgiving of debts at the Jubilee, marrying with one of the same Tribe, and if there be any other like to these; also Ceremonial trespasses, as touching a dead body, &c. But things immutable, and common to all Nations are the laws concerning Moral trespasses, Sins against the Moral law, as murder, adultery, theft, enticing away from God, blasphemy, striking of Parents. Now that the Christian Magistrate is bound to observe these Judicial laws of *Moses* which appoint the punishments of sins against the Moral law, he proveth by these reasons.

1. If it were not so, then it is free and arbitrary to the Magistrate to appoint what punishments himself pleaseth. But this is not arbitrary to him, for *he is the Minister of God, Rom. 13.4.* And *the judgment is the Lord's, Deut. 1.7; 2 Chron. 19.6.* And if the Magistrate be *Keeper of both Tables*, he must keep them in such manner as God hath delivered them to him.

2. Christ's words, *Matt. 5.17, Think not that I am come to destroy the Law or the Prophets, I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill*, are comprehensive of the Judicial law, it being a part of the law of *Moses*; Now he could not fulfill the Judicial law, except either by his practice, or by teaching others still to observe it; [but it was] not by his own practice, for he would not condemn the Adulteress, *John 8.11*, nor divide the Inheritance, *Luke 12.13,14.* Therefore it must be by his doctrine for our observing it.

3. If Christ in his Sermon, *Matt. 5*, would teach that the Moral law belongeth to us Christians, insomuch as he vindicateth it from the false glosses of the Scribes & Pharisees; then he meant to hold forth the Judicial law concerning Moral trespasses as belonging to us also: for he vindicateth and interpreteth the Judicial law, as well as the Moral, *Matt. 5.38, An eye for an eye, &c.*

4. If God would have the Moral law transmitted from the Jewish people to the Christian people; then he would also have the Judicial law transmitted from the Jewish Magistrate to the Christian Magistrate: There being the same reason of immutability in the punishments, which is in the offences; Idolatry and Adultery displeaseth God now as much as then; and Theft displeaseth God now no more than before.

5. *Whatsoever things were written aforetime, were written for our learning, Rom. 15.4*, and what shall the Christian Magistrate learn from those Judicial laws, but the will of God to be his rule in like cases? The Ceremonial law was written for our learning, that we might know the fulfilling of all those Types, but the Judicial law was not Typical.

6. *Do all to the glory of God, 1 Cor. 10.31; Matt. 5.16.* How shall Christian Magistrates glorify God more than by observing God's own laws, as most just, and such as they cannot make better?

7. *Whatsoever is not of faith is sin, Rom. 14.23.* Now when the Christian Magistrate punisheth sins against the Moral law, if he do this in faith and in assurance of pleasing God, he must have his assurance from the Word of God, for faith can build upon no other foundation: it is the Word which must assure the Conscience, God has commanded such a thing, therefore it is my duty to do it, God hath not forbidden such a thing, therefore I am free to do it. But the will of God concerning Civil justice and punishments is no where so fully and clearly revealed as in the Judicial law of *Moses*. This therefore must be the surest prop and stay to the conscience of the Christian Magistrate.<sup>24</sup>

(2) Durand's assertion that Gentiles' admiration for Israel's just laws does not equal an obligation to enact those laws is complete nonsense. The acknowledgment that a law or laws is just or righteous is an admission that such laws are good, right, proper and perfect. If we know of a law that sets forth perfect justice because it reflects the character of God, then obviously we are obligated to obey that law. If a pagan nation learns about God's law and sees that God's laws on sexual ethics are radically different from their own, then does not that nation have an obligation to repent of its unjust laws? Should the U.S., Canada, Western Europe, Australia, New Zealand and other nations that have adopted positivistic, secular humanistic law systems that in many areas are radically unjust, wicked and anti-Christian, repent and adopt the just, moral, universal and absolute laws that are found in the Mosaic code. Durand would argue, "Absolutely not!" His solution is *not revealed law*, but "natural law."

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<sup>24</sup> George Gillespie, *Wholesome Severity Reconciled with Christian Liberty*, 182-183.

(3) Durand argues that the Gentile nations have nothing to do with the law of Moses and are only obligated to follow “natural law.” He argues for this position by appealing to Scriptures which say that the Gentiles “have not the law” (Rom. 2:14) and the supposed fact that “heathen kings outside of Israel were highly esteemed by God when they ruled justly according to the natural law” (*Judicial Warfare*, 42). (His arguments from Paul’s epistles are dealt with below.) There are a number of serious problems with Durand’s arguments.

a) Durand ignores the fact that for Paul not having revealed law is presented as a distinct disadvantage (read Rom. 3:1-4). Moreover, Paul’s point in Romans 2:14-15 is not to argue that “natural law” is an adequate source for individual, family or social ethics *independent of Scripture*; but, rather, that the Gentiles have enough of an innate knowledge of right and wrong in the very fabric of their being as creatures created in the image of God *to render them guilty before Jehovah* for their sin. Previously, Paul has also argued that the heathen have a natural knowledge of the true God, so as to render them without excuse (Rom. 1:18ff). This truth does not mean that the unregenerate do not need divine revelation regarding the true God taught to them. It simply explains their guilt and the just sentence of condemnation that hangs over them. Durand needs to demonstrate from Scripture that God has given unbelieving mankind “natural law” as a foundation of social ethics and that such a foundation renders mankind’s responsibility to obey the revealed, perspicuous, perfect, righteous moral laws of God non-binding. This task is impossible.

b) Durand’s appeal to Cyrus the king of Persia as a man “highly esteemed by God” because he “ruled justly according to natural law” (*Judicial Warfare*, 42) is completely contrary to the two passages he cites as proof of his position (Isa. 44:28; 45:1). In the first passage (Isa. 44:28), Cyrus is mentioned in the prophecy as the one who will carry out God’s counsel in delivering Israel back to their land. God will use him as Israel’s shepherd. Cyrus not only allowed Israel to go back to their land, but he helped them do so and encouraged them in their efforts. Before we praise Cyrus as a just and righteous king, however, it needs to be pointed out that archeologists have demonstrated that this was the king’s policy towards many idolatrous heathen religions as well. While God used him to shepherd Israel and he did them much good, he still was a rank heathen idolater. (Regarding the first commandment in the Decalogue Calvin writes, “The Commandment itself will always remain in force, even to the end of the world; and is given not only to the Jews, but likewise to us also” [Commentaries on the Four Last Books of Moses..., 2:73].) In the second passage we are told that Cyrus is anointed by the Lord (Isa. 45:1) which simply means that God appointed him for a specific task. “It does not necessarily imply that Cyrus becomes a true worshipper of God.”<sup>25</sup> Also, there is no indication in the broad or narrow context that God is approving or making any kind of statement about Persia’s justice system or laws. Durand is grasping after straw.

We could also mention the Roman Empire, which many scholars believe had the most advanced body of civil law among all the ancient nations outside of Israel. Could Rome have benefited from the revealed moral laws in the Old Testament or was its body of law based on natural law adequate? The Roman Empire had many laws and state-sanctioned practices that were very evil and unjust. Note the following examples: a) The Roman state sanctioned the worship of many gods and advocated emperor worship. This body of laws led to the slaughter of thousands of Christians in various persecutions. b) Roman law sanctioned a barbaric form of chattel slavery that was based on conquest and kidnapping. c) The father had the authority of life

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<sup>25</sup> Edward J. Young, *The Book of Isaiah*, 3:195.

and death over his children and could kill them without repercussions. d) In the Roman justice system there were different levels of justice and treatment for citizens, non-citizens and slaves. Non-citizens could be scourged and tortured to extract information. e) In Roman society infanticide was permissible and common. f) The Roman state rewarded soldiers who served their full term of service with lands stolen from conquered peoples. Many of the lands confiscated had been in certain families for centuries. g) A popular policy of the Roman government was state-sanctioned gladiatorial games where prisoners, criminals, enemies and various animals were slaughtered and dismembered publicly. This is how many hundreds of Christians were dispatched in the Roman persecutions. h) Cultic prostitution was legal and widespread in the Roman Empire, especially in Asia Minor. Women taken in conquests were bought and made prostitutes throughout the empire. The idea that God has abrogated all the moral laws of the Old Testament and expects everyone to base systems of justice on natural law is naïve and unbiblical. Because of the fall, natural law is inadequate as a guide for fallen men. Everyone needs special revelation as a specific, perspicuous limit to the state.

## A Refutation of Durand's Dispensational Understanding of Paul

Durand's exegesis of Pauline passages, which he believes support his position, are pitiful. It will become clear as we look at his arguments that he neglects the analogy of Scripture and simply reads his dispensational presuppositions into the text. His first passage is 2 Corinthians 3:7-11. We will include verses 3-6 for the sake of context:

...clearly *you are* an epistle of Christ, ministered by us, written not with ink but by the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of flesh, *that is*, of the heart. And we have such trust through Christ toward God. Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think of anything as *being* from ourselves, but our sufficiency *is* from God, who also made us sufficient as ministers of the new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life. But if the ministry of death, written *and* engraved on stones, was glorious, so that the children of Israel could not look steadily at the face of Moses because of the glory of his countenance, which *glory* was passing away, how will the ministry of the Spirit not be more glorious? For if the ministry of condemnation *had* glory, the ministry of righteousness exceeds much more in glory. For even what was made glorious had no glory in this respect, because of the glory that excels. For if what is passing away *was* glorious, what remains *is* much more glorious.

Durand views this passage as an explicit abrogation, not simply of covenantal form, but of everything within the whole Mosaic system including the Ten Commandments and the moral case laws. He writes,

It is not possible to interpret that which was "*done away*" as merely the outward performance of sacrifices, for it was certainly not the ceremonial law which was "*engraven in stones*," but "*the words of the covenant, the ten commandments*" (Exodus 34:28). Furthermore, in speaking also of that which was "*written*," Paul intended to bring to mind Deuteronomy 31:9: "*And Moses wrote this law, and delivered it unto the priests the sons of Levi, which bare the ark of the covenant of the LORD, and unto all the elders of Israel.*" Therefore, all the case laws, tithing laws, sacrificial laws, *etc.*, as well as the summary laws of the Decalogue, were all classed together by Paul as "*the ministration of death*," and declared to have passed away in contrast to the ministry of the Gospel "*which remaineth*." ...the Gospel far excels the law in

glory because the former is eternal, while the latter was only meant to be temporary (Judicial Warfare, 29-30).

Let us contrast Philip E. Hughes' interpretation with Durand's dispensational conclusion. He writes,

It is evident that Paul has in mind the contrast between the giving of the law to Moses on Mount Sinai and the establishment of the new covenant prophesied by Jeremiah. At Sinai the law had been written by the finger of God on tablets of stone (Ex. 31:18); but this was an external law-giving, whereby sinful man was confronted with his awful inability to fulfill the just requirements of his holy Creator. Jer. 31:33, however, promises a law-giving that is internal, namely, the writing by God of His law in the very heart itself. It is most important to realize that it is the selfsame law which was graven on tables of stone at Sinai that in this age of the new covenant is graven on the tables of the human heart by the Holy Spirit. The gospel does not abrogate the law, but fulfils it. There is no question, as Augustine points out, of Paul finding fault with the dispensation of the Old Testament. *The Christian is still under solemn obligation to keep the law of God, but with this vital difference, that he now has the power, the power of Christ by the Holy Spirit within himself, to keep it.* The law, therefore, is neither evil nor obsolete, but, as Paul says elsewhere, "the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and righteous, and good" (Rom. 7:12). Nor is the law opposed to love; on the contrary, love of God and love of one's neighbor are the sum of the law, as our Lord Himself taught (Mk. 12:28-31): love, the Apostle affirms, is precisely "the fulfillment of the law" (Rom. 13:8-10). To overlook these considerations leads to the postulation of an erroneous and unscriptural antithesis between law and gospel, which by its equation of divine love with divine "injustice", or disregard of law, undermines the whole structure of the Christian redemption.... As the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews points out, the introduction of a *new* covenant presupposes that it is a *better* covenant, since if the earlier covenant had been faultless there would have been no need for a second; and the arrival of the new means the outmoding of the old (Heb. 8:6-13). The old was necessarily temporary and imperfect inasmuch as it looked forward to the establishment of that which is perfect and permanent. The blood of the ancient sacrifices, oft-repeated, could not take away sins; but the blood of Christ's sacrifice, offered once for all, is the blood of the *eternal* covenant (Heb. 10:4ff.; 13:20).

*The establishment of the new covenant, however, implies neither the abrogation nor the depreciation of the Mosaic law.* This is plainly shown by the terms in which God announces His new covenant: "I will put *my law* in their inward parts" (Jer. 31:33), and by the object it is intended to achieve: "that they may walk in *my statutes*, and keep *mine ordinances*, and do them" (Ezek. 11:20). There is no question of a new law or of no law. Neither God changes nor His law. The difference between the old and new covenants is that under the former that law is written on tablets of stone, confronting man as an external ordinance and condemning him because of his failure through sin to obey its commandments, whereas under the latter the law is written internally within the redeemed heart by the dynamic regenerating work of the Holy Spirit, so that through faith in Christ, the only law-keeper, and inward experience of His power man no longer hates but loves God's law and is enabled to fulfil its precepts. (There were, of course, lovers of the law in the Old Testament period, but as such they did not differ radically from believers of the New Testament era: their love of the law was by reason of divine grace granted to them, not by reason of any self-adequacy; and, as Fathers and Reformers have repeatedly emphasized, they were men and women of faith whose trust was centered in the same Christ whom the New Testament proclaims, but in an anticipatory manner, as looking forward to the coming of Him in whom all the promises of the new covenant would find their fulfillment.) Of this new and better covenant with its better promises Christ Himself is the



Mediator by virtue of His propitiatory sacrifice of Himself, offered upon the foundation of a life lived in unflinching conformity to the requirements of the divine law.<sup>26</sup>

Durand also appeals to lengthy sections in Romans (6:14; 7:1-4) and Galatians (3:26-27, 29, 4:1-9; 5:1, 18). Let us briefly analyze some of these passages. First, there is a favorite of dispensationalists: Romans 6:14, "For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under law, but under grace." A parallel to this passage is Galatians 5:18, "But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law." A brief analysis of Galatians 5:18 will demonstrate that Durand's dispensational understanding is erroneous.

In Galatians 5:18 Paul returns to the theme of Christian freedom (cf. 5:1, 13): "But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law." The danger of the legalism of the Judaizers is still on Paul's mind. The circumcision party was seeking to be justified by first rendering obedience to the Mosaic law. They argued that faith in Christ was not enough to become part of the true people of God. Thus in the midst of his discussion of the only true way of holiness (i.e. life lived by the Spirit) Paul condemns those who think they can achieve holiness by the law *apart from the sole sufficiency of Christ and the power of His Spirit*. (As noted, this verse is equivalent theologically to Romans 6:14, "For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace.") The way of victory for the Christian life is for those who place their trust in Jesus alone and receive the Holy Spirit. Those who trust in their own ability to keep the law are still under dominion to sin. To put oneself "under the law" was to rely on a written code to save and sanctify and thus deny oneself the power of the Spirit, who is the only one that can wage war against the flesh with success. The Spirit of Christ writes the law on our hearts (Jer. 31:33-34) and bends them to do God's will. The letter kills, but the Spirit regenerates and makes alive (2 Cor. 3:6).

The law of God can perform a number of important functions, but it cannot regenerate hearts, save souls or (by itself) sanctify behavior. A study of Scripture reveals the limits of the law. As Murray writes, "(1) Law commands and demands. (2) Law pronounces approval and blessing upon conformity to its demands (cf. 7:10; Gal. 3:12). (3) Law pronounces condemnation upon every infraction of its demands (cf. Gal. 3:10). (4) Law exposes and convicts of sin (cf. 7:7, 14; Heb. 4:12). (5) Law excites and incites sin to more aggravated transgression (cf. 7:8, 9, 11, 13)."<sup>27</sup> The law, however, has no ability or power to justify a sinner. In and of itself, it can do absolutely nothing to relieve a person's bondage to sin. In fact, it only accentuates and makes that bondage explicit. It reveals guilt, but can do nothing to eliminate guilt. Even the moral law, which is a perfect standard of righteousness, can do nothing to cause a person to see the spiritual and holy nature of its precepts or lead a person to want to obey it. Only the Spirit of God which is given because of the efficacy of our Lord's death and resurrection can do that.

Thus, those who are under the law are still under the guilt of sin and *are in bondage to the power of sin in their lives*. The only solution to the plight of sin is faith in Christ and union with Him in His death and resurrection. It is by virtue of this vital union that the Holy Spirit is operative in believers and the power of sin is broken. Ironically, the Judaizers' faith in the law as an instrument or partial method of justification kept them in bondage to sin and to their sinful natures. That is because they did not understand the sole sufficiency of Christ; that what He did

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<sup>26</sup> Philip E. Hughes, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1962), 89-90, 94; emphasis added.

<sup>27</sup> John Murray, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 1:229.

not only justifies, but also sanctifies. He sends the Holy Spirit into the hearts of His people and initiates them into a new slavery to righteousness.

With this interpretation in mind, we can avoid a very common abuse of verse 18, that the moral law in the Old Testament cannot be used as a standard or guide for the sanctification of believers in the New Covenant era. Paul is not arguing against people who look solely to Christ for redemption, who in the power of the Spirit strive to keep God's moral requirements out of gratitude for redemption. Such an interpretation contradicts Paul himself who openly pointed believers to the law of love (Gal. 5:14; Rom. 13:9) and the ten commandments (Rom. 13:8). The apostle is once again rejecting the Judaizers' teaching that gave the law a salvific role in addition to Christ. To be led by the Spirit indicates that believers are not under the curse, bondage, impotence and death of the law. The standard of the moral law remains for believers, but now the power needed to love, acknowledge and obey the moral law is provided by the Spirit of God. As Paul has just said, those who walk by the Spirit are fulfilling the law (Gal. 5:14; cf. Rom. 8:4). Instead of abrogating the moral law as our ethical standard, the Holy Spirit enables us to love, appreciate and observe the law as we should. Instead of being under the curse of the law and held in its bondage as the Judaizers were, we are regenerated, released from guilt and set free to obey and serve God. The letter of God's law without the regenerating and sanctifying power of the Spirit is a word of condemnation and death. But—by virtue of the death and resurrection of Christ—the Spirit gives life, light and ethical ability. We should praise God everyday for such a glorious and comprehensive salvation.

## The Sarah-Hagar Allegory

Durand also adopts a dispensational approach to the Sarah-Hagar allegory in Galatians 4:21-29.<sup>28</sup> A brief analysis of this passage will demonstrate that such a view is unbiblical and unwarranted.

Paul first contrasts the "two covenants": "For these are two covenants: the one from Mount Sinai which gives birth to bondage, which is Hagar..." (v. 24). The verb "are" (*eistin*) here simply means "represent" or "stand for." Hagar represents the covenant from Mount Sinai which refers to the Mosaic economy or the Mosaic administration of the covenant. This covenant is said to give birth to bondage or slavery. There are two possible approaches to Paul's statement. One can view the Mosaic covenant itself as leading to bondage, or one can view the apostle's statement as dealing with the Pharisaical understanding of the Mosaic covenant that was the cornerstone of the Judaizers' interpretation.

The central problem with the idea that the Mosaic law itself teaches a covenant of works (or that keeping the law is necessary for justification) is the fact that it explicitly contradicts Scripture. Note the following reasons: (1) The Mosaic law was given in a context of grace to a people already redeemed. It was never intended as an instrument of salvation (cf. Ex. 20:2). (2) Paul has already quoted from the Old Testament (Habakkuk 2:4, "The just shall live by faith [Gal. 3:11]; Gen. 15:6, "Abraham believed God and it was accounted to him for righteousness [Gal. 3:6]) to prove that justification is by faith, not by the works of the law. If the law is a new covenant of works, then these quotes would be plain evidence of a blatant internal contradiction within the Torah. (3) The apostle has also quoted from the law (Leviticus 18:5 and Deuteronomy 27:26) to demonstrate that anyone who attempts to be justified by the law is under a curse (cf.

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<sup>28</sup> Durand does not actually exegete these and other passages. They are simply quoted as proof of his position of radical discontinuity.

Gal. 3:10-12). (4) The Old Testament sacrificial system which is part of the law teaches through types and ceremonies that redemption comes only through the sacrificial death of Christ. (5) Paul has noted that the promise preceded the law by hundreds of years and the Mosaic covenant cannot annul, displace or abrogate this earlier covenant to Abraham (e.g., Gal. 3:15-18). Consequently, the Mosaic covenant builds upon the earlier covenant with Abraham and does not contradict it. With these points in mind, we must avoid the erroneous teaching of classical dispensationalism which views the Mosaic covenant as *replacing* the Abrahamic covenant with a separate, different alternative to salvation by grace through faith in the Messiah. In fact, the covenant at Sinai came into being because of the Abrahamic covenant and Israel's prior status as the covenant people (cf. Ex. 2:24). (6) In the history of Sarah and Hagar and their children, the birth of Isaac was by the promise that required only *faith*, while the birth of Ishmael was a result of human manipulation, ingenuity or *works*. If Abraham and Sarah had been fully *consistent* in their belief in God's promise, Ishmael would have never been born. (7) Paul in the next verse (25) will tie Hagar to the "*Jerusalem which now is.*" Jerusalem was the headquarters of the Judaizers and the capital of the nation that rejected Christ for a works religion and consequently (like the descendants of Hagar; cf. Gal. 4:29) persecuted the true saints of God. Given all these considerations, any idea that Paul had an ax to grind against the law itself *as understood biblically* is most certainly in error. The apostle is arguing against the law as a system that contributes to or completes a believer's salvation (cf. Gal. 3:21).

It is significant that twice Paul will refer to this Hagar-covenant as coming from Mount Sinai. He even notes that Mount Sinai is located in Arabia (v. 25a). Paul emphasizes that this covenant originated outside the promised land in the Sinai Peninsula where the slave descendants of Hagar dwell. This is a veiled way of saying that the Jews who have not embraced Jesus Christ by faith alone because they have turned the Mosaic law into a system of earning salvation, are really spiritual Ishmaelites. They are pagans whose heart and doctrine is in Arabia with Hagar's slave children. However seemingly wise, dedicated, intelligent, devout, strict and sincere are the efforts of the Jews to keep God's law as a system of merit before Jehovah, they leave men in Arabia with the heathen.

Although Paul mentions two covenants he does not discuss or mention the other covenant. Clearly, however, the context indicates this other covenant is represented by Sarah. Many see in this passage a contrast between the Old and New Covenants. This view is in error. Sarah represents the covenant of promise or the covenant of grace as expressed to Abraham. Here the apostle is not contrasting the Old Testament with the New, but rather an important historical expression of the covenant of grace with the common first century false Jewish understanding of the Mosaic covenant. God did not give the Jews the law to lead them into bondage; they rather perverted the law in order to rely on their own works instead of Christ. Remember, Paul has already taught that the law is not against the promise (3:21); that its purpose was not to lead men into slavery, but to Christ to be justified by faith (3:24). As Rushdoony notes, "Paul is *not* saying that God gave two conflicting covenants, but rather that two views of the covenant are in conflict within the church. These two views are comparable to the conflict between Sarah and Isaac on the one hand and Hagar and Ishmael on the other. These two views of the covenant cannot both be true; one means slavery to a false faith, however full of zeal, the other, freedom in Christ."<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Rousas John Rushdoony, *Romans and Galatians*, 376.

