

OCCASIONAL NOTES

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The Timelessness of The Ten Commandments

"The Law of the Lord is perfect, converting the Soul"

(Psalm 19:7)

By Mark Mullins

In this edition of the Occasional Notes I would like to look at the moral law of God to show that the Ten Commandments are for all time and that the Lord Jesus did not bring in a different law but rather disclosed the full implications of those Ten Commandments for our lives today. I will look first at the Character of God, then the evidence for the Ten Commandments before Mount Sinai. I will next summarise briefly the Covenant of Works and the Covenant of Grace before turning to an alternative approach advocated by New Covenant theologians who reject the continuity of the Covenant of Grace in both the New and Old Testaments.

Character of God



I think the most compelling argument for the existence of one law for all mankind is the character of God. A. A. Hodge describes the law of God as "an immutable transcript of the divine nature". We know from Malachi 3:6 that God is unchangeable – "I am the Lord, I change not". The Lord Jesus, being fully God and fully man, is also unchangeable for we read in Hebrews 13:8 that "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever".

One of the attributes of God is his righteousness. For example Psalm 71:19 tells us that "Thy

righteousness also, O God, is very high". This means that everything that God does is right. God is also just ("shall not the judge of all the earth do right?" (Genesis 18:25)). It goes without saying that God is holy (Psalm 99:9). Holiness, righteousness and justice presuppose standards by which such attributes can be measured. Habakkuk 1:13 tells us that "Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil and canst not look on iniquity". We see from this that holiness is the antithesis of evil.

Holiness is therefore defined by the concept of good and evil. For example, we are warned against evil-doing (1 Peter 4:15) so evil-doing needs to be defined.



This takes us to the creation where we read that man was created in the image of God (Genesis 1:26). William Perkins wrote, "The image of God is the integrity of the reasonable creature, resembling God in holiness"¹. This is perhaps best illustrated by Ephesians 4:24 where Paul exhorts us to "put on the new man which is created after God, in righteousness and holiness". In Ecclesiastes 7:29, we read that "God hath made man upright". This is not to be understood of their physical ability to stand upright. After all chimpanzees occasionally walk upright².

¹ A Golden Chain by William Perkins at page 30 (pdf download of the edition printed by John Legate in 1600 (originally printed 1592))

² <http://humanorigins.si.edu/human-characteristics/walking-upright>

Instead it speaks of man's moral rectitude since he is made in the image and likeness of God³.

So we may conclude that the holiness of God was to be seen in man, created after his image.

The Measure of Holiness

For man's purposes, God's law is the measure of holiness. *[God is not under law – he is law! ...as Perkins says in point 5 on the next page.]* William Perkins defined the moral law as follows: "The Moral Law is that part of God's word which commands to man his perfect obedience, in his nature as well as in his actions; and it forbids the contrary". William Perkins cited three scripture verses to support this view:

- i. Romans 10:5:- Moses describeth the righteousness which is of the law, That the man which doeth those things shall live by them;
- ii. 1 Timothy 1:5:- The end of the commandment is charity out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned;
- iii. Luke 10:27:- Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind;

It is my contention that the moral law that is binding for all time is summarised in the Ten Commandments. William Perkins had five helpful rules to interpret those commandments (my words in italics; otherwise the words of Williams Perkins):

1. In the negative, the affirmative must always be understood; and in the affirmative, the negative;
2. The negative binds at all times, and to all times; and the affirmative binds at all times, but not to all times; and therefore negatives are of more force. *This might seem a little difficult to understand but let us take the commandment, "Thou shalt not steal". That is binding at all times and to all times. The affirmative is that I must at all times look after my neighbour's possessions. However, that only applies when I am able to look after his possessions. Suppose I house sit for him then at all times when I am house-sitting I must look after those possessions but when I am no longer there and no longer in a*

position to look after them, then the duty ceases.

3. Under one vice expressly forbidden, are comprehended all of that kind – indeed the least cause, occasion, or enticement to it, is forbidden as well; such as that in 1 John 3:15:- "Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him". Matthew 5:21 to the end. Evil thoughts are condemned, as well as evil actions.
4. The smallest sins are entitled with the same names as the one expressly forbidden in that commandment to which they pertain. As in the former passages, hatred is named as murder, and to look at a woman with a lusting eye is adultery.
5. We must understand every commandment of the law as annexed with this condition: *unless God commands the contrary*. For God being absolute Lord, and so above the Law, He may command that which His law forbids. So he commanded Isaac to be offered, the Egyptians to be destroyed, the brazen Serpent to be erected (which was a figure of Christ), etc.⁴

These principles are important to understand because it makes us realise that there is a golden thread running throughout scripture that explains and enlarges upon the meaning and application of the Ten Commandments.

