

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Text: Romans 3:19–20	8
Romans 3:19–20 Considered in Its Context	9
Notes and Observations From Our Text	10
I. Introduction: Our Subject and Approach:	10
Truth and Legalism	11
Truth and Antinomianism	11
II. An Examination of The Nature and Extent of The Moral Law	11
A. Outline of Study	12
B. Texts	12
1. The Moral Law in Its Positive Form in The Old and New Testaments	12
2. The Moral Law in Its Largely Negative Form as Epitomized In The Decalogue	13
3. New Testament Scriptures Concerning The Relevance of The Moral Law	18
III. A Study on The Nature, Significance and Relevance of The Moral Law	26
A. What Is The Relation of Man To The Moral Law?	26
1. Man as a Creature of God	26
2. God and Man: Necessarily and Scripturally a Covenant Relationship	27
B. Is It Legitimate To Refer To The Scriptures as The “Law–Word” of God?	31
C. Various Uses of The Term “Law” in Scripture.	32
D. The Three–Fold Structure of The Mosaic Law	35
E. The Nature of The Moral Law	35
F. An Ignorance of The Moral Law	50
G. The Perpetuity of The Moral Law	53
H. The Essential Purpose of The Moral Law	57
I. The Law and The Gospel in Their Proper Relation.	61
J. The Explicit and Implicit Preaching of The Law	64
K. Legalism and Antinomianism	65
L. Some Questions and Objections Answered	70

IV. An Exposition of The Moral Law as Contained in The Decalogue	73
A. Five General Observations Concerning The Moral Law.....	73
1. Fallen, Sinful Man Naturally Rebels Against God's Authority.	73
2. One's Attitude Toward The Moral Law Is An Expression of One's World-And-Life View.....	73
3. Fallen, Sinful Individuals Are By Nature Outlaws Before God's Moral Law.	73
4. The Danger of Worshipping The God of Our Own Imagination.	74
5. We Are All Guilty Before The Moral Law of God.	74
B. The Biblical, Historical and Theological Context of The Giving Of The Decalogue.....	74
C. The Prologue To The Decalogue.....	75
1. The Grammar of The Various Texts.....	75
2. Observations on The Prologue and Decalogue as a Whole.....	77
V. The First Commandment	79
A. Analysis and Exposition	79
B. The Lord God Is The All-Encompassing, Living Reality.	81
C. God Is Absolute: No Division Between Sacred and Secular.	82
D. Man as The Image-Bearer of God and Worship.	83
E. What Is Prohibited in The First Commandment.	83
F. Duties Enjoined in The First Commandment.	87
G. Final Observations.....	87
VI. The Second Commandment.....	89
A. Analysis and Exposition.	89
B. The First and Second Commandments	92
C. Romanism and Lutheranism	92
D. The Significance of The Prohibition.....	93
E. Self-Will and Worship	96
F. The Irrationality, Insanity and Criminality of Idolatry.	97
G. Mental Idolatry	97
H. The Primacy and Centrality of The Word of God.	97
I. What Duties Are Enjoined in The Second Commandment?	98
J. Prohibitions: Explicit and Implicit in The Second Commandment.....	99

K. The Lord Jesus Christ Is God Manifest Inthe Flesh and The Only Divinely–Ordained and Revealed Image of God. He Is Therefore To Be Worshipped as Such.....	103
VII. The Third Commandment	105
A. Analysis and Exposition	105
B. First–Third Commandments	106
C. The Prority of Worship.....	107
D. Blasphemy–Profanity–Swearing–Cursing.....	107
E. Cursing: The Most Useless Sin	108
F. Civil and Religious Oaths	109
G. Duties Enjoined	110
H. Prohibitions: Explicit and Implicit	111
VIII. The Fourth Commandment.....	113
A. Analysis and Exposition	113
B. The First–Fourth Commandments	114
C. The Sabbaths of Israel.....	115
D. Different Views of The Weekly Sabbath	117
E. The Provisional and The Perpetual	118
F. The Perpetual and The Eschatological.....	118
G. Saturday Or Sunday?.....	119
H. Sabbath Or Lord’s Day?	120
1. The “Christian Sabbath”	120
2. The “Lord’s Day”	122
I. Old Covenant and New Covenant Observance.....	122
J. Duties Enjoined	122
K. Prohibitions: Explicit and Implicit	123
IX. The Fifth Commandment.....	125
A. Analysis and Exposition	125
B. God’s Ordered Universe and Authority	127
C. The Significance of The Family.....	128
D. Disobedience To Parents.....	129
E. The Larger Application	131

1. Authority and The Fall.....	131
2. Absolute and Relative Authority	132
3. Unjust Authority: Civil Resistance and Disobedience.....	134
4. The State as God	136
5. The State as Parent.....	137
F. The Duties Enjoined	138
G. The Prohibitions: Explicit and Implicit.....	139
X. The Sixth Commandment	140
A. Analysis and Exposition	140
B. The Fifth–Tenth Commandments	141
C. God Is The Source of All Life.....	141
D. Reverence For Life	141
E. Murder and Manslaughter	143
F. Capital Punishment.....	143
G. Abortion–Euthanasia–Suicide	145
H. Passive and Hidden Murder.....	147
1. Passive Murder.....	147
2. Hidden Murder.....	148
I. Pacifism and War.....	149
J. Self–Defense	150
K. Spiritual Murder.....	151
L. Duties Enjoined	151
M. Prohibitions: Explicit and Implicit.....	152
XI. The Seventh Commandment	154
A. Analysis and Exposition	154
B. The Seventh Commandment in Context.....	155
C. Sexuality Created By God and Perverted By Man	155
D. Marriage.....	158
E. Divorce	160
F. Two Biblical Studies: Negative and Positive.....	161
G. Sexual Perversion.....	163
H. Sexual Diseases and Divine Judgment	164
I. The Teaching of Our Lord on Marriage, Divorce and Adultery	164

J. The Death Penalty and Church Discipline.....	168
K. Modern Technology and Scriptural Consistency.....	169
L. Spiritual Adultery	170
M. Duties Enjoined.....	171
N. Prohibitions: Explicit and Implicit	172
XII. The Eighth Commandment	173
A. Analysis and Exposition	173
B. The Eighth Commandment in Context	174
C. The Basis of and Necessity For Private Property	174
1. Fallen, Sinful Human Presumption.....	174
2. Everything Belongs To God	174
3. Private Property and The Creation Mandate	176
4. The Biblical Work Ethic	177
5. What Is Private Property?.....	180
D. The God–Complex of Fallen, Sinful Humanity	180
1. Man’s Nature and Calling.....	180
2. The Fruit of The Fall.....	180
E. Communism and Christianity	181
F. Money and Evil.....	182
G. Types of Theft.....	182
1. Theft of Material Or Fiscal Property.....	182
2. Theft of Intellectual Property	183
3. Theft of Freedom	183
4. Theft By Government.....	184
5. Legalized Theft	185
6. Theft of Time.....	185
7. Passive Or Self–Theft.....	185
8. Moral Theft	186
9. Spiritual and Religious Theft	186
10. Accessory To Theft and Responsibility For Property	186
11. Permissible Theft?	187
H. Repentance–Restitution–Retribution: The Grace of Law	187
I. The Case of Zacchaeus.....	188

XIII. The Ninth Commandment.....	190
A. Analysis and Exposition	190
B. The Ninth Commandment in Context.....	192
C. God Is The Source of All Truth.....	192
1. Securing The Truth	192
2. Fallen Humanity and The Lie.....	193
3. Lying a Devilish Sin	193
4. A Revelational Epistemology	194
D. The Tongue	195
E. Types of Falsehood.....	195
1. What Is a Lie?	195
2. The Malicious Lie	196
3. The Jocular Lie.....	197
4. The Polite Lie.....	198
5. The Lie of Necessity	198
F. Is Falsehood Ever Permissible?	198
1. Lies in Scripture.....	198
2. Principles Consistent With Scripture	200
3. Questions Answered	202
G. The False Prophets	203
H. A Scriptural Study in Falsehood	204
XIV. The Tenth Commandment.....	204
A. Analysis and Exposition	204
B. The Tenth Commandment in Context.....	205
1. The Absolute Sovereignty of God.....	205
2. The Unity of The Law and The Tenth Commandment	205
C. Covetousness: The Essential Issues	206
1. The Desire To Acquire.....	207
2. Covetousness–Envy–Jealousy	207
3. When Do Thoughts Or Desires Become Sin?	210
4. Thought and Life.....	211
5. The Oldest Sin.....	212
6. Love and Lust	212

D. Four Scriptural Examples of Covetousness.....	214
E. The Sin of Covetousness Rightly Viewed.....	214
E. The Blessing of Godly Contentment.....	215
Epilogue: From Sinai To Calvary	216
Works on The Moral Law	219
Catechetical Studies on The Moral Law.....	221
Biblical Commentaries on Exodus 20:1–17 & Deuteronomy 5:1–21....	222
Working List of General Commentaries.....	223

The Moral Law of God As Expressed in The Ten Commandments

TEXT: ROMANS 3:19–20

“Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law:¹ that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God.² Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law *is* the knowledge of sin.”³

A study and Exposition of The Moral Law as expressed in the Ten Commandments is one of the most essential, crucial and vital biblical studies anyone can attempt.

- (1) The Decalogue forms the core and essence of all Divine revelation, It forms the core of the Pentateuch—the Five Books of Moses. It forms the moral background for Historical and Wisdom Literature, and forms the central message of Prophetic Literature. It likewise forms the moral background for the gospel and the New Testament!
- (2) The Law encompasses and is determinative, not only for the history of Israel, but for all redemptive history.
- (3) The Moral Law is central to message of the Old Testament prophets, who called the nation of Israel to repentance and obedience in terms of covenant faithfulness. The prophetic promises of the gospel are set against the background of God’s Law!
- (4) The New Testament and Gospel Covenant, as these center in Person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ, find their foundation in the Moral Law and their fulfillment in active and passive obedience of the Lord Jesus Christ. Through His active obedience, our Lord perfectly kept the Law of God and fulfilled its demands; by His passive obedience, culminating in His suffering and death, He fully paid its penalty. In His Person and work He has provided the perfect and the only

¹ ὁ νόμος λέγει...λαλεῖ, vb. pres. Continues to speak. τοῖς ἐν τῷ νόμῳ, in the sphere of the Law’s jurisdiction.

² ἵνα πᾶν στόμα φραγῇ καὶ ὑπόδικος γένηται πᾶς ὁ κόσμος τῷ θεῷ.

³ διὰ γὰρ νόμου ἐπίγνωσις ἁμαρτίας

righteousness that God will accept. This righteousness is imputed through faith.

The modern, degraded ideas about the gospel, its message and its evangelistic methodology, derive from an utter absence of the Moral Law of God and its necessary foundation for the truth of the gospel!

The relation of the Moral Law to the Gospel and to both sinners and believers is ably set forth in the following hymn:

The law of God is good and wise, and sets His will before our eyes,
Shows us the way of righteousness, and dooms to death when we transgress.
Its light of holiness imparts the knowledge of our sinful hearts
That we may see our lost estate, and seek deliverance ere too late.
To those who help in Christ have found, and would in works of love abound
It shows what deeds are His delight, and should be done as good and right.
When men the offered help disdain, and willfully in sin remain,
Its terror in their ear resounds, and keep their wickedness in bounds.
The law is good; but since the fall Its holiness condemns us all;
It dooms us for our sin to die, and has no power to justify.
To Jesus we for refuge flee, Who from the curse has set us free,
And humbly worship at His throne, Saved by His grace through faith alone.⁴

(5) The Scriptures present the Moral Law as an ever-present, abiding reality which will be the one standard of judgment on the Final Day.