## The Two Locations

In his next contrast Paul takes his argument a step further and reveals that the unbelieving Jews of his own day belong in the same category as Hagar and her slave children: “For this Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia, and corresponds to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children—but the Jerusalem above is free, which is the mother of us all” (vs. 25-26). The present city of Jerusalem, which was the home base of the Judaizer missionaries and the philosophical source of their perverted version of the gospel, Paul says, corresponds to Hagar the slave woman who gives birth to slaves. “It must be remembered that it appears that the Judaizing Christians of Jerusalem did not see themselves as a separate entity from Judaism, but rather a movement within that religious group. Their allegiance was to the present Jerusalem and their Jewish heritage, not just to the Jerusalem church.”<sup>30</sup>

Paul supports his antithesis with the verb “corresponds” (*sustoicheo*) which was originally a military term for soldiers placed in the same line or column. The apostle is placing Pharisaical Judaism and their spiritual stepchildren, the Judaizers, in the same category as pagan unbelievers. This statement would be shocking to unbelieving Jews and would be taken as a great insult by the Judaizers. Paul is telling the Christians in Galatia that the circumcision party’s missionaries are spiritual Ishmaelites. Unbelieving Jews are not really God’s people, but are the enemies of God’s people.

In the Jewish mindset of the first century, redemptive history began in earnest with Abraham, passed through Isaac and Jacob, extended through Moses and the Sinai Covenant and then as history progressed through David came to be focused on the present city of Jerusalem. They regarded themselves and their capital city (the center of the temple cultus) as the focus not only of their own hopes, but the hopes of the whole world. Paul crushes their perception of reality by demonstrating that they are not really the children of Abraham at all. By accepting a system of salvation through works, they have rejected the promise and placed themselves in spiritual bondage. They are in the same category as Ishmael—*not* Isaac. No matter what one’s genealogy or ethnic background is and no matter what one’s former spiritual privileges may have been, if one trusts in the works of the flesh for salvation, one is in bondage. One is an Ishmaelite, an enemy of God and His people. When a person bases his hopes of eternal life on keeping the law instead of or in addition to a simple faith in Christ, he places himself in chains.

In our day when many “evangelicals” accept Roman Catholicism as a legitimate form of Christianity and when “Reformed” churches openly tolerate the Federal Vision heresy in their denominations, we need to embrace the full import of Paul’s teaching. Adding the works of the law onto faith or defining faith as including faithful obedience to the law for justification turns professing Christians into slaves. In God’s eyes such people are Ishmaelites. They are enemies of the truth and the genuine church of Christ.

Paul’s contrast with the present Jerusalem is the heavenly city: “But the Jerusalem above is free, which is the mother of us all.” The parallelism here is unusual in that one would expect the apostle to contrast the present Jerusalem with “the Jerusalem of the future.” The apostle, however, is concerned to show that the church of Jesus Christ which is the new spiritual Jerusalem exists right now. It has replaced the current earthly city because the unbelieving Jews have rejected faith in Christ for a system of works righteousness and because in God’s plan the earthly city lost its significance when Jesus died on the cross. Since the kingdom of God has

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<sup>30</sup> Ben Witherington III, *Grace in Galatia*, 334.

been taken from Israel and given to the New Covenant multinational church (Mt. 21:43), the nation of Israel with its borders, capital and temple is no longer set apart or holy. In fact, when Paul wrote Galatians, Jesus had already assigned the city over to judgment to be destroyed (Mt. 24:1-35). Membership in God's kingdom is *not* by blood, nationality or works, but is attained solely by faith in the Messiah. Everyone who repudiates their own so-called works of righteousness and instead trusts solely in Jesus is a true child of Sarah and brother of Isaac. Paul's teaching explicitly contradicts dispensational thought which still regards ethnic Israel and Jerusalem as holy and special in God's sight. Remember, Jesus Himself said that Jerusalem as a place of worship would lose its special significance with the coming of the New Covenant (Jn. 4:21); that unbelieving Jewish congregations were synagogues of Satan (Rev. 2:9; 3:9); and that Jerusalem was a persecuting Babylon (Rev. 17:1-18:24).

This new Jerusalem is described as above in heaven for a number of reasons. (1) The earthly Jerusalem was but a type of the heavenly and eternal city where God dwells. This city is said to descend to the new earth at the second coming of Christ when the living and dead saints are glorified, reunited and then forever dwell in the presence of God. (2) All true believers have their citizenship in heaven (Phil. 3:20) where Jesus lives and reigns. Christians are described as the "church of the firstborn who are registered in heaven" (12:23). Our allegiance, trust, love and devotion are directed to our King at the right hand of God. We pray for God's will in heaven to be established on this fallen earth (Mt. 6:10). We look to Christ in heaven as the foundation of our salvation. He achieved our justification and our holiness flows from the efficacy of His work. His heavenly intercession is what keeps us safe and causes us to persevere. He has gone before us to prepare dwellings for us in paradise (Jn. 14:2) and only because of Him we have an enduring possession for ourselves in heaven (Heb. 10:34). (3) "The Church is said to be above, because it dwells by faith in heaven with Christ."<sup>31</sup> Faith unites us to the Mediator and, thus, we are raised up together and made to sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus (Eph. 2:6). Our position judicially and mystically is in God's throne room with the Savior. The Spirit of God from heaven dwells in our hearts and makes us all one no matter what our location. (4) Thus, the heavenly Jerusalem is also the sum total of all true believers in Christ whether Jew or Gentile; and whether in heaven or upon earth.

The heavenly Jerusalem is described as "free." Because Christians receive the promise solely by faith in Christ, they are not under the law as a means of salvation. Also, they are not under the Jewish traditions or the elements of this world. The legalist is in bondage to the whole law of God. This law is the most rigorous master in the world. It not only requires a perfect obedience to all its requirements, but it demands a perpetual obedience: twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, fifty-two weeks a year, year after year. This obedience must not only be comprehensive and perpetual; it also applies to everything in our innermost being; our thoughts, intents, motives and desires. People who reject Christ for works need to understand the severity of the bondage to which they have committed themselves. As Spurgeon says, "The poor sinner trying to be saved by law is like a blind horse going round and round a mill, and never getting a step further, but only being whipped continually; yea, the faster he goes, the more work he does; the more he is tired, so much the worse for him. The better legalist a man is, the more sure he is of being damned; the more [seemingly] holy a man is, if he trust to his works, the more he may rest assured of his own final rejection and eternal portion with Pharisees."<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> William Perkins, *A Commentary on Galatians*, 309.

<sup>32</sup> Charles Haddon Spurgeon, *The New Park Street Pulpit* (Pasadena, TX: Pilgrim [1857] 1975), 2:126.

The more we understand the bondage of legalism, the more we can appreciate the freedom that Jesus gives to us by completing His redemptive work. He bids all those who are oppressed by the heavy, unbearable load of works salvation (and the mountain of absurd regulations added by the Pharisees) to embrace Him by faith and experience the liberty of salvation by pure grace: “Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give your rest” (Mt. 11:28). “You shall know the truth and the truth will make you free...if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed” (Jn. 8:32, 36). We have been called unto liberty in Jesus the Messiah (Gal. 2:4; 5:13); and we must stand fast in the liberty by which Christ has made us free (Gal. 5:1).

Paul refers to the heavenly Jerusalem as the mother of us all. This statement ties in perfectly with the analogy of free Sarah who gives birth to free children. It also is true theologically in that the Word of God and ordinances have been committed unto the church. This Word is used by the Spirit to bring forth children unto God (1 Pet. 1:23; Jas. 1:18) and then feeds these children with “pure milk” (1 Pet. 2:2; 1 Cor. 3:2) and “solid food” (Heb. 5:14). The Scriptures bring us into the kingdom and cause us to grow up to maturity. As our Lord said, “Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth” (Jn. 17:17). Whenever the church ceases to teach the pure doctrine of the gospel and the whole counsel of God faithfully, as the Jews did in Jesus’ day and the papal church has done, it ceases to be a mother and becomes nothing but a cast out slave.

### Galatians 3:23-25: The Law’s Purpose in Redemptive History

Durand quotes Galatians 3:23-24 as evidence for his dispensational understanding of the complete abrogation of everything in the Mosaic law. A brief examination of this section of Galatians is therefore in order to demonstrate that Durand’s understanding is in error. The apostle Paul moves from the law’s *universal* purpose in verse 22 in leading sinners to Christ *personally* to the law’s special purpose in *redemptive history* (i.e. with respect to the Jews) in verses 23-25: “But before faith came, we were kept under guard by the law, kept for the faith which would afterward be revealed. Therefore, the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor.” If we compare verse 23 with verse 22 we might think that Paul was simply repeating himself with slight variations for emphasis. Both verses speak of being confined or kept in custody by the law and even use the same verb, *sunkleio* (“imprisoned,” “walled in,” “confined”). These verses, however, contain some important differences that need to be noted for a proper analysis.

First, in verse 23 Paul speaks about the law’s role before “faith came...the faith which would afterward be revealed.” The coming faith to be revealed does not refer to each individual believer’s faith, but to the time of the gospel fulfillment. Faith or a personal trust in the Redeemer existed throughout the history of the Old Testament. Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham and David were all justified by trusting in the Mediator. In fact, Paul had just elaborated on Abraham’s faith in 3:6-9. But “the faith” (note the article) refers to faith in a specific eschatological sense for the Old Covenant people. It is something *revealed*. It is something objective that came in history. “The coming of faith is therefore identical to the coming of Christ, who is the object of faith, which is the decisive point in salvation history.”<sup>33</sup> With the coming of the Messiah the Mosaic administration was displaced by the actual fulfillment of the promise.

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<sup>33</sup> Ronald Y. K. Fung, *The Epistle to the Galatians*, 168.

This interpretation is supported by Paul's conclusion in verse 24 where he teaches that the Old Testament people of God were children supervised by the law. Once we understand that Paul is discussing the law's unique role prior to the incarnation and death of Jesus, then we can interpret the word "confined", "imprisoned" or "guarded" correctly.

Second, Paul reverts to the first person plural "we" (in both the verb *ephouroumetha* and participle *sunkleio*) to identify himself with the Jewish people. This indicates that he has shifted from the law's function of condemning all men (*ta panta*) in the world to the law's function of supervising the Old Covenant people and preparing them for the Messiah. This interpretation is supported by the fact that in verse 22 all men have "sin" as their jailer or prison (this emphasizes the law's condemning function) while verse 23 says that the "law" itself is the guardian. Jews and Gentiles are alike confined under the law because all have sinned and are under the law's curse. But only the Old Testament church was confined under law as a guardian or child supervisor because the people of God at that time were in an immature state in salvation history. The Jews lived "under the law" in a special way that did not apply to the Gentiles.

With these two points in mind the expression "imprisoned" (NIV) "kept" (KJV) of "having been locked up" (*sunkekkeis menoī*) in verse 23 should not be viewed as being in the dungeon of sin, held by an executioner as in verse 22, but rather *protective* custody. It is better to interpret verse 23 in terms of verse 24 than verse 22. The law guards the Old Covenant people and encloses them in to protect them and prepare them for the New Covenant era or the time of eschatological maturity. Under the Mosaic administration, the law not only showed the people their sin and need of a Savior, but also served as a guardian to keep the people in line. It served as a fence by teaching the Jews about their religious, ethical and covenantal separation from the surrounding Gentile peoples. Before the death of Christ and coming of the Holy Spirit the Jews needed the enclosure of the ceremonial laws. These detailed regulations regarding clean and unclean foods, rites of purification, laws about mixing seeds or types of cloth or plowing with different kinds of animals and so on served as a protective wall to cordon off the covenant people from corruption and worldliness. In many ways these laws were stifling and difficult, but the time of immaturity required them.

Therefore, contrary to much modern evangelical thought, verse 23 is attributing an essentially positive function to the Mosaic law. The verb "kept under guard" (NKJV) (*ephouroumetha*) should not be translated in the negative sense as in the New International Version's "imprisoned" because this keeping under guard is a guardianship for children who may harm themselves. It is not a barbed wire fence for criminals, but a protective wall for those whom God loves. Before the coming of Christ, Israel was like a nursery fenced in by the law within a world ruled by sin. "The imperfect 'we were being guarded' reaches back to Sinai and covers that entire period."<sup>34</sup>

## The Analogy of the Supervisory Guardian

Paul goes on to explain more precisely what he has just said about the custody of the law in verse 24 with an analogy of a child's attendant or guardian: "Therefore the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith." The word "therefore" indicates that what the apostle says here is the logical result or consequence of the teaching of verse 23.

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<sup>34</sup> R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Paul's Epistles to the Galatians, Ephesians and Philippians*, 179.

The key to understanding this verse is to understand the meaning of the Greek term *paidagogos* translated variously as: “tutor” (NKJV, ASV, NEB, NASB), “trainer” (Amplified), “schoolmaster” (KJV), “custodian” (RSV, NBV), “guardian” (JB, NIV), “wards in discipline” (Moffatt), “slave-guardian” (Lenski); “child-conductor” (Young’s Literal Translation), and “attendant” (Goodspeed, Williams). Translated literally it means “childleader,” from *pais* “child” and *ago* “lead.” The translations “schoolmaster” and “tutor” are unfortunate and misleading, for the main idea behind the word is that of training through strong discipline and not teaching through the impartation of knowledge.

The word comes from the practice of wealthy Greek and Roman families who would appoint a guardian to supervise their sons by disciplining them, watching over them and protecting them. This supervisory guardianship began around the age of six or seven and lasted through late adolescence (around 17 years of age). The “*pedagogue*” was usually a slave and sometimes also a eunuch. When the son was very young the guardian would make sure the child got out of bed. He would help him get dressed and make him breakfast. Then he would escort him to school and gymnastic exercises and even made sure that he made it home safely. He would even carry the child’s implements for study. Schools at that time had a special waiting room for these custodians. As the child grew, the guardian was supposed to keep the son away from evil influences (e.g., foolish, violent or uncultured associations) dangerous situations and unwise or hurtful decisions. If a guardian failed in any way he could be severely punished by his master—the boy’s father. These custodians also had to help the child learn proper manners and deportment. As the ancient author Plutarch reveals, “And yet what do tutors [*hoi paidagogoi*] teach? To walk in the public streets with lowered head; to touch salt fish but with one finger, but fresh fish, bread and meat with two; to sit in such and such a posture; in such and such a way to wear their cloaks.”<sup>35</sup> In Greco-Roman culture the custodian would find himself in the position of warding off aggressive homosexual advances toward his young teenage charges that were common occurrences in the public baths.<sup>36</sup> These boy-discipliners were supposed to work to subdue the child’s natural rebellious tendencies and uncouth manners so that he would develop into a gentleman worthy of his class or wealthy status. The Greek philosopher Plato gives us some insight into these guardians:

Just as no sheep or other witless creature ought to exist without a herdsman, so children cannot live without *paidagogen*, nor slaves without masters. And of all wild creatures, the child is the most intractable; for insofar as it, above all others, possesses a fount of reason that is yet uncurbed, it is a treacherous, sly and most insolent creature. Wherefore the child must be strapped up, as it were, with many bridles—first, when he leaves the care of nurse and mother, with *paidagogois* to guide his childish ignorance, and after that with *didaskalois* [teachers] of all sorts of subjects and lessons, treating him as becomes a freeborn child. On the other hand, he must be treated as a slave; and any free man that meets him shall punish both the child himself and his *paidagogen* or his *didaskalon* [teacher], if any of them does wrong (VII. 808D-E).<sup>37</sup>

Although these child-supervisors did occasionally develop affectionate relationships with those under their care, the primary picture of these men in ancient literature is that of strict disciplinarians who often had to resort to corporal punishment and even brute strength to keep in

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<sup>35</sup> Plutarch, *Mor.* 439f-440, cited in Young, “PAIDAGOGOS,” 160-161, as quoted in Timothy George, *Galatians*, 265.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>37</sup> Plato, *Laws* as quoted in Richard N. Longenecker, *Galatians*, 146-147.



line those who were their responsibility. They would violently break up what we would call a teenage party and have the friends of their ward thrown in jail. Because they were not the child's parent and were responsible solely to the head of the household they could exact severe punishments without any fear of losing the child's affection. Thus, "pedagogues frequently accomplished their task by tweaking the ear, cuffing the hands, whipping, caning, pinching, and other unpleasant means of applied correction."<sup>38</sup> The role of these custodians was essentially positive because they protected, disciplined and guarded boys at an immature time in their lives when they were most likely to be harmed, go astray or do something foolish. They were used to help untrained, undisciplined boys develop into mature men. When the child reached maturity these supervisory guardians were no longer needed. By doing their job properly, they essentially worked themselves out of a job.

With an understanding of the child-guardian, the point of Paul's analogy comes into focus. The people of God, before the coming of Christ, needed the supervisory function of the whole Mosaic system. These people did not have the same privileges and advantages of those in the New Covenant church because they were lacking the finality of God's revelation. That is the New Testament canon which explained in detail the person and work of Christ as well as its implications for God's people. They also did not have the outpouring of the Holy Spirit or the greater effusion of the Spirit of Christ. The coming of the Holy Spirit and completion of the canon were dependent upon the incarnation and finished work of the Mediator. As such, they needed the weak and beggarly elements because of their immaturity. They needed the guidance of the ceremonial law to instruct and prepare them for the coming perfect redemptive work of the Messiah. This was largely accomplished through the typology of the redemptive rituals; as well as the discipline of the various ceremonial laws of separation to teach them about sanctification and separation from the world. In addition, there were rituals of purification and cleansing that pointed to regeneration and deliverance from the pollution of sin. Gill writes,

The ceremonial law gave them some hints of the Gospel scheme, and the way of salvation by Christ, but in a manner suited to their estate of childhood; by sights and shows, by types and figures, by rites and ceremonies, by shadows and sacrifices; it taught them by divers washings the pollution of their nature, their need of the blood of Christ to cleanse from all sin; by circumcision, the necessity of regeneration, and the internal circumcision of the heart; by the Passover, the daily sacrifice and other offerings, the doctrines of redemption, satisfaction and atonement...<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Timothy George, *Galatians*, 266.

<sup>39</sup> John Gill, *An Exposition of the New Testament*, 3:22. In his sermon on this topic Calvin concurs: "Yet was there also a diversity, because they were fain [obliged] to have Sacrifices, washings, and such other like things, till the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. And when the law was given, so as there was a Priest that entered into the Sanctuary to be an intercessor, and the people stood aloof a great way off, and a veil or Curtain was drawn in the midst of the Tabernacle to make a darkening of things: ye see they were things wherein the state of the fathers differed from ours: for during the absence of our Lord Jesus Christ, they had Ceremonies and figures, whereas we have the very body and substance of them, as saith Saint Paul to the Colossians. For God biddeth us not to offer anymore Calves, Sheep, or Oxen to wipe out the spots of our sins. But he telleth us that we must be sprinkled with the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, through the power of the Holy Ghost, and that in our Lord Jesus Christ we shall find all that is requisite for our salvation. Ye see then that as now faith reigneth in full power: that is to say, whereas the fathers had but a little taste of it according to their measure: it is fully and openly revealed unto us. And for this cause Saint Paul saith, that the fathers were after a sort restrained or shut up: so that he likeneth the law to a bondage, and in very deed so was it, and he will hereafter show what manner of bondage it is. It is not meant that the fathers obtained not the everlasting life which we hope for, or that we shall not be crowned altogether at the last day: but that God was fain [*willing*] for a time to weeld [*handle*] them like little babes. And for that cause also doth he

Without the knowledge of New Covenant revelation and the greater effusion and power of the Holy Spirit that Jesus would usher in by His death and resurrection in history, God had to treat the Jews as children for their own good. The object of the Mosaic administration of the covenant of grace was to keep the people of God in line and prepare them until the Messiah ushers in a new, superior, more glorious age. As Matthew Henry writes, “The great advantage of the gospel state above the legal, under which we not only enjoy a clearer discovery of divine grace and mercy than was afforded to the Jews of old, but are also freed from the state of bondage and terror under which they were held. We are not now treated as children in a state of minority, but as sons grown up to a full age, who are admitted to greater freedoms, and instated in larger privileges, than they were.”<sup>40</sup>

Although there are certainly elements of the law’s organization of the Old Covenant church into a particular nation (with borders and certain laws that were unique to Israel) that are part of this guardian aspect, the main focus of Paul in Galatians on the law’s custodial aspect is on the ceremonial ordinances which foreshadowed Christ and His work.<sup>41</sup> This observation is supported by examining the laws that the Judaizers were emphasizing that Paul deals with in this epistle. There is the issue of circumcision (Gal. 2:3-4; 5:2-4) and the ceremonial holy days in the Jewish calendar (Gal. 4:3, 9, 10) which the apostle calls “elements of the world” and “weak and beggarly elements” which lead back to bondage. The Judaizers did not recognize that the Mosaic administration played a temporary guardian role and was no longer necessary or applicable when the reality or substance had come into the world. Now that a perfect, sufficient and everlasting salvation has come, it is wrong and contrary to the gospel to look to ceremonial ordinances. It is an implicit denial of the finality of the cross and empty tomb, as well as a clinging to a state of immaturity. The fact that the circumcision party tied together this erroneous view of the Mosaic law with their concepts of human merit in salvation made matters even worse.

This interpretation of the guardian aspect of the Mosaic law is supported by Galatians 4:21-23 where Paul contrasts the two covenants: “For these things are the covenants: the one from Mount Sinai which gives birth to bondage, which is Hagar—for this Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia, and corresponds to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children—but the Jerusalem above is free, which is the mother of us all” (vs. 24-26). The expression, “Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage” likely indicates that Paul is not only referring to the bondage of the ceremonial system, but also the Pharisaical interpretation of that system as necessary for salvation. The apostle is saying that Christians are free from the bondage of the ceremonial law and the concepts of merit that have been illegitimately attached to the Mosaic administration. To look to the law as a system of merit unto salvation is to cling to Hagar (which is what God never intended), instead of Sarah which required only faith in the promise.

Paul teaches the temporary nature of the law as a guardian by the prepositional phrase *eis Christon* which can be translated “unto Christ” or “until Christ.” The first translation would

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use the similitude of a schoolmaster, and will again set down a third similitude of Tutors and governors” (*Sermons on Galatians*, 370-371).

<sup>40</sup> Matthew Henry, *Commentary on the Whole Bible*, 6:663.

<sup>41</sup> “From the law until Christ, the Church of God was enclosed in the nation of the Jews, and all the world beside [there was] no Church of people of God. And this distinction of a people and no people [i.e. non-Israel] stood some time after the coming of Christ (Matt. 10:5, “Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into the cities of the Samaritans enter ye not”). After the ascension of Christ, this distinction ended; because the mystery of man’s redemption was then more plainly revealed; and it began then to be revealed to the whole world, cf. Col. 1:26, 27; and Rom. 16:25” (William Perkins, *A Commentary on Galatians*, 198).

mean that the law served as a guardian *to lead us to Christ*. The *pedagogue* escorts the Old Covenant church to the Savior. This is the view of most English translations (KJV, NKJV, ASV, NASB, NIV). The law's purpose was to direct the Jews toward the Messiah through types, ceremonies, rituals and so forth. The ceremonies of cleansing, the shedding of the innocent blood of clean animals, the temple cultus and the Jewish festival days were either preaching the person and work of Christ or something intimately related to His work. The Mosaic system rotated around the Messiah to come and thus, as our Lord said to the Jews, "If you believed Moses, you would have believed Me: for he wrote about Me" (Jn. 5:46). As we have noted, the law also served a universal purpose in leading men to Christ by telling everyone that they have been cursed by God and are under His wrath for their blatant failure to live up to its righteous and perfect requirements. It sets forth the complete inadequacy and total failure of our own righteousness to recommend ourselves to God.

The second possible translation "until Christ [came]" emphasizes the temporal nature of the law's supervisory role. This sense would concur with the apostle's immediately prior statement that the Old Covenant saints "were kept under guard by the law, kept for the faith which would afterward be revealed" (v. 23). Although the first possibility is certainly implied by the general context, the purpose of the guardian and the ultimate purpose of the law stated in 24b in the immediate context, points to the temporal sense. By demonstrating that the Mosaic covenant of the administration of grace was displaced and set out of gear by the coming of Christ, Paul has completely undercut all the circumcision party's attempts at making Gentiles into their concept of a good law-keeping Jew.