If this is correct then we would expect to find the Ten Commandments throughout scripture both before the Ten Commandments were given to Moses on Mount Sinai and in the New Testament.

We have already seen that the law of God is the transcript of God's character and that he had placed that on man whom he made in his own image. Paul describes it in these terms in Romans 2:14-15:- "For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves: which shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another". So we see that God's law was written on men's hearts at creation. It is interesting to note the name of the tree from which man was forbidden to eat. It was the tree of the knowledge of good and

³ See John Gill's commentary on Ecclesiastes 7:29

⁴ A Golden Chain by William Perkins at the end of chapter 19 (p75)

evil (Genesis 2:17). Good and evil being defined by the Ten Commandments, I would suggest.

The Law of God before Mount Sinai

We see two mentions of the Lord's commandments in general before the Ten Commandments were given on Mount Sinai:

1. Genesis 26:5:- "Because that Abraham obeyed my voice, and kept my charge, my commandments, statutes and laws";
2. Exodus 16:28:- "And the Lord said unto Moses, how long refuse ye to keep my commandments and my laws?"

1 John 3:4 defines sin as the transgression of the law. Judgment fell on the people of Sodom, principally for the sin which takes its name from that city, but also for pride, haughtiness, abundance of idleness, a failure to strengthen the hands of the poor and needy (Ezekiel 16:49). Therefore all these sins must have been apparent to the people of Sodom, for (as I have already mentioned) "shall not the **Judge** of all the earth do right?" (Genesis 18:25).

The following scriptures show, in order of the commandments, that the Ten Commandments were known to men before they were given to Moses on Mount Sinai:-

1. In Genesis 35:2-3 Jacob told his household to put away the strange gods among them and that he would raise an altar to God at Bethel showing that men were aware of the sins of idolatry and having multiple gods – thus breaking the first and second Commandments;
2. In Job 2:9, Job described his wife as one of the foolish women for encouraging him to curse God showing that they were both aware of the third Commandment ("Thou shalt not take the Name of the Lord thy God in vain");
3. In Genesis 22:3 the Lord promised to rain bread from heaven every day to test whether they would walk in his law or not. They were to gather double portions on the sixth day for the seventh day "is a sabbath unto the Lord: to day ye shall not find it in the field". This is what we would expect given that God not only rested on the seventh day himself but blessed the seventh day and sanctified it (set it apart). He blessed the seventh day for all people and not just the Jews (Genesis 2:2-3);
4. In Genesis 9:24-27, Canaan was cursed for dishonouring his father, Noah, by looking on his

nakedness thus breaking the fifth commandment to honour our mother and father;

5. In Genesis 4:9-12 we see that God punished Cain for lying and murder, breaking the sixth and ninth commandments (thou shalt not murder and thou shalt not bear false witness);
6. Genesis 20:3-9 and Genesis 39:7-9 describe adultery as sin which is a breach of the seventh commandment; and
7. In Genesis 3:6-17 God punished Adam and Eve for coveting and stealing the forbidden fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil – thus breaking the tenth and eighth commandments respectively.

So we see that the Ten Commandments were an expression of the unchanging and pre-existing principles of the moral law of God.

The Covenant of Works and The Covenant of Grace in the Bible – a Brief Summary

The Bible teaches that there are two overarching covenants in the Bible. First, there is the Covenant of Works in the Garden of Eden whereby Adam and Eve were promised eternal life if they kept God's law and did not eat of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Having broken that covenant man became alienated from God and dead in trespasses and sins (Ephesians 2:1). The next covenant, therefore, needed to be and indeed was a Covenant of Grace which we find first mentioned as early as Genesis 3:15:- "And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel." This is the first announcement of the Covenant of Grace by which the Lord promised to bruise the serpent's head by the seed of the woman. He would put enmity between the serpent and the woman because up until then they must have been friends. So in sin man was a son of the devil but when he becomes a Christian he becomes a friend of God. We therefore see mankind divided into two groups: those in the world who belong to the devil and those who are in Christ. The seed is the Messiah who would destroy the devil and all his works on the cross (Colossians 2:15). There was a number of administrations of this Covenant of Grace. The next was God's covenant with Noah where he promised never to destroy the earth by means of another flood. He guaranteed that there would always be a succession of seasons. He also promised that the forces of nature would be restrained. The powers of evil were also restrained and man could not be as violent as he had been.

Man was protected against violence by man and animals. Now this was not a new covenant and did not interfere at all with the covenant of grace. It could be described as a covenant of common grace.