ROMANS 3:19–20 CONSIDERED IN ITS CONTEXT

From 1:18–3:20, the Apostle establishes the utter condemnation of fallen, sinful humanity. Fallen, sinful mankind is. . .

ETHICALLY Condemned. (1:18–20)
INTELLECTUALLY Condemned. (1:21–22)
HISTORICALLY Condemned. (1:21–22)
RELIGIOUSLY Condemned. (1:23–24)
SCIENTIFICALLY Condemned (1:25)
MORALLY Condemned. (1:26–27)
SOCIALLY Condemned. (1:28–31)
WILLFULLY Condemned. (1:32)
RACIALLY Condemned. (2: 1–3:9)
UNIVERSALLY Condemned. (3:9–12)
TOTALLY Condemned. (3:13–18)
LEGALLY Condemned. (3:19–20)

⁴ Matthias Loy (1828–1915). was an [American Lutheran theologian](#) in the Evangelical Lutheran Joint Synod of [Ohio](#). Loy was a prominent pastor, editor, author and hymnist and served as president of [Capital University](#), [Columbus, Ohio](#). Baptist Edition, *Trinity Hymnal*, p. 449.

NOTES AND OBSERVATIONS FROM OUR TEXT

1. The Apostle Paul considered the Moral Law of God as a present, abiding reality and the final standard by which all men are to be judged.
2. The sphere of the law's jurisdiction includes the entire human race, who exist in the sphere of the Law.
3. The absolute demands of God's Law condemn every single human being who stands outside the imputed righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ wrought out by His active and passive obedience.
4. There is not nor can there ever be any justification by the works of the Law. There are, for fallen, sinful man, only two types of righteousness: self-righteousness or imputed righteousness.
5. The purpose of the Law is to reveal the true knowledge of sin.
6. Mark the sound theology of the Scottish paraphrase in the old *Church of Scotland Hymnal* of Rom. 3:19–22, 31:

Vain are the hopes the sons of men upon their works have built;
 Their hearts by nature are unclean, their actions full of guilt.
 Silent let Jew and Gentile stand, without one vaunting word;
 and, humbl'd low, confess their guilt before heav'n's
 righteous Lord.

No hope can on the Law be built of justifying grace;
 The Law, that shows the sinner's guilt, condemns him to his face.
 Jesus! how glorious is Thy grace! when in Thy name we trust,
 Our faith receives a righteousness that makes the sinner just!⁵

I

Introduction: Our Subject and Approach:

- (1) A preliminary Study on the nature, significance, and relevance of the Moral Law, including a definition and description of the doctrinal terminology in use, and an exposition of several texts of Scripture which are determinative concerning the Moral Law.
- (2) An exposition of the Decalogue⁶ or Ten Commandments.

⁵ Church of Scotland Hymnal, Paraphrase 46, p. 337.

⁶ LXX: τοὺς δέκα λόγους, "The Ten Words" or "Decalogue." This term first used by Clement of Alexandria [96 AD–].

TRUTH AND LEGALISM

The subject of the Moral Law, as expressed in the Decalogue or Ten Commandments, ever seems to be surrounded with controversy:

Those who hold that the Ten Commandments, as the epitome of the Moral Law, are the rule for the believer's life are often called "legalists" or referred to as "legalistic" in their approach to the Christian life. It is thought that these have an "Old Testament Mentality." It is further claimed that such Christians do not understand or may even deny that believers are now "under grace," and fail to give due emphasis to the New or Gospel Covenant. It is asserted that such individuals are often confused in the matters of both justification and sanctification, as though either or both justification and sanctification come through the Law. Neither are true; both are a denial of grace.

TRUTH AND ANTINOMIANISM

Those who hold that the Moral Law was abrogated in the Person and work of our Lord Jesus Christ are termed "Antinomians."⁷ These believe that the Christian is "under grace" and not "under law" to such an extent that there is at times a tendency to either ridicule the Law or deprecate it altogether. These often tend toward an antinomianism-turned-legalism. When religious men turn from God's Law, they inevitably substitute a law of their own—as man must have law, antinomianism inevitably leads to legalism.

Some antinomians hold that the Moral Law should be preached to sinners; others do not. All antinomians hold that the Moral Law is *not* the standard for the believer's life and practice, i.e., the rule of life for Christians.

II

An Examination of the Nature and Extent of The Moral Law

The term "Law" must be defined by its given context, as this term is scripturally used in a variety of ways.

In the most inclusive sense, the Moral Law embraces all of the moral commands of Scripture. The Decalogue or Ten Commandments is the *codification* and *epitome* or summarization of the Moral Law.

⁷ ἀντὶ, against, and νόμος, law. Martin Luther first used this term against those who held that the believer was not under the Moral Law as a rule of life. There are various types of antinomianism, as this study will reveal.

It is largely negative form, as it presupposes the fallen, sinful nature of mankind. Eight Commandments are framed in the negative and two in the positive. All are framed in the singular, as personally addressed to each individual.

It has been common, historically and doctrinally, to refer to the Decalogue or Ten Commandments as “The Moral Law.” This is the approach we will take in these studies, while understanding that the Decalogue is the epitome of God’s Moral Law.

OUTLINE OF STUDY

There is a great and pressing need to investigate the Scriptural place, relevance and use of the Moral Law. This is especially true with regard to its proper place as a preparation for the Gospel, and as our rule of life, i.e., the significance of the Moral Law to the unconverted and to the converted. Among several concerns, it is the purpose of this study:

- (1) To demonstrate the eternal nature and relevance of the Moral Law.
- (2) To give an exposition of the Ten Commandments and their application under the New or Gospel Covenant.
- (3) To establish the authority of the Moral Law as the rule of the believer’s life.
- (4) To demonstrate that the preaching of the “Moral Law” is the God-ordained means for the conviction of sin, and so the evangelical preaching of the Law occupies an essential place in Gospel preaching.

TEXTS

THE MORAL LAW IN ITS POSITIVE FORM IN THE OLD AND NEW TESTAMENTS

OLD TESTAMENT

Deut. 6:4–5. Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God *is* one LORD: ⁵ and thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might [בְּכָל-מְאֹדֶךָ].⁸

Lev. 19:18. ... thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself: I *am* the LORD.

Obs: (1) Obedience to the Moral Law is necessarily internal as well as external. (2) It further demands total obedience of the most ardent nature. (3) Although these statements are not from the Moral Law as given in Exodus 20, they are an exact summary! (4) Love to God and love to neighbor comprise what has traditionally been recognized as the “two tables” of the Moral Law.

⁸ בְּכָל-מְאֹדֶךָ, with all the force of one’s being. LXX: καὶ ἐξ ὅλης τῆς δυνάμεώς σου.

NEW TESTAMENT

Matt. 22:35–40. ³⁵ Then one of them, *which* was a lawyer, asked *him* a question, tempting him, and saying, ³⁶ Master, which is the great commandment in the law? ³⁷ Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. ³⁸ This is the first and great commandment. ³⁹ and the second *is* like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. ⁴⁰ On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.

Obs: (1) The NT gives this summary three times: Matt. 22:36–40; Mk. 12:29–31⁹ and Lk. 10:27. **(2)** These positive presentations of the Moral Law as love to God and love to man assume the basic, traditional divisions of the “First Table” and “Second Table” of the Law. **(3)** The terminology impresses us that the Law demands the total and unmitigated obedience of the whole man—in thought, inclination, motive, word and action.¹⁰

THE MORAL LAW IN ITS LARGELY NEGATIVE FORM AS EPITOMIZED IN THE DECALOGUE

The Prologue

And God spake all these words, saying, ² I *am* the LORD thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.

Obs: (1) The Moral Law is framed in the singular and was spoken to each Israelite directly by the LORD God. (2) This Law was never given as a means of meriting one’s acceptance before God, but graciously given to a redeemed people as their rule of life before the LORD God and to each other.

The First Commandment

³ Thou shalt have no other gods before me.

Obs: Lit. “before my face” [עַל־פָּנַי], an absolute prohibition of any other god, as the LORD God is omniscient and all-seeing.

The Second Commandment

⁴ Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of *any thing* that *is* in heaven above, or that *is* in the earth beneath, or that *is* in the water under the earth: ⁵ Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God *am* a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth *generation* of them that hate me; ⁶ and shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments.

⁹ Mk. 12:28 begins with שְׁמַע יִשְׂרָאֵל [the *Shamah Israel*], which describes the Divine personality and character, and in this context, God’s law.

¹⁰ καὶ ἐν ὅλῃ τῇ διανοίᾳ σου, The mind as the seat of understanding, feeling, or desire. The LXX in most mss. mirrors the MT, but the *Vaticanus* ms. of the LXX adds διανοία. In the 3 NT quotations, all include the addition of διανοία (Matt. 22:37; Mk. 12:30; Lk. 10:27).

Obs: An absolute prohibition of all idolatry—physical, mental, moral and spiritual. Romanism and Lutheranism merge this Commandment with the first and then divide the Tenth into two Commandments.¹¹

Obs: Man as the image-bearer of God possesses a religious instinct, and so needs no command to worship; he rather needs direction for his worship because of his sinful, fallen nature. The First Commandment reveals the Object of our worship; the Second, the mode of our worship.

The Third Commandment

⁷ Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain; for the LORD will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain.

Obs: “vain” [לִשְׁוֵא] means “lightly or to no purpose.” The name of the LORD God is to be held in utmost reverence.

Obs: The First Commandment reveals the Object of our worship—the one true God; the Second, the mode of our worship—true spirituality; the Third, our inward-attitude toward God in worship—true reverence, or a proper frame of spirit.

The Fourth Commandment

⁸ Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. ⁹ Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work: ¹⁰ But the seventh day is the sabbath of the LORD thy God: *in it* thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates: ¹¹ For *in* six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it.

Obs: The Sabbath is a creation ordinance. Man needs rest. This further necessitates an organized life.

Obs: The First Commandment reveals the absolute sovereignty of God over our worship; the Second, the spirituality of our worship; the Third, our inward-attitude in worship. The Fourth Commandment reveals the absolute sovereignty of God over our time—work and rest, worship and vocation, labor and recreation.

The Fifth Commandment

¹² Honour thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee.

Obs: There must be respect for all proper, God-given authority. The primary social unit ordained by God is the family. Any breakdown in the family circle means disaster for society.

Obs: The Fifth Commandment forms a connection between the first four (love to God) and the final five (love to neighbor), as it protects and perpetuates all God-ordained,

¹¹ Both Romanism and Lutheranism merge this Second Commandment with the First, then divide the last Commandment into two to preserve the total number. This was done in both cases to avoid the issue of using images and pictures in worship.

proper authority. The Sixth protects human life, the Seventh protects the God–ordained institution of marriage, the Eighth protects one's private property, the Ninth protects one's reputation, and the Tenth protects everything pertaining to one's neighbor by mandating the proper inward attitude toward others and what pertains to them.

The Sixth Commandment

¹³ Thou shalt not kill.

Obs: This prohibits any and all unlawful taking of human life. Capital punishment is a necessity as man is the image–bearer of God; it is delegated to human government, revealing that human government is answerable to the LORD God. Murder, abortion, infanticide, euthanasia and mercy killing are contrary to God and His Law.

The Seventh Commandment

¹⁴ Thou shalt not commit adultery.

Obs: This Commandment prohibits any and all immorality in thought, word or act. The Fifth Commandment protects the authority necessary for the maintenance and perpetuation of the family and subsequently all human government. The Sixth Commandment gives the proper significance to human life (man is the image–bearer of God) which is necessary to the family and its God–ordained mandate and subsequently to society itself. The Seventh Commandment protects the God–ordained institution of marriage which is essential to the family and to all subsequent morality. These Commandments all separate man from brute creation and are foundational to the preservation of human society.

The Eighth Commandment

¹⁵ Thou shalt not steal.