The ultimate purpose of the law as a custodian is that "we might be justified by faith" (v. 24b). The law itself made it perfectly clear that the Jews needed a Savior. The author of Hebrews points out that the high priest had to offer up sacrifices, first for His own sins, and then for the people's (7:27) and that "the law made nothing perfect" (7:19). They were held under the supervision of a system that was symbolic and that could not remove sins with the blood of bulls and goats (9:9, 12). The law not only taught men that they were guilty and polluted sinners, but also that a Mediator was needed who could obtain with His own sinless blood a perfect, eternal redemption. The Jews were held under that supervisory-preparatory system until the object of their faith came into history and conquered sin and death. A proper understanding and use of the law causes us not to look to the law or ourselves for redemption, but solely to Jesus and His righteousness. True faith looks unto, rests upon and receives the person and work of Christ and nothing else at all.

The law as a supervisory guardian was a good and necessary thing for the Jewish people before the coming of Christ. It provided them with everything they needed in that time of immaturity to understand their condition, to know the impossibility of saving themselves by works and to look to the coming Mediator who alone could forgive sins and grant eternal life. The Judaizers had foolishly misunderstood the law's true purpose and had assigned to it something that was never intended by God.

In verse 25 Paul concludes this section on the law as a guardian by making explicit and emphasizing what was clearly implied in verses 23 and 24: "But after faith has come we are no longer under a tutor [i.e. supervisory-guardian]." Here Paul delivers the death blow to the circumcision party's argument for Gentiles to submit themselves to the whole Mosaic system in order to become "true Christians." With the coming of Christ the Mosaic expression of the law has come to a complete end. All the ceremonial laws have been abrogated with the coming of Christ. To return to the Mosaic form of the law covenant is to return to a state of the immaturity

of a restricted childhood. It implies that Jesus did not die on the cross, rise from the dead or send the Holy Spirit to His church. To insist that Gentiles (or even Christian Jews) must become circumcised, follow the Mosaic dietary requirements, the Old Testament feast days and other weak, beggarly ordinances is to deny God's plan and outworking of redemptive history. It not only condemns men to a state of perpetual immaturity and spiritual childishness; but, within their Pharisaical philosophy of merit and human contribution, it leads men straight to hell.

## Concluding Remarks and Applications

In discussing the intent of the law (vs. 19-25), Paul has discussed the law's purpose as it relates to all men personally, as well as its unique role in salvation history. He has mentioned its universal application (the moral law's confining all under sin), as well as the Mosaic law's particular application to Israel. Because there is so much misunderstanding regarding how and to what extent believers are no longer under the law, by way of review, application and further reiteration we will briefly examine the different ways that Christians are no longer under the law.

First, believers are not under the law as a means of justification before God. This is one of the central teachings of the epistles, especially Galatians and Romans. The obligation of a perfect and perpetual obedience to God's moral law has been satisfied by the sinless life of Christ. His perfect obedience to the law is imputed or credited to the believer. Jesus came to "fulfill all righteousness" (Mt. 3:15). As Paul says, "Therefore, as by the offense of one [Adam] judgment came upon all men to condemnation, even so by the righteousness of one [Jesus] the free gift came upon all men [i.e. all men in Christ or true believers] unto justification of life (Rom. 5:18-19, KJV). Adam, in the garden before the fall, was required to obey God's command perfectly if he was to attain to glorified life (i.e. all possibility of sin and mortality would forever be removed and Adam's body and soul would be glorified). This pre-fall covenant is referred to as the covenant of works by Reformed theologians. Adam, as we all know, failed miserably and therefore a perfect obedience must be fulfilled by the second Adam—Jesus Christ. He, by His life of moral perfection, fulfilled the obligation of a positive righteousness in the place of His people and they obtain this righteousness solely through faith. "His suffering discharges the penalty, but only his active obedience fulfills the condition."<sup>42</sup> When God declares a believing sinner righteous, He is not simply making a declaration of forgiveness or an exemption from the penalty as important as these things are. He is declaring that the whole law has been fulfilled, which means all sins or liability to punishment have been removed by the Savior's vicarious suffering and *the obligation to obey* the moral law has been vicariously taken care of as well. Justification is not just a declaration that a person is innocent, but also that eternal life has been *earned or merited* by the second Adam's perfect righteousness. Jesus provides a positive righteousness for the elect so that *judicially* the believing sinner is positionally just as righteous as the Savior in God's sight (cf. Gal. 4:4-5; 1 Cor. 1:30; Phil. 3:8-9; Zech. 3:3-4; Isa. 61:10).

Second, Christians are not under the law's curse or penalty. "He who believes in Him is not condemned" (Jn. 3:18). "There is...no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus" (Rom. 8:1). "Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law having become a curse for us" (Gal. 3:13). The full penalty with its suffering and torment for our sins was imputed to Jesus on the cross. He removed our sin (expiation) by His vicarious suffering and death and thus propitiated Jehovah's just wrath and reconciled us to God.

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<sup>42</sup> A. A. Hodge, *Outlines of Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1972 [1880]), 500.

Third, believers are not under the Mosaic administration of the covenant of grace. This means that the ceremonial laws have been abrogated. Once Jesus came and fulfilled all the types, figures and shadows of the Old Testament, there is no reason whatsoever to cling to these laws. It would be to live in a state of immaturity and bondage. Believers who attempt to revive Jewish feast days and Old Testament rites are implicitly denying the sufficiency and perfection of Jesus' work. The work of Christ and the New Covenant that our Lord's death and resurrection brought to pass is a glorious superseding of and advancement over the Mosaic administration with its ceremonial ordinances.

Because the New Covenant people of God are not under the Mosaic administration, they also are not obligated to follow the civil or judicial laws that only applied to the nation of Israel. The kingdom of God has been taken away from the Jewish nation and given to the church which is multi-national and which is not a political organization (Mt. 21:43). The author of Hebrews tells us that the land of Canaan was but a type of the believer's citizenship in heaven (Heb. 11:8-16). Therefore, laws regarding the borders of Israel, the location of the tribes, political loyalty to that nation, the method of tax collection, the type or form of the government, the location of the capital and defending "the holy land" with physical military means are not applicable today. That land is no longer holy or set apart and ethnic Jews do not automatically have a title to that land. Moreover, laws that deal specifically with the land such as the laws of jubilee and the cities of refuge are no longer binding.

The judicial law contained a number of laws that do not apply to the nations outside of Israel. There were regulations designed to protect the existence of the various tribes and land allotments such as the command for a brother to raise up a seed for his deceased brother (Deut. 25:5) and the returning of land its original owner every forty nine years. Such laws were clearly designed to protect the lineage of the coming Redeemer. After the incarnation such laws are obviously unnecessary. Further, these laws cannot even be applied to modern Israel for the documents proving family lineage and proper succession of family plots were destroyed in A. D. 70 by the Romans when they burned the Temple complex where the records were stored. There also are a number of judicial laws that are in part ceremonial, such as various health regulations about cleaning that typified regeneration and sanctification.

Given these considerations, those who argue that all nations are obligated to simply adopt the *whole* civil law of Israel are in error and are not thinking carefully. However, another error, equally if not even more serious, is that nothing at all within the judicial law applies to Gentile nations or to people living today. There are many judicial laws within the Mosaic code that are moral in character—case laws that apply the Ten Commandments to individuals, families and societies. As the notable Puritan William Perkins notes, "Now judicial laws, that are in foundation and substance moral, are not abrogated, but are perpetual.... If a judicial law serve[s] directly and immediately, to guard and [give] sense [to] any one of the ten commandments, in the main scope and end thereof, it is moral in equity and perpetual: because the end and use of it is perpetual."<sup>43</sup> The judicial laws against blasphemy (Lev. 24:16), idolatry (Ex. 20:3; 23:13); bestiality (Lev. 18:23), homosexuality (Lev. 18:22), bribery (Ex. 23:8), adultery (Ex. 20:14; Lev. 18:20), perjury (Ex. 20:16), perverting justice (Ex. 23:1-2, 6), witchcraft (Ex. 22:18), sorcery (Ex. 22:18; Dt. 18:10), cross dressing (Dt. 22:5), murder (Ex. 21:13), manslaughter (Ex. 21:12-14), assault (Ex. 21:18-26, kidnapping (Ex. 21:16; Dt. 24:7), incest (Lev. 18:6ff), seduction (Ex. 22:16-17), prostitution (Dt. 23:17), rape (Dt. 22:25-26), perjury (Ex. 20:16), moving property markers (Dt. 19:14), arson (Ex. 22:6), theft or stealing (Ex. 20:15; 22:1-5), slander (Ex. 23:1),

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<sup>43</sup> William Perkins, *A Commentary on Galatians*, 203.

oppressing a stranger (Ex. 23:9), mistreating the blind or deaf person (Lev. 19:14), loving one's neighbor (Lev. 19:19) and the like are obviously moral and binding on all men.

This point is supported by three observations. (1) Moral laws are not positivistic or arbitrary, but are based on God's nature and character and therefore cannot be annulled. (2) The heathen nations were judged and cast out of the land for violating many of these same laws (cf. Lev. 18:24-30). (3) God Himself says that this body of laws is the most just among all the nations and is worthy of admiration and emulation by the heathen (Dt. 4:6-8). As the Scottish delegate to the Westminster Assembly writes, "The will of God concerning civil justice and punishments is nowhere so fully and clearly revealed as in the judicial law of Moses. This therefore must be the surest prop and stay to the conscience of the Christian Magistrate."<sup>44</sup> Since the judicial laws that are moral were written by God and are identified by Him as just, righteous and perfect (Ps. 19:7; Rom. 7:12), the idea that they are no longer a standard for sanctification or for the civil magistrate is unbiblical and irrational.

## Various Errors, Misconceptions, Misrepresentations and False Assumptions

Durand has devoted a whole section of his website to the idea that I have deliberately misrepresented his position on the law. Therefore, in this section I will carefully present his views and demonstrate that they are unscriptural and not Reformed. Durand's basic position is that the whole Mosaic covenant has been abrogated, that anything within the Mosaic covenant (e.g., the *written* ten commandments, the *enscripturated* moral case laws, etc) are also abrogated (i.e. even as a specific standard for sanctification) because they are part of that covenant.<sup>45</sup> The

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<sup>44</sup> George Gillespie, "Wholesome Severity Reconciled with Christian Liberty" (London, 1645) in Christopher Coldwell, editor, *Anthology of Presbyterian and Reformed Literature* (Dallas, TX: Naphthali Press, 1991), 4:182.

<sup>45</sup> From Durand's book, *Judicial Warfare*: My comments next to his quotes are in brackets.

Pg 21 "...it [the law] either stands as a covenantal whole "in exhaustive detail" or it was abolished as a covenantal whole. One may not arbitrarily interpret the phrase '*the law*' to mean one thing (*i.e.* the moral law) in one passage of Scripture and something completely different in another (*i.e.* the ceremonial law)." [Note that Durand has adopted the dispensational position of radical discontinuity between the ethics of the covenants.]

Pg 26 Durand quotes favorably an author who says: "Neither Christ nor the apostles ever distinguished between the moral, ceremonial and the civil law when they speak of its establishment or abolition." (John Kitto) [In other words, the whole law of God revealed to Moses, including the Ten Commandments and all moral case laws, has been abolished. Once again, Durand supports the dispensational view of radical discontinuity.]

Pg 29 "The Mosaic law [Including the Ten Commandments] has not only been changed, but has been taken away and replaced by the New Covenant." [In other words, there is no *direct* continuity between the covenants regarding the standard for sanctification.]

Pg 30 "Christ...has abrogated the whole Mosaic covenant which agrees with the teaching of Hebrews that the law [Including the Ten Commandments] has not only been changed, but also has been taken away." [Durand ignores the fact that every example of obsolete, shadow laws that have been taken away is from the ceremonial law.]

Pg 42 "The Gentiles' admiration of the Israelites for their just laws [see Dt. 4:6-8] simply does not equal an obligation to enact those same laws in their own countries." [If the Gentile nations are not obligated to enact "just laws," as Durand proposes, then are they allowed to enact unjust laws? Could their laws be different than Israel's "just laws" and yet still be just? In other words, could they be *a* and *non-a* at the same time? Durand's assertion is irrational.]

Durand does a number of things in his book which are non-confessional and unbiblical: (1) He does not make any distinction between the law as it relates to earning salvation (justification) and the moral law as it relates to sanctification. (2) He makes no distinctions between laws that are ceremonial and only applied to Israel and laws that are moral and obviously applied to all nations at all times (see Leviticus 18; Dt. 4:6-8) He does however contradict this when he says moral principles in the law continue. Thus, the Ten Commandments are both abrogated

moral law, however, continues but “the moral law is synonymous with natural law.” Durand’s argument that I have misrepresented his position is based on my repeated statements that he teaches that the whole law of God has been done away, including the ten commandments. Durand thinks that this is a misrepresentation because he believes in natural law which is the moral law given to Adam in the garden. To clear up matters (I think Durand understands my position, but is deliberately equivocating), let me explain my position more clearly. Durand rejects all *revealed, enscripturated moral laws* within the Mosaic law and teaches that it is wrong for Christians to appeal to them *directly* as a source for ethics. This position is virtually identical to dispensationalism. He writes,

Pastor Schwertley has completely misrepresented what I wrote. What I actually said was the whole *Mosaic covenant* has been abrogated (which is what Paul himself taught), but I was very clear that the moral law has not been abrogated. It was given to Adam in the Garden and is an essential part of man's nature *i.e.* it preceded the Mosaic Covenant and continues in force even though that system no longer operates. In fact, I went out of my way to state my belief that *the moral law is synonymous with natural law* [emphasis added].

Like all Van Tilian Reconstructionists, Schwertley doesn’t believe that man has access to the moral law apart from special revelation (*i.e.* the Old Testament case laws) — hence their insistence that the Mosaic Law cannot be abrogated. As far as I can tell, the term “Law of God” has historically been understood by Reformed writers to mean the moral law. Like all Reconstructionists, he reinterprets this term and applies it exclusively to the Mosaic Law. That is how he can accuse someone who says that the Mosaic Law in its entirety has been abolished of claiming that the “whole Law of God has been done away.” (Greg Durand, e-mail via sermonaudio.com, Sept 2, 2007)

There are a number of problems with the above statement. First, one can speak of the Mosaic covenant being replaced by the New Covenant (which is obvious) and yet note that the moral laws within the Mosaic covenant are still in force as a *standard* of ethics for civil magistrates and for sanctification. Durand has adopted a position of *radical discontinuity* identical with dispensationalism. The specific administration of the law given to Moses with all its ceremonies, types, sacrifices and political laws unique to Israel were preparatory and temporary. But that which is moral is based on God’s nature and character and cannot be

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and binding at the same time (but only the principles). (3) Following dispensational writers he makes no discernable distinction between covenantal form (e.g., the Gentiles are obviously not required to adopt the *whole Mosaic covenantal administration* as a covenant for each nation); and, the moral content of the Mosaic code which obviously all nations at all times are obligated to obey. God tells us explicitly that the seven Canaanite nations were to be driven out for violating the sexual ethics set forth in Leviticus 18. (4) Apparently, the goal of Durand's book is to get readers to not look to the revealed moral laws in the Older Testament as a specific standard for laws for civil magistrates, but rather to look to natural law. The problem with this is: a) Paul appeals to natural law or the law written on the heart to show that men are guilty of sin, not as a rule for a detailed system of law (Rom. 2:15). b) The written moral laws in both testaments are perspicuous; the human conscience has been corrupted by sin and, therefore, is not completely trustworthy. I would challenge Mr. Durand to note one pagan nation in all of human history who has put in place the requirements of the first table of the law. c) If natural law and the moral law are the same law, then why does Mr. Durand have a problem going to the moral laws in the Older Testament? Clearly, Durand has an ax to grind against appealing *directly* to Old Testament moral laws and moral case laws as applicable to modern states. His solution is natural law. d) History has repeatedly shown that sinful men need the specifics of God’s revealed moral laws because vague generalities are easily manipulated.

abrogated as a *standard* for ethics. *The moral laws within* the Mosaic code are the same as natural law and, therefore, they should be used, studied, memorized and applied to personal holiness. When Durand accuses me of teaching that man only has access to the moral law through special revelation, he deliberately misrepresents my position. I have noted in my lectures a number of times that the work of the law written on the heart is there and is enough to render man guilty before God (Rom. 2:14-15). My problem with those who reject *revealed* Old Testament moral laws in favor of looking to natural law is that: (1) Because of the fall and our sinful natures, natural law can easily be perverted, misread and abused by the fallen mind. That is why pagan law orders throughout history have had so many unjust laws and penalties. (2) The written enscripturated moral laws are perspicuous, objective, detailed and thus cannot be rewritten to satisfy a depraved heart. That is why the Prophets in the Old Testament did not appeal to natural law when rebuking corrupt kings and magistrates. (3) The apostle Paul when teaching Christian ethics in relation to sanctification did not tell believers to follow natural law or look within to their conscience, but repeatedly went directly to the revealed, enscripturated Old Testament moral laws (cf. Rom. 13:8-10; Gal. 5:13-14). When Paul used the term “the law” (*ho nomos*), he was not appealing to conscience or the law written on our hearts, but rather he quotes the Old Testament moral laws verbatim from the Greek Septuagint.<sup>46</sup> Like a dispensationalist, Durand will say that “moral principles *reflected* in the law” apply (*Judicial*

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<sup>46</sup> If anyone has any doubts as to my contention that Durand holds to a system of thought on the Old Testament law that has more in common with dispensationalism than Reformed theology, they need to read the following comments in his essay, “A Response to the Misrepresentations of Brian Schwertley.” He writes, “When referring the Mosaic law, I have always used the words ‘abrogate’ [“to repeal, to annul...to abolish... syn.—abolish, nullify, rescind, annul, repeal”]; *Webster’s New Twentieth Century Dictionary Unabridged*, 6. The word “repeal” means “to withdraw officially, to revoke, to rescind, to annul” (cf. *Ibid.* 1532).] and ‘abolish’ [“to make void; to annul; to abrogate...to destroy, or put an end to”...syn. —abrogate, nullify, annul, repeal, revoke, cancel, destroy, do away with, annihilate” (*Ibid.* 5)]. While being divested of its legal force, an abrogated or abolished law does not vanish, but maintains its place in the statute books and the legal principles thereof may still be studied, extracted, and applied by a future court to similar cases. In a subtle attempt to alter the meaning of what I have written, Schwertley substituted the words ‘obliterate’ and ‘eradicate’ in the place of the words ‘abrogate’ and ‘abolish’—neither of which I would have ever used to refer to the Mosaic law since they both mean ‘to do away with completely, so as to leave no trace.’ Thus, he wanted his audience to conclude that I believe the Mosaic law has been erased and is therefore to be treated as if it never existed. This is blatant deception.” This quote is so absurd and forced that it is somewhat amusing. The Mosaic law (the whole thing—including the 10 commandments and all the moral case laws) supposedly has been abrogated or abolished, but it still may be extracted and applied. If it is abolished, annulled or abrogated, how does it apply to us? Circumcision and the use of incense in public worship have been abrogated. This means that any statutes relating to these things cannot be appealed to as authoritative binding laws. This means we can ignore these laws totally because they have nothing to do with us. We can study them to attempt to discern the typological or symbolical meanings, but these laws can be freely *disobeyed or disregarded* with no moral consequences whatsoever. (How, Mr. Durand is “thou shalt not murder” abrogated, destroyed, annulled, or abolished? What is the difference between “eradicate” and “cancel, destroy, annihilate” which are synonyms of “abolish”?) Laws upholding slavery in the United States prior to the civil war have been annulled, abrogated, done away with, etc. This means they can be studied out of historical interest, but they have nothing to do with us. Durand’s view that every law within the whole Mosaic administration has been “abrogated” or “abolished,” yet we can study them for principles is contradictory nonsense. They either apply or they do not apply. If they are ceremonial and typical then we can try to figure out their New Testament fulfillment. If they are for Israel only, then they have nothing to do with us and can be freely disregarded. Durand and dispensationalists engage in such arbitrary, self-contradictory nonsense because it is obvious that the moral laws in the Mosaic code are different than ceremonial laws and thus cannot be ignored. If Durand had to choose between the justice system of the early New England Puritans and ones preferred by Baptist dispensationalists of the preceding century, he would prefer the dispensationalists because according to Durand’s own teaching the New England Puritans were “blatant legalists” (i.e. the early Puritans adopted the moral laws within Israel’s civil code almost verbatim).



*Warfare*, 22), but the law itself is abrogated and any direct use of it even for sanctification is “blatant legalism” (see *Judicial Warfare*, 142). Paul disagreed and quoted moral laws *directly* out of the Decalogue and *outside* the Decalogue (e.g., Rom. 12:19-20; 13:9; 1 Cor. 9:9; cf. 5:1; Gal.5:14; 1 Tim. 5:18; James also appeals to enscripturated Old Testament moral laws directly; Jam. 2:11-12; cf. 5:4). If Jesus, Paul, James and John can appeal *directly* to the written moral laws within the Old Testament, then we can and should do likewise. (4) If two believers have a different view of what natural law teaches, then to what objective standard can they appeal to resolve their differences? The only answer that makes any sense is the objective, written, revealed moral laws in the Old and New Testaments.

Second, Durand’s statement, “As far as I can tell, the term ‘Law of God’ has historically been understood by Reformed writers to mean the moral law,” (remember Durand says, “the moral law is synonymous with natural law,” and thus we should not appeal *directly* to any of the laws within the Mosaic covenant) is sheer nonsense. The greatest of the Reformed symbols—the Westminster Standards will prove my point. Note below how the writers of the Larger Catechism repeatedly cite Old Testament moral laws in the Mosaic code verbatim as proof texts for Christian and societal ethics. In other words, they were not trying to indirectly glean a few principles here and there, but rather wholeheartedly accepted moral case laws as binding.

### W. C. F. Larger Catechism<sup>47</sup>

[Q. 28] *What are the punishments of sin in this world?* The answer lists blessings and cursings of the covenant, *citing Deuteronomy 28:15ff.*

[Q. 108] “The duties required in the second commandment are, the receiving, observing, and keeping pure and entire, all such religious worship and ordinances as God hath instituted in his Word...as also the disapproving, detesting, opposing, all false worship; and, according to each one’s place and calling, removing it, and all monuments of idolatry.” *Deuteronomy 7:5 is cited.*

[Q. 109] “The sins forbidden in the second commandment are, all devising, counselling, commanding, using, and anywise approving, any religious worship not instituted by God himself; tolerating a false religion...” *Deuteronomy 13:6-12 is cited.*

[Q. 128] “The sins of inferiors against their superiors are, all neglect of the duties required toward them; envying at, contempt of, and rebellion against, their persons and places, in their lawful counsels, commands, and corrections; cursing, mocking, and all such refractory and scandalous carriage, as proves a shame and dishonor to them and their government.” *Exodus 21:15 and Deuteronomy 21:18ff are cited*, which require the death penalty for striking parents and for stubborn and rebellious sons.

[Q. 136] “The sins forbidden in the sixth commandment are, all taking away the life of ourselves, or of others, except in case of public justice, lawful war, or necessary defence; the neglecting or withdrawing the lawful and necessary means of preservation of life; sinful anger, hatred, envy, desire of revenge; all excessive passions, distracting cares... provoking words; oppression, quarreling, striking, wounding, and whatsoever else tends to the destruction of the life of any.”

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<sup>47</sup> The material in this section comes from Martin A. Foulner, *Theonomy and the Westminster Confession: An Annotated Sourcebook* (Edinburgh: Marpet Press, 1997), 8-10.