The third administration was the covenant with Abraham in Genesis 17 where God first stated his purpose of redemption in the form of a covenant. For the first time there was a separation between those who belonged to God and those who belonged to the world by circumcision. God chose Abraham and his descendants and made promises to them alone. They became the people of God and God promised him a spiritual seed through whom the whole world would be blessed (see Romans 3-5 and Galatians 3).

The next covenant was the covenant at Mount Sinai and the giving of the Mosaic law. Now a common misunderstanding (which I held for years) is that at Sinai God was re-establishing a covenant of works by which man could be saved. However, this could not be because that had already failed in the Garden of Eden. God would not be re-establishing what had already failed. Indeed Galatians 3:17 makes the point: "And this I say, *that* the covenant, that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect." The promise made to Abraham, therefore, still applied after the giving of the law at Mount Sinai. In terms of the gospel, the purpose of the law is summed up in Galatians 3:24:- "... Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster *to bring us* unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith." There is a number of scriptures in the New Testament that show that the gospel saved both in the Old Testament and the New Testament.

1. We see from the words of the Lord Jesus himself that the Old Testament saints are in heaven in exactly the same way that we are and share all the blessings of God with us: Luke 13:28:- "There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when ye shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets, in the kingdom of God, and you yourselves selves thrust out." It is inconceivable that the patriarchs and prophets were saved by their works. It was by faith as it was in the Lord's day for this was the Gospel that the Lord preached.
2. In Romans 11 Paul taught that the Gentiles were grafted into the same tree as the Jews. It was not a new tree so both old and new covenants belong to the same tree: "For if the firstfruit be

holy, the lump is also holy: and if the root be holy, so are the branches. And if some of the branches be broken off, and thou, being a wild olive tree, wert grafted in among them, and with them partakest of the root and fatness of the olive tree; boast not against the branches. But if thou boast, thou bearest not the root, but the root thee." (Romans 11:16-18). Galatians 3:14 makes this point clear when Paul wrote: "That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith." Again in verse 29: "And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise." Don't these verses make it crystal clear that there is no new covenant of grace in the New Covenant but a *continuation* of the same covenant of grace? Of course the answer is yes!

3. Consider also Ephesians 2:11-13:- "Wherefore remember, that ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands; that at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world: but now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ."

I appreciate that much more could be written on this subject and I would commend Martyn Lloyd Jones' *Great Doctrines of the Bible*, chapter 21 for a fuller treatment of the covenant of grace in the New Testament.

New Covenant Theology's View of the Covenants

New Covenant Theology rejects the Reformed view of these two Covenants of Works and of Grace. They see a discontinuity between the Old and New Testaments and regard the Abrahamic covenant as merely a picture of God's plan for salvation and not itself a reality⁵. Steve Lehrer, for example teaches that what Abraham believed was "not the gospel," for it "did not include anything about sin, the need for repentance, or the atoning work of Jesus Christ". He therefore "lacked knowledge that we consider essential to the gospel."⁶ Yet, the Lord Jesus told us that "Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it and was glad" (John 8:56). It is inconceivable that

⁵ Kevin McGrane – New Covenant Theology: Weighed and Found Wanting at p17.

⁶ These quotes come from S. Lehrer, New Covenant Theology: Questions Answered (2006)

Abraham would not have been aware that the one in whom he rejoiced was the one who would redeem him from his sins.

Surprisingly, it is the view of some New Covenant Theologians that the favours gained by Israel in the Old Testament were merely carnal and temporal.⁷ Hence, Steve Lehrer wrote:

- "God was kind to the Israelites in that they did not deserve God's favour in liberating them from bondage in Egypt. But God did not give these folks the 'grace' to savingly trust in Him." [Lehrer, 2006, 46.]
- "God spoke to the Jews. Although it wasn't salvation ... He gave them the gospel in picture form ... though the blessing the Jews received from having the Word of God was not salvation." [Ibid., 54.]
- "New Covenant Theologians say that the Old Covenant was only a picture of true spiritual salvation and that it could not acquire forgiveness of sins for those under it." [Ibid., 57.]

New Covenant Theology View of the Mosaic Covenant

Instead of seeing the Mosaic Covenant as another administration of the Covenant of Grace New Covenant Theologians see it as a Covenant of Death. This is what Steve Lehrer wrote: "God orchestrated the birth and multiplication of the Israelites; He delivered them from the Egyptians; He had them rebel and die in their sins in the wilderness; and He placed them under the Old Covenant for 1500 years. God did all of this to teach us, not to save them."⁸

New Covenant Theology blames all this on the Ten Commandments which it places at the heart of the Covenant of Death. The New Covenant Confession of Faith says this: "The Old Covenant caused the Israelites to sin all the more. It was never the means of anyone's salvation.... The Ten commandments are the essence of the ... Mosaic Covenant."⁹

It is not perhaps surprising then that New Covenant Theologians have a low view of the Ten Commandments which may explain why they are only too quick to disapply the Ten Commandments in the New Testament.