Obs: This prohibits the unlawful diminishing of another person or his property in any way. It also presupposes the possession of wealth and private property.

Obs: There are three necessary thoughts concerning this Commandment in the context of the Moral Law. **First**, each Commandment has a direct relation to the prologue in Ex. 20:1–2, “And God spake all these words, saying, I *am* the LORD thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.” God owned the nation of Israel as their Redeemer and Deliverer. Thus, he had absolute authority over them through his Law. **Second**, as Jehovah delivered them out of the house of bondage, they should understand both slavery and freedom (The Eighth Commandment includes the prohibition of kidnapping for the purpose of slavery, especially in the context of the Sixth–Eighth Commandments). **Third**, there is an immediate relation among the Sixth, Eighth and Ninth Commandments, as he who steals a person or his property is presumably also ready to both kill and lie.

The Ninth Commandment

¹⁶ Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour.

Obs: This requires both the maintenance and the promotion of truth between human beings, and of our own and of our neighbor's good name, especially in witness–bearing. The Third Commandment forbids perjury against God, the

Ninth forbids perjury against our fellow man. The Fifth Commandment guards the rights of authority, the Sixth guards the rights of person and life, the Seventh guards the rights of marriage and family, and thus of society; the Eighth guards the rights of property. The Ninth Commandment guards the rights of both name and reputation, and so necessarily guards the system of justice which is absolutely essential to society itself (Psa. 11:1–4; Isa. 1:17, 23, 26).

The Tenth Commandment

¹⁷ Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that is thy neighbour's.

Obs: This Commandment prohibits any discontent with our providential circumstances. As the Moral Law reaches into the heart or inner being and is not simply external, so no mere external obedience is sufficient.

Obs: The Tenth Commandment strikes at the root of all and every sin. Every sin begins in the heart or mind (Prov. 4:23; Matt. 12:34–35; Mk. 7:21–23; Rom. 7:7; Jas. 1:13–16). The Tenth Commandment thus has an immediate relation to all the other Commandments.

Deut. 5:6–21. The Decalogue is reiterated with some very minor variations in Deuteronomy as the core of the Covenant¹² between the LORD God and the nation of Israel.

NOTE: The LORD God in this treaty reveals Himself as absolutely sovereign. The nation and all otherls were called to a complete obedience. Some see a resemblance in a Suzerain Treaty, which was common in the societies of the second millennium BC. It was a treaty made between an absolute Sovereign and either his vassal kings or people in which he dictated the terms of their relationship. A suzerain treaty was between unequals [Lat: *susum*, *sursum*, “upward, above,” hence *souverain* and sovereign]. A treaty between equals was a parity treaty.

It is vital to grasp that the giving of the Moral Law at Sinai was directly by the LORD God [אֱלֹהֵינוּ אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל] and not by Moses, as the Ceremonial and Civil Laws. God spoke as Yahveh, the Covenant-Keeping God, who had redeemed and therefore owned Israel. The terms of this covenant were sovereignly dictated to each individual person [framed in the singular], and were for the good and blessing of each Israelite.. To refuse this covenant would have been utter rebellion against their Lord, their God and their Sovereign!

It is vital to comprehend the nature of this covenant, as Dispensational theology holds that in agreeing to God's Commands, Israel exchanged grace for law.

¹² Cf. Gleason Archer, *Survey of Old Testament Introduction*, pp. 253–255; Herbert Wolf, *An Introduction to the Old Testament: Pentateuch*, pp. 211–215; R. B. Dillard and Tremper Longman III, *An Introduction to the Old Testament*, pp. 97–99; R. K. Harrison, *Introduction to the Old Testament*, pp. 648–650.

Obs: (1) The Book of Deuteronomy is largely an expansion of the Moral Law, which formed the core and basis of the Covenant made with Israel:

Second Speech of Moses	(4:44–28:68).
Introduction to Speech	(4:44–5:5).
Stipulations of the Covenant	(5:6–26:19).
The Decalogue	(5:6–21).
Response of the People	(5:22–33).
Elaboration of the Decalogue	(6:1–26:15).
First Commandment	(6:1–11:32).
Second Commandment	(12:1–32).
Third Commandment	(13:1–14:21).
Fourth Commandment	(14:22–16:17).
Fifth Commandment	(16:18–18:22).
Sixth Commandment	(19:1–21:23).
Seventh Commandment	(22:1–23:14).
Eighth Commandment	(23:15–24:7).
Ninth Commandment	(24:8–16).
Tenth Commandment	(24:17–26:15).
Concluding Exhortation	(26:16–19).
Symbols of the Covenant	(27:1–10).
Curses and Blessings	(27:11–28:68).

(2) The prophets from Isaiah to Malachi are all concerned with the Moral Law and its violations by Israel, and so call the nation to repentance and obedience. The Moral Law forms the core of the entire Old Testament.

Obs: Eight Commandments are framed in the negative and two in the positive. The basic negative nature of the Moral Law in these Commandments presupposes the fallen, sinful condition and predisposition of mankind.

Obs: The testimony of David to the Law of God:

Psa. 1:2. But his delight *is* in the law of the LORD;¹³ and in his law doth he meditate day and night.

Psa. 19:7–14. ⁷ The law of the LORD *is* perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the LORD *is* sure, making wise the simple. ⁸ The statutes of the LORD *are* right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the LORD *is* pure, enlightening the eyes. ⁹ The fear of the LORD *is* clean, enduring for ever: the judgments of the LORD *are* true and righteous altogether. ¹⁰ More to be desired *are they* than gold, yea, than much fine gold: sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb. ¹¹ Moreover by them is thy servant warned: and in keeping of them *there is* great reward. ¹² Who can understand *his* errors? cleanse thou me from secret *faults*. ¹³ Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous *sins*; let them not have dominion over me: then shall I be upright, and I shall be innocent from the great transgression. ¹⁴ Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O LORD, my strength, and my redeemer.

Obs: Psa. 19 deals with the two types of Divine revelation—natural revelation in creation (v. 1–6) and special revelation in Divine Law (v. 7–14).

¹³ כִּי אֵם, but if he has Any delight at all, it is in the Law of the Lord...

Psa. 23:3. He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.¹⁴

Psa. 119 gives a continual reference to the Law of God under eight different designations: “Law, Commands, Precepts, Statutes, Ways, Testimonies, Judgments and Word.”

NEW TESTAMENT SCRIPTURES CONCERNING THE RELEVANCE OF THE MORAL LAW

The New Testament abounds in commentary on the Moral Law of God. Our Lord comments upon the Law as a present reality. James refers to the Law as a present and determining entity (Jas. 1:25; 2:8–12; 4:11). The Apostle Paul repeatedly comments upon the relevance of the Moral Law and its relation to the gospel. E.g., Rom. 2:11–16; 3:19–20, 27–31; 5:20; 7:4–8:9; 10:4; 13:8–10; 1 Cor. 9:21–22; 15:56; Gal. 3:13, 24; 1 Tim. 1:7–11.

Each of the Ten Commandments is reiterated or alluded to in the New Testament:

- The first Commandment concerning having no other God (Jn. 14:6; Acts 4:12; 1 Cor. 8:4–6).
- The Second Commandment forbidding idolatry (1 Jn. 5:21).
- The Third Commandment to honor the name of God (Matt. 6:9).
- The Fourth Commandment (Matt. 12:8; Col. 3:23; Heb. 4:9).
- The Fifth Commandment (Eph. 6:1–2).
- The Sixth Commandment (Matt. 5:21–22; Acts 2:23; 7:52; Rom. 13:87–10; 1 Jn. 3:15).
- The Seventh Commandment (Matt. 5:27–28; 1 Thess. 4:3).
- The Eighth Commandment (Eph. 4:28; Titus 2:10).
- The Ninth Commandment (Col. 3:9).
- The Tenth Commandment (Jas. 4:3).¹⁵

Heb. 10:5–7. ⁵ Wherefore when he cometh into the world, he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me: ⁶ In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin thou hast had no pleasure. ⁷ Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me,) to do thy will, O God.

¹⁴ יִנְהִלֵנִי, Pi'el. v. 2, “leadeth,” a term for an intense, gentle leading.” V. 3, יִנְהִנֵנִי, Hiphil, “guides me,” implies a force. בְּמַעַנְלֵי-צֶדֶק, the deeply rutted or well-defined and unmistakable paths of righteousness.

¹⁵ See Philip Graham Ryken, *Written in Stone*, p. 24.

Obs: This is a reference to Psa. 40:6–8. “⁶ Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire; mine ears hast thou opened: burnt offering and sin offering hast thou not required. ⁷ Then said I, Lo, I come: in the volume of the book *it is* written of me, ⁸ I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law *is* within my heart.”

Our Lord came to honor God’s Law. His impeccable life [active obedience] and sacrificial suffering and death [passive obedience] must both be viewed in the context of God’s Law. The gospel itself is framed by the Law! Gospel–righteousness answers fully and completely to Law–righteousness! Cf. Rom. 1:16–17.

Matt. 5:17–20. ¹⁷ Think not [Μὴ νομίσητε] that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil [οὐκ ἦλθον καταλῦσαι ἀλλὰ πληρῶσαι]. ¹⁸ For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled. ¹⁹ Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach *them*, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. ²⁰ For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed *the righteousness* of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.

Obs: Our Lord came to honor the Moral Law, not to tear it down or abrogate it, but to “fill it completely full,” i.e., bring to light its true and full spiritual import. The context reveals that He speaks concerning the Moral Law (e.g., vv. 21, 27–28, 43).

Obs: There is a strong admonition to correctly and faithfully teach the Commandments of God, v. 19.

Obs: Our Lord instituted no new duty to God in his teaching ministry; he reiterated the Moral Law.

Jn. 1:17. For the law was given by Moses [ὁ νόμος διὰ Μωϋσέως ἐδόθη], *but* grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.

Obs: The context demands that the term “law” refers to the entire Mosaic legislation, not to the Moral Law in particular, which was declared directly by the LORD God himself!. This is a contrast between the Old and New Covenants. The Old was preparatory; the New is the fulfillment, finality and consummation.

Jn. 13:34–35. ³⁴ A new commandment [Ἐντολὴν καινὴν] I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. ³⁵ By this shall all *men* know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.

Obs: καινὴν, not new in time [νέος], but new in form and quality. This is an intensification and more focused adaptation of love to one’s neighbor. This is a Christ–like love which is to be unique between and among Christians and distinctly more intense from the love one is commanded of his neighbor.

Acts 24:24–25. ²⁴ and after certain days, when Felix came with his wife Drusilla, which was a Jewess, he sent for Paul, and heard him concerning the faith in Christ. ²⁵ and as he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and

judgment to come, Felix trembled, and answered, Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee.

Obs: In the context of the NT use of the Moral Law, we must assume that Paul went to the Moral Law to point to this Gentile man with his Jewish wife the reality of sin and righteousness.

1 Tim. 2:5. For *there is* one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; ⁶ Who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time.

Obs: The mediatorship of Christ between God and men is necessitated by the reality of the Divine Moral Law. Our Lord as a propitiation appeased the absolute righteous demands of a thrice holy God as expressed through his Moral Law (Rom. 3:25)! The Law, as the eternal expression of God's righteous character necessitates the vicarious or substitutionary nature of the atonement!

2 Tim. 3:15–17. ¹⁵ and that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures [τὰ ἱερὰ γράμματα], ¹⁶ which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. ¹⁶ All scripture *is* given by inspiration of God [πᾶσα γραφή θεόπνευστος], ¹⁷ and *is* profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness [πρὸς παιδείαν τὴν ἐν δικαιοσύνῃ]: ¹⁷ That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works. ¹⁸

Obs: This passage refers to the OT Scriptures and their profit to the NT believer—and especially to training and discipline in righteousness!