*Capital punishments cited are: Numbers 35:16-21 and Exodus 21:18ff as well as the case laws in Numbers 35:31 and Exodus 22:2.*

[Q. 139] “The sins forbidden in the seventh commandment, besides the neglect of the duties required, are, adultery, fornication, rape, incest, sodomy, and all unnatural lusts...” *A cited proof text is Leviticus 20:15, 16:* “And if a man lie with a beast, he shall surely be put to death; and ye shall slay the beast.”

[Q. 141] “The duties required in the eighth commandment are, truth, faithfulness, and justice in contracts and commerce between man and man; rendering to every one his due; restitution of goods unlawfully detained from the right owners thereof...to procure, preserve, and further the wealth and outward estate of others, as well as our own.” *Lev. 6:2-5 is cited*, and the command to add a fifth part in making voluntary restitution is italicized, also *Lev. 25:35, Deut. 21:1-4, Ex. 23:4ff.*

[Q. 142] Includes the sin of removing landmarks, *citing Deut. 19:4.*

[Q. 145] Regarding sins forbidden by the ninth commandment the Catechism’s citations include right judgment by judges [Lev. 19:15]; concealing the truth [Lev. 5:1; Deut. 13:8]; failure to reprove sin [Lev. 19:17]; lying [Lev. 19:11]; talebearing [Lev. 19:16]; and raising false rumors [Ex. 23:1].

[Q. 151] “3. From the nature and quality of the offence: if it be against the express letter of the law, break many commandments, contain in it many sins: if not only conceived in the heart, but break forth in words and actions, scandalize others, and admit of no reparation: if against means, mercies, judgments, light of nature, conviction of conscience, public or private admonition, censures of the church, civil punishments...” *Quoting Deut. 22:22, 28f*, as binding examples of differing degrees of sin. The Catechism draws the distinction between adultery [requiring death], and seduction of an unbetrothed damsel which requires restitution.

The Confession of Faith 23:3 [Of the Civil Magistrate] is particularly germane to this discussion. “Civil magistrates may not assume to themselves the administration of the Word and Sacraments; or the power of the keys of the kingdom of heaven yet he hath authority, and it is his duty, to take order, that unity and peace be preserved in the Church, that the truth of God be kept pure and entire; that all blasphemies and heresies be suppressed; all corruptions and abuses in worship and discipline prevented or reformed; and all the ordinances of God duly settled, administered, and observed...” The proof texts include Leviticus 24:16 and Deuteronomy 13:5, which order death for blasphemies and heretics respectively. It is interesting that, although Calvin, the early Presbyterians and Puritans had many good things to say about “natural law” and “the light of nature,” when it came to teaching Christian or societal ethics (i.e. how people who are regenerated and justified should conduct themselves), they repeatedly referenced the *revealed* ten commandments and the moral case laws. Why do we repeatedly find this pattern? It is probably because an *objective, written standard of absolute ethics* is necessary for instruction in righteousness. How would a Christian teach ethics by appealing to natural law? Does he meditate on his conscience? Does he study the habits of beavers, bumblebees and mountain gorillas?

Durand's contention that all the laws after Exodus 34 were "a localized codification of the Covenant of Works" that were *all abrogated* when the Mosaic covenant was put away was obviously not accepted by the Westminster Divines. If as Durand writes, "the Mosaic Law... was never intended to be a 'model' for the rest of the world" (Sept. 24, 2007 e-mail), then why did the Divines keep referring to it for virtually every teaching on ethics? Moreover, why did God Himself say in Deuteronomy 4:6-8 that Israel needed to be faithful so the surrounding pagan nations would recognize the superiority of Israel's laws and justice system? Durand would be wise to read Calvin's sermon on Deuteronomy 4:6-10:

But let us come to that which Moses adds concerning statutes and laws, which is the principal point of this sentence. *What people is there (says he) which has so rightful statutes and ordinances as we have?* Truly if a man would have believed the heathen, they thought very well of themselves in their own dotages [feble-mindedness or childishness], and they bare themselves in hand that there was nothing but sound perfection in them. But yet for all that, it is a wonder to see how they became so dull. They that otherwise were of great skill and sharp witted, became so brutish in their superstitions, as even little children might justly have been ashamed of them. But the light must be said to shine in the dark; or else it will never be possible to discern a right. And for proof thereof, what is the cause that the heathen are so hardened in their own dotages? It is for that they never knew God's Law, and therefore they never compared the truth with the untruth. *But when God's law comes in place, then does it appear that all the rest is but smoke:* in so much that they which took themselves to be marvelously witty, are [instead] found to have been no better than besotted [foolish] in their own beastliness. This is apparent. Wherefore let us mark well, that to discern that there is nothing but vanity in all worldly devices, we must know the Laws and ordinances of God. *But if we rest upon men's laws, surely it is not possible for us to judge rightly.* Then must we needs go first to God's school, and that will show us when we have once profited under Him, it will be enough. That is all our perfection. And on the other side, we may despise all that ever is invented by man, seeing there is nothing but fondness and uncertainty in them. *And that is the cause why Moses terms them rightful ordinances.* As if he should say, it is true indeed that other people have stores of ceremonies, stores of rules and stores of laws: but there is no right in them at all, all is arie, all is crooked. True, it is that they perceive it not: and what is the cause thereof, but for that it is not possible for them to discern good from evil, without God's word which is the truth? Howsoever we fare, *we cannot do the right thing that is just or right, except we have first learned it at God's hand.* And if we have been so far overseen as to allow our own doings, let us not go on still, for God will disallow every whit of it, because we must take all our righteousness at His truth. In this case, it is not for every man to bring his own weights and his own balance: *but we must hold ourselves to that which God has uttered and does utter.*<sup>48</sup>

Third, Durand's statement that I am a Van Tilian Reconstructionist is false and is simply assumed on his part. In apologetics, there are things that I like in Van Til, Greg Bahnsen and Gordon Clark. However, there are also things with which I strongly disagree (e.g., the idea of accepting paradox, analogical thinking, etc). I am a presuppositionalist; but, I am not wedded to any one system of thought. In addition, I am not a Christian Reconstructionist in the modern sense of the word. The Christian Reconstructionist movement has been: too antinomian on the first table of the law; generally bad on tithing (Gary North excepted); generally wrong on worship and church government; weak on the proper role of the church (Vallecito) and/or

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<sup>48</sup> John Calvin (Arthur Golding, trans.), *The Sermons of John Calvin Upon the Fifth Book of Moses Called Deuteronomy* (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, [1583] 1987), 123. English modernized and emphasis added.

maintaining a high church Episcopal view of church authority (Tyler); unbiblical and unconfessional in their view of ecumenical cooperation (e.g., their acceptance of Arminian and Pentecostal heretics). Moreover, many in the movement have either adopted the damnable heresy of the Federal Vision or do not see a problem with it. Rather than critique these genuine and serious problems, Durand apparently is very concerned about the Christian Reconstructionist movement's love of the ten commandments and the moral case laws and wants to make sure churches and the nation do not look to or adopt these *revealed* laws for sanctification or civic justice. While Paul says the Old Testament *revealed* moral laws are "holy and just and good," Durand says they are "temporary," a "parenthesis" and a dangerous form of "judicial warfare." Perhaps he would tell Planned Parenthood, sodomite activists, abortionists, liberal judges, President Obama, Nancy Pelosi, Harry Reid and the like that they need to pay closer attention to natural law. Given the fact, however, that the wicked are continuously suppressing and twisting natural law to justify their sinful behavior, it would be wise, proper and good to point them to the *revealed, enscripturated moral laws* in the Bible. To this rather obvious, biblical idea the prophets and apostles say "yes" while Durand says, "no, natural law is sufficient."<sup>49</sup>

There are some other important questions that Durand needs to answer. (1) What is wrong with using the *revealed* moral laws in the Old Testament as a standard for sanctification or as a guide for civil laws in a Christian commonwealth as long as they are not used as a co-ground or instrument of justification (e.g., the heresy of the Judaizers, Romanists and Federal Vision advocates)? Durand's idea that the *whole revealed law* (ceremonial, moral, civil) is a package and thus all laws have been abrogated together not simply for justification, but also for sanctification (see his dispensational view on sanctification below), is a radical departure from the Westminster Standards which quotes the ten commandments with approval and organizes the appropriate moral case laws under each commandment for clarification and explication. (2) How can it be wrong for a Christian civil magistrate to appeal to the *revealed moral case laws* in the Old Testament as a standard or guide for justice when: a) These laws were written by God Himself (Because they came from Jehovah directly the idea that they are unjust, inferior, harsh, primitive, barbaric or somehow of lesser value than "natural law" is impossible and unbiblical); b) They are described by God Himself as "just" or "righteous" laws (e.g., Deut. 4:8)? If these revealed moral laws and moral case laws are just, righteous, holy, good, spiritual, perfect, etc., as the Bible so clearly says (cf. Ps. 19:7; 119:142; Rom. 7:12), why is it wrong to use them and how could fallen men improve upon them with only "natural law"? Can man look to the law written on the heart to come up with laws that are better or more just? No, of course not! The law written of the heart and the *revealed* moral laws *cannot* differ.

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<sup>49</sup> Durand could respond to the apostle's statement that the law is "holy and just and good" (Rom. 7:12) by arguing that all such positive statements regarding the law in the New Testament are not referring to the *revealed enscripturated moral law*, but only to natural law. (Durand essentially states this in an e-mail sent Sept. 24, 2007 where we sets forth the suggestion that the expression "covenant of works" could be substituted for "the law" in the N. T.) The problem with such a view is that in the immediate context (Rom. 7:7) the example the apostle gives of this "holy and just and good" law is taken from Deuteronomy 5:21, "You shall not covet." Not only does Paul refer to the revealed, enscripturated moral law as "holy and just and good," but he quotes from a section of the law that Durand calls a "localized codification of the covenant of works" that only applies to Israel. Paul also appeals directly to the Old Testament *revealed* moral law in his section on Christian sanctification in Rom. 12:12; 13:8-9; cf. Gal. 5:14.

## Durand's Rejection of Revealed Moral Law as a Standard for Societies

Since Durand in his various e-mails and on his website keeps insisting that I am misrepresenting his position on the Old Testament moral law I would like to clarify our differences by a quote from his book that proves he rejects the use of all the *revealed* moral laws within the Mosaic administration in favor of natural law. He writes,

God's prohibition against homosexuality was written upon the Sodomites' heart as part of the law of nature. This is precisely the doctrine of the Apostle Paul, who wrote in Romans 1:26-32 that homosexuals know their behavior is against nature and yet they willfully indulge in it nonetheless. Thus, by appealing to the destruction of Sodom as a proof-text for the universal application of the Mosaic case laws, Bahnsen unwittingly undermined his own thesis. Even if we were to accept the Reconstructionists' claim that man must have a specifically revealed law of God to regulate his behavior, we need not look for it in Leviticus or Deuteronomy. The eternal moral law against homosexuality is implied in the first words God spoke to Noah, and through him to all his posterity, following the flood: "Be fruitful and multiply" (Genesis 9:1); this was merely a reaffirmation of the commandment delivered to the human race through Adam and is part of the creation mandate which predated the Mosaic law by about two thousand years. Homosexuality is counterproductive to this commandment and contrary to the natural order, resulting in corruption and death (Romans 1:27). It therefore falls within the purview of the civil magistrate's duty to protect society from decay from within by restraining and punishing the commission of unnatural behavior. Paul acknowledged that homosexuality is so detrimental to the health of human society that it is "worthy of death" (Romans 1:32), equating "the judgment of God" with the natural order of creation, not the civil sanctions of the Mosaic code as Rushdoony claimed.<sup>50</sup>

This statement contains a number of erroneous conclusions and claims. Durand apparently believes that the fact that the people of Sodom were destroyed because of homosexuality; and, Paul teaches that homosexuality is against nature (Rom. 1:26-32) is proof that there is no need for "the universal application of Mosaic [moral] case laws." This conclusion is unwarranted for the following reasons. First, if God's prohibition against homosexuality written on the heart implies or teaches (as Durant believes) that specific, revealed moral laws are unnecessary, superfluous or wrong for the nations, then why did God bother to give Israel judicial statutes with moral case laws at all? If natural law is good enough for the nations to have genuine justice, then why was it not also good enough for Israel? Durand may argue that "it was a codification of the covenant of works forced upon them for worshipping the golden calf." We have already demonstrated that such a view is unbiblical nonsense. Second, God tells Israel that their *revealed* law code with its moral case laws is *superior* to every other nation upon earth (Deut. 4:8-9). The obvious conclusion one should reach from such a statement is that the surrounding pagan nations are *unable* to achieve this level of justice through natural law alone. Revealed law is superior because it is perspicuous, objective and detailed.<sup>51</sup> We know that natural law is enough to

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<sup>50</sup> *Judicial Warfare*, 41.

<sup>51</sup> Calvin's position on the *written* law of God is that it is essential because our sin and depravity *obscures* the law of nature. He spoke of *written* law "as a *necessary remedy* both for our dullness and our contumacy." In *The Institutes of Christian Religion* he writes, "...[C]onscience, instead of allowing us to stifle our perceptions, and sleep on without interruption, acts as an inward witness and monitor, reminds us of what we owe to God, points out the distinction between good and evil, and thereby convicts us of departure from duty. But man, being immured in the darkness of error, is scarcely able, by means of that natural law, to form any tolerable idea of the worship which is

condemn us of sin, but is exceptionally difficult to get a group of people to agree as to what natural law specifically teaches. Third, God Himself had no problem applying His own revealed moral case laws to the surrounding pagan nations because, after a detailed section from the moral case laws dealing primarily with sexual sins (adultery, incest, homosexuality, bestiality, etc), God says that He is judging these nations as a result of these wicked practices (Lev. 18:24-27). If God can use revealed moral case laws to identify sins outside of Israel, then so can we. Fourth, Paul says that the Jews had a distinct advantage over the Gentiles “because to them were committed the oracles of God” (Rom. 3:2). Durand writes as though God’s law was a distinct disadvantage; as if it is something we must studiously avoid as a standard for personal and societal ethics. He says we do not need to look for ethics in Leviticus or Deuteronomy; we can go directly to natural law.

In addition, Durand’s claim that Bahnsen’s appeal to the destruction of Sodom (for their perverse sexual practices) actually disproves his [i.e. Bahnsen’s] case for the universal application of the moral case laws is absurd. The point that Bahnsen makes is valid and irrefutable. If behavior *a* is condemned by God *prior* to the giving of the Mosaic law; and, a law within the Mosaic law also condemns behavior *a*, then one cannot argue that behavior *a* in the Mosaic law is abrogated without also abrogating objections to behavior *a* prior to the revealed law. Natural law’s condemnation of homosexuality and divine revelation’s condemnation of homosexuality are the same. Therefore, there is nothing wrong with appealing to Scripture instead of telling people to look at what nature says. A “thus saith the LORD” is more effective than general appeals to the natural order. Moreover, it is highly debatable if “nature” is a reliable guide to the penalties.

## Durand’s Dispensational Understanding of the Old Testament’s Revealed Moral Laws in Relation to Sanctification

The Reformed understanding of the moral laws of God revealed in the Old Testament is that they can never be used as a ground, partial ground or co-instrument of justification; and, that

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acceptable to God. At all events, he is very far from forming any correct knowledge of it. In addition to this, he is so swollen with arrogance and ambition, and so blinded with self-love, that he is unable to survey, and, as it were, descend into himself, that he may so learn to humble and abase himself, and confess his misery. *Therefore, as a necessary remedy, both for our dullness and our contumacy, the Lord has given us his written Law, which, by its sure attestations, removes the obscurity of the law of nature, and also, by shaking off our lethargy, makes a more lively and permanent impression on our minds*” (2:8:1). Amazingly, Durand uses this same quote and then says, “Thus natural law is an insufficient for the pure worship of God because it does not overcome the enmity that fallen man has toward his creator.... However, Calvin nowhere implied that natural law is an insufficient guide for the drafting of just laws and the maintaining of an orderly society” (*Judicial Warfare*, 47). If natural law is inadequate in the sphere of the worship of God and written laws are needed, then how could a pagan society form just laws relating to worship (e.g., idolatry, blasphemy, false religions, enticement to idolatry, etc) *without written laws*? Can a culture generally arrive at just laws relating to the second table, when it blasphemes and mocks the true and living God and tramples underfoot the first table of the law? The statutes relating to the first table of the law are theologically and ethically the foundation for second table commandments. The rejection of the true God for macro-evolution and secular humanism is the philosophical foundation of no-fault divorce laws, laws that allow unborn babies to be butchered and thrown into dumpsters like trash, sodomite marriage, prison terms for first degree murderers, state sanctioned counterfeiting, socialism, the Nazi party, the holocaust, etc. Durand is not carefully thinking through the implications of his system. Historically, natural law theory (without being accompanied with the biblical world view and specific ethics of written revelation) has eventually led to secular humanistic positivistic law.

the revealed moral laws of God do not have any power or ability to sanctify a person *without* regeneration and an internal, enlightening, enabling, empowering work of the Holy Spirit. The work of progressive sanctification is unlike regeneration in that the Spirit of God uses means (i.e. the means of grace) to make believers more holy or obedient. The central means is the Word of God. “Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth” (Jn. 17:17). “You have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit...” (1 Pet. 1:22). “As newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby...” (1 Pet. 2:2). Thus, as an important part of the ethical teachings of Scripture, the revealed moral laws in both Testaments should be studied, memorized and applied for our growth in godliness. This makes sense for the revealed moral law defines sin (cf. 1 Jn. 3:4) and tells us what behaviors must be removed from our lives. God’s revealed law tells us what is good and what is bad; what is spiritual and what is sinful. As David says,

How can a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed according to Your word...Your word I have hidden in my heart, That I might not sin against You...I will meditate on Your precepts, And contemplate Your ways...I will delight myself in Your statutes; I will not forget Your word...Teach me, O LORD, the way of Your statutes, And I shall keep it *to* the end...Give me understanding, and I shall keep Your law; Indeed, I shall observe it with *my* whole heart (Ps. 119:9, 11, 15, 16, 33, 34).

This view, which is standard among Reformed theologians and expositors, is rejected by dispensationalists because they view all Old Testament laws, whether moral in content or not, as abrogated with the coming of Christ. They teach that in the New Covenant era believers are only under laws repeated in the New Testament—the “law of Christ.” In addition, a common dispensational interpretation of Galatians is that Paul is condemning any use of the Old Testament law for *sanctification*.<sup>52</sup> The Reformed view is that Paul is condemning the use of the

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<sup>52</sup> In a letter to Greg Durand dated 9/24/07, I asked him the following questions: “3. Could you explain how the Old Testament written moral laws apply to sanctification? Are they to be used at all or do Gentiles rely on natural law for sanctification? 4. Do you believe that Galatians is dealing with the Jewish law as it relates to justification, sanctification or both?” After accusing me of slandering and misrepresenting his writings (in this critique of his views I have given his heterodox comments within their context so the reader can read this essay and judge for himself if I have misrepresented his views), Durand gives the following response to these crucial questions: “...Questions 3 and 4 are irrelevant because my book was dealing with the Reconstructionist view of the civil magistrate and cultural dominion, not with personal sanctification, which is another matter entirely (a subject that I am not unwilling to discuss at the proper time). On top of that, the latter half of Question 3 presents a false dilemma” (Greg Durand, e-mail, 10/19/07). I would like to know how the latter half of question 3 presents a false dilemma. The written O.T. moral laws either apply to Christians or they do not apply as a standard for sanctification. This is a simple *a* or *b* question. The fact that Durand will not answer it is telling. It is also interesting that Durand says that his book does not deal with personal sanctification. This statement is clearly false. His view that the second giving of the law was a localized codification of the covenant of works, that has nothing to do with the Gentiles or with New Covenant believers, radically affects how one views the O.T. revealed moral laws as a standard for sanctification. (In different e-mails Durand suggested that positive uses of the expression “the law” [*ho nomos*] in the New Testament should be regarded as “natural law” or as “the covenant of works.” This theory or suggestion is given in spite of the fact that Jesus, Paul and James quote Old Testament revealed moral laws and apply them to Christians.) In addition, Durand accuses R. J. Rushdoony and the whole Christian Reconstruction movement of being “blatant legalists” for insisting that Old Testament moral laws are important for a believer’s sanctification. This accusation is barefaced slander and is excellent evidence that I have not misrepresented his views as being a unique kind of dispensationalism.

law for justification (Gal. 5:4, “You who attempt to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace”); and that without looking to Christ alone by faith for justification, no one can possess the Holy Spirit who is the source of a believer’s sanctification (cf. Gal. 3:1-5). In addition, the ceremonial laws are no longer binding on believers (cf. Gal. 3:25; 4:8-10). The reason for stating the orthodox view of Galatians is to set forth a contrast with Durand’s book which essentially states that any direct use of the Old Testament moral law of God as a standard for sanctification is “blatant legalism.” This assertion is identical to the dispensational position. Note the following quotation from Durand’s book, *Judicial Warfare*:

According to Rushdoony, “Man’s *justification* is by the *grace* of God in Jesus Christ; man’s *sanctification* is by means of the *law* of God.... Sanctification depends on our law-keeping in mind, word, and deed. The perfection of the incarnate Word was manifested in His law-keeping; can the people of His kingdom pursue their calling to be perfect in any way other than by His law-word?” Thus, blatant legalism lies at the very heart of theonomic Postmillennialism and since it is clearly the subject of the Apostle’s condemnation in Galatians 3:2-3, this is one fact that the more moderate Reconstructionists are not too eager for the Church at large to discover (142).<sup>53</sup>

Before we further analyze this statement theologically and demonstrate that Durand’s view is erroneous, we first need to clarify the quote from Rushdoony which (whether deliberate on Durand’s part or not) is somewhat misleading. The first part of the quote is from page 4 of Rushdoony’s book, *The Institutes of Biblical Law*. The second half of the quote, following the ellipsis, occurs on page 307. If Rushdoony were saying that we are justified solely by Christ, but that sanctification was something that men can do in their own power, without the work of the Holy Spirit who is given to us and works effectively in us because of the efficacy of the sinless life, death and resurrection of Jesus, then Durand would be making a good point. But, as a former Christian Reconstructionist who tells us that he has carefully studied Rushdoony’s books, Durand should know that this is *not* what Rushdoony is teaching at all.