⁷ Kevin McGrane at p25-6 in which he includes Steve Lehrer's quotes that follow.

⁸ Steven Lehrer at p62 quoted from "New Covenant Theology weighed and found wanting" by Kevin McGrane

⁹ <http://ncbf.net/pdf/confession.pdf>

They believe that Christians are now only required to obey the law of Christ as taught in the New Testament. As Frederick Serjeant put it, "motivated by love, [they] are not subject to commandments written on stone, but those written on the table of the heart."¹⁰



Another proponent of New Covenant Theology is John Reisinger. He wrote: "We insist that Christ is the new lawgiver ... the full and final Lawgiver who supersedes and replaces all others."¹¹ In an Open Letter to Dr RC Sproul, in *Sound of Grace* Vol. 9,



No. 4 (2003) John Reisinger wrote: "[W]e believe that Christ replaces Moses as the new lawgiver ... we will continue to insist that our Lord replaces Moses as God's lawgiver over the church."

Distinguishing Between the Law of God and the Law of Christ

We need to think carefully what this is saying. Is it possible that the law of Christ could be different from the law of God? After all the Lord Jesus said in John 10:30:- "I and my Father are one". Furthermore, we read in both the Old and the New Testaments that there is one lawgiver:

1. Isaiah 33:22:- "For the Lord is our judge, the Lord is our lawgiver, the Lord is our king; he will save us;" and
2. James 4:12:- "There is one lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy: who art thou that judgest another?"

Who will judge the world? In John 5:22 the Lord Jesus tells us that "the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son". If the Lord Jesus is our judge, is he not also our lawgiver? And if our lawgiver then how is it that his law changed when "the Lord changeth not"?

This was John Calvin's response to this suggestion when he wrote: "Those ... have pretended that Christ was only a second Moses, the giver of an Evangelical Law, to supply the deficiency of the

¹⁰ Frederick Serjeant, "The New Covenant", uploaded to Sermon Audio 6th September 2015

¹¹ John Reisinger, *In Defense of Jesus, the New Lawgiver* (2000) cited in McGrane at p143

Mosaic Law ... This idea is in many ways most pernicious.”¹²

This brings us on to the main argument used by those who seek to put forward that there has been a change to the moral law in the New Testament.

The position of the New Covenant Theologians is not new; it is dressed up in different clothes. Rome and Islam have done the same by introducing other ultimate lawgivers and has led to this stinging rebuke by Martin Luther:

“It is a very wicked error when the monks and sophists portray Christ as a new lawgiver after Moses, not unlike the error of the Turks who proclaim that their Mohammed is the new lawgiver after Christ. Those who portray Christ this way do him a supreme injury.”¹³

Threefold Division of the Law

The traditional view of the Mosaic law is that it is divided into three parts: ceremonial, civil and moral. This is a division that New Covenant theologians reject. One argument is that the terms ceremonial, civil and moral are never used in the Bible but this of itself is a spurious argument. We might just as well say that the term Trinity should not be used because it is not in the Bible. It is not whether a particular term is literally present in the Bible but whether that term or expression accurately and faithfully describes a doctrine or teaching that *is* to be found in the Bible.

It is further claimed that there are no indications of any divisions of the law in the Bible. Rather, the law is presented as monolithic, that is, whole and indivisible. Douglas Moo relies on the following verses that “suffice to show that the continuity of the law in the new covenant cannot be founded on such a distinction among the different “kinds” of laws:¹⁴



1. Galatians 5:3:- “For I testify to every man that is circumcised, that he is a debtor to do the *whole law*.”;

2. James 2:10:- “For whosoever shall keep the *whole law*, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all.”

¹² John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Book II, VII, 7 cited in McGrane at p144.

¹³ Comment on Galatians 4:5 in *Works*, Vol. 26, 368

¹⁴ Moo, Douglas J., ‘The Law of Christ as the Fulfilment of the Law of Moses: A Modified Lutheran View,’ in Willem

I suggest that this approach is flawed. Scripture does indeed show that there are three distinct parts of the law:

1. We find a clear distinction between the moral and ceremonial law in 1 Samuel 15:22:- “And Samuel said, hath the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams. Here there is a distinction between the ceremonial law requiring sacrifice and the moral law requiring obedience. John Gill neatly summarises the distinction: “Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? No, certainly the one being merely ceremonial, the other moral; the one supposes sin committed, for which sacrifice is offered; the other moral, and is a compliance with the will of God.”¹⁵



2. Again Proverbs 15:8 is along the same lines: “The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord: but the prayer of the upright is his delight.”
3. Proverbs 21:3 is also in similar terms but this time distinguishes moral (justice) and civil (judgment) from ceremonial law;
4. Amos 5:22, 34: “Though ye offer me burnt offerings and your meat offerings, I will not accept them: neither will I regard the peace offerings of your fat beasts... but let judgment run down as waters, and righteousness as a mighty stream”. It was futile to observe the ceremonial requirement of the law (peace offerings) where judgment and righteousness were missing;
5. 1 Corinthians 7:19 – “Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing, but the keeping of the commandments of God.”