Gal. 2:19. ¹⁹ For I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God.

Obs: The context [Gal. 2:1–21] is concerned with justification. The Law was not “dead,” but Paul was, i.e., the law had not been abrogated, but satisfied and its claims answered in the redemptive work of our Lord. The atonement was and is, in all reality, a legal transaction, an imputation or transference of guilt and the imputation or transference of righteousness.

Gal. 3:24. Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster *to bring us* unto Christ [ὁ νόμος παιδαγωγὸς ἡμῶν γέγονεν εἰς Χριστόν], ¹⁹ that we might be justified by faith.

NOTE: Three issues: **(1)** The “law” in Galatians is usually considered in the inclusive sense as *the Mosaic legislation*, not merely the Ten Commandments

¹⁶ τὰ ἱερὰ γράμματα, “sacred, dedicated to God.” The sacred writings comprised the Old Testament Scriptures.

¹⁷ πᾶσα γραφή θεόπνευστος, sing. Every minute particle, aspect, and nuance of Scripture is God–breathed.

¹⁸ ἵνα ἄρτιος ᾦ ὁ τοῦ θεοῦ ἄνθρωπος, πρὸς πᾶν ἔργον ἀγαθὸν ἐξηρτισμένος. Cf. ... ἄρτιος...ἐξηρτισμένος...

¹⁹ ὁ νόμος...γέγονεν..., perf., i.e., “...the law has become and continues to be...”

or “Moral Law” when the Apostle speaks against it or contrasts it with grace and faith. Thus, we note a “gospel” of works, 1:6–7, and justification by works, including circumcision, which is a metonymy for the whole Mosaic legislation (2:3, 11–16; 3:11; 4:9–11; 5:1–6; 6: 12–15).

(2) This particular passage refers to the Moral Law as the God–ordained medium for the conviction of sin.

(3) It is justification and *not* sanctification that is the issue in Galatians. Failure to comprehend these essential issues has led to much misunderstanding. It is not the Moral Law as the rule of the believer’s life that is in view, but the whole Mosaic legislation as a means to justification (as interpreted by the Judaism preached by the Judaizers from Jerusalem. Cf. Acts 15:1; 2 Cor. 11; Col. 2). These “Judaizers” sought to mix grace and law. It was this “Judaizing party” that dogged the steps of the Apostle Paul, sought to corrupt the churches, and called forth several of his letters, e.g., Galatians, much of 1 and 2 Corinthians, Colossians, etc.

Obs: The Moral Law is the God–ordained means of conviction of sin! Cf. 1 Cor. 15:55–56, “...Death is swallowed up in victory.⁵⁵ O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?⁵⁶ The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law.” No better commentary on this than the paraphrase in the old Church of Scotland Hymnal:

Behold what heav’nly prophets sung is now at last fulfilled,
That death should yield his ancient reign,
and, vanquish’d, quit the field.

Let faith exult her youthful voice and thus begin to sing;
O Grave! where is thy triumph now? and where, O Death, thy sting?
Thy sting was sin and conscious guilt, ’twas this that armed thy dart;
The Law gave sin its strength and force to pierce the sinner’s heart.
But God, whose name be ev’r bless’d! disarms that foe we dread,
And makes us conquerors even now in Christ our living Head!²⁰

Gal. 5:18 But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law [anarth., οὐκ ἔστέ ὑπὸ νόμου].

Obs: “Law” [anarth.] refers to a principle of mere outward command. When Law and grace are set in juxtaposition in the New Testament, the contrast is between a legal self–righteousness as opposed to the gospel of grace.

- *Some New Testament warnings are to those who would step back into Judaism from their Christian profession* (“Moses” or the law) in order to avoid persecution as Christians. To do so would be apostasy.

NOTE: This is the key to the Epistle to the Hebrews. It was written to Hebrew Christians (3:12; 4:14–16; 5:11–14; 6:9–11; 10:32–39; 12:1–17; 13:1–25) who were tempted to step back into Judaism to avoid suffering during the Neronian persecution of Christians.

²⁰ Ch. Scot. Hymnal, Paraphrase 50, pp. 341–342.

Note the five great warnings against apostasy in Hebrews: **(1)** A warning against *drifting* away from the truth (2:1–4). **(2)** A warning against *disbelieving* the truth of God. **(3)** A warning against *degenerating* in spiritual discernment (5:11–6:20). **(4)** A warning against *despising* the truth of the Gospel (10:26–31). **(5)** A warning against *defiling* the truth through gracelessness (12:12–17).

- *Some New Testament warnings are against the tendency for some to look to themselves and their own ability or works* and so pervert the grace of God. Faith and repentance can be deceptive if they are looked upon as works rather than the gift of God in the context of free and sovereign grace (Acts 13:48; Eph. 2:8–10).
- *Some New Testament warnings are against an admixture of grace and law.* Some seek to “mix Moses and Christ,” as it were. Those who possess a legalistic mentality (“touch not, taste not, handle not”) usually substitute some form of legalism for true spirituality. (Acts 15:1; Gal. 3:1–5; Rom. 11:5–6).
- *Some New Testament warnings are against the perversion of the Law*—law as a system of works and a means of justification that only produces self-righteousness and stands opposed to the grace of God and the finished work of Christ (Gal. 3:1–5; 5:1–4).

Gal. 5:22–23. ²² But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, ²³ Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law [οὐκ ἔστιν νόμος].

Obs: “law” anarth. There is no principle of command which stands in opposition to the fruit of the Spirit. Grace brings one into conformity in principle to God’s Law—There is no “antinomian grace.”

Rom. 2:11–16. ¹¹ For there is no respect of persons with God. ¹² For as many as have sinned without law shall also perish without law: and as many as have sinned in the law shall be judged by the law; ¹³ (For not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified. ¹⁴ 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: ¹⁵ 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;) ¹⁶ In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel.

Obs: The Moral Law was ontologically embedded in man’s nature at creation as the image-bearer of God, rendering him a rational, morally-responsible being with a Divinely-given sense of right and wrong. This is known as “natural law.” The Gentiles were not absolutely without law, as the text clearly states, but were without the law *in a codified form*—it was still written in their inner beings. Paul’s gospel included the Moral Law!

Obs: The Moral Law is a reinforcement and summarization of natural law. It would be contrary both to nature and to grace to either set them in opposition or to hold that grace would make man lawless!

Rom. 3:31. Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law [νόμον οὖν καταργούμεν διὰ τῆς πίστεως; μὴ γένοιτο· ἀλλὰ νόμον ἱστανόμεν].

Obs: The term “Law” is anarth. In v. 27–31, and refers to a principle of law or command. As there is only one God, so there is only method of justification. The law as “command” anticipated its fulfillment in the Person and work of our Lord. Justification by faith answers the claims of the Law. Faith does not replace the law; indeed, faith establishes the Law!

Rom. 4:13–16. ¹³ For the promise, that he should be the heir of the world, was not to Abraham, or to his seed, through the law, but through the righteousness of faith. ¹⁴ For if they which are of the law be heirs, faith is made void, and the promise made of none effect: ¹⁵ Because the law worketh wrath: for where no law is, *there is* no transgression. ¹⁶ Therefore *it is* of faith, that *it might be* by grace; to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed; not to that only which is of the law, but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham; who is the father of us all,

Obs: The larger context is justification by faith (3:21–5:21). The immediate context is the contrast between circumcision and uncircumcision, between faith and law. Here “law” must include the whole Mosaic law and its covenant–sign of circumcision, not the Moral Law.

Rom. 5:12–14. ¹² Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned [πάντες ἥμαρτον]: ¹³ (For until the law sin was in the world: but sin is not imputed when there is no law. ¹⁴ Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam’s transgression, who is the figure of him that was to come.

Obs: v. 12. All sinned in Adam, i.e., the imputation of original sin. v. 13. Further, sin reigned through natural law, i.e., the Moral Law ontologically–embedded in man’s nature, as men from Adam to Moses did not sin as Adam did, against a specific commandment.

Rom. 5:20. Moreover the law entered [παρεισηλθεν], that the offence might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound:

Obs: The Moral Law, codified under Moses, became the straightedge which exposed the perversion of sin—revealed sin in all its hideousness.

Rom. 6:14. For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law [οὐ γάρ ἐστε ὑπὸ νόμον], but under grace.

Obs: “Law” is anarth. and thus refers to a mere principle of outward command. Grace gives an inward dynamic or enablement. This must *not* be interpreted in a “Dispensational” sense, as contrasting the so–called “Dispensations of Law and Grace.”

Rom. 7:12, 14, 22; 8:3–4. ¹² Wherefore the law *is* holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good.... For we know that the law is spiritual.... For I delight in the law of God after the inward man... ³ For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: ⁴ That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

Obs: In this section (6:15–8:9), the inspired Apostle refutes both antinomianism and legalism. The believer “delights in the law of God after the

inward man,” but is delivered from either casting off the Law [antinomianism] or turning it into a system of works [legalism].

Obs: No chapter division at 7:25–8:1. The Moral Law is holy, good, just and spiritual. Grace brings us into conformity to it. There is no antinomian grace!

Rom. 10:4. For Christ *is* the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.

Obs: This verse is self-explanatory. Our Lord is the fulfillment [τέλος] of the law concerning justification, but only for those who believe. We are either in union with Adam—condemned, or in union with Christ—justified. Unbelievers are still condemned under the Covenant of Works in union with Adam.

1 Cor. 9:21. To them that are without law, as without law, (being not without law to God, but under the law to Christ [μὴ ὦν ἄνομος θεοῦ ἀλλ’ ἔννομος Χριστοῦ],) that I might gain them that are without law.

Obs: The Apostle was not lawless as a believer, but lived in the sphere of God’s Law in Christ. The issue focuses on the Gentiles described as those “without law” and he himself as being “in-lawed” to Christ. The meaning, to be consistent, must be that although he lived as the Gentiles did when among them, he was yet living [among Jews or Gentiles] in the sphere of Christ’s law. He was not an antinomian. The Moral Law of God and the Moral Law of Christ are one and the same.

NOTE: τοῖς ἀνόμοις ὡς ἄνομος, μὴ ὦν ἄνομος θεοῦ ἀλλ’ ἔννομος Χριστοῦ. The designation “those without law” (τοῖς ἀνόμοις) was a common reference by the Jews to the Gentiles. Among the Gentiles, Paul lived as a Gentile, but never in a lawless way, as he was “in-lawed” to Christ (ἐννομος Χριστοῦ) [in the sphere of or under the authority of Christ’s Law].

A consistent biblical concept of the Moral Law is clearly illustrated in the ministry and teaching of our Lord Jesus Christ. His teaching and that of the inspired Apostles did not set aside the Moral Law, but rather reinforced it (Matt. 5:17–18; 22:36–40; Rom. 3:19–20, 27–31; 7:7–13; 13:8–10; 1 Tim. 1:5–11). It is utterly incomprehensible that anyone should set the doctrine of our Lord and the inspired Apostles against the truth and reality of the Moral Law as given in the Old Testament!

Some would hold that the moral commands of our Lord and the inspired Apostles would make the Gospel rather than the Law the rule of the believer’s life. This would necessarily imply a contradiction between Law and Gospel and between the moral teaching of God in the Old Testament and our Lord in the New. Only Dispensationalism would posit such a contradiction! As the Scriptures are inclusively the Law–Word of God, and the moral commands of our Lord and the inspired Apostles are not contradictory to [but rather the outworking of] the epitome of the Law as expressed in Ex. 20:1–17 and Matt. 22:36–40, is there truly any contradiction?