Rushdoony repeatedly insists in his writings that there is no hope for people or society without regeneration or a work of the Holy Spirit. For example, he writes, “The New Testament abounds in warnings against disobedience and in summons to peace. The key is regeneration, propagation of the gospel, and the conversion of men and nations to God’s law-word. Meanwhile, the existing law-order must be respected, and neighboring law-orders must be respected as far as possible without offense to one’s own faith” (*Institutes*, 113-114). This quote completely disproves Durand’s assertion on page 143 which implies that Christian Reconstruction is all about exercising dominion over their fellow men. In *The Institutes of the Biblical Law* Rushdoony says, “The key to social renewal is individual regeneration. All authorities are to be obeyed, parents, husbands, masters, rulers, pastors, always subject to the

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<sup>53</sup> Note that Durand says that there are “moderate Reconstructionists” who apparently are totally aware that Rushdoony is teaching “blatant legalism” and these “moderate Reconstructionists” do not want the church at large to discover that Rushdoony (the founder of the movement and the most brilliant thinker in it) is a total heretic who believes that we are justified by the works of the law. Regarding this statement, we ask Durand: Who are these moderate Reconstructionists? If they are willing to defend someone who, according to Durand, is a damnable heretic, then how can they be labeled as moderate? After reading Durand’s book and his e-mails, I am convinced that Durand is a liar who simply makes up stuff out of thin air. Also, I am thoroughly convinced that any sharp first year student, attending a quality seminary, that reads Durand’s book would immediately recognize he is not knowledgeable of Reformed theology, exegesis and is incredibly sloppy. Anyone familiar with the writings of Christian Reconstructionists that Durand quotes would know almost immediately that he is a crackpot.



prior obedience of God” (p. 122). On page 449 he adds, “Clearly, there is no hope for man except in regeneration.” On the same page where Rushdoony says that “sanctification is by means of the law of God” (p. 4), he goes on to clarify this statement by saying, “The purpose of grace is not to set aside the law, but to fulfill the law [i.e. the justification achieved by the active and passive obedience of Christ] and enable man to keep the law” (i.e. the work of the Holy Spirit in regeneration and progressive sanctification whereby the justified sinner is more and more enabled to obey the moral law out of gratitude for the salvation already achieved by Christ.). Anyone familiar with Rushdoony’s writings, knows that he repeatedly insists on the necessity of regeneration, conversion and work of God’s Spirit in people, if they are to live in obedience to God’s Word.<sup>54</sup> Rushdoony is not a legalist and never has been. (In addition, the organization he left behind in Vallecito, California has been faithful to the gospel and has soundly rejected the Federal Vision heresy. In their magazine, heretics such as Andrew Sandlin and Steve Schlissel have been removed and articles by champions of the true gospel such as Joe Morecraft and Chris Strevel can be found instead.)<sup>55</sup>

If there are any further doubts as to Rushdoony’s position on sanctification, one can easily clear things up by reading from his work on systematic theology. Rushdoony writes,

The Shorter Catechism (no. 35) defines sanctification thus: “Sanctification is the work of God’s free grace, whereby we are renewed in the whole man after the image of God, and are enabled more and more to die unto sin, and live unto sin, and live unto righteousness (1 Peter. 1:2; Eph. 4:24; Rom. 6:6).”

*First*, the divine priority in sanctification or growth in holiness is God’s free grace. I Peter 1:2 links and grounds sanctification in God’s election and foreknowledge; Ephesians 4:24 makes clear that it follows from regeneration.

*Second*, in sanctification our nature is renewed and remade in all our being after the image of God, i.e., in conformity to the last Adam, Jesus Christ. Having been transferred by Christ’s justification into the new humanity, we are now by God’s Spirit led into the holiness of that new race of Jesus Christ.

*Third*, in this life, while never wholly sanctified, we die more and more to sin by the renewing of the Spirit. At the same time, this means growth in righteousness or justice, and God’s justice is set forth in His law-word. Just as “sin is the transgression of the law” (I John 3:4), so holiness is the obedience of faith to the law. Holiness is grounded on justification and regeneration.<sup>56</sup>

To gain insight into how Durand makes such obviously unscriptural statements regarding the law and sanctification, we need to observe how he *explains* his accusation that Rushdoony’s view on the law as a standard for sanctification is “rank heresy.” He writes,

According to Rushdoony, “[D]iligent keeping of the law” is “the condition of blessing: it is the ground of conquest and of possession, in terms of which the covenant people of God, His law-people, enter into their inheritance.” This teaching clearly takes the typological nature of the Mosaic covenant and transfers it to the New Covenant where it does not belong, and makes

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<sup>54</sup> “In terms of God’s law, true reform begins with regeneration and then the submission of the believer to the whole law-word of God” (*Institutes*, 571).

<sup>55</sup> Chris Ortiz’s recent Internet interview with Steve Schlissel, however, is very disturbing and inconsistent with Rushdoony’s writing and mission. Ortiz needs to repent or needs to be fired by Mark Rushdoony.

<sup>56</sup> Rousas John Rushdoony, *Systematic Theology* (Vallecito, CA: Ross House, 1994), 537, 538.

personal law-keeping, rather than the imputed righteousness of Christ, the basis of the Christian's inheritance and right standing with God. This is what Rushdoony meant when he wrote that "sanctification is by the law"; he subtly [sic] redefined sanctification in terms of progressive justification (increasing blessings) and based his novel version of postmillennial dominion upon it. Gary North's doctrine of covenantal sanctions was no different. No more blatant promotion of the Judaizing heresy could be asked for than in the teachings of these men and it is my contention that Reconstructionism is the seed from which the more blatant Federal Vision heresy has sprung. Schwertley rightly condemns anyone who "speaks of an obligation to keep the law in any way in order to be justified [i.e. to gain the favor, or blessing of God, and to escape His curse] is a damnable heretic, a Judaizer, and a lieutenant in Antichrist's service" ["Judicial Law," Part Nine, 12:57], and in doing so, has conceded the whole thesis of my book that Reconstructionism is a modern-day variation, if not a revival, of the ancient Galatian error. ("A Response to the Misrepresentations of Brian Schwertley," 2)

This statement (and others like it in his book *Judicial Warfare*) is one of the most unscholarly, convoluted, unfair, unscriptural attacks on the views of Christian Reconstructions that I have ever seen. Let us briefly analyze this statement to expose the many erroneous assertions in it.

First, Reconstructionists have never argued for a *one on one correspondence* between Deuteronomy 27ff. and the Gentile nations in the New Covenant era. They have never taught, for example, that America will be conquered and plundered by the Babylonians or the Assyrians if the people turn to idols (cf. Deut. 27: 49-62); or that Americans will be dispersed among all nations (cf. Deut. 27:63-68). They have never argued that the church or a Christian nation should adhere to typological elements of the Mosaic law.<sup>57</sup> They are simply teaching that the principal of blessing for obedience and cursing for disobedience to the moral law of God does apply to peoples and nations. This idea is not new and is easily supported by numerous passages. "Blessed is the nation whose God is the LORD" (Ps. 33:12). "Righteousness exalts a nation. But sin is a reproach to any people" (Prov. 14:34). The great Puritan Charles Bridges writes,

If it isn't beneath statesmen to take lessons from the Bible, let them deeply ponder this sound political maxim, which commends itself to every instinct of the simple mind. Actually, it would be a strange paradox in the divine government, if the connection between godliness and prosperity, ungodliness and misery, established in individual cases, should not be fulfilled by the multiplication of individuals into nations. The Scripture records, however—confirmed by the result of impartial and extended observation—clearly prove this to be the rule of national, no less than personal, management. The history of the chosen people, as they were a *righteous or sinful nation*, is marked by corresponding *exaltation or disgrace*. Not the wisdom of policy, extent of empire, splendid conquests, flourishing trade, abundant resources—but *righteousness exalts a nation*.<sup>58</sup>

We are told that God decided to destroy the seven Canaanite kingdoms for violating the sexual ethics revealed in Leviticus 18. The prophets contain many prophecies against the Gentile nations for violations against God's moral law (including the first and second commandments; cf. Dt. 18:9-12; Isa. 19:1; 46:1; Jer. 46:25; 48:35; 50:12; 51:17, 18, 47, 52; etc). The resurrected Savior is called "the ruler of the kings of the earth" (Rev. 1:5). He rules the nations with a rod of iron (Rev. 12:5) and judges those who worship the beast. If Durand thinks that the blessings and

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<sup>57</sup> Rushdoony holds to the food requirements of the ceremonial law because he believes they are health laws and are not ceremonial. He, however, is virtually alone in this interpretation within the movement.

<sup>58</sup> Charles Bridges, George F. Santa, ed. *The Book of Proverbs* [Milford, MI; Mott Media, 1978], 232-233.

courses in the law have absolutely nothing to do with the New Covenant era, then he has contradicted the Westminster Standards which cite Deuteronomy 28:15ff in the Larger Catechism Q&A 28 on “what are the punishments of sin in this world.”

Second, Durand’s contention that the Reconstructionist view of the law’s blessings for obedience is a form of “progressive justification” is a complete fabrication and is totally fallacious. Keep in mind this is the main argument behind his contention that Reconstructionism is “blatant legalism,” a “revival of the ancient Galatian error.” When Reconstructionists talk about the blessings for keeping God’s law, they are speaking about *temporal blessings*, not justification. Durand does not give one quote or even one solid inference that Reconstructionists believe in “progressive justification” through personal achievement. The Bible teaches that if believers are obedient to God’s law-Word, they will be blessed for it. People who work hard and follow biblical principles of money, economics and debt will be much better off than people who ignore or disobey these principles. People who follow biblical laws on love, reconciliation, communication, forgiveness, justice, etc. will have happier, more harmonious churches, families and businesses. This truth is a no-brainer.

Why does Durand so blatantly misrepresent Rushdoony and Christian Reconstructionists? Because Durand teaches that the Mosaic law was a “covenant of works” and thus when men argue that we should obey specific revealed moral laws in it, Durand apparently believes this is a seeking of justification through law-keeping. He has committed a fundamental misrepresentation of the Christian Reconstruction movement. Those men who were Christian Reconstructionists and then embraced the Auburn Avenue or Federal Vision heresy did so, *not* because of their view of the law, but because of their embrace of: sacramentalism, mono-covenantalism, the New Perspective on Paul, and the views of Norman Shepherd. (As noted, at present the theologians at Chalcedon have rejected these views.) Christian Reconstruction is not the seed of the Federal Vision heresy.<sup>59</sup> Of all the prominent players in the formation of the Federal Vision (James Jordan, Doug Wilson, Norman Shepherd, Peter Leithart, Steve Schlissel, Steve Wilkins) only a few were notable Reconstructionists and none came to their conclusions based on R. J. Rushdoony’s, Gary North’s or Greg Bahnsen’s views of the law.

Having proved that Durand completely misrepresents Rushdoony’s position on sanctification, let us turn our attention to Durand’s assertion that Galatians 3:2-3 proves that anyone who wants to use the revealed Old Testament moral laws as a standard for sanctification is guilty of “blatant legalism.” Paul writes, “This only I want to learn from you: Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are you now made perfect by the flesh?” Both of these questions are designed to refute the Judaizers by examining Christian experience. In the first question, Paul notes that if the Judaizers’ doctrine were true, then one would have to go through some sort of lengthy process before one could expect to receive this divine gift. One would have to become circumcised, learn all the details of the Torah and then put them into practice to merit the gift of the Spirit from God. The blessing of God’s personal presence would flow only from personal achievement. This would mean that Spirit-baptized Christians would be a group of the spiritual

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<sup>59</sup> Perhaps some of the reasons as to why the Federal Vision heresy has so many converts from the Christian Reconstruction camp is R. J. Rushdoony’s and Greg Bahnsen’s wrong view regarding the original covenant of works and the endorsement of Shepherd by many prominent theologians after the initial controversy at Westminster Seminary (East) in the late 1970s. Certain sloppy statements on the meaning of faith as faithful obedience have also been made. Greg Bahnsen’s and R. J. Rushdoony’s teaching on justification, however, is generally the traditional confessional view.

elite who would have every reason to boast for their achievements. The Galatians knew by personal experience that this scenario was not true. They did not work to receive the Holy Spirit. They did not even seek the Holy Spirit as a second work of grace. They believed in Christ and as a result the Spirit of God was bestowed. The reason for this is simple. When a person is justified by Jesus, all their sin and guilt is removed and they are clothed by the perfect righteousness of Christ. Since in God's sight (judicially) they are just as righteous and perfect as the Redeemer, how could God deny them this wonderful gift? Note, the gift of the Holy Spirit has been merited by the Savior and thus faith in Christ automatically results in Spirit baptism. Paul always connects the possession of the Spirit and His work within man squarely upon the righteousness of Christ. The Holy Spirit's work of regeneration and sanctification within man is an application of a salvation already accomplished by Christ. It is indeed true that the Holy Spirit's work of regeneration within man logically precedes faith, for it is the Holy Spirit who enables the dead sinner to live, hear the gospel and imparts the gift of faith. Nevertheless, even this work flows from union with Christ. And the work of the Spirit does not become fully evident until the sinner actually places his faith in the Savior. Regeneration and saving faith are essentially coterminous.

The question, "Having begun in the Spirit, are you now made perfect by the flesh?" is probably the focus of Durand's argument in that dispensationalists often view this verse as an explicit rejection of any use of the Old Testament law for sanctification. This is a serious error and is easily refuted. Before we turn our attention to the true meaning of this verse, it needs to be pointed out that if Paul in this passage is warning Christians that any use of the *revealed* Old Testament moral laws as a guide or standard for sanctification is "blatant legalism," then the apostle would be condemning himself because he repeatedly quotes revealed moral laws out of the Mosaic law in his teaching on Christian sanctification (e.g., Gal. 5:14—Lev.19:18; Rom. 13:9—Lev. 19:18; Rom. 12:19—Deut. 32:35; Rom. 13:9—Ex. 20:13-17; etc). (As noted above, this is also the procedure of the Westminster divines.)

Then what exactly does the apostle have in mind? The key to understanding Paul's thought is the two-fold antithesis he sets before his readers: "beginning... completion; Spirit... flesh." The antithesis that Paul presents is *not* between the Holy Spirit and the law of God, but between the Holy Spirit and the *flesh*. The Galatians had begun in the Spirit (that is, they received the Spirit as a confirmation of Christ's work when they believed), but now they were attempting to achieve the perfection necessary for a right standing with God by the flesh. The word flesh (*sarx*) refers to the whole human person as fallen and corrupted by sin. The Galatians had started out right by believing in Christ and receiving the Holy Spirit. They began the Christian life correctly by believing unto salvation. They had a true profession. Their minds were enlightened and under the direct influence of the Spirit. Consequently, they clung only to Christ for their redemption. But after they began to listen to the Judaizers, they were no longer looking solely to Christ. Instead, they were putting their confidence in self-effort or works done by their flesh. They looked to circumcision and ceremonial religious observances (i.e. Jewish feast days and Sabbaths, Gal. 4:9-10). They, at least partially, bought into the whole Pharisaical idea that man has the ability to obey God's law and merit salvation before God and thus their original profession of Christ was only lip service if they did not repent of this error. They looked at Jesus as setting them on the right path that only they could complete by a strenuous study of the law and faithful discipline of their bodies. They were guilty of beginning to renounce Jesus as the all-sufficient Savior. They were attempting to finish what Christ had started by works. Their position assumed that our Lord's work was not enough. It presupposed that the Savior's

statement, “It is finished,” on the cross was inaccurate. One can see why Paul was so angered by their foolishness.

It is important that we understand the Paul is not here criticizing the revealed moral law as a standard of sanctification, but rather man’s attempt to be justified by the law.<sup>60</sup> The Galatians began with the gospel, but then they turned to obedience to the law as something needed to supplement the gospel. The gospel of justification by faith alone completely rules out attempts at law-keeping as a means of getting right with God. Paul finds it astonishing that anyone who once embraced the true gospel of grace could be so foolish as to turn back to the law for redemption. To do so is to begin on one basis (justification by faith in Christ alone wherein the Holy Spirit was bestowed) and then shift to another basis (justification by the works of the flesh). This second new basis is obviously totally incompatible with the original correct basis. “It is as if Paul were saying, ‘How hopeful was your beginning, and how sad your continuation! And just think of it: those false guides whom you are now beginning to follow have a name for this process of going downhill. They call it *becoming perfected!* What tragic irony!’”<sup>61</sup> “The ‘higher life’ they were promoting was in reality a step backwards into the negative sphere of human self-justification and rebellion against the grace of God.”<sup>62</sup>

Paul’s teaching not only applies to the Galatians but to everyone who views Jesus as the beginning of a salvation that only we can bring to completion by our own efforts. Romanists are guilty of this by their dependence upon penance, the sacraments, the mass, the merits of the saints and a mountain of ceremonies drawn partly from the Jews, partly from the heathen and partly from their own imagination. Arminians add man’s autonomous free will and self-ability to persevere to the work of the Redeemer; without these things the cross and empty tomb cannot save. Thankfully, Paul assures us that God makes the unwilling willing and completes what He has begun (“He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ” [Phil. 1:6]). The Auburn Avenue heretics add the faithful obedience of the saints to the work of Christ for “final justification.” The New Perspective on Paul theologians are also in this category, for they view first century legalistic Judaism as in reality a religion of grace. They have no problem with the idea that we get in the door by grace, but that we must stay in by obedience. They, like their Federal Vision cousins, believe that this interpretation completely preserves the graciousness of God in salvation. But, as Ryken points out, “What these scholars fail to

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<sup>60</sup>A casual reading of this verse has caused some people to believe that here Paul is discussing sanctification, the mortification of sin, or the quest for personal godliness instead of justification. As a result, they wrongly conclude that the law (even the Ten Commandments or the moral law) has no role to play in a believer’s seeking of holiness in his life. Perhaps they believe this because sanctification follows justification and the verb “being made perfect” is in the present tense. There are a number of reasons why we should reject such an interpretation. First, it completely violates the context of this passage. Paul is still in the midst of a discussion of justification by faith. Second, the Judaizers were attempting to stand before God on the basis of their own righteousness. Thus, they turned justification into a process. Paul refutes this idea by noting where they *began*. The person who believed in Jesus, was justified and received the Holy Spirit must continue what they did correctly at the beginning; that is, look solely to Christ. The Judaizers’ problem was *not* that they simply wanted to obey God or be more holy; but that they were looking to their behavior as a co-ground or instrument of justification. We must never base our justification on our progress in godliness. Our behavior will never measure up to God’s holiness. Third, the idea that the moral law of God revealed in the Old Testament should have nothing to do with our quest for personal holiness explicitly contradicts the New Testament’s own teaching on sanctification (Rom. 7:7; 8:3-4; 12:19; 13:9; Gal. 5:14; etc). We are justified by faith in Christ alone. But the person who is justified has a responsibility to study the Word of God, apply it to their own life and attend all the means of grace. The Holy Spirit uses all of these means to progressively sanctify the believer.

<sup>61</sup> William Hendriksen, *Exposition of Galatians*, 114.

<sup>62</sup> Timothy George, *Galatians*, 213.

recognize is that this theology contains a grace-destroying legalism: if we continue with God by obedience, then even if we begin by grace we are ultimately thrown back on ourselves and our own ability to keep the law.”<sup>63</sup> This view is not substantially different from that of the Judaizers and Romanists. That is why it was vigorously rejected and fought against by Paul and then much later by the Protestant Reformers.

Note that all of these heterodox theologies add something to the work of Christ. They all begin in some way with Jesus and His merits and then move into what man achieves. Every one of them destroys our hope for they all take our eyes off of the Savior and place them on our flesh. To attempt to be saved partly by the Mediator and partly by the flesh is foolishness. We must look solely to Christ for salvation at the beginning, the middle and the end of our lives. We must finish in the same way we started—by faith in Jesus apart from the works of the law. Thus, we see that Durand’s dispensational attempt to make Galatians 3:2-3 condemn the use of *revealed* Old Testament moral laws as a standard for sanctification is complete nonsense. If we were to apply this passage only to the imperatives in the New Testament or only to “natural law,” the *illegitimate use* of such laws would also be condemned because Paul is referring not to the obedience of sanctification at all, but to a work of the flesh to merit salvation or justification.

A careful study of the doctrine of sanctification in the books of Romans and Galatians reveals that Rushdoony’s emphasis on regeneration, conversion and the work of the Holy Spirit as *necessary* before anyone will obey the *revealed* moral law of God in sanctification is totally correct. The Judaizers were teaching that the key to becoming a true child of God was submission to the law of Moses. In other words, obedience leads to justification. The apostle was teaching something that was the antithesis of the circumcision party’s thought. Those who rely on the own strength and seek to obey the commandments to become acceptable to God will fail. Not only will they fail to be justified, but they will not achieve personal holiness either. That is because the Savior’s redemptive work is the *foundation* which leads to a believer’s victory over the power of sin and his ability to keep God’s *revealed* moral law. Paul explains this teaching in the book of Romans: “For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made us free from the law of sin and death. For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh, that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit” (Rom. 8:2-4). The apostle speaks of the Redeemer’s forensic work of justification as a platform for a Christian’s personal holiness. The one (sanctification) cannot exist without the other (justification). The Holy Spirit applies the efficacy of Jesus’ death and resurrection to the sinner in regeneration and sanctification. The apostle is demonstrating to his judaizing critics and their followers that the gospel of justification by faith alone does not promote sinful behavior; but, on the contrary, produces a genuine, more profound obedience to God than was possible under the law. Obedience to the *revealed* moral law becomes a habitual practice for all true believers because of the enabling power of the Holy Spirit.

Durand would do well to stop spending his time reading Seventh Day Adventist trash and instead start reading some good Reformed expositors on Romans and Galatians. If he did, he could avoid his common, sloppy dispensational mistakes. Perhaps he could start with William Hendriksen’s comments on Galatians 2:19:

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<sup>63</sup> Philip Graham Ryken, *Galatians*, 91, footnote 12.

It must never be overlooked that in the writings of the apostle the word law—as is true with respect to so many other great words—has more than one meaning. It is not my purpose at this point to present a detailed study of all the various meanings which this word has in Paul’s epistles. That task would be more appropriate in a commentary on Romans. For the present the following would suffice. On the one hand Paul rejoices in the fact that he is not under law (Rom. 6:14, 15; cf. 7:6). He speaks of being delivered from the curse of the law (Gal. 3:13). He describes the law as “the hand-written document that was against us, which by means of its requirements testified against us” (Col. 2:14; cf. Eph. 2:15). And in the chapter now under study—see below—he even states, “If justification (were) through law, then Christ died in vain” (Gal. 2:21). Yet, on the other hand, he also tells us that he is “under law to Christ” (1 Cor. 9:2), that he “delights in the law of God according to the inner man” (Rom. 7:22), that “the law is holy, and the commandment holy and righteous and good” (Rom. 7:12), and that love—the very love which is “the greatest of the three greatest” (1 Cor. 13:13)—is the fulfillment of the law (Rom. 13:10; cf. Gal. 5:14; 6:2).

There is no warrant, therefore, to go to any extreme in denouncing the law. Whenever anything is said in disparagement of law, the concept law must be carefully described. The hue and cry of the present day, to the effect that as Christians “we have nothing whatever to do with the law” has no Scriptural justification at all. It is, in fact, a dangerous slogan, especially in an era of lawlessness!<sup>64</sup>

John Stott’s comments on Galatians 5:14 would be another good place to start:

What is the Christian’s relation to the law? The so-called “new morality” forces the question upon us with some urgency. It is quite true that Paul says to us, if we are Christians, that we have been set free from the law, that we are no longer under the law and that we must not submit again to the “yoke of slavery” which is the law (verse 1). But we must take pains to grasp what he means by these expressions. Our Christian freedom from the law which he *emphasizes concerns our relationship to God*. It means that *our acceptance depends* not on our obedience to the law’s demands, but *on faith in Jesus Christ who bore the curse of the law when He died*. It certainly does not mean that we are free to disregard or disobey the law.

On the contrary, although we cannot gain acceptance by keeping the law, yet once we have been accepted we shall keep the law out of love for Him who has accepted us and given us His Spirit to enable us to keep it. In New Testament terminology, although *our justification depends not on the law but on Christ crucified, yet our sanctification consists in the fulfillment of the law*. Cf. Romans 8:3, 4.

Moreover, if we love one another as well as God, we shall find that we do obey His law because the whole law of God—at least the second table of the law touching our duty to our neighbor—is fulfilled in this one point: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself”, and murder, adultery, stealing, covetousness and false witness are all infringements of this law of love. Paul says the same thing in 6:2: “Bear one another’s burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.”<sup>65</sup>

## Durand’s Perversion of My Interpretation of the Fourth Commandment

In an e-mail entitled “A Response to the Misrepresentations of Brian Schwertley” Durand writes, “If one commandment is admitted by Schwertley to be ‘positivistic’ (applicable in its *outward form* to Israel alone), then the others may be as well.” This quote is both false and

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<sup>64</sup> William Hendriksen, *Galatians and Ephesians*, 102.