VanGemeren (ed.), *The Law, the Gospel, and the Modern Christian: Five Views* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 1993), 319-376.

¹⁵ John Gill, *Commentary on the Whole Bible*.

Significantly there are three distinct ways that the Ten Commandments were set apart from the other Old Testament laws:

1. When they were given they were accompanied by thunder, lightning, the noise of the trumpet, smoke and thick darkness (Exodus 20:18,21);
2. They were written with the finger of God (Exodus 31:18 and 32:15-16); and
3. They alone were placed in the Ark of the Covenant (Exodus 25:16; 20:20).

All these verses demonstrate the superiority of the moral law above the civil and ceremonial.

So what do we make of Galatians 5:3 that if a man is circumcised it makes him a debtor to the whole law? This verse is saying no more than that a man who is circumcised must justify himself which can only be done by keeping the law perfectly. I suggest this is speaking about keeping the *whole* moral law which is impossible for any man to do, so I do not see how it advances Douglas Moo's argument. I suggest that James 2:10 is also speaking about the moral law. As Jamieson-Fausset-Brown's commentary says: "The law is one seamless garment which is rent if you but rend a part; or a musical harmony which is spoiled if there be one discordant note (Tirinius); or a golden chain whose completeness is broken if you break one link (Gataker). You thus break *the whole law*, though not the whole of the law, because you offend against *love*, which is the fulfilling of the law. If any part of a man be leprous, the whole man is judged to be a leper. God requires perfect, not partial, obedience."¹⁶

New Covenant Theology claims that the undivided Mosaic law was a temporary framework¹⁷. It was fulfilled in Christ and was then abrogated in its entirety. It is, therefore, no longer a direct judge of the conduct of God's people. Believers are no longer required to follow the Old Testament law, which includes the Ten Commandments.

We have already shown that the Ten Commandments pre-existed Mount Sinai. As for the future, Matthew 5:17 and 18 demonstrate the continuity of the Ten Commandments:-

1. Matthew 5:17:- "Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come

to destroy, but to fulfil". Douglas Moo states that fulfil is not (as one might expect) the exact opposite of abolish. Instead, Jesus fulfilled the law by proclaiming the standards of righteousness that were anticipated in the law, through his ministry and teaching. He tells His disciples to look to Himself as the fulfiller of the law for guidance in the way they are to live.¹⁸

Interestingly, Dr Moo does not suggest that the Lord Jesus is speaking about the whole law but appears to concede that this is the moral law since he speaks of the righteousness anticipated in the law. It is quite apparent from the verses that follow that the Lord Jesus is speaking of the moral law and *not* the ceremonial or civil law. As John Gill comments on this verse the Lord Jesus fulfilled the law in two ways: doctrinally, by explaining the law fully and giving it its true sense and meaning; and practically, the Lord Jesus perfectly obeyed its commands.¹⁹ However, there is no suggestion that he set aside the law. In Romans 3:31, Paul makes it clear that this is not the case:- "Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea we establish the law." Faith looks to Christ as the end of the law for righteousness because the Lord Jesus has kept the law for us. Thus faith has made void the need for us to justify ourselves by the law (which we are powerless to do) because Christ has kept the law on our behalf. In that sense faith has made void the law. However, as John Gill says in his commentary on this verse:

"yet its use in other respects is not set aside, such as to inform us of the mind and will of God, to discover and convince of sin, to show believers their deformity and imperfection, to render Christ and his righteousness more valuable, and to be a rule of walk and conversation to them; and it still remains a cursing and condemning law to Christless sinners, though justified ones are delivered from it as such: yea, the law is so far from being made void, that it is established by this doctrine; for by it the perpetuity of it is asserted, the spirituality of it is acknowledged, the perfect righteousness of it is secured."²⁰

¹⁶ Jamieson, Fausset & Brown, *Commentary on the Whole Bible*.