1 Tim. 1:8–11. But we know that the law *is* good, if a man use it lawfully [Οἶδαμεν δὲ ὅτι καλὸς ὁ νόμος, ἐάν τις αὐτῷ νομίμως χρήται]...²¹ ⁹ Knowing this, that the law is not made for [οὐ κεῖται]²² a righteous man, but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and for sinners, for unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers,¹⁰ For whoremongers, for them that defile themselves with mankind, for menstealers, for liars, for perjured persons, and if there be any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine;¹¹ According to the glorious gospel of the blessed God, which was committed to my trust.

Obs: (1) The Moral Law of God is a present reality which judges men, and it to be rightly used. (2) In the context of the Jewish misuse of the law as a system of self-righteous justification, Paul states that it is “exceedingly excellent” if properly used, i.e., as a means of convicting of and restraining sin. (3) The law does “not lie upon” [οὐ κεῖται] the righteous, i.e., rest upon him as a sentence of condemnation, but it does upon the ungodly.

Jas. 1:23–24. ²³ For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: ²⁴ For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was. ²⁵ But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth *therein*, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed.

Obs: A mirror or looking glass reveals the reality and the flaws of the facial features. One does not use the mirror to clean himself up by rubbing his face with the mirror, but to see himself as he really is! The Moral Law reveals us as we really are, with all of our outward and inward sins and failures. It was never meant to be an instrument to make us acceptable with God. All legalism is self-righteousness.

Jas. 2:8. If ye fulfil the royal law according to the scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself, ye do well [καλῶς ποιεῖτε]²³:

Obs: James commends those who keep the Moral Law as excellent behavior!

Jas. 4:11. Speak not evil one of another, brethren. He that speaketh evil of *his* brother, and judgeth his brother, speaketh evil of the law, and judgeth the law: but if thou judge the law, thou art not a doer of the law, but a judge.

Obs: The Moral Law is the final judge. To speak evil of one's brother implies that one knows the whole matter, including the thought, motive and inclination, and passes judgment on another which only the Lord can pass. It is assuming the Divine prerogative and is sinfully self-righteous.

²¹ ...καλὸς ὁ νόμος, exceedingly excellent is the law! [καλὸς, intrinsically good or beautiful as opposed to ἀγαθός, good in character]. νομίμως, in the proper or correct way.

²² οὐ κεῖται, does not lie upon one as a sentence of condemnation.

²³ καλῶς ποιεῖτε, *emph. pos. excellently, what is right.*

1 Jn. 2:2–4. ³ and hereby we do know that we know him [Καὶ ἐν τούτῳ γινώσκομεν ὅτι ἐγνώκαμεν αὐτόν], if we keep his commandments. ⁴ He that saith, I know him [ἔγνων αὐτόν], and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.

Obs: Note the use of the pres. and imperf tenses. The Moral Law of God is the Law of Christ. It is the rule of the believer's life and a manifestation of that saving relationship with our Lord which is evidenced in loving obedience.

Obs: This is completely consonant with the Old Testament: Eccl. 12:13–14.

“Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this *is* the whole *duty* of man. ¹⁴ For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether *it be* good, or whether *it be* evil.” There is no contradiction between the Old Testament and the New.

1 Jn. 3:4. Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law [ἡ ἁμαρτία ἐστὶν ἡ ἀνομία].

Obs: The Apostle John, at the conclusion of the Apostolic Era, defines sin as the transgression of the law, or lawlessness. The Law remains a present reality. There is no antinomian grace.

Rom. 3:19–20. ¹⁹ Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law [τοῖς ἐν τῷ νόμῳ]: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God [ὑπόδικος γένηται πᾶς ὁ κόσμος τῷ θεῷ]. ²⁰ Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law *is* the knowledge of sin [διὰ γὰρ νόμου ἐπίγνωσις ἁμαρτίας].

Obs: The Moral Law of God is an abiding, functional reality, and will be the Divine standard on the final Day of Judgment upon all men!

III

A Study on the Nature, Significance and Relevance of The Moral Law

A. WHAT IS THE RELATION OF MAN TO THE MORAL LAW?

1. MAN AS A CREATURE OF GOD

Man is a creature, a being created by God. Thus, he was created and lives in the context of an absolute and sovereign God (Gen. 1:1; Rev. 4:11).

Man was created in the image and likeness²⁴ of God as a rational, morally-responsible being, answerable to God in every area of life and experience. As the image-bearer of God, man stands in a unique

²⁴ As the “image of God” refers to man as a rational, morally-responsible being, the “likeness of God” refers to man as having dominion or rule [headship] over all creation.

relation to Him, distinct from all other creatures. The rational, moral nature of man—the moral impress of the Divine image—is described in the language of Scripture as “light” and “law:”

Jn. 1:6–9. ⁶ There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. ⁷ The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all *men* through him might believe. ⁸ He was not that Light, but *was sent* to bear witness of that Light. ⁹ *That* was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world.²⁵

Rom. 2:14–16. 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;) In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel.

2. GOD AND MAN: NECESSARILY AND SCRIPTURALLY A COVENANT RELATIONSHIP

Covenant Theology and Dispensational Theology stand in stark contrast. Covenant Theology holds that there are two dispensations or administrations of God’s dealings with man: works and grace; the first in Adam, and the second in Christ.

Dispensationalism teaches that man is repeatedly tested under various dispensations or administrations, each ending with judgment: innocence, conscience, human government, promise, law, grace and kingdom.²⁶

Obs: Dispensationalism limits “Law” to a given dispensation, administration or time–frame, thus denying that the Moral Law as expressed in the Decalogue is the eternal, immutable expression of the Divine moral self–consistency or absolute righteousness.

God has always dealt with man within a covenant relationship—from a principle of *representation* and *imputation*—and not merely on a personal basis. This truth has been largely lost to modern, evangelical Christianity. This was and is the Divine prerogative by right of both creation and redemption. Man was created to live in a covenant relationship with God (Gen. 1:27–28; 2:16–17).

There have been two covenants that determine the state of man before God—the so–called *covenant of works* and the *covenant of grace*.

²⁵ Jn. 1:9 refers to the “light” or moral nature and self–consciousness that separates him from animal creation.

²⁶ See Alan Cairns, *Dictionary of Theological Terms*, pp. 112–117; 135–137.

A. THE COVENANT OF WORKS

Gen. 1:27–28. So God created man in his *own* image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them. and God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth.

Gen. 2:16–17. and the LORD God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.

The covenant of works was made with Adam. Adam stood before God not merely as an individual, but as Representative Man [the federal head of the human race].²⁷ When Adam apostatized from God by disobedience to that covenant and fell, the entire human race fell in him and were constituted sinners in and by his transgression (the imputation of [Adam's] original sin and its necessary consequences).

Rom. 5:12. Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.²⁸

Rom. 3:23. For all have sinned,²⁹ and come short of the glory of God...

Obs: The denial of original sin and the covenant nature of Adam's transgression has resulted in such false teachings as:

- Denying original sin, holding to a fictitious "the age of accountability," i.e., that children are not born sinners, and only become sinners by personally sinning.
- Denying the covenant nature of Adam's sin and thus denying the covenant nature of our Lord's redemptive work, many teach a general atonement, i.e., that the Lord Jesus died to make man saveable, and that one must accept the work of the cross for the redemptive work of Christ to be rendered effective.

²⁷ "Federal," from the Lat. *foedus*, a league or compact. God constituted Adam the representative and head of the human race by covenant. He stood before God as representative Man (i.e., as representing the entire human race).

²⁸ Lit: "all sinned" (πάντες ἥμαρτον), aor., an event or act [in Adam, original sin imputed to all the human race].

²⁹ πάντες γὰρ ἥμαρτον (aor. same form as in Rom. 5:12, referring to original sin, See footnote 29), "For all sinned and [consequently] are continually coming short [ὕστεροῦνται, pres. ptc.] of the glory of God."

- Denying the covenant nature of the believer's union with Christ, many deny the necessity of conversion, and have substituted a “decisionist” religion and a “carnal Christian” heresy.

Man in Adam is a sinner (Rom. 5:12; 3:23), a covenant-breaker, a rebel, an outlaw, predisposed against God and his Law.

Rom. 8:7. Because the carnal mind *is* enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.

Man is thoroughly alienated from a righteous, just and holy God, and now under the curse of the Law and the reigning power of sin.

Personal obedience on the part of any individual can never deliver from original sin because every man is a sinner by imputation and by the inheritance of a sinful nature as well as by personal transgressions or sins. Nothing can change or set aside the consequences of original sin but the free and sovereign grace of God through the imputation of the righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Salvation of necessity must be by grace through faith; any attempt at salvation through a legal or works-righteousness must be utterly condemned!

B. THE COVENANT OF GRACE

The covenant of redemption and grace refers to the eternal redemptive purpose of the triune God to save elect sinners. It is termed the “covenant of redemption” because it is redemptive in nature. It is termed the “covenant of grace” because in this covenant man is considered as a sinner.

All three Persons of the Godhead are inherently involved in this eternal, redemptive purpose. *God the Father* preeminently elects, calls, justifies and glorifies. *God the Son* is identified with the elect of the Father and becomes their Surety, Mediator, Redeemer and Advocate or Great High Priest. *God the Spirit* applies the finished work of the Son to the elect in their experience (Cf. Jn. 17:1–7; Eph. 1:3–11; Rom. 3:21–31; 5:1–21; 8:28–34; Gal. 3:13; 1 Tim. 2:5; 2 Tim. 1:8–10; Titus 2:11–14; Heb. 1:1–4; 2:9–18; 4:14–5:10; 7:1–28; 8:1–13; 9:11–12; 10:1–18; 1 Jn. 2:1).

In order to redeem sinners, God the Son became incarnate, not merely as Savior and Redeemer, but necessarily and pointedly as Representative Man. The covenant of grace was especially made with the Lord Jesus Christ—The “Second Man” [in contrast to the “first Man,” Adam] and The “Last Adam” [in contrast to the “first Adam”].

1 Cor. 15:21–22. For since by man *came* death, by man *came* also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.

1 Cor. 15:45–47. and so it is written, The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam *was made* a quickening spirit. Howbeit that *was* not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; and afterward that which is spiritual. The first man *is* of the earth, earthy: the second man *is* the Lord from heaven.

By our Lord's active obedience (His perfect life lived in conformity to the Law) and passive obedience (His vicarious suffering and death, which paid the Law's penalty, Rom. 3:24–26; 2 Cor. 5:21), those whom he represents are delivered from the curse of the Law (Gal. 4:4–5; 3:13), justified, forgiven and reconciled to God (Acts 13:38–39; Rom. 5:1–21; Heb. 9:12).

Mark the inspired comparison and contrast between Adam and the Lord Jesus Christ in Romans 5:12–19:

1. The Condemnation in Adam (5:12–14)

- (a) *The Proposition* (5:12). Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned:
- (b) *The Proof* (5:13–14). (For until the law sin was in the world: but sin is not imputed when there is no law. Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression, who is the figure of him that was to come.

2. The Contrast Between Adam and Christ (5:15–17).

- (a) *A Contrast of Nature* (5:15). But not as the offence, so also *is* the free gift. For if through the offence of one many be dead, much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, *which is* by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many.
- (b) *A Contrast of Result* (5:16). and not as *it was* by one that sinned, so *is* the gift: for the judgment *was* by one to condemnation, but the free gift *is* of many offences unto justification.
- (c) *A Contrast of Quality* (5:17). For if by one man's offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ.)

3. The Comparison Between Adam and Christ (5:18–19). Therefore as by the offence of one *judgment came* upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one *the free gift came* upon all men unto justification of life. For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous.

C. EVERY HUMAN BEING IS IN ONE OF TWO COVENANTS

Thus, every human being has a distinct relation to the Law of God. Every human being is included in one of two covenants: either in Adam or in Christ; either under the curse of the Law or redeemed from that curse through the Person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ. Those who are unregenerate, unconverted and therefore yet in their sins, are under the curse of the Law, under its condemnation and utterly alienated from a righteous, just and holy God. Those who are resting in Christ by faith are justified, forgiven and reconciled, recipients of the imputed righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ and freed from the curse of the Law.