<sup>65</sup> John Stott, *Only One Way: The Message of Galatians*, 142-143. Emphasis added.

unbiblical. I never said the fourth commandment was positivistic. (A positivistic command is one that is *not* based on God's nature and character and thus is essentially arbitrary. It stands only on God's authority who commanded it.) I said, "Now keep in mind that the Fourth Commandment *does have an aspect of it* which is positivistic, in the sense that the day itself can change, but the principle of worshipping the LORD is moral. The setting aside of a day of worshipping the LORD, that is moral. The day it is on is positivistic." In the era from the creation of Adam to the resurrection of Christ the Sabbath day was on the seventh day to remember and honor God's creation of the universe in six days and His rest on the seventh day (Ex. 20:11). From the resurrection of Christ to the consummation, the day of rest and worship is the first day of the week to remember and honor our Lord's redemptive recreation and resurrection victory. God obviously can alter any positivistic elements of His law. However, He cannot change moral laws because they are based on His nature and character and thus to do so would be to deny Himself.

Note that Durand says that the fourth commandment was "applicable in its *outward form* to Israel alone." That statement is line with dispensational thought and must be rejected. The Sabbath day was a creation ordinance that applied to all mankind before Abraham was born or Israel as a nation even existed. The specific moral *requirements* of this command are binding on all nations, in all ages. The specific requirements of the fourth commandment are not repeated in the New Testament. Durand must either admit that the fourth commandment is binding or he must argue that all people should follow natural law on this matter. Durand needs to understand the fact that, even though revealed moral laws may have specific reasons preceding them (e.g., the preamble to the Ten Commandments) or specific injunctions connected to them to encourage obedience (e.g., The command to remember added to the restatement of the fourth commandment in Deuteronomy 5:15) that apply only to the people of God, this does not mean that the *revealed specific* moral requirements of each commandment are not universally binding on all peoples, in all ages. If we drove Durand's argumentation to its logical absurdity, then the imperatives of each epistle in the New Testament given to specific churches would be applicable in outward form to each first century church alone and we could only extract general principles from the specific commands. Sinful men need the specifics of the moral laws and not simply some general, indirect principles extracted from the moral commandments. In many cases throughout church history, appeals to natural law have been smoke screens for human autonomy in ethics.

## Love Defined by the Moral Law Revealed in the Old Testament

Durand's dispensational paradigm cannot explain Paul's explicit teaching that our duty for sanctification can be summarized by an obedience to Leviticus 19:18 which Jesus Himself said is a summary of our whole duty to our neighbor (Mt. 22:39). Thus, we end our consideration of sanctification and the revealed moral law with a brief analysis of this verse.

After giving the negative and positive aspect of Christian liberty (Gal. 5:12), Paul explains himself by telling us that the whole moral law as a guide to sanctified living is summed up by love: "For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself'" (Gal. 5:14). This statement has baffled a number of commentators, in that prior to this point the apostle has been speaking of the law largely in negative terms. He has described the curse of the law (Gal. 3:10-13); the law as child guardian (Gal. 3:23-25) and as something that people must be released from if they are to be saved (Gal. 3:22; 4:4-5). He has warned the Galatians of the great dangers of adopting the ceremonial ordinances (Gal. 4:9-11) and has stated



in no uncertain terms that the law's role as a child guardian ceased with the coming of Christ (Gal. 3:25). Yet here he speaks plainly about believers fulfilling (i.e. obeying or practicing) the law. How can this positive function of the law for new covenant believers be explained?

## Some Unbiblical Conclusions

Before we answer this question let us dispense with some unsatisfactory conclusions. Some writers of the modernist persuasion teach that this passage is an explicit contradiction to his earlier teaching. They believe that Paul was not concerned with a coherent systematic theology.<sup>66</sup> This view denies the doctrine of the inspiration of the Scriptures and is obviously unbiblical. New Perspective scholars make a distinction between using the law to become part of God's people (which they argue the apostle condemns) and keeping the law to remain part of God's people.<sup>67</sup> In other words, Jesus lets us in and the law keeps us in the sphere of redemption. This paradigm not only denies the biblical teaching of salvation solely by faith and solely by grace, but would have been totally acceptable to the Judaizers. While our obedience to the moral law is necessary, it plays no role in keeping us justified. It is a fruit of salvation, never a cause or contributing factor. The New Perspective view (which has been adopted by Federal Vision authors) is almost identical to the Roman Catholic doctrine of a first, then a final justification. To argue that we get in by faith alone, and then stay in by faith plus works, merges justification with sanctification. It makes justification a synergistic process where man finishes what Jesus began. For this reason it is thoroughly heretical.

The classical dispensationalist regards positive statements regarding the law in the Pauline epistles (which clearly teach or imply that the law is binding on new covenant believers) as referring *not* to the Mosaic law or the Old Testament moral law, but to a new law—"the law of Christ." Their theological presuppositions force them to adopt this position because they reject covenant theology in favor of the idea that in each dispensation there is "a wholesale shift of jurisdictions, from a period where the law had jurisdiction to a new period where the Spirit reigns."<sup>68</sup> Thus they teach that "the age of the church has rendered the [whole] law inoperative."<sup>69</sup> In addition, the classical dispensational interpretation of Galatians is that Paul is rejecting the whole Mosaic law (including the 10 commandments) as a standard, or guide to Christian ethics and sanctification. In the New Covenant era the ethical principles found scattered throughout the New Testament are the standard for Christian ethics. According to dispensational thought, therefore, the many restatements where God wholeheartedly approves of the Old Testament moral law as a basis for Christian ethics are really only part of the new "law of Christ."

This view should be rejected for the following reasons. First, it is arbitrary and not exegetical. When a first century Jewish believer read restatements of sections of the ten commandments (Rom. 13:9; Jas. 2:11) or injunctions for believers to keep God's commandments (1 Cor. 7:19) and strive to be holy (cf. 1 Pet. 1:15-16), would he regard this as a strictly new law that had nothing to do with the Old Testament or would he conclude that Old Testament moral

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<sup>66</sup> For example, see Heikki Raisanen, *Paul and the Law* (Tubingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 1983), 199. See also F. Thielman, *From Plight to Solution* (Leiden: Brill, 1989), 50-54.

<sup>67</sup> For example, see E. P. Saunders, *Paul, the Law and the Jewish People* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983), 4.

<sup>68</sup> Wayne G. Strickland, "The Inauguration of the Law of Christ with the Gospel of Christ: A Dispensational View" in Stanley N. Gundry, editor, *Five Views on Law and Gospel* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996, 99), 259.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid*, 259.

laws are binding on Christians as a standard for ethics and sanctification? Obviously, with Paul he would conclude that “the law is holy and the commandment holy and just and good” (Rom. 7:12). Second, the law’s function of rendering the whole world guilty and without excuse before God applies to the whole human race (see Rom. 3:19-20; Gal. 3:22). Therefore, the moral law in the Old Testament cannot be limited to the Jews. Third, moral laws whether stated in the Old or New Testament are based on God’s nature and character and thus are not positivistic or arbitrary, but are as eternal as God’s nature itself. Thus they give us the divine and universal standard of right and wrong. They are non-negotiable ethical absolutes.

Fourth, as the outward expression of God’s moral character, the moral law antedates the Mosaic covenant. Thus, not only does the Bible teach that marriage, the Sabbath day, the sanctity of human life, the wickedness of murder, assault, theft, dishonesty and so on are in place long before Moses, but Paul says specifically that pagans who do not have the *revealed* moral laws of Scripture have the work of the law written on their hearts (Rom. 2:15). Thus, to argue that the moral laws are somehow abrogated or non-binding simply because they are stated within the Mosaic administration of the covenant does not make any sense whatsoever. Classical dispensationalists do this because they look at each distinct covenant as an airtight category. Consequently, when God makes a new covenant virtually *everything* is disregarded and replaced.

Fifth, the prophet Jeremiah teaches that the great difference between the Old and New Covenant was *not* a new and different ethical standard; but, rather, a much greater Spirit-given ability to conform to God’s holy law. (Read Jer. 31:32-33. Ask yourself the following questions: When Jeremiah says “My law” would any of the Old Testament Jews think that it meant some completely new and different law? Or, would they conclude it referred to the revealed moral law they already had? The answer to this question is obvious.) The dispensational system is arbitrary, irrational and unbiblical.

Another unbiblical view is that Galatians 5:14 is not a command to fulfill the law and Christians are never told “to do” (*poieiv*) the law, but rather when Christians love each other the whole law just happens to be fulfilled in the process (e.g., see Longnecker, Betz, Westerholm). This argument is strange and absurd given the fact that there is really no essential difference between “fulfilling” and “obeying comprehensively” or “doing” the law. This argument rests upon a distinction without a true or significant difference. This artificial distinction is made simply as an attempt to circumvent the reality that Paul has no problem appealing to Old Testament moral laws or principles as a guide to Christian sanctification. In addition, the argument that love of one’s neighbor *just happens* to satisfy the whole law still does not eliminate the obvious conclusion from this passage that the Mosaic law contains a moral code that is worth fulfilling or that is good to fulfill. If the whole Mosaic law, including its ethical content, had absolutely nothing whatsoever to do with Christians, then one could reasonably argue in the New Covenant era: “Who cares whether Christians fulfill the essence of the whole law? It has no relevance or binding nature to us at all even in the sphere of sanctification or Christian living.”

## The Solution to the Alleged Problem

The key to understanding Paul’s positive statement about the Old Testament moral law is the context. Earlier when the apostle spoke negatively about the curse of the law, the prison house of the law and the law as a yoke of bondage, he was refuting all of man’s attempts to be justified before God by merit or a correct performance of the law. When it comes to justification,

the law is a dead and, thus, can only place men in bondage to an obligation to perfect obedience and a horrible curse for any disobedience. When men pervert and abuse the law and attempt to use it for earning salvation, as the Pharisees and Judaizers had done, Paul needed to demonstrate the negative consequences of such a course. His purpose in doing so was to point men to Jesus Christ, who bore the curse of the law on the cross and fulfilled the obligation of a positive righteousness for justification by His sinless perfection.

Paul is speaking to people who have already been justified by the righteousness of Christ and is answering the question: “Now that we have been set free from the law as a means of justification, how should we live our lives and behave as Christians?” He has already stated that Christian freedom does not mean freedom to serve the flesh and that instead of a lifestyle of sin, we should through love serve one another (Gal. 5:19). Here he expands and explains his thought by telling us what biblical love entails. Therefore, he quotes a summary verse of the second table of the ten commandments (which themselves are a summary of man’s whole moral duty toward his fellow man). We do not have any conflict or contradiction because Paul is now discussing sanctification or how believers are to grow in personal holiness. As Stott makes clear, “[A]lthough we cannot gain acceptance by keeping the law, yet once we have accepted we shall keep the law out of love for Him who has accepted us and has given us His Spirit to enable us to keep it. In New Testament terminology, although our justification depends not on the law but on Christ crucified, yet our sanctification consists in the fulfillment of the law. *Cf.* Romans 8:3, 4.”<sup>70</sup> Everyone who has truly been set free by the blood of Christ expresses his liberty in two ways: first in the daily denial and mortification of the sinful flesh; second in loving service to our neighbor which involves treating them in accordance with the requirements of God’s moral law. These two things are the essence of biblical sanctification.

## Summary and Conclusion

A brief analysis of Durand’s book reveals that Durand needs to repudiate his own book and go back to the drawing board. Some of the things he needs to do are as follows: (1) Abandon his virtually unique and erroneous concept of the second giving of the law as “a localized codification of the covenant of works.” This incorrect and absurd interpretation is the foundation of his many gross errors and fallacious conclusions. (2) Durand needs to study and interact with Reformed theologians, commentators and expositors in order to arrive at a correct theology and exegesis. If he did this, he would not come to so many bizarre, erroneous and outlandish conclusions. (3) Durand needs to stop lying about his theological opponents and instead interact with their stated positions. The Christian Reconstruction movement needs a solid, detailed, scholarly critique of their errors and mistakes. (To this date, none have been written. The book put together by professors from Westminster Seminary is, generally speaking, an embarrassment.) Durand (at present) seems totally unqualified to give such a critique. The things that actually merited criticism were basically ignored, while Durand attacked God’s revealed Old Testament moral laws (the same laws loved and advocated by David, Solomon, Jesus, Paul, James and John). (4) Durand needs to carefully study the distinction between justification and sanctification. (5) In addition, if he is going to argue that Christian commonwealths are supposed to rely on natural law instead of the detailed, perspicuous, revealed moral laws, perhaps he could tell us how that is supposed to work. (e.g., How do men come to an agreement on the rule of law

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<sup>70</sup> John R. W. Stott, *Only One Way: The Message of Galatians*, 143.

without written blueprints?) It is our hope that Durand will repent of his gross errors and many false accusations.

## Chapter 2: The Abiding Validity of the Old Testament Moral Laws

The temporary duration of the Mosaic expression of the law raises some important questions for Christians living today. Do passages such as Galatians 5:18, “But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law,” and Romans 6:14, “...You are not under law but under grace,” teach (as dispensationalists and law of Christ *only* advocates assert) that, with the coming of Christ, New Covenant believers are to have nothing to do with any aspects of the Mosaic code whatsoever? In other words, are believers only under the ethical requirements stated in the New Testament or under natural law? In addition, is it wrong to look at the Old Covenant revealed moral laws as a guide to sanctification or as principles for governing society (what the Reformers called the second and third uses of the law)? And if some laws from the Mosaic law do apply, how can one say that the law was added until the coming of Christ (cf. Gal. 3:19)?

To answer these and similar questions we need to point out a few things. Note that Paul is discussing the Mosaic *administration* as a temporary means between Abraham and Christ of God’s dealing with the chosen people. It is the *tutor aspect* of the law in redemptive history that Paul has in mind. There is something peculiar and unique about the Mosaic system that is the focus of this verse. If we say that nothing regarding the law continues into the New Covenant era, then we would have to argue that the revealed moral law no longer convinces men of sin which is obviously false. (In fact Paul says “I would not have known sin except through the law” [Rom. 7:7]. The law exemplified in the Ten Commandments was needed to show the apostle that he himself was guilty of sin and sinful. This use of the law occurred *after* the death and resurrection of Christ [cf. Ac. 9:1-19]). The law continues to reveal our transgressions even till the second coming of Christ.<sup>71</sup> But, with respect to the Mosaic manner of revealing sin (i.e. the ceremonial ordinances), it was only until the first coming. “For the law before Christ did convince men of sin, not only by precepts and threatenings, but also by rites and ceremonies. For Jewish washings, and sacrifices, were real confessions of sin.... *And this manner of revealing sin, ended in the death of Christ.*”<sup>72</sup>

Moreover, if the whole law is abrogated (even the Ten Commandments and the moral case laws) when Jesus came, then people living after the death of Christ were dead to the law *before* they believed the gospel. The dispensational view, if applied consistently, would teach many absurd doctrines. Also, if every aspect of the law has been abrogated, then how is sin reckoned in the New Covenant era, for the Bible defines sin as “the transgression of the law” (1 Jn. 3:4)? As Paul says, “Sin is not imputed when there is no law” (Rom. 5:13); and, “Where there is no law there is no transgression” (Rom. 4:15). The fact that sin and death existed from Adam to Moses and is still operative from the death of Jesus to the present indicates that moral laws, whether enscripturated or not, have a permanency throughout all time. (The only way to circumvent this observation is either to assert that the moral law as revealed to Adam [so-called

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<sup>71</sup> If the moral law continues to reveal to us what sin is, then it is obviously still an absolute and universal standard of right and wrong. If the law is an absolute standard of right and wrong, then it is absurd to suggest that it can no longer serve as a standard for Christian conduct or as a guide to social ethics. It still tells us how to love God and our neighbor. It certainly does not show us what sin is so that we can embrace Christ and then continue to habitually sin (Rom. 6:1ff.).

<sup>72</sup> William Perkins, *A Commentary on Galatians*, 189; emphasis added.

“natural law”] and the moral law as delivered to Moses are two *different* ethical standards that have nothing in common; or, one can posit two separate moral codes for two different dispensations. Both of these views are wrong because all moral laws derive from God’s nature and character and thus God has one moral law, not two.

The contradictions and absurdities of dispensationalism and natural law antinomianism can all be avoided simply by making a distinction between covenantal form (e.g., New Covenant believers are obviously not required to adopt the whole Mosaic administration of grace as a covenant or system) and the moral content of the Mosaic law, which Gentiles throughout all time have been and continue to be obligated to obey. Further, as we survey the whole Word of God and use the analogy of Scripture, it is easy to demonstrate that all dispensational approaches to the moral law of God are exegetically and logically untenable. There are many solid, irrefutable reasons as to why the dispensational interpretation of the Old Testament moral law is unbiblical.

First, the dispensational approach is based on a fallacious presupposition that the Mosaic law is such a unified whole that a completion or fulfillment of only a portion of it cannot take place. The basic argument behind this idea is that the Jews viewed the law as a unity; that the biblical authors had no concept at all of categories of law such as moral, ceremonial and civil. When they spoke of the law they meant the whole law. Therefore, when Paul says the law was until Christ we have no choice but to regard this as an abrogation of the entire Mosaic legislation, Ten Commandments and all. The idea that the law is an indivisible single entity that cannot be divided in any way contradicts a number of biblical teachings.

There are a number of passages in the prophets where obedience to moral laws is given a clear priority over ceremonial or ritualistic requirements. Isaiah pleaded with Israel saying, “To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices to Me? Says the LORD. ‘I have had enough of burnt offering of rams and the fat of fed cattle. I do not delight in the blood of bulls, or of lambs or goats.... Wash yourselves, make yourselves clean; put away evil of your doings from before your eyes. Cease to do evil, learn to do good; seek justice, rebuke the oppressor; defend the fatherless, plead for the widow’” (Isa. 1:11, 16-17). Sacrifices, even if done correctly, are worthless when the people refuse to do good and seek justice. Similarly in Micah we read, “With what shall I come before the LORD, and bow myself before the High God? Shall I come before Him with burnt offerings...? Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams,...He has shown you, O man, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God (Mic. 6:6, 7, 8). Obviously, ethical requirements took precedence over external ceremonial rituals, even though they were still required at that time (see Jer. 7:21-23; Ps. 51:16-17).

Samuel made a category distinction when he said, “Has the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD” (1 Sam. 15:22)? “*To obey is better than sacrifice*, because obedience to God is a moral duty, constantly and indispensably necessary; but sacrifice is but a ceremonial institution, sometimes unnecessary, as it was in the wilderness; and sometimes sinful, when it is offered with a polluted hand, or in an irregular manner; therefore their gross disobedience to God’s express command is not to be compensated with sacrifice.”<sup>73</sup> Hosea makes a distinction between moral and ceremonial requirements when he spoke for God saying, “For I desire mercy and not sacrifice” (6:6). If the Old Testament Jews had no concept of a difference between moral and ritualistic requirements in the law, then such statements would be essentially meaningless. The people of God were not complete idiots. They could see that Jehovah was placing a priority on loving one’s neighbor over the external

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<sup>73</sup> Matthew Poole, *A Commentary on the Whole Bible*, 1:550.

performance of ceremonial rituals. The New Testament also recognizes a distinction between moral and ceremonial laws (e.g., Ac. 8:10-16; 15:10-29; Rom. 14:2-6, 14-17; Gal. 2:3-5; 4:9-11; 5:2; 6:15; Eph. 2:14-15; Col. 2:14-15; 1 Tim. 3:11; etc.). In fact, the book of Hebrews is incomprehensible without such a distinction (cf. Heb. 7:11-12, 18-19).

Jesus Himself alluded to the positivistic aspect of the ceremonial requirements when He noted that David “did eat the showbread, which [according to the ceremonial law] was not lawful for him to eat” (Mt. 12:4), in order to preserve his life. Here our Lord is arguing that there is nothing wrong with ignoring a ceremonial requirement in an emergency. Yet the Bible clearly does not allow men to violate moral laws in a similar situation. Men are not permitted to steal, lie, cheat or do violence to a neighbor if they are hungry. The reason for this difference is simple. The moral law is based on God’s nature and character while (generally speaking) ceremonial laws are positivistic laws that illustrate or teach a truth through symbols or types.

Jesus Himself taught His disciples that it was important to recognize distinctions in the law. In their presence He chided the Pharisees for focusing on minor issues and neglecting “the weightier matters of the law: justice, mercy and faith” (Mt. 23:23). When confronted with the false piety and legalism of the Pharisees, our Lord often instructed His followers to contemplate the moral emphasis of the law as taught by the prophets. He said, “But go and learn what this means: ‘I desire mercy and not sacrifice’” (Mt. 9:13; cf. 12:7; 23:23; Hos. 6:6; Mic. 6:8). While modern scholars may not see any distinctions within God’s law; the prophets, Christ and the apostles obviously did. Solomon did also and, under divine inspiration, wrote a whole book of practical wisdom by applying the moral law of God to everyday situations. If those who reject every aspect of the Mosaic law were consistent they would argue that the book of Proverbs only applies to Christians when its teachings are explicitly restated in the New Testament canon.

In addition, the Old Testament law recognized a distinction between moral laws and ceremonial ordinances in that *unbelieving, uncircumcised* sojourners, who were among God’s people or in the land, were subject to the moral laws within the civil code (e.g., Lev. 18:26), yet were not required to participate in any of the ceremonial rites. In fact they were forbidden to do so (Ex. 12:44-48; Lev. 22:10). The Temple worship and the sacrificial cultus were only available to the people of God. The Old Covenant Jews certainly understood the difference between moral statutes (e.g., laws dealing with rape, murder, fraud, adultery and theft) and ceremonial ordinances (e.g., burnt offerings, feast days, etc). Are we to believe that Gentiles guilty of homosexual acts or violence against a neighbor were not punished because such laws only applied to the Israelites? Such a view is absurd.

Moreover, the fact that the different laws are not organized into neat separate categories but appear all mixed together in a single *Tora* is irrelevant. Virtually all important biblical topics are not organized into a modern systematic theology. The Bible is simply not written that way. That, however, does not mean that differences do not exist or that classifications cannot be made. As long as this categorization can be inferred and proved by Scripture then it is legitimate. In fact, as we will see, the biblical teaching on the law is incomprehensible and contradictory without these categories.

Second, the Old Testament law itself explicitly recognized that the moral laws were universal (i.e. applicable to both Jews and Gentiles) in that after a lengthy list of laws dealing with sexual ethics in Leviticus 18 (i.e. statutes forbidding incest, adultery, homosexuality as well as sacrificing children to Molech), God says the pagan nations are defiled and will be cast out of the land *for violating these same laws* (vs. 24-30). The judicial code of Israel was even supposed to be an example of supreme justice among the surrounding heathen nations. God told Israel that

if they were careful to observe His statutes and judgments then the Gentile nations will “hear all these statutes, and say...what great nation is there that has such statutes and righteous judgments as are in all this law” (Deut. 4:6, 8). This acknowledgment would not be based on the ceremonial ordinances which were incomprehensible to the heathen, but rather the moral statutes. This direct revelation from God would have been dishonest and inappropriate if the *whole* law could only be applied to Israel and could not be used in any way outside the covenant nation as a guide for social justice. In fact, it would not make any sense whatsoever.

Furthermore, the prophets who applied the *Torah* in their covenant lawsuit preaching recognized that all the heathen nations were required to obey God’s moral commandments and would be judged if they violated them. Thus, God spoke through Isaiah saying, “The earth is also defiled under its inhabitants, because they have transgressed the laws, changed [or violated] the ordinance [or statute] broken the everlasting covenant” (24:5). E. J. Young’s comments on how and why the Gentile nations were guilty of violating God’s revealed law are excellent:

Just as Palestine itself, the Holy Land, had become profane through the sin of its inhabitants (Num. 35:33; Deut. 21:19; Jer. 3:9; and Ps. 106:38), so also the entire earth became profane when the ordinances given to it were violated.... Transgression is against the law of God, and this is expressed by the terms *law, statute, everlasting covenant*. The [moral] laws which God has revealed to His people bind all mankind; and hence, the work of the Law of God written on the human heart, for example, may be described under such terms.