¹⁷ Moo, Douglas J., 'The Law of Christ as the Fulfilment of the Law of Moses: A Modified Lutheran View,' in Willem VanGemeren (ed.), *The Law, the Gospel, and the Modern Christian: Five Views* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 1993),344

¹⁸ Moo, Douglas J., 'The Law of Christ as the Fulfilment of the Law of Moses: A Modified Lutheran View,' in Willem VanGemeren (ed.), *The Law, the Gospel, and the Modern Christian: Five Views* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 1993), 357.

¹⁹ John Gill, *Commentary on the Whole Bible*.

²⁰ John Gill, *Commentary on the Whole Bible*.

Matthew Henry had this to say about Matthew 5:17:- Christ "protests against the thought of cancelling and weakening the Old Testament." Rather He came "[1.] To obey the commands of the law, for he was made under the law, Gal. 4:4. [2.] To make good the promises of the law, and the predictions of the prophets, which did all bear witness to him. [3.] To answer the types of the law. [4.] To fill up the defects of it, and so to complete and perfect it.



If we consider the law as a vessel that had some water in it before, he did not come to pour out the water, but to fill the vessel up to the brim; or, as a picture that is first rough-drawn, displays some outlines only of the piece intended, which are afterwards filled up; so Christ made an

improvement of the law and the prophets by his additions and explications. [5.] To carry on the same design. The gospel is the time of reformation (Heb. 9:10), not the repeal of the law, but the amendment of it, and, consequently, its establishment."

2. Matthew 5:18 makes it quite clear that not "one jot or tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled" . This can only refer to the moral law.

The Use of the Moral Law

As we have seen New Covenant theologians do not attribute any role to the moral law in bringing reformation to the soul which has led them to brand the giving of the Ten Commandments as the Covenant of Death and to consider the law as of temporary effect. However, it was merely the ceremonial and civil elements that were for the duration of the Old Testament. So in Hebrews 8:13 we read "In that he saith, a new covenant, he hath made the first old. Now that which decayeth and waxeth old is ready to vanish away." The author is not saying that the Covenant of Grace (as manifested in the Mosaic covenant) had become obsolete but the external administration of it with its Levitical priests and their typical sacrifices. It was that the external administration of it with its Levitical priests and their sacrifices (being a type of Christ) that became obsolete as soon as the antitype –

Jesus Christ – offered himself once for all time as both sacrifice and sacrificer (Hebrews 10:1-14). However, the moral law did not change. It has always had one purpose and that is to point men and women to Christ as we read in Galatians 3:24:- "The Law is our schoolmaster to lead us to Christ". The promise to Abraham was the same as the promise to us which is Christ (Galatians 3:16-18).

Charles Haddon Spurgeon preached a Sermon on Romans 10:4 at the Metropolitan Tabernacle on 19th November 1876. Here is a summary of the points that he made about Christ and the law which I think succinctly makes the points for us²¹:

"Now, what has our Lord to do with the law? He has everything to do with it, for he is its end for the noblest object, namely, for righteousness. He is the



'end of the law.' What does this mean? I think it signifies three things:"

1) 'Christ is the **purpose** and object of the law';

- The law given to lead us to Christ – Gal. 3:24.

- Shows man his

sin;

- Shows the result of sin;
- Teaches men their utter helplessness;
- Shows our great need of cleansing.

2) 'He is the **fulfilment** of it';

- By bringing the righteousness that it demands for salvation;
- By paying the penalty of our breaking the law;
- By putting great honour on the law through paying it;
- By securing its stability.
 - 'Jesus Christ came and showed us how the law could stand firm as a rock, and yet the redeemed could be justly saved by infinite mercy. In Christ we see both mercy and justice shining full orb'd, and yet neither of them in any degree eclipsing the other.'

3) 'He is the **termination** of it.'

- 'His people are no longer [subject to] it as a covenant of life.' 'Although we rejoice to do good works, we are not seeking life through them.'
- 'We are no longer under its curse.' (Rom. 6:14).
 - 'As the law demands righteousness and looks at the believer in Christ, and sees that Jesus has given him all the

²¹ <https://archive.spurgeon.org/sermons/1325.php>

righteousness it demands, the law is bound to pronounce him blessed. "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile."

The purpose of this article is to lay a framework to demonstrate that the Ten Commandments are for all time and that they fit perfectly into the covenantal theology of the reformation. In the next article I will consider the Sabbath and demonstrate why it is to be kept in our day, albeit as the first day of the week and not the seventh day.

The relevance of the law to the believer is not that he might be saved by keeping it because sinners can only be saved by trusting in and thereby being spiritually united with the only one who has perfectly kept every iota of the law and paid the penalty for

their failure to keep it which is the Lord Jesus Christ. The law is now relevant to the believer not as a way of self-salvation, but as the rule for living a holy life.