Rom. 3:10–12. As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one.

Rom. 3:19–20. Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law *is* the knowledge of sin.

Rom. 10:4. For Christ *is* the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.

Gal. 3:13. Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed *is* every one that hangeth on a tree:

Rom. 5:1–2. Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

B. IS IT LEGITIMATE TO REFER TO THE SCRIPTURES AS THE “LAW-WORD” OF GOD?

There are at least eight different terms in the Hebrew Old Testament for the concept of “law.” The ideas conveyed are those of “law,” “statute,” “mandate,” “decree,” “testimony,” “instruction,” “precept,” “commandment” and “judgment.”

NOTE: The various OT Hebrew terms or synonyms for “law” are as follows: **(1)** תּוֹרָה (*torah*), from a root (תָּרַח) which means “to throw or point out,” and so “law, direction, instruction, teaching, guidance”. This is the most common OT term. E.g., Lev. 10:11; 2 Kgs. 2:12. **(2)** מִצְוָה (*mitsvah*),

“command, commandment.” E.g., Numb. 15:31; Deut. 17:20. **(3)** עֲדוּת (*edut*), “statute, stipulation, witness, testimony.” E.g., Ex. 31:18; 40:20. **(4)** מִשְׁפָּט (*mishpat*). In the pl., “judgments, statutes, legal claims.” E.g., Lev. 18:5; Psa. 119:13. **(5)** חֻקָּה (*chuqqah*), Something engraved or written, hence “statute, ordinance, law, decree.” E.g., Numb. 27:11. **(6)** פִּקּוּדִים (*piqqudim*), “precepts, statutes, commandments.” (Occ. only in the Psalms). E.g., Psa. 19:8. **(7)** דָּבָר (*dabar*), a verb, “to arrange, speak, declare, command.” דָּבָר (*dabar*), a noun, “word, commandment.” E.g., Josh. 8:8; 1 Sam. 15:13. **(8)** דָּת (*dath*), A Persian word for a “decree,” “law” or “edict.” Used in post-exilic literature. E.g., Ezr. 7:12, 14.

There are two New Testament terms, which have the connotation of “custom,” “precept,” “charge,” “statute,” “law,” or “standard.”³⁰ The Law of God is thus Divinely-revealed instruction or the Divine command, mandate and standard for man.

All of God’s Word is “command,” and written for our obedience and guidance, not merely for information or speculation. It is, in this sense, the *Law-Word* of God to which man is either in obedience or disobedience.

1 Jn. 2:2–4. ³ and hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments. ⁴ He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.

C. VARIOUS USES OF THE TERM “LAW” IN SCRIPTURE.

The term “law” is used in Scripture in several different ways. It is absolutely essential to distinguish the given usage according to its intent and context. We mark at least seven different ways. Care must be taken to make the proper distinctions within the given context.

An opening comment: As New Testament Christians or believers, we might use the term “law” to refer to the entire Scriptures. This is by *application*, not interpretation. E.g.:

Psa. 1:2. But his delight is in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night.³¹

³⁰ νόμος, “that which is assigned,” hence “law, commandment, custom, statute.” E.g., Rom. 3:19–20; 7:7–14. ἐντολή, “command, charge, precept.” Frequently used for the commandments of God. E.g., Matt. 19:17; 22:36–40; Jn. 13:34; 1 Jn. 2:3–4. NOTE: Three other terms occur, but are not relevant to this study: διάταγμα, decree or law (Heb. 11:23); ἔνταλμα, used only of the commandments of men; and ἐπιταγή, (e.g., Titus 1:3).

³¹ תּוֹרַת יְהוָה, synonymous with the Scriptures as guidance and instruction.

Psa. 40:8 I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law *is* within my heart.

Psa. 119:18 Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law.

Heb. 10:1. For the law having a shadow [σκιά] of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect.

But now, by interpretation, not application, we find seven different uses of the term “law” as found in Scripture itself:

1. *The Five Books of Moses*, or the Pentateuch as the “Book of the Law” or the first of the three-fold division of the Hebrew Scriptures: The Law [תּוֹרָה] or *Torah*, The Prophets [נְבִיאִים] or *N^ebi'im* and The Writings [כְּתוּבִים] or *Kethubim*.

Lk. 24:44. and he said unto them, These *are* the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and *in* the prophets, and *in* the psalms, concerning me.

2. *The whole Mosaic legislation* (“Moral,” “Ceremonial,” and “Civil” Law). This use of the term “law” is usually contrasted with “grace” or “faith” in a New Testament redemptive or Gospel context, as some aspects of the Mosaic legislation were perverted into a legalistic system, i.e., circumcision, a law-works mentality, the Sabbath, etc. This designation of the law is sometimes called “Moses” by metonymy.

Gal. 5:1–4. Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage. ² Behold, I Paul say unto you, that if ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing. ³ For I testify again to every man that is circumcised, that he is a debtor to do the whole law. ⁴ Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace.

3. The term “Law” used anarth. refers to a principle of “Command, i.e., law as a kind or type of command,” “a principle of law or external command.”

Rom. 6:14. For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law [οὐ γάρ ἐστε ὑπὸ νόμον], but under grace.

Gal. 5:22–23. ²² But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, ²³ Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law [κατὰ τῶν τοιούτων οὐκ ἔστιν νόμος].

4. *Human law or custom.* This may refer to the human legal system of a given culture and society, or to a general principle founded as a human institution (Rom. 7:1–3):

Matt. 5:40. and if any man will sue thee at the law [καὶ τῷ θέλοντί σοι κριθῆναι],³² and take away thy coat, let him have *thy* cloke also.

Rom. 7:1–3. Know ye not, brethren, (for I speak to them that know the law,) how that the law hath dominion over a man as long as he liveth? ² For the woman which hath an husband is bound by the law to *her* husband so long as he liveth; but if the husband be dead, she is loosed from the law of *her* husband. ³ So then if, while *her* husband liveth, she be married to another man, she shall be called an adulteress: but if her husband be dead, she is free from that law; so that she is no adulteress, though she be married to another man.

5. *Various principles or powers of operation* that exist in the created spiritual or moral order of things, e.g., the “law” of faith, the “law” of the mind, the “law” of sin. In this usage, the word “principle” could be substituted for the word “law.”

Rom. 3:27. Where *is* boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? of works? Nay: but by the law of faith.

Rom. 7:21–23. ²¹ I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me. ²² For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: ²³ But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members.

6. The Moral Law as epitomized in its positive form as consummate love to the Lord God and to one’s neighbor or fellow man (Matt. 22:36–40):

...Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. ³⁸ This is the first and great commandment. ³⁹ and the second *is* like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. ⁴⁰ On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.

7. *The Decalogue or Ten Commandments*—a codification and epitome of the “Moral Law” in its largely negative form (Ex. 20:1–17).

NOTE: The Moral Law in its widest sense, is comprised of all the moral commands of Scripture. It is epitomized in its positive form in the “Two Great Commandments:” Love to God and love to neighbor (Dt. 6:4–5; Lev. 19:18).

By “Law” in this study we mean the Moral Law as the expression of the moral Self-consistency of God, i.e., His absolutely righteous character. It is in this context alone that we see sin in its true character and significance. Cf. Ex. 20:1–17; Rom. 3:19–20; 5:20; 7:7–13; 1 Tim. 1:5–11; 1 Jn. 3:4. It must be clearly understood that the “Moral Law” was not *instituted* at Sinai in the Ten Commandments, but rather *codified* in these commandments. The reality and principles of this “Moral Law” are eternal as both revelatory and descriptive of the moral Self-consistency [absolute righteousness] of the Divine character.

³² Κρίνω, to judge, determine, pronounce an opinion or judgment.

D. THE THREE-FOLD STRUCTURE OF THE MOSAIC LAW.

1. In the Covenant made with national Israel through Moses, there were the Civil Law, the Ceremonial Law and the Moral Law.
2. The Ceremonial [Tabernacle, priesthood and offerings] laws were fulfilled in the Person and redemptive work of the Lord Jesus Christ. The Civil Laws were largely to Israel as a nation and monolithic society. The Moral Law, as the expression of the moral self-consistency [absolute righteousness] of God is eternal, immutable and perpetual.
3. The Moral Law, as expressed in the Decalogue or Ten Commandments, forms the foundation of the Old Testament and Old Covenant. It is reiterated in the New Testament and New Covenant.
4. Some hold that the three laws are one and the same, and should either be presently observed to a great degree or totally discarded. Reconstructionism and New Covenant Theology disagree with this three-fold division. Reconstructionism would retain much of the Civil Law as well as the Moral Law for modern society. NCT would abrogate all three Laws for the believer, holding that the Decalogue was a legal document given only to Israel.³³
5. Dispensationalism, unduly separating the Old and Testaments and Covenants, also holds all three Laws [“the Dispensation of Law”] to be abrogated by the “Dispensation of Grace.” Law is relegated to a “Dispensation of Law” which, it is said, extends from Sinai to the cross. The “Dispensation of Grace” is said to extend from the cross to the end of this gospel economy.

E. THE NATURE OF THE MORAL LAW.

1. *The basis for the Moral Law is the moral self-consistency or absolute righteousness and holiness of Almighty God. Adam was created and before the Fall lived in a state of positive righteousness, not mere innocence.*³⁴ The Lord God cannot accept anything less than moral

³³ See Alan Cairns, *Dictionary of Theological Terms*, pp. 303–306.

³⁴ Adam was only “innocent” in that he had not personally sinned. As the image-bearer of God, he could not have been morally neutral!

perfection from his moral creatures. Thus, both the active and passive obedience of the Lord Jesus must be imputed to the believing sinner!³⁵

The issue of the validity and perpetuity of the Moral Law, especially as epitomized in the Decalogue, is an on-going saga of debate, denial, denigration and disruption.

Where must we begin? What is the most basic issue? *The most basic issue is this: what rationale or basis is there for a principle of law which governs the relationship of man to God, or a moral creature to his Creator?*

This issue is necessarily grounded in several realities:

- *The Creator–creature distinction and relation.* God created the universe *ex nihilo* [out of nothing]. He is absolutely sovereign over this creation and this creation is absolutely dependent upon him for virtually everything. He is both Creator, Sustainer and Law–giver.
- *God is a God of order*, as witnessed in both the physical and moral realms. As there are physical laws to govern physical creation, so there must be a moral law to govern God’s moral creatures.
- As both Creator and Redeemer, *God is to be the sole Object of, not only submission and obedience, but of love from moral, rational creatures* who owe their very existence and sustenance to him. Because of the nature of this relation, such love must be to the fullest powers of which the rational, moral creature is capable—loving God with one’s whole heart, soul, mind and strength (Dt. 6:4–5; Matt. 22:36–40).
- *Man was created as the image–bearer of God—as a rational, morally–responsible, self–determining being.* The relationship between such a creature and his Creator must be one characterized by law—a Moral Law. Such is the nature of the law written on his heart by nature, on the Tables of Stone at Sinai and written again upon the heart of the regenerate individual.
- Man is now a fallen, sinful being, and the image of God within him has been crippled or distorted. Thus, *due to the inability to properly discern and act in accordance with the law indelibly*

³⁵ By our Lord’s active obedience he fulfilled the demands of the Law; by his passive obedience, culminating in his suffering and death, he paid its penalty, thus providing a perfect righteousness, which is imputed by faith.

inscribed on his inner being, this Moral Law was in time and history externally written down and epitomized [codified] for the moral direction of mankind in general and believers in particular. Such is necessary for a right relation to God.