The Law was not specifically revealed to the Gentiles as it was to the Jews at Sinai. Nevertheless, according to Paul, the Gentiles do by natural instinct those things which are prescribed by the Law...and this fact shows that the work of the Law is written on their own hearts. In transgressing those things prescribed in the Law, however, it may be said that the Gentiles were actually transgressing the Law itself. Here, the plural is used to show that the Gentiles had transgressed divine commands and ordinances, and also that their sins were many and varied. We may say that the Gentiles transgressed specific items of the Law, a thought which the plural form of the noun would also support. It is a transgression of the divine will generally, or as Calvin puts it, “all the instruction contained in the Law.”

The mention of “statute” is perhaps intended for the sake of specificity, for inasmuch as both commandment and promise are included in the Law, this word stresses the commandment....

Lastly, we are told that men frustrated or made void the everlasting covenant.... It must be noticed, however, that those who have frustrated the eternal covenant are not merely the Jews but the world generally. The frustrating of the covenant is something universal. For this reason we may adopt the position that the eternal covenant here spoken of designates the fact that God has given His Law and ordinances to Adam, and in Adam to all mankind.... Isaiah uses the language which is characteristic of the Mosaic legislation, and thus describes the universal transgressions of mankind.<sup>74</sup>

It is important to note that God defines “the work of the law written on the heart” (Rom. 2:15), or the universal law given to Adam, using the Mosaic law and not vice versa. Because written moral statutes are perspicuous and easily accessible, they are used to tell us what the Gentile nations did wrong. (This explicitly contradicts the idea that *every aspect* of the Mosaic legislation had nothing to do with the Gentiles.) It is for this reason that when the book of Proverbs applies the law of God to whole nations it says that, “Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people” (14:34). David also defines “all the wicked of the earth” as “all those who stray from Your statutes” (Ps. 119:118-119).

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<sup>74</sup> E. J. Young, *The Book of Isaiah* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1969), 2:156-158.

The prophets repeatedly condemned heathen nations and peoples for violating specific statutes found in God's law. They condemned idolatry (Jer. 47:25; 48:13, 35; 50:2; 51:38; cf. Ex. 20:2-3; Deut. 5:7-8); kidnapping (Am. 1:6; cf. Ex. 21:16; Deut. 24:7); sorcery (Isa. 47:9, 12, 13; Nah. 3:4; cf. Ex. 22:18; Lev. 19:21); unlawful loans (Hab. 2:6; cf. Ex. 22:25-27; Deut. 24:6, 10-13); theft (Isa. 16:4; cf. Ex. 20:15; Deut. 5:19); and murder (Isa. 14:20; cf. Ex. 20:13; Deut. 5:17). John the Baptizer applied the moral law to a heathen magistrate (Herod) when he told him it was not lawful for him to be married to his brother's wife (Mk. 6:18; cf. Lev. 18:16, 20, 21). It is totally unrealistic to think that John was basing his exhortation on natural law theory. He was a prophet who applied God's revealed law.

Third, if the whole Old Testament law including all the moral precepts was abrogated with the coming of Christ, then why does God promise to put His law into the hearts of believers in the New Covenant era? Jehovah said, "I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people" (Jer. 31:33). Calvin writes, "By these words he confirms what he said, that the newness, which he before mentioned, was not so as to substance, but as to the form only: for God does not say here, 'I will give you another Law,' but I *will write My Law*, that is, the same Law which had formerly been delivered to the Fathers."<sup>75</sup> Since the New Testament makes it perfectly clear that the ceremonial ordinances have been abrogated, we must interpret this verse in terms of the Holy Spirit's work in the New Covenant era of causing hearts to love and obey the revealed moral law. There is a much greater effusion of the Spirit after Pentecost than under the Older Covenant. This passage obliterates the idea that New Testament passages which speak of the abrogation of the ceremonial laws; or, which assert that believers are dead to the law as a means of justification, teach the abrogation of the whole law even for the sanctification of believers. Did God abrogate His law in order to write it on our hearts? Such a view is illogical and unbiblical.

Fourth, the Old Testament prophets viewed the teaching of God's law as an integral aspect of disciplining the nations in the New Covenant era. In Isaiah 2:2-3 we read, "Now it shall come to pass in the latter days *that* the mountain of the LORD's house shall be established on the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow to it. Many people shall come and say, 'Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, To the house of the God of Jacob; He will teach us His ways, And we shall walk in His paths.' For out of Zion

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<sup>75</sup> John Calvin, *Commentaries on the Prophet Jeremiah and Lamentations* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1981), 4:131-132. Calvin's view is the same as all the classic Protestant commentators. Matthew Poole writes, "After those days, saith the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts: in the times of the gospel, God's law is not abrogated and made void. Christ himself came not to destroy the law, but to fulfill it; but it is written in the hearts of God's true Israel by the finger of the Spirit, not in tables of stone only; and they become obedient to it, not from compulsion and force, but from their secret appropriation of it, and acknowledgment of it, as holy, just, and good, the delight they take in it after the inward man, Rom. vii. 22" (*A Commentary on the Holy Bible*, 2:592). Matthew Henry concurs, "That he will incline them to their duty: I will put my law in their inward part and write it in their heart; not I will give them a new law (as Mr. Gataker well observes), for Christ came not to destroy the law, but to fulfill it; but the law shall be written in their hearts by the finger of the Spirit as formerly it was written in the tables of stone. God writes his law in the hearts of all believers, makes it ready and familiar to them, at hand when they have occasion to use it, as that which is written in the heart, Prov. iii. 3. He makes them in care to observe it, for that which we are solicitous about is said to lie near our hearts. He works in them a disposition to obedience, a conformity of thought and affection to the rules of the divine law, as that of the copy to the original" (*Commentary on the Whole Bible*, 4:606). John Gill notes, "I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; not the ceremonial law, which was abolished when this covenant was made; but rather the moral law still in force, which is a transcript of the nature and will of God..." (*An Exposition of the Books of the Prophets of the Old Testament*, 1:578).



shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem” (cf. Mic. 4:1-5). In Isaiah 42 we are told that the Messiah will establish justice in the earth; “and the coastlands shall wait for His law” (v. 4). The law that proceeds from Jehovah will be “as a light of the peoples” (Isa. 51:4). His law will reside in His people’s hearts (Isa. 51:7; cf. Jer. 31:33). The expressions “the law” or “His law” in these contexts must refer to the same moral law given to Moses. If we argue that these references refer to a wholly new law (e.g., the law of Christ) that has nothing to do with the Old Testament law, then we not only ignore the original audience, but also import a meaning to these words that is alien to the context. The *Torah* of “the last days” refers to the use among New Covenant believers of the Old Testament moral laws. All the Protestant symbols recognize the moral law and the teaching of this law has been a great spiritual and social benefit to individuals, families and nations.

Fifth, the New Testament authors repeatedly appeal to the Old Testament moral laws for ethics. This use of the law is completely inconsistent with the idea that every aspect of the Mosaic law has been abrogated. When contrasting the ethics of His kingdom with the perverted doctrine of the Pharisees, Jesus says that loving our neighbors (Lev. 19:18) even extends to our enemies (Mt. 5:44). He also rebukes the scribes and Pharisees for circumventing the fifth commandment through their traditions (Mt. 15:14; Mk. 7:9-10). In Matthew 18 our Lord applies a civil law regarding witnesses to discipline cases in the church (v. 16; Deut. 19:15). In Mark 10:19 and Matthew 22:37-40, He quotes approvingly from the Ten Commandments and their summary. In Matthew 5:17-19 Christ explicitly endorses the ethical teachings of the Old Testament law for His disciples and makes it crystal clear that His disciples need to do and teach them if they want to be called great in the kingdom of heaven. According to the teaching of our Lord in this passage, we should assume continuity unless laws are abrogated or altered by further revelation. The only clear passages of abrogation in the New Testament involve the ceremonial ordinances or the weak and beggarly elements (see the section on this below). (The attempt to circumvent Matthew 5:17ff. by arguing that “fulfill” [*plerosai*] refers only to the fulfilling of prophecy or the Savior’s own obedience to the law violates the immediate and broader context. Not only is “fulfill” set in a contrast to “destroy” or “abrogate” [*katalysai*], but the whole rest of the chapter is taken up with personal ethics. Jesus gives the correct interpretation of the moral law over against the perverse traditions of the scribes and Pharisees.)

The apostle Paul, writing *after* Galatians, assumes that the moral law of God revealed in the Old Testament is authoritative, good, useful and binding on New Covenant believers. He affirms that “the law is holy, and the commandment holy and just and good” (Rom. 7:12; cf. 1 Tim. 1:8). “As holy, just, and good it reflects the character of God and is the transcript of his perfection. It bears the imprint of its author.... As ‘holy’ the commandment reflects the transcendence and purity of God and demands of us the correspondent consecration and purity; as ‘righteous’ it reflects the equity of God and exacts of us in its demand and sanction nothing but what is equitable; as ‘good’ it promotes man’s highest well-being and thus expresses the goodness of God.”<sup>76</sup> In verse 14 of the same chapter he adds the statement, “We know that the law is spiritual.” That is, it is derived from the Holy Spirit and thus has its origins in God and displays His character. For this reason David could say, “The law of the LORD is perfect” (Ps. 19:7). How, we ask, is something that is spiritual, perfect, good, holy, righteous and just abrogated by God? Could God set aside laws that are not positivistic or arbitrary in any way, but rather are reflections of His own nature and character? God could no more abrogate His moral precepts than deny His own nature.

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<sup>76</sup> John Murray, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 1:253.

Further, if Jehovah could simply abrogate His own moral laws revealed in the Old Testament, then why send Jesus to the cross to endure the suffering that violations of these laws merited? God could have eliminated all sin simply by abrogating all moral laws. Further, why would Christians who are serious about sanctification and personal godliness want to ignore or deliberately set aside righteous, holy, just and good laws? Such a view does not make any sense exegetically or logically. To argue that with the coming of Christ these moral, just and righteous laws are no longer allowed to instruct us in holiness is incredible and astounding. Only someone blinded by unbiblical presuppositions in this area could come to such strange and irrational conclusions.

When Paul describes himself after his conversion, he says that as a Christian he has a “delight in the law of God according to the inward man” (Rom. 7:22). The apostle’s regenerate mind consented to, approved of, and delighted in the moral perfections of God’s revealed law. His fight against sin as a saved individual involved a heartfelt commitment to the moral law. In our battle against the flesh, our renewed soul recognizes the moral law as our ally in personal sanctification. If Paul, the Christian, says that the law is the object of his love or delight, then obviously his renewed mind approves and endorses the revealed Old Testament moral law.

In Romans chapter 3, Paul says that “we know that whatsoever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God” (v. 19). This verse is significant because Paul includes Gentiles throughout the whole world as under the condemnation of the law even though they never possessed the specially revealed law (see Rom. 2:14).<sup>77</sup> There is a sense in which those without law (i.e. the Old Testament revealed law) are yet within the law and condemned by it. The reason for this reality is simple. The work of law written on the heart (Rom. 2:15) and the enscriptured moral laws of the Old Testament are both based on God’s nature and character and thus contain the same moral standard. Paul focuses on the enscriptured moral law because it is perspicuous and is the standard of judgment on the final day (Jas. 2:12). This verse explicitly contradicts theologians and expositors who maintain that the Old Testament law was for the Jews only and did not apply to Gentiles in any way.

Those who teach that every aspect of the law has been abrogated with the coming of our Lord are teaching the exact opposite of Romans 3:31: “Do we then make void the law through faith? Certainly not! On the contrary, we establish the law.” This verse is connected to the preceding statements of Paul by the word “then.” Paul had just argued that men could not be justified by obedience to the law (vs. 21-30). Men are not justified by doing but by believing. In context it is obvious that Paul is discussing the Mosaic law (e.g., “by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified” [v. 20]; “the righteousness of God apart from the law” [v. 21]; “a man is justified by faith apart from the deeds of the law” [v. 28]). Since the apostle is making universal statements about all mankind (e.g., “every mouth...all the world” [v. 19]; “no flesh” [v. 20]; “to all and on all” [v. 22]) and is comparing two kinds of righteousness: the righteousness obtained by faith and attempts to achieve righteousness by observing the law, Paul’s focus here is on the

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<sup>77</sup> Regarding this verse Hendriksen writes, “I believe... —everybody, the whole world—most adequately expresses what Paul had in mind. It is true that the phrase ‘those (who are) within the pale of the law’ might cause us to think exclusively of the Jews. However, does not the law, God’s Word, have a message for all? And does it not have authority over all, and a claim on all, whether they be believers or unbelievers? And does it not condemn all, without exception, whether they be Jews or Gentiles by race” (*Exposition of Paul’s Epistle to the Romans* [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1980, 81], 124). John Murray writes, “There can be no question but here is the note of all-inclusive universality, especially in the words ‘the whole world.’ Paul includes the Gentiles who did not have the law in the sense of the Old Testament or specially revealed law (cf. 2:14)” (*The Epistle to the Romans*, 1:124).

revealed Old Testament moral law. Interestingly, in the Greek, “law” in this question is in an emphatic position: “the law do we nullify?” The apostle raises this hypothetical question at the end of this chapter precisely because he at some length has been speaking strongly against the law as a means of justification. If the keeping of the law serves no role in our justification, then is the law irrelevant for New Covenant believers? Does not Paul’s doctrine of justification by faith alone apart from works render the law of God superfluous?

The apostle answers this question with his strongest, most emphatic formula of denial: “God forbid!” or literally, “Let it never be!” He views the idea that the gospel results in an abrogation of the law for daily living with shock and abhorrence. “On the contrary,” he affirms, “we establish the law.” “The forceful character of the answer must probably be explained in the light of the fact that there were those who were saying, ‘Let us do away with the law. All we need is faith. Let us continue in sin, that grace may abound.’”<sup>78</sup> Here Paul anticipates the main objection to his argument and deals with it in brief. He will take up this subject in much more detail later on when he discusses the work of Christ as it relates to sanctification in opposition to the accusation of antinomianism.

The verb *histomen*, translated “we establish,” means “to cause to stand” or “confirm.” Although the Christian never obeys the law as a means of justification, he is still obligated to obey the moral law in order to live a sanctified or godly lifestyle. An imputed righteousness, apart from a personal obedience to the law, does not mean that believers can ignore the moral demands of the law as the proper, ethical, Christian way to live. Paul says that the moral requirements of the law are still in effect as the authoritative will of God for New Covenant believers. John Owen notes that “faith does not render void, or nullify the authority, the use and sanctions of the moral law, but on the contrary, sustains and confirms them. Though it does what the law does not, and cannot do, inasmuch as it saves the sinner whom the law condemns; yet it effects this without relaxing or dishonoring the law, but in a way that renders it, if possible, more binding, and more honourable, and more illustrious.”<sup>79</sup> The doctrine of justification by faith

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<sup>78</sup> William Hendriksen, *Exposition of Paul’s Epistle to the Romans*, 137.

<sup>79</sup> John Owen, as quoted by the editor of John Calvin, *Commentaries on the Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Romans*, 151-152, footnote 1. The interpretation that Romans 3:31 teaches the continuing validity of the Old Testament moral law for the sanctification of believers is common among the best Protestant interpreters. Calvin writes, “For the *moral* law is in reality confirmed and established through faith in Christ, inasmuch as it was given for this end—to lead man to Christ, by showing him his iniquity; and without this it cannot be fulfilled, and in vain will it require what ought to be done; nor can it do anything but irritate lust more and more, and thus finally increase man’s condemnation; but where there is a coming to Christ, there is first found in him the perfect righteousness of the law, which becomes ours by imputation, and then there is sanctification, by which our hearts are prepared to keep the law; it is indeed imperfectly done, but there is an aiming at the work.... Let us then also bear in mind, so to dispense the gospel that by our mode of teaching the law may be confirmed; but let it be sustained by no other strength than that of faith in Christ” (*Commentaries on the Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Romans*, 152). Matthew Poole says, “It is indeed abolished as a covenant of works, and in this sense is made void to believers; and it is done away as to the form of administration of it by Moses; and it is destroyed as a yoke of bondage; and the people of God are free from the malediction of it, and condemnation by it, and so from its terror; yet it remains unalterable and unchangeable in the hands of Christ; the matter of it is always the same, and ever obligatory on believers, who, though they are freed from the curse of it, are not exempted from obedience to it: wherefore the law is not made void, so as to be destroyed and abolished in every sense, or to be rendered idle, inactive, useless, and insignificant; but, on the contrary, is made to stand, is placed on a sure basis and firm foundation, as the words used signify” (*Commentary on the Holy Bible*, 3:498). Matthew Henry concurs, “*Do we then make void the law through faith?* A very material objection is here to be anticipated and answered, viz. that by establishing justification by faith alone the law is rendered useless, and the obligation thereto destroyed. *God forbid: yea, we establish the law:* having rejected this objection, by his usual note of abhorrency, he proceeds to show, that nothing more establisheth the law,

establishes the law because justified believers who live according to the Spirit fulfill the righteous requirements of the law (Rom. 8:4; cf. 13:8, 10).

A passage that is devastating and inexplicable to those who teach the abrogation of the whole law is Romans 8:3-4: "For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh, that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit." Paul notes that because of our sinful natures the law did not have the power to deal with sin judicially. The law cannot exercise a judicial judgment over the power of sin in our lives. The law does not deprive sin of its power; instead, because of our depravity, it stimulates sin (Rom. 7:8-10). But what the law could not do, Jesus did by taking a human nature and dying for our sins and rising victorious out of the grave. He eliminated the guilt of sin and also conquered the grave. He eliminated the penalty of sin and also conquered the enslaving dominion of sin over our lives (Rom. 6:2-14).

Why did our Lord vanquish the power of sin over us? Paul says that He did it in order that we might fulfill or live in habitual obedience to the righteous requirement of the law.<sup>80</sup> The

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inasmuch as by faith we attain a perfect righteousness, we are interested in the most complete obedience of Christ to the moral law; and that hereby every type, promise, and prophecy is fulfilled; see Matt. v. 17; Luke xvi. 17: and we ourselves also being enabled thereunto by a gospel spirit, have a more exact conformity to the law, though we cannot reach to a fulfilling of it" (*Commentary on the Whole Bible*, 5:388). John Gill's commentary reads, "He obviates an objection (v. 31), as if this doctrine did nullify the law, which they knew came from God: 'No,' says he, 'though we do say that the law will not justify us, yet we do not therefore say that it was given in vain, or is of no use to us; no we establish the right use of the law, and secure its standing, by fixing it on the right basis. The law is still of use to convince us of what is past, and to direct us for the future; though we cannot be saved by it as a covenant, yet we own it, and submit to it, as a rule in the hand of the Mediator, subordinate to the law of grace; and so are so far from overthrowing that we establish the law.' Let those consider this who deny the obligation of the moral law on believers" (*An Exposition of the New Testament*, 2:440). Charles Hodge writes, "If it means the moral law, which no doubt was prominently intended, still it is not invalidated, but established. No moral obligation is weakened, no penal sanction disregarded. The precepts are enforced by new and stronger motives, and the penalty is answered in Him who bore our sins in his own body on the tree" (*Romans*, 102). See also John Murray, John Stott, R. J. Rushdoony, William Hendriksen, Thomas R. Schreiner, etc.

<sup>80</sup> The common view of older commentators, that verse 4 is only forensic, has rightly been rejected by the vast majority of modern commentators. Some reasons for this are as follows. First, the fact that verse 3 is discussing the sacrificial death of Christ (contrary to Hodge) does not necessitate a strictly forensic view. Paul in Romans 6 and 7 had just explained how the efficacy of Jesus' death *extends* to deliverance from the power of sin. Murray writes, "It will have become apparent why it was maintained at the outset that 'condemnation' should be interpreted more inclusively than freedom from the guilt of sin. As it has been shown, it is the judicial aspect that is in view in God's condemnation of sin in the flesh. And it is this same judicial aspect of our enslavement to the power of sin that comes into view in verse 1. Our enslavement to sin is properly viewed as the judgment to which we are consigned and there can be no release from this bondage, contemplated in its judicial character until sin as power receives its judicial condemnation in the cross of Christ and until the effectual application to us takes effect. Hence freedom from condemnation must embrace freedom from the judgment of sin's power as well as the judgment of sin's guilt" (*The Epistle to the Romans*, 1:282).

Second, the strictly forensic view must interpret verse 4 as teaching that in a certain sense our justification is subjective, for Paul says plainly, "the law might be fulfilled in us." The problem with this view is that it contradicts the Scriptural teaching that justification is *objective* to the sinner. It takes place in the heavenly court, not in our souls or our flesh. In addition, our Lord's perfect obedience to the law takes place outside the sinner. Christ's perfect righteousness is imputed or reckoned to the sinner's account, even though personally he is still a sinner.

Third, in verse 4 Paul describes the fulfillment of the law in us as walking in the Spirit and not according to the flesh. This statement clearly refers to personal behavior. Because of Christ's redemptive work, the Christian's lifestyle is directed by the Holy Spirit and not the sinful flesh. The Spirit indwells believers, breaks the power of sin and more and more enables them to obey God's holy law (cf. Gal. 5:18, 25 where walking in the Spirit refers to sanctification).

efficacy of Jesus' death and resurrection which is applied in us by the power of the Holy Spirit results in holy living which Paul defines as fulfilling the moral ordinances of the Mosaic law. Before we were converted we could not obey the law because we were held captive by sin both as to guilt and pollution. But the redemptive work of Christ is the basis for victory over sin. It is the foundation for the work of sanctification in us and according to Paul the ethical standard for sanctification is still God's revealed moral law. "The failure to see a reference to the keeping of the law by believers is explicable in some cases by an unduly negative view of God's law.... What Paul argues is that those who have the Spirit actually keep the law."<sup>81</sup> This law-keeping, however, we know from other portions of Scripture is far from perfect (e.g., 1 Jn. 1:8). This passage "is conclusive proof that the law of God has the fullest normative relevance in that state which is the produce of grace."<sup>82</sup> John Stott notes, "Holiness consists in fulfilling the just requirement of the law. This is the final answer to antinomians and adherents of the so called 'new morality.' The moral law has not been abolished for us; it is to be fulfilled in us. Although law-obedience is not the *ground* of our justification (it is in this sense that we are 'not under law but under grace'), it is the fruit of it and the very meaning of sanctification."<sup>83</sup> This is part of the reason that Paul could say, "Do we make void the law through faith? Certainly not! On the contrary, we establish the law" (Rom. 3:31).

Having noted the apostle's teaching in Romans 3:31; 7:12, 14 and 8:4, we should not be surprised that he repeatedly quotes from the Mosaic law as a source of authority for his injunctions on personal godliness. In Romans 12:17-18 Paul commands believers to avoid personal revenge against those who have done evil against them. Why should Christians act this way? Because the law teaches, "'Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,' says the Lord" (Rom. 12:19; Deut. 32:15). To back up this quote from the law Paul quotes Solomon's application of it (Prov. 25:21-22) in the next verse (20).

The apostle also explicitly endorses the revealed moral law in Romans chapter 13: "Owe no one anything except to love one another, for he who loves another has fulfilled the law. For the commandments, '*You shall not commit adultery,*' '*You shall not murder,*' '*You shall not steal,*' '*You shall not bear false witness,*' '*You shall not covet,*' and if *there is any other*

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Fourth, the objection that the phrase "the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us" implies sinless perfection and thus cannot refer to sanctification (e.g., Calvin and Hodge) is refuted by the analogy of Scripture. When the Bible speaks of certain believers as being righteous, upright, faithful or blameless, it is understood that this does not mean a perfect obedience to the law. When Paul says, "Bear one another's burdens and so fulfill the law of Christ" (Gal. 6:2) in his discussion of sanctification, no one believes this refers to a perfect and perpetual love of our brethren this side of heaven.