Thus for the believer it is relevant for his sanctification not his justification *per se*. Whereas for the unbeliever he will be judged under the law. When we consider the description of Mount Sinai with the thunder, lightning, the noise of the trumpet, smoke and thick darkness at the giving of the law we have some idea of the terror that will accompany that judgment. Let us take heed to follow the Ten Commandments through grace from the Lord Jesus Christ.

(Research for this article was carried out by Hannah Munday.)

Church Report for 2019

By Faith Amurao

"One thing, and one only, will carry men through all, and make and keep them successful; the LOVE OF CHRIST, constraining and sustaining, is the only adequate power. Not *our* love to Christ, nor, perhaps, even Christ's love to us personally; rather His love to poor, ruined sinners *in* us. Many waters will not quench that love, nor floods drown it. That love will seek the wandering sheep *until* they are found; and if, when found, they are but wayward, wandering sheep still, will yet love and care for them. Oh, beloved friends, pray that *this* love may be in us, abide in us, dwell richly in us all who are already on the field, and in those who join us." (Hudson Taylor)

Hudson Taylor's words are an encouragement to us at Strangers' Rest Evangelical Church. They point us to the source of our strength – Christ and his love. As the apostle Paul wrote to the Corinthian church, "And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing." All our endeavours even those out of good intentions without the love of Christ makes us nothing. Like vapour, empty and of no consequence. Our Lord also said, "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." And he laid down his life for us, his enemies! He showed us that the path of His self-sacrificing love is the only way to follow him. We know that we need ever more such love and what a love with which to win those who are lost!

Morning Prayer Meetings

Our Monday, Thursday and Saturday early morning prayer meetings, usually linked up by phone, continue to be attended by a small group of brothers and sisters. They are a source of strength by drawing near to the throne of God's grace from whom answers to prayers are given whether they be direct affirmations or a word to tarry and continue waiting on the Lord.

Children's Ministry

Since mid-September this year, we have had the help of Hannah Munday to assist in the work among the children and their families. We now have an afternoon Sunday School after the children have their lunch. We are going through John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* with them. Families who are part of the church have been visited such as giving advice

as to a church member's child concerning his options for Higher Education. The age range of the children who attend the Bible Club is 10-16 years of age. As they grow older, they are in need of much prayer as distractions turn their focus away from the Lord and a good number of them oversleep on the Lord's Day after a late night of being on the internet and on gadgets or watching television. At the Children's Christmas party recently, however, there were five new children who came to join us to hear about the gift of the Lord Jesus from Mark Mullins' Gospel presentation as a result of being invited by the current Children's Bible club attendees.

English Classes

These continue to remain an opportunity to those whose English is their second language, a chance not only to improve their English but to hear about the Lord Jesus Christ and his Gospel salvation. One recent student, a Japanese lady, temporarily living in London with a view to return to Japan to teach English to Primary school children after one Saturday session came to the Sunday morning service! Numbers attending these classes are, however, very low despite continued advertising on Gumtree.

Local Students

We have had the pleasure of seeing two to three Christian students from the local student accommodation of Queen Mary University visiting the church fairly regularly during term time. They found the church on the internet and have been attending since the beginning of the Autumn/Winter term despite the busyness of their postgraduate courses.

Evangelism

Ernie continues to undertake these during the week. He goes door-to-door knocking among his contacts in the local neighbourhood, building on his present relationships. One of these contacts, is a single mother who is raising a 15 year-old son and for whom Ernie prays regularly at the morning prayer meetings. Every so often on a Saturday, he and Mark do an open-air outreach at Watney Market which is the closest market to the church. The

captive audience, quite literally, are the sellers of goods or fruit and veg on the market stalls. There are one or two individuals who stop to listen. Some even promise to attend a service. But we trust that the seed of knowledge planted in their hearts will be guarded to grow and flourish by our gracious God.

Conferences

The Essex Puritan Conference run yearly by a Korean pastor, David Minh, who is a friend of the church took place at Strangers' Rest in October. This was followed by the annual general meeting of Christian Watch in which Pastor Peter Simpson spoke on putting the Word of God at the heart of the nation's life, his text being 1 Kings 3:1-15. The bi-annual Christian Alliance Ministries conferences held at Cromford, Derbyshire continue to be a blessing to the small group of believers who attend from various parts of England. The last one was on the subject of "seeking first the kingdom of God".

Church Flat

As of mid-September this year, we have had new tenants in the church flat, a brother and a sister who are siblings and who assist in playing the piano for the Lord in the church as well as the latter, as already mentioned, carrying out Children's ministry work.

Church Kitchen

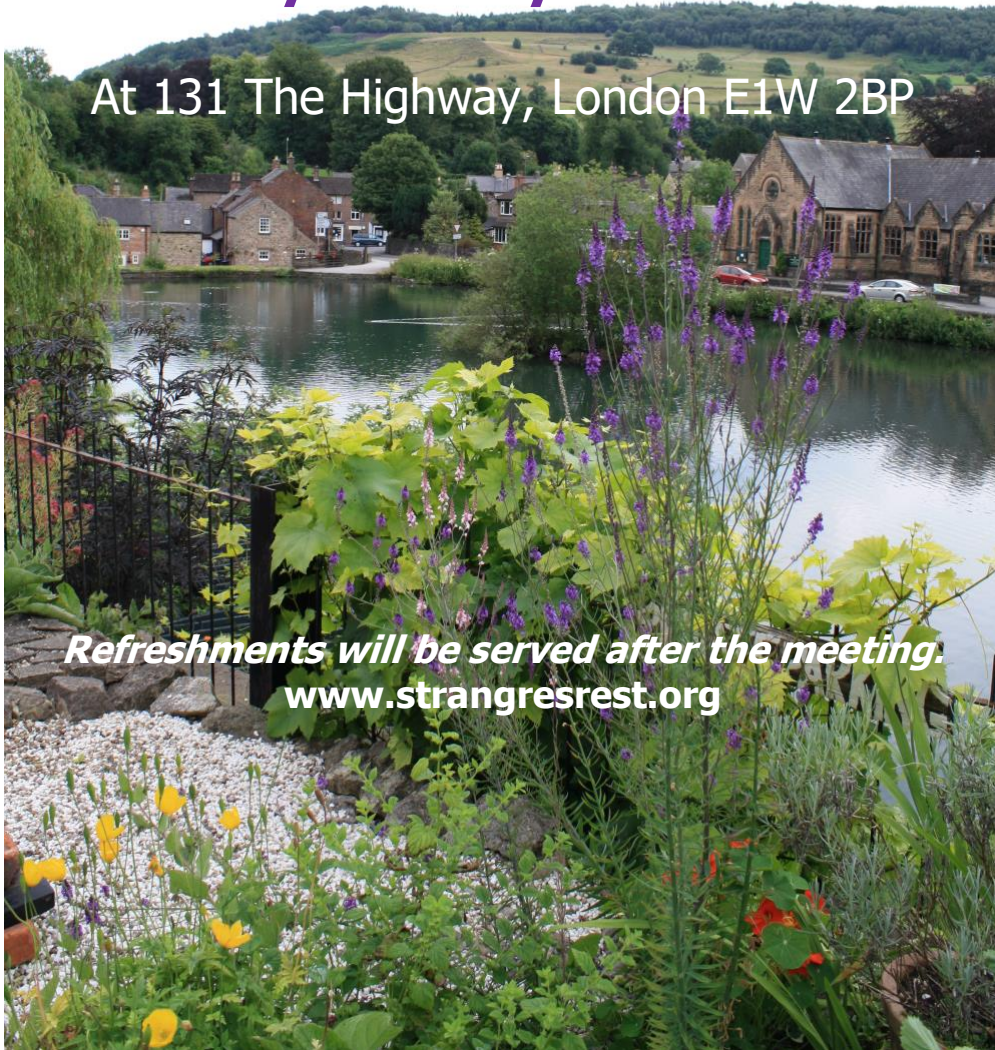
Thanks to the provision of the Lord through a bequest via Stewardship, he has ensured that we were able to renovate the church kitchen and made it up to the standard of Food Safety regulations if we are to register with the local council to provide Sunday lunches again regularly. We are now blessed, thanks also to the building efforts of a former member of the church, Steve York and his workmen, with a lovely, modern kitchen.

To return to the words of Hudson Taylor which reflects Paul's heart cry that "the love of Christ constraineth us" (2 Corinthians 5:14), it is the love that sustains us in this work as we trust in and wait on the God, that "great Shepherd of the sheep" (Hebrews 13:20), who will bring back his lost ones home.

143rd Anniversary Service of The Strangers' Rest Evangelical Church

Saturday 23rd May 2020 at 14:00

At 131 The Highway, London E1W 2BP



Refreshments will be served after the meeting.
www.strangresrest.org

Editor – Mark Mullins (mlrmullins@gmail.com)
Editorial Assistant – Faith Amurao (faith.amurao@strangersrest.org).
Strangers' Rest Evangelical Church, 131 The Highway, London E1W 2BP; 07784531776.
Sunday Services: 11:00am & 6:30pm; Wednesday Bible Study & Prayer Meetings: 7:00pm;
Friday Children's Bible Club (Term time): 6:30pm.