- Divine revelation necessitates regulation. With all new revelation from God, there is, in Scripture, some necessary regulation to explain this revelation and the exact relationship of man to God.

Upon these biblical and historical realities rests the rationale for the validity and perpetuity of the Moral Law.

2. *The Moral Law is the transcript of God's righteous nature and character.* As such, there is a correspondence between the LORD God in his Divine attributes and the Moral Law:

- *The Lord God is absolutely perfect* and non-contradictory in his nature and character; the Divine attributes are in perfect harmony. In redemption, Divine love, grace and mercy answered what Divine holiness, righteousness and justice demanded. God's Moral Law reflects this perfection and is answered in the active and passive obedience of the Lord Jesus Christ!
- *The Lord God is a trinity in unity.* So is the Moral Law of God is a unity. To break one Commandment is to break them all. It is to become a law-breaker, an "outlaw."
- *The Lord God is the Source, Support and End of all things* (Rom. 11:36).³⁶ The Moral Law is the very foundation, core and consummation of Divine revelation as it determines both Old Testament and New Testament revelation—including the nature and glory of the gospel!
- *The Lord God is both omnipresent and imminent.* God's Moral embraces all mankind and penetrates the deepest recesses of the human heart.
- *The Lord God is morally self-consistent*, i.e., absolutely and perfectly holy and righteous; the Moral Law reflects and expresses this perfect moral self-consistency. Thus, He properly commands his people to be morally self-consistent (1 Pet. 1:15–16).
- *The Lord God is loving, gracious and merciful.* The demands of the Moral Law have been fully and finally answered in the Perfect

³⁶ ὅτι ἐξ αὐτοῦ καὶ δι' αὐτοῦ καὶ εἰς αὐτὸν τὰ πάντα...

Person and redemptive work of the Lord Jesus Christ. By his active obedience he fulfilled the Law's demands; by his passive obedience he paid its penalty. The gospel reveals the absolute righteousness of God through the righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ imputed by faith to the believing sinner.

- *The Lord God is Self-consistent.* There is no incoherency or contradiction in his Moral Law.
 - *The Lord God is rightly a jealous God.* His Moral Law demands the utmost reverence and loving obedience.
 - *The Lord God is holy, just and good;* so is his Moral Law (Rom. 7:12).
 - *The Lord God is both true and Truth.* The Moral Law reveals the truth concerning the holy, righteous character of God and the awful reality and nature of sin.
 - *The Lord God is love and loving* (1 Jn. 4:16). The epitome of the Moral Law in its positive revelation is both ardent, consummate love to God and to one's neighbor.
 - *The Lord God is spirit.* The Moral Law is spiritual; it is not merely external or legal (Rom. 7:13).
 - *The Lord God is immutable.* His Moral Law is the unchanging revelation of his holy and righteous character (Rom. 3:19–20).
3. *The Moral Law must be interpreted in the context of the whole of Scripture.* The remainder of Scripture is the God-given commentary on and context for the Law. The NT especially is an inspired commentary on the reality, significance and perpetuity of the Moral Law.
 4. *The Moral Law must be interpreted spiritually,* i.e., within the Covenant of Redemption and Grace as fulfilled in the Lord Jesus. The Moral Law does not lie upon believers as a sentence of condemnation.³⁷ As believers, we love God's Law and rejoice in the reality that the Lord Jesus Christ through His active and passive obedience has both fulfilled its demands and paid its penalty.

³⁷ Cf. 1 Tim. 1:9, and the words "...the law is not made for [οὐ κεῖται] a righteous man ... οὐ κεῖται denotes "not to lie upon," i.e., as a heavy sentence of condemnation. See. p. 19.

5. *The Moral Law as epitomized in the Decalogue was and is for a redeemed people as a rule of life* so their behavior would reflect the moral self-consistency of the Lord God (Ex. 20:1–3)!

And God spake all these words, saying, I *am* the LORD thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. Thou shalt have no other gods before me.

It was *never* given as a system of justification by works whereby men could earn their acceptance before God!

6. *The Moral Law as epitomized in the Decalogue is a series of case law.* Each of the Commandments, especially the negative mandates, is an example or illustration of case law.³⁸ These are graphic and pointed examples or illustrations of the pervasive and inclusive principles in Scripture revealing the moral character of God. E.g.:

The case law stated, “Thou shalt have no other gods before me.” This prohibits anyone or anything before the face or presence of God. Anyone or anything which takes priority in its requirements of our time, energies and thoughts becomes our “god.” This condemns both outward idolatry and idols of the heart!

The case law stated, “Thou shalt not kill [unlawfully take human life]” implies any and all detraction from one’s self or another, and condemns every thought, intention and motivation leading to the overt act. Cf. 1 Jn. 3:15, “*Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer...*”

The case law stated, “Thou shalt not commit adultery” seeks to preserve all moral purity and condemns heart-lust, and every form of mental, verbal, visual and physical immorality and fornication. Cf. Matt. 5:27–28:

Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery: But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.

7. *The Moral Law is a unity.* To break one commandment is to break them all, i.e., to become a law-breaker!

Jas. 2:8–10.⁸ If ye fulfil the royal law according to the scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself, ye do well [καλῶς ποιείτε]:⁹ But if ye have respect to persons, ye commit sin, and are convinced of the law as transgressors.¹⁰ For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one *point*, he is guilty of all.

8. *The “First Table” of the Moral Law is primary and foundational to the “Second Table.”* The Moral Law, as epitomized in both the Old and

³⁸ Sometimes termed “the law of categories,” Case law is “the aggregate of reported cases as forming a body of jurisprudence.” *Black’s Law Dictionary*, p. 216.

New Testaments as Love to the Lord God and love to our neighbor, assumes that love to God is both primary and also determinative of love to our neighbor. This stands in sharp contrast to the modern psychological, quasi-religious idea that we must first learn to love ourselves before we can love someone else! In modern thought, “self-esteem” has replaced love to the Lord God.

9. *The Negative implies the Positive and the Positive implies the Negative.* Although couched in largely negative commands, the Decalogue also affirms all positive virtues.

Dt. 6:4–5. Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God *is* one LORD: ⁵ and thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might.

Lev. 19:18. Thou shalt not avenge, nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people, but thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself: I *am* the LORD.

Heb. 13:5. *Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.*

Eph. 4:25–32. ²⁵ Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour: for we are members one of another. ²⁶ Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath: ²⁷ Neither give place to the devil. ²⁸ Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labour, working with *his* hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth. ²⁹ Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers. ³⁰ and grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption. ³¹ Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: ³² and be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.

- The prohibition against idolatry implies the fervent worship of Jehovah alone and a fervent, intelligent relationship with him.
- The prohibition against taking God's name in vain³⁹ implies honoring his name in all our thoughts, words and actions.
- The positive command to “remember the Sabbath Day to keep it holy” (i.e., as a day separated for physical rest) also enforces the positive command to do one's labor within six days. It implies that we are to labor diligently and not procrastinate or be lazy and

³⁹ “vain” (Heb: רֵשָׁע, LXX: ἐπὶ ματαίῳ), denotes in an empty, meaningless, worthless or less than honorable way.

irresponsible in our work. This commandment implies an organized life, a proper work ethic, and prohibits everything to the contrary.⁴⁰

- The positive command to honor one's parents (and all legitimate authority) necessarily implies every specific transgression to the contrary.
- The prohibition against murder implies that we are to love and honor our neighbor and not to detract from him in any way.

Rom. 13:8–10.⁸ Owe no man any thing, but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law.⁹ For this, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet; and if *there be* any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.¹⁰ Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love *is* the fulfilling of the law.

1 Jn. 3:10–18.¹⁰ In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother.¹¹ For this is the message that ye heard from the beginning, that we should love one another.¹² Not as Cain, *who* was of that wicked one, and slew his brother. and wherefore slew he him? Because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous.¹³ Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you.¹⁴ We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not *his* brother abideth in death.¹⁵ Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him.¹⁶ Hereby perceive we the love *of God*, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down *our* lives for the brethren.¹⁷ But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels *of compassion* from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him? ¹⁸ My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth.

- The prohibition against stealing implies honesty and a self-sufficiency, i.e., a productive life-style that gives of its abundance to others.

Eph. 4:28. Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labour, working with *his* hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth.

⁴⁰ The weekly Sabbath was not primarily a day of religious worship, but a day set aside by God for physical rest. This principle of one-day-out-of-seven for physical rest reflects the physical, mental and emotional nature of man. As our Lord stated, "Man was not made for the Sabbath, but the Sabbath for man." (Mk. 2:27). Some of the high or holy days of Israel were also called "Sabbaths," but should not be confused with the one-day-in-seven rest.

- The prohibition against adultery implies that our actions should protect and strengthen the marriage relationship.

1 Pet. 3:7. Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with *them* according to knowledge as unto the weaker vessel, giving honour unto the wife, as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered.⁴¹

- The prohibition against bearing false witness implies honesty in our speech and a positive effort to edify others (Eph. 4:25, 29–32).
- The prohibition against covetousness implies that our minds are to be filled with love to our neighbor.

Matt. 22:37–40. ³⁷ Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. ³⁸ This is the first and great commandment. ³⁹ and the second *is* like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. ⁴⁰ On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.

10. *Law and Grace.* Upon Dispensational presuppositions, some hold these to be in conflict or opposed to one another. These are set in juxtaposition in the NT when the law is perverted as a means to justification, and thus, as a works–system of self–righteousness, which sets itself against justification by faith. Some references, such as in Galatians, it is the entire Mosaic legislation described the term “law,” including festivals and circumcision.

Gal. 5:6, 11, 15. ² Behold, I Paul say unto you, that if ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing. ³ For I testify again to every man that is circumcised, that he is a debtor to do the whole law. ⁴ Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace....⁶ For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love....¹¹ and I, brethren, if I yet preach circumcision, why do I yet suffer persecution? then is the offence of the cross ceased. ¹² I would they were even cut off which trouble you....brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only *use* not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another. ¹⁴ For all the law is fulfilled in one word, *even* in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.

11. *Law and Faith.* Are faith and Law opposed? Faith does not render the Law of God void, but rather establishes it: “*Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law.*” (Rom. 3:21–

⁴¹ 1 Pet. 3:7, a Chiastic const: Οἱ ἄνδρες ὁμοίως, συνοικοῦντες κατὰ γνώσιν ὡς ἁσθενεστέρω σκεύει τῷ γυναικείῳ, ἀπονέμοντες τιμὴν ὡς καὶ συγκληρονόμοις χάριτος ζωῆς εἰς τὸ μὴ ἐγκόπτεσθαι τὰς προσευχὰς ὑμῶν.

31). As believers, we “died to the Law”⁴² *as an instrument of condemnation*. By virtue of our union with Christ and faith in him the Law is “established,” not abrogated (Rom. 7:4; Gal. 2:16–21).

Rom. 3:27–31. ²⁷ Where *is* boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? of works? Nay: but by the law of faith. ²⁸ Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law. ²⁹ *Is he* the God of the Jews only? *is he* not also of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles also: ³⁰ Seeing *it is* one God, which shall justify the circumcision by faith, and uncircumcision through faith. ³¹ Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law.

This “establishment of the Law” by faith has been accomplished in two ways:

- In his active [his holy, blameless life] and passive [his suffering and death] obedience, *our Lord vicariously both kept the Law for us and then paid its penalty*. Thus, the claims of the Law against us have been fully answered by virtue of our union with Christ through faith.
- Upon the basis of our Lord’s redemptive work, *the Holy Spirit enables us to conform to the Law in principle*. This is not justifying behavior, but the sanctifying work of the Spirit of grace through our union with Christ (Ezk. 36:25–27; Rom. 6:14; 8:1–4; 2 Cor. 3:1–6; Gal. 5:22–23; Heb. 8:1–13).

Rom. 8:3–4. ³ For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: ⁴ That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

12. *Law and Love*. These have a close affinity and relationship in Scripture! Law and love are not set in juxtaposition with each other. There are two essential considerations concerning the relationship of Law to love:

- a. The largely negative cast of the Moral Law as epitomized in the Decalogue must never be construed in terms of either fear or restriction.

Some consider the Ten Commandments only as restrictions upon man’s life. Eight of the Ten Commandments are framed in the negative because they presuppose man’s fallen, sinful condition and tendencies.

⁴² Cf. Gal. 2:19 (ἀπέθανον), aor., “died.” Cf. also Rom. 7:4 (ἐθανατώθητε), aor., “died.”

Further, man by nature has a hatred for God's Law. He seeks to be his own god and determine for himself what is right or wrong:

Rom. 8:5–9. ⁵ For they that are after the flesh [κατὰ σάρκα ὄντες] do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit [κατὰ πνεῦμα] the things of the Spirit. ⁶ For to be carnally minded *is* death; but to be spiritually minded *is* life and peace. ⁷ Because the carnal mind *is* enmity against God [τὸ φρόνημα τῆς σαρκὸς ἔχθρα εἰς θεόν]:⁴³ for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. ⁸ So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God. ⁹ But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.

A truly regenerate heart does not rebel against God's Law!

Psa. 1:1–3. Blessed *is* the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. ² But his delight [כִּי אֱמֶלֶךְ] *is* in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night. ³ and he shall be like a tree planted [שֶׁתִּי] by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper.

Psa. 19:7–14. ⁷ The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple. ⁸ The statutes of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes. ⁹ The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring for ever: the judgments of the LORD are true and righteous altogether. ¹⁰ More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold: sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb. ¹¹ Moreover by them is thy servant warned: and in keeping of them there is great reward. ¹² Who can understand his errors? cleanse thou me from secret faults. ¹³ Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me: then shall I be upright, and I shall be innocent from the great transgression. ¹⁴ Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O LORD, my strength, and my redeemer.

Psa. 119:97. O how love I thy law! it *is* my meditation all the day.

Rom. 7:12. Wherefore the law *is* holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good.

The Law was given in the context of Divine grace for the good and blessing of God's people. and it is epitomized in terms of love—consummate love to God and to one's neighbor. Law and Love have the closest affinity!

⁴³ τὸ φρόνημα τῆς σαρκὸς ἔχθρα εἰς θεόν. the mind-set of the flesh [is] enmity [has a hatred] against God.

- b. Righteousness, sin and love must all be defined and understood in terms of Divine Law. There is absolutely no place for “situation ethics” or moral relativism!

Love has replaced righteousness as the focal-point of the gospel in modern, evangelical religion, contrary to Rom. 1:17.⁴⁴

Rom. 1:16–17. ¹⁶ For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. ¹⁷ For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith.

Apart from Law, love remains biblically undefined and stripped of its necessary moral character.

“Love” is *not* the fulfillment of the Law in a *temporal* or Dispensational sense, as though the Law were limited to Israel in a given time-frame, but in an *interpretive* sense. As love is the fulfillment of the Law, so the Law interprets love, i.e., the Law gives to love its moral character and context. Apart from a necessary external standard—Divine Law—love remains undefined. True, consistent, biblical love is not a merely subjective, undefined, indefinite feeling, but an objective reality commanded in the context of and conditioned by the Law—Word of God (Rom. 13:8–10), i.e., we love our neighbor when we do not deprive him of his life, lie about him, steal from him, commit adultery with his wife or covet what he has—or do anything that tends toward such overt acts. The absence or abrogation of the Law is not freedom, but lawlessness—and lawlessness is sin (1 Jn. 3:4).⁴⁵

Rom. 13:8–10. ⁸ Owe no man any thing, but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law. ⁹ For this, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet; and if *there be* any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. ¹⁰ Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love *is* the fulfilling of the law.

It is only in terms of God’s Law—not committing adultery with his wife, not diminishing from him in any way, not lying to him or about

⁴⁴ Rom. 1:17, δικαιοσύνη γὰρ θεοῦ ἐν αὐτῷ ἀποκαλύπτεται ἐκ πίστεως εἰς πίστιν, καθὼς γέγραπται· ὁ δὲ δίκαιος ἐκ πίστεως ζήσεται

⁴⁵ “...sin is the transgression of the law.” Lit: “sin is lawlessness” (ἡ ἁμαρτία ἐστὶν ἡ ἀνομία).

him, and not coveting what he has—that we may consistently love our neighbor—or love our enemies!

The Apostle assumed that his readers, largely Gentile believers, were fully acquainted with the Law, and with the two-fold division of the First and Second Tables.

13. *The inclusive nature of the Moral Law.* The Law not only forbids the outward act, but anything and everything that leads to such. E.g., heart-adultery (Matt. 5:27–28), hate leads to murder (1 Jn. 3:15). No mere external compliance to these precepts is the true obedience that God demands. Every commandment—negative or positive—reaches into the heart, mind and soul. Mark the following examples:

- *Idolatry* (1 Cor. 10:31). Whatever is first in a person’s thought—life or outward life is his “god”. Mental idolatry is as base and blasphemous as physical idolatry.

Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.

- *Blasphemy* (Rom. 2:24). To be identified with or to take God’s name in any way other than to his glory is to take it in vain and even cause others to blaspheme.

For the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles through you, as it is written.

- *Murder.* This command not only forbids any unlawful taking of human life; it forbids any thought, inclination or motivation that would lead to diminishing others in any way.

Matt. 5:21–22. ²¹ Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment: ²² But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment: and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire.⁴⁶

1 Jn. 3:10–18. ¹⁰ In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother. ¹¹ For this is the message that ye heard from the beginning, that we should love one another. ¹² Not as Cain, *who* was of that wicked one, and slew his brother. and wherefore slew he him? Because his own works were evil, and his brother's

⁴⁶ The word “raca” signifies “stupid”. The word for “fool” is μωρός (*moros*), implying, in this specific context, a moral reprobate.

righteous. ¹³ Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you. ¹⁴ We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not *his* brother abideth in death. ¹⁵ Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him. ¹⁶ Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down *our* lives for the brethren. ¹⁷ But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of *compassion* from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him? ¹⁸ My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth.

- **Adultery** (Matt. 5:27–30). This command forbids even the heart–sin of secret lust and desire.

²⁷ Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery: ²⁸ But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart. ²⁹ and if thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast *it* from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not *that* thy whole body should be cast into hell. ³⁰ and if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off, and cast *it* from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not *that* thy whole body should be cast into hell.

- **Theft** (Jas. 1:13–16). This command forbids such sins as envy, covetousness and the motivation to take the property of another, and even an attitude of unconcern respecting the person and property of another.

¹³ Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man: ¹⁴ But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. ¹⁵ Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death. ¹⁶ Do not err, my beloved brethren.

- **False witness**. This command forbids the very devilish, unregenerate attitude of heart and mind that would ruin the reputation of another or commit perjury against him.

Jn. 8:44. Ye are of *your* father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it.

Col. 3:9–10. ⁹ Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds; ¹⁰ and have put on the new *man*, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him:

- **Covetousness** (Rom. 7:7–13). This commandment forbids the very unsanctified desire for what belongs to another.

Rom. 7:7–13. ⁷ What shall we say then? *Is* the law sin? God forbid. Nay, I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust,

except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet. ⁸ But sin, taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence. For without the law sin was dead. ⁹ For I was alive without the law once: but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died. ¹⁰ and the commandment, which was *ordained* to life, I found *to be* unto death. ¹¹ For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it slew me. ¹² Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good. ¹³ Was then that which is good made death unto me? God forbid. But sin, that it might appear sin, working death in me by that which is good; that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful.

All this can be summarized—epitomized—in the command for biblical love to God and neighbor (Matt. 22:36–40; Rom. 13:8–10; 1 Cor. 13:4–8).

⁴ Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, ⁵ Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; ⁶ Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; ⁷ Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things. ⁸ Charity never faileth:

14. *As the gospel must not be preached legalistically, so the Moral Law must be preached evangelically*, i.e., in its proper relationship to the gospel.

The preaching of the Law is not necessarily “legalistic preaching”. As there is a legalistic way of preaching the Gospel, so there is an evangelical way of preaching the Law. Mark the following realities:

- *The Gospel is preached in a legalistic way* when it is perverted into a system of works or natural ability for salvation. E.g., viewing faith and repentance as meriting or earning forgiveness before God.
- *The Gospel is also preached in a legalistic way* when it is couched in terms of rules and regulations which are not scriptural, but rather man-made. E.g., legalistic restrictions upon the outward forms of religion.
- *The Law is preached in an evangelical way* when it stands in its proper connection to the Gospel to produce a consciousness of sin and prepare the sinner to receive the Gospel.
- *The Law is preached evangelically* when it neither contradicts the Gospel nor opposes it, nor does it stand as a substitute for the Gospel. Nor yet is the Law to be preached apart from the Gospel, or it *does* become mere legalistic preaching.

- The preaching of the Law without the Gospel becomes legalism; the preaching of the Gospel without the Law becomes antinomianism. The Law safeguards the moral self-consistency of God and therefore magnifies the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ through the grace of the Gospel. The Gospel answers to the moral self-consistency of a holy and righteous God and therefore the demands of the Law. Both together glorify the grace of God and give his love its necessary moral character. It is this Divinely-revealed balance that we find in the New Testament.

[Charles Bridges]:...as there is a legal mode of preaching the gospel, so there is an evangelical mode of preaching the law....⁴⁷

We cannot indeed have too much of the Gospel; but we may have too little of the law. and a defect in the Evangelical preaching of the Law is as clear a cause of insufficient ministration, as a legal preaching of the Gospel. In such a ministry there must be a want of spiritual conviction of sin *generally*—of spiritual sins *most particularly*—and—flowing directly from hence—a low standard of spiritual obedience. Indeed, all the prevalent errors in the Church may be traced to this source. We should never have heard of Methodist perfection—Mystic dependence upon the inward light [Quakerism]—Antinomian delusion—inconsistent profession of orthodoxy—Pharisaical self-righteousness—or Pelagian and Socinian rectitude of nature—if the spiritual standard of the law had been clearly displayed, and its convincing power truly felt.⁴⁸

[We would add modern Dispensational antinomianism with its “decisionism,” “easy-believeism” and “carnal Christian” heresy!].

[John Newton]: Ignorance of the nature and design of the law is at the bottom of most religious mistakes. This the root of self-righteousness....The law of God...in the largest sense, is that rule, or prescribed course, which he has appointed for his creatures according to their several natures and capacities, that they might answer the end for which he has created them....

The Decalogue...uttered by the voice of God himself, is an abstract of that original law under which man was created; but published in a prohibitory form, the Israelites, like the rest of mankind, being depraved by sin, and strongly inclined to the commission of every evil....We cannot be at enmity with God, and at the same time approve of his law; rather, this is the ground of our dislike to him, that we conceive the law by which we are to be judged is too strict in its precepts, and too severe in its threatenings; therefore men, so far as in them lies, are for altering this law....

These prejudices against the law can only be removed by the power of the Holy Spirit. It is his office to enlighten and convince the conscience...the sinner

⁴⁷ Charles Bridges, *The Christian Ministry*, p. 223.

⁴⁸ Charles Bridges, *The Christian Ministry*, p. 228.

is then stripped of all his vain pretenses, is compelled to plead guilty and must justify his Judge, even though he should condemn him....to sinners these things must be applied according to the gospel, and to their new relation by faith to the Lord Jesus Christ, who has obeyed the law, and made atonement for sin on their behalf; so that through him they are delivered from condemnation, and entitled to all the benefits of his obedience; from him likewise they receive the law, as a rule enforced by his own example and their unspeakable obligations to his redeeming love. This makes obedience pleasing; and the strength they derive from