<sup>81</sup> Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998), 406, 407. Frederic Louis Godet adds regarding verse 4, "The matter in question here is not *guilt* to be removed; and to say that the law itself can henceforth declare as just, the term *plerthesai, to be fulfilled*, would not be very suitable. The matter in question, according to the context and the terms employed, is *what the law demands* of man. All the postulates contained in the righteousness demanded by the law (comp. the Sermon on the Mount, for example) are *fulfilled in us*, as soon as we *walk*, no more *after the flesh*, but *after the Spirit*. For, as we have seen, the law being *spiritual*, must coincide at all points in its statutes with the impulses of the Spirit" (*Commentary on Romans* [Grand Rapids: Kregel (1883) 1977], 301). F. F. Bruce writes, "The law's 'just requirement' is summed up in 13:9 in the commandment, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.'...Here is the fulfillment of Jeremiah's prophecy of the New Covenant (quoted in part in 11:27), under which, God said, 'I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts' (Jer. 31:33), and of the parallel promise of Ezekiel 11:19-20; 36:26-27, where God undertakes to give his people 'a new heart' and a 'new spirit'—in fact, his own Spirit, sent to dwell within them so that henceforth do his will spontaneously" (*Romans* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, (1963) 1985], 153).

<sup>82</sup> John Murray, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 1:283.

<sup>83</sup> John Stott, *Romans: God's Good News for the World* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity, 1994), 222.

commandment, are *all* summed up in this saying, namely, ‘*You shall love your neighbor as yourself.*’ Love does no harm to a neighbor; therefore love *is* the fulfillment of the law” (vs. 8-10). When discussing the duties of Christians towards each other Paul alludes to Leviticus 19:18 twice and then quotes it verbatim in verse 9. When Christians follow this law to love their neighbor, then all the other commandments are obeyed. The apostle also quotes four of the Ten Commandments as they are set forth in the Greek translation of the Old Testament. Love is not left undefined by the apostle, but is fleshed out in concrete acts based on the objective, enscripturated, moral standard of the Decalogue. This would be an exceptionally odd and contradictory thing to say if Paul had abrogated the whole Mosaic law (i.e. every aspect) back in the book of Galatians. Paul does not say that love is the end of the law or that believers are now only obligated to follow the “laws of Christ,” but that “love is the fulfillment of the law” (i.e. the moral precepts in the Old Testament). He goes on to say that “love does no harm to a neighbor” (v. 10). If we want to express Christian love to another person, then we must seek their good by obeying the Old Testament moral laws that were given for their protection. “This appeal to the Decalogue demonstrates the following presuppositions. (1) The Decalogue is of permanent and abiding relevance. (2) It exemplifies the law that love fulfills and is therefore correlative with love. (3) The commandments and their binding obligation do not interfere with the exercise of love; there is no incompatibility. (4) The commandments are the norms in accordance with which love operates.”<sup>84</sup> This is one of the clearest and strongest affirmations of the abiding validity and relevance of God’s Old Testament moral laws in the New Testament. The law of God is the standard by which Christians love each other. The standard for expressing our love to God is also found in God’s commandments. “By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and keep His commandment. For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments” (1 Jn. 5:2-3).

Scholars who are dispensational or hold to a replacement theory of God’s Old Testament law (i.e. the whole Old Testament law [even the Ten Commandments and moral statutes] are replaced with a new law—the law of Christ), have great difficulty with such clear applications of God’s Old Testament moral laws by New Testament authors. Some simply assume that since these laws are in the New Testament that they are part of Christ’s new law. The problem with this argument is that the expression “law of Christ” (cf. Gal. 6:2; 1 Cor. 9:21) is never demonstrated exegetically to be a new and different law for Christians. “The law of God” and “the law of Christ” are essentially synonymous like God’s Word and “the word of Christ” (Col. 3:16). Those who advocate a dispensational paradigm need to demonstrate how the New Testament has a new ethical approach as regards *content*. What features of the New Testament ethic are brand new and are not simply a repetition, renewal or exposition of the Old Testament ethic? The result of such a study would prove continuity, which is what we would expect given Matthew 5:17-19. In addition, after Paul tells us that “all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself’” (Gal. 5:14; It is interesting that Paul begins a section on Christian sanctification by appealing to the Old Testament moral law and by quoting Leviticus 19:18), he goes to identify this same ethic as the “law of Christ” in Galatians 6:2. Obviously, Paul did not regard the “law of Christ” as a completely new or different ethical system.

Another tactic of those who hold to a dispensational approach is to argue that laws from the Mosaic code are only used in an indirect manner in the New Testament. In other words, since it has been abrogated, it is not used in a direct or immediate way. The New Testament authors

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<sup>84</sup> John Murray, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 2:161-162.

only appeal to underlying moral principles that are found in the law. This view, which is very common today, not only contradicts many passages in the epistles, but is untenable logically. Throughout the New Testament moral laws are quoted *verbatim* from the Old Testament. How is a direct quotation of a passage only an appeal to an underlying principle? This argument is only an attempt to circumvent the obvious fact that the apostles repeatedly and directly appeal to Old Testament moral laws as an authority for Christian ethics. Moreover, what is the moral principle in “you shall not murder, or steal, or lie, or commit adultery, or covet,” that is different than these simple, plain, explicit commands? The word “principle” means a rule of conduct, a fundamental truth, or a law. Apparently, dispensationalists believe there are moral laws within or underlying the moral laws. Such thinking is double talk and nonsense. A moral law is a moral principle. The only difference between the Old Testament and the New Testament when it comes to the moral laws is *application*. We may not have flat roofs where we entertain, so the command to put a fence around our roof does not always apply to roofs today (Dt. 22:8). But it certainly does apply if we have a balcony or if we do happen to have a deck on our roof. The law has not been abrogated, but circumstances have changed.

In 1 Corinthians 5:1 Paul upholds the law’s prohibition against incest. He uses a passage from the moral case laws about kind and fair treatment of oxen as a proof text to take care of pastors (1 Cor. 9:9). And in 1 Timothy 1:8 Paul says “the law is good if one uses it lawfully.” The context indicates that Paul was correcting people in the church who were *not* using the law for “godly edification” (v. 4), or as a way to love others from a pure heart (v. 5). Hendriksen notes that Paul “wishes to impress upon Timothy—and through him upon the Ephesians, particular upon those who were promoting erroneous doctrines—that the proposition, ‘Constant law study is an excellent thing,’ is not new. ‘This proposition,’ says the apostle as it were, ‘is a widely recognized principle, something we all know very well.’ Read Ps. 19, Ps. 119, Matt. 5:17-18.”<sup>85</sup>

Paul goes on to explain that the law was made for men who are lawless, insubordinate, ungodly, etc. and not for the righteous (v. 9). Given the fact that Paul was rebuking men who were not Judaizers, but rather were dealing with the law from the perspective of Jewish myths, traditions, genealogies and speculative nonsense (vs. 3-4), his point here is not that the law has been abrogated for the righteous (i.e. those declared righteous), but that they do not need it applied to them because they have already sought to conform their lives to it and thus already are ethical or righteous *personally* (see Barret, Bernard, Calvin, Earle, Ellicott, Knight, Hendriksen, Henry, Poole, Ridderbos, Simpson and Weiss). They have been regenerated by God’s Spirit, sanctified and enabled by the efficacy of Jesus’ death and resurrection to live in conformity (albeit not in a perfect or absolute manner; cf. 1 Jn. 1:8) to the requirements of the moral law. As Paul says in Romans 8, “He condemned sin the flesh, that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit” (vs. 3-4).

When Paul elaborates on a proper use of the law it becomes clear that he is referring to the moral aspects of the Mosaic code. George W. Knight III writes,

The conjunction *de* relates this statement about “law” directly to a list of various sins that certainly seems to be based on the Mosaic law, all of them governed by the same verb (*keitai*) as that which governs the statement of principle.... The statement of principle and the list of sins are so tightly tied together that it is difficult not to think that they are both dealing with the Mosaic law.... The terms that follow in the list specify sins to be avoided and show that the law

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<sup>85</sup> William Hendriksen, *Exposition of Thessalonians, Timothy and Titus* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1979), 2:66.

was given for a specific ethical use, not to be used in any other way with the righteous (v. 9a). The references to smiters of parents (with two words), murderers, sexual sinners (with two words), kidnappers (literally “stealers of people), and liars and perjurers are a deliberate echo of the order of the second part of the Decalogue (Ex. 20:12-16). Furthermore, that some, indeed most, of the sins are stated in aggravated forms lead one to Ex. 21:15ff. (and elsewhere) the commandments of Exodus 20 are specifically applied and worked out, where we have reference to striking of parents (v. 15), where there is a clear indication that “you shall not kill” is meant to prohibit murder (vv. 12-14), and where one of the forms of stealing is kidnapping (v. 16). By using these aggravated forms from Exodus 21, Paul may be showing the false teachers and the church that when the OT applied and worked out the principles of the law, it did so in this very specific way of dealing with people’s sins. The list would therefore carry with it, then, a double-edged thrust: Its ethical application of the Decalogue echoes the OT itself and thus gives both an example of how the law is to function and a refutation of the would-be teachers.<sup>86</sup>

Given all of these considerations, one can say with confidence that the apostle Paul, quite late in his career (c. A.D. 64), was still teaching the applicability of the moral laws in the Mosaic code for the New Covenant era.<sup>87</sup>

In the midst of a section where Jesus is rebuking believers for showing partiality toward the rich while ignoring the poor in their midst, the brother of our Lord backs up his charge with an argument taken directly from the Old Testament moral law. He writes,

If you really fulfill *the* royal law according to the Scripture, “*You shall love your neighbor as yourself,*” you do well; but if you show partiality, you commit sin, and are convicted by the law as transgressors. For whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one *point*, he is guilty of all. For He who said, “*Do not commit adultery,*” also said, “*Do not murder.*” Now if you do not commit adultery, but you do murder, you have become a transgressor of the law. So speak and so do as those who will be judged by the law of liberty (2:8-12).

Christians, James says, do the right thing if they obey the royal law. The expression “the royal law” (*nomon basilikon*) refers to the fact that God and Christ are the sovereign givers of the law. The law rests on God’s power and on the absolute authority of the theanthropic Mediator. “God’s laws are royal laws because of the dignity of the author of them.... Men’s laws are but properly ministerial and explicatory; God’s is royal and absolute.”<sup>88</sup>

How does James define this kingdom law? He cites Leviticus 19:18 out of the Old Testament Scriptures: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself” (This same verse is quoted six times in the synoptic gospels and is appealed to as an authoritative guide for Christian

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<sup>86</sup> George W. Knight III, *The Pastoral Epistles* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992), 82, 83-84.

<sup>87</sup> One heterodox writer and publisher attempted to circumvent the obvious endorsements and New Covenant applications of the Old Testament moral laws by making a distinction between the apostle’s use of the word law (*nomos*) with or without the article. He argued that when Paul did not use the article (the) that he was not speaking of the Old Testament law, but rather “natural law.” Since Paul does not use the article in 1 Timothy 1:9, this would be a good time to dispense with this argument. There are many passages that do not use the article that are recognized by virtually all expositors to refer to the Mosaic law (e.g., Lk. 2:23-24; Ac. 13:39; Rom. 2:25; 3:20; 4:13; 6:14; 10:4; Gal. 2:19; 6:13; 1 Cor. 9:20; etc). As the Greek scholar A. T. Robertson has noted, “*Nomos* is a word that is used with a great deal of freedom by Paul. In general when *nomos* is anarthrous [i.e. without the article] in Paul it refers to the Mosaic law as in *epanapaue nomo* (Rom. 2:17)” (*A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research* [Nashville: Broadman Press, 1934], 796). Further, in 1 Timothy 1:8, Paul uses the article and then in the very next verse (9), when speaking of the same law, does not use the article. Clever arguments based on the anarthrous use of *nomos* must be rejected.

<sup>88</sup> Thomas Manton, *A Commentary on James* (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, [1693] 1962), 206.



sanctification by Paul in Romans 13:9 and Galatians 5:14). This commandment perfectly suits James' argument because it specifically applies to a case where Christian poor people were not being treated biblically as neighbors. "The truly wise man goes to God's own authorized statute-book; and those who 'fulfill' the law, as found there, 'do well,' act worthily of the Christian profession, 'adorn the doctrine of God their Savior.'"<sup>89</sup> Those who show favoritism break the royal law (the whole moral law as summarized in Lev. 19:18). Such a person is guilty of sin.

To strengthen his point and express the unity of the moral law, James sets forth examples from the Decalogue which are the central ethical commandments from the Mosaic law. God formulated the law and thus it is royal. It is absolute and binding on mankind. This moral law is a unity and thus we are not free to pick and choose which of the moral laws we would like to obey. To blatantly disregard one law is, in principle, to disregard the whole moral law (v. 10). Therefore, all Christians whether Jewish or Gentile are obligated to keep the whole moral law, even the Old Testament moral laws found in the Mosaic legislation. "In fact, in the Sermon on the Mount Jesus teaches that nothing from the law will disappear 'until everything is accomplished' (Mt. 5:17-19). And Paul refers to the obligation of obeying the whole law (Gal. 5:3)."<sup>90</sup> "The law is a transcript of the divine character. It contains many details for our guidance; but of this *body* of law, *love* is the *soul*, all-pervading: for God, whose character the law expresses, 'is love.'"<sup>91</sup>

Given both Paul's and James' dependence on Leviticus 19:18 and the Ten Commandments as basis of Christian ethics, we can only conclude that the "law of Christ" and the "royal law" found in the Mosaic legislation (Jas. 2:8) are indeed the same law. Given these kinds of unambiguous ethical instructions in the New Testament, it is *impossible* to demonstrate exegetically, logically or substantively that the moral law given to Moses was considered abrogated or off limits to New Covenant believers for sanctification. Moreover, one cannot argue that in the New Covenant era the principle of love has replaced the old law because the law of love that Jesus, Paul and James appeal to came from the Mosaic law and was a summary of the second table of the Decalogue and the moral case laws that flow from it.

James backs up his teaching by telling believers to speak and act with the final judgment of God in mind where they will be judged by the law that gives freedom (v. 12). God's eye is always watching us and one day all of us must stand before the judgment seat of Christ (2 Cor. 5:10). What is interesting for our topic is the fact that everything a man says or does is going to be judged by the moral law of God. In context, this at a minimum must include the moral laws recorded in the Old Testament referred to by James. Manton writes, "He hinteth the reinforcement of the duties of the law of Moses in the gospel, which doth as exactly require a care in our speeches and actions as the law, for though believers be freed from the terrors of the law, yet not from the obedience of it."<sup>92</sup> To believers the law is a law of liberty because it sets the boundaries in which we enjoy complete freedom and because the Holy Spirit enables our service to God. License and antinomianism leads to slavery and bondage to sin. Although believers cannot go to hell, their works whether good or bad will still be evaluated by Christ. For James, our Lord and Paul this is a legitimate motivation for holiness.

Sixth, those who argue that the Christian has nothing to do with the Mosaic law are never fully consistent with their own teaching. One of the moral commandments within the Mosaic

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<sup>89</sup> Robert Johnstone, *Commentary on James*, 159.

<sup>90</sup> Simon J. Kistemaker, *Exposition of James, Epistles of John, Peter, and Jude* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996), 78.

<sup>91</sup> Robert Johnstone, 167.

<sup>92</sup> Thomas Manton, *A Commentary on James*, 218.

code is the prohibition of bestiality (Ex. 22:19; Lev. 18:23; 20:16). This commandment is never repeated in the New Testament. Yet, there are few, if any, dispensationalists who argue that bestiality is now permitted. Instead, they attempt to circumvent this argument by saying that bestiality is forbidden by the general New Testament prohibition of fornication or sexual immorality. The problem with this argument is that the New Testament authors define fornication in terms of the Mosaic law. It is a fundamental principle of biblical interpretation that general terms and phrases used in Scripture are to be defined by the Bible itself.

The New Testament also does not repeat the Old Testament prohibitions against cursing a deaf person (Lev. 19:14) or deliberately causing a blind man to wander off the road (Deut. 27:18). These kind of obvious moral commands are said to be covered by the New Testament injunctions to love our neighbor (Rom. 13:9, 10; Gal. 5:14; Jas. 2:8). Yet, once again, the Bible defines the general command to love in terms of obedience to the detailed, specific commandments of the revealed moral law. This statement is not conjecture or even merely an inference, but is the explicit teaching of Paul (Rom. 13:8-10), John (1 Jn. 5:2-3) and James (Jas. 2:8-11). The New Testament authors, writing under divine inspiration, repeatedly presuppose the continuing validity of the Old Testament moral laws.

Further, if we throw out the whole Old Testament law, then, if consistent, we would have to conclude that in many areas the New Covenant ethic is *less specific* concerning regulations dealing with rape, seduction, homosexuality, incest, prostitution, kidnapping, theft, fraud, murder, manslaughter and so on. Are we supposed to completely disregard all these laws which were written by God Himself (Ex. 20:1; 24:3-4) and are called just, righteous and holy laws (Deut. 4:8; Rom. 7:12) in order to start from scratch from general prohibitions or so-called natural law? Such a view is not biblical, logical or wise. Suppose for a moment that a group of Christian legislators are attempting to craft legislation based on “natural law,” but they are in disagreement as to what “nature” teaches. How can such situations be resolved if men are not permitted to go to the perspicuous, detailed *revealed* law? And if these legislators using so-called “natural law” came up with laws that *contradicted* the laws dealing with the same topic in the Old Testament, then, we ask, how could a law that contradicts statutes *that God Himself says are just* (Deut. 4:8; Rom. 7:12) also be just or righteous? Can a law be righteous and non-righteous at the same time? Of course not!

In addition, those who argue that the whole Old Testament law has been abrogated and replaced with a completely new law, the “law of Christ”; and that the many restatements found in the New Testament of moral laws out of the Mosaic code are not the Mosaic law anymore, but now are the law of Christ, are asserting something absurd. If we accept this position, then we must believe two things that make no sense. (1) We must hold that Old Testament moral laws were abrogated at the cross, then *immediately reinstated* at the resurrection. The only difference is that God’s law has been renamed Christ’s law. (2) The Old Testament moral laws were abrogated and then replaced with new laws that *were identical*. This view is patently absurd because if something is abrogated, it is annulled, set out of gear and non-binding. But we have been told that these laws really are binding after all. Attempts to avoid this obvious contradiction by speaking of principles or indirect applications and so forth are a smoke screen to take our eyes away from the obvious fact that the Old Testament moral laws were accepted as binding by the apostles and continue to be binding today.

Seventh, not only is there abundant evidence throughout the New Testament that the Old Testament moral laws are still binding, the apostles and evangelists make it perfectly clear that some laws have been abrogated—the ceremonial ordinances. If the whole law was set out of

gear, this specific teaching about the “shadows” or “weak and beggarly elements” of the law would have been unnecessary.

The ceremonial laws basically came in two categories. (1) The first group included all the laws which typify Jesus Christ and His work of redemption. As such, they were only shadows which pointed to the person and work of the Messiah. The ceremonial laws refer to the sacrificial rituals (the temple cultus): the priesthood, the sacrifices, the Levitical holy days (i.e., the feasts), the temple, the music, the utensils, circumcision, ritual washings, and so on. The ceremonial laws strengthened the faith of the Jews in the coming Messiah, by typifying both Him and the redemption from sin that He would bring. The ceremonial laws were directed to those in Israel. They were *restorative*, for they reflected God’s mercy and salvation. They were *anticipatory*, for they looked ahead to the perfect, final salvation wrought by the Messiah. And they were *temporary*, for as types and shadows they could not really remove the guilt of sin and bring perfection. God always intended to supersede the whole ceremonial system by Jesus Christ. A. A. Hodge writes,

That the ceremonial law introduced by Moses was typical of Christ and His work is taught throughout the New Testament and especially in the Epistle to the Hebrews. It is declared to be a “shadow of things to come, but the body is of Christ.” The tabernacle and its services were “patterns of things in the heavens,” and figures, anti-types, of the true tabernacle, into which Christ has now entered for us. Col. ii. 17; Heb. ix. 23, 24. Christ is said to have effected our salvation by offering Himself as a sacrifice and by acting as our high priest. Eph. v. 2; Heb. ix. 11, 12, 26, 28; xiii. 11, 12. That the coming of Christ has superseded and forever done away with the ceremonial law is also evident from the very fact just stated that ceremonies were types of Him, that they were the shadows of which He was the substance. Their whole purpose and design were evidently discharged as soon as His real work of satisfaction was accomplished; and therefore it is not only a truth taught in Scripture (Heb. x. 1-14; Col. ii. 14-17; Eph. ii. 15, 16), but an undeniable historical fact, that the priestly work of Christ immediately and definitely superseded the work of the Levitical priest. The instant of Christ’s death, the veil separating the throne of God from the approach of men ‘was rent in twain from the top to the bottom’ (Matt. xxvii. 50, 51), thus throwing the way open to all, and dispensing with priests and their ceremonies forever.<sup>93</sup>

(2) The ceremonial law also included laws designed to teach Israel about their religious, ethical and covenantal separation from the surrounding pagan nations. There were ceremonial laws which forbade the covenant people to: mix “different kinds of seeds” when planting crops (Deut. 22:9); plow with two different types of animals such as an ox and a donkey (Deut. 22:10); wear garments made of two different types of cloth such as linen and wool (Deut. 22:11). God also prohibited the Israelites from eating unclean animals (Lev. 11:1-47; 20:22-26; Deut. 14:1-21). These laws illustrated that the Gentile nations were unclean before the coming of Christ (cf. Acts 10:9-43; Gal. 2:12). In the Old covenant era, Gentiles who came to believe in the God of Israel had to become Jews (e.g., Ruth). These laws acted as a wall of division between Jews and

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<sup>93</sup> A. A. Hodge, *The Confession of Faith: A Handbook of Christian Doctrine Expounding the Westminster Confession* (London: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1992), 255-256. John Owen writes, “What were the tabernacle and temple? What was the holy place with the utensils of it? What was the oracle, the ark, the cherubim, the mercy-seat, placed therein? What was the high priest in all his vestments and administration? What were the sacrifices and annual sprinkling of blood in the most holy place? What was the whole system of their religious [temple] worship? Were they anything but representations of Christ in the glory of His person and His office? They were a shadow, and the body represented by that shadow was Christ” (“Meditations and Discourses on the Glory of Christ, in His Person, Office and Grace” in *The Works of John Owen* [Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth (1850-1853) 1965], 1:348).

Gentiles (cf. Eph. 2:11-22). But now that Christ has accomplished a perfect redemption, people of all nations who believe in Christ are made holy and are part of God's covenant people with full rights as adopted sons. Although these ceremonial laws do not apply to New Covenant believers, the general principles they teach do apply. Christians are to be holy and separate from the pagan mindset and lifestyle of sin and unbelief and are not to be unequally yoked with unbelievers (2 Cor. 6:14-7:1).

Since the New Testament teaches the continuity and applicability of the Old Testament revealed moral laws for Christians and also explicitly sets forth the discontinuity of the whole ceremonial system, we should not interpret passages about the end of the law as teaching the end of every aspect of the Mosaic law. Those who have done so find themselves in direct conflict with the doctrine of the prophets, Jesus and the apostles as well as simple principles of logic.

I would challenge Durand to attempt to refute this section of this monograph with specific arguments, instead of complaining and equivocating regarding my quickly prepared lectures on the judicial law of Moses.<sup>94</sup>

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<sup>94</sup> I offered to debate Durand on the abiding validity of the Old Testament revealed moral laws back in 2007. He declined. The invitation remains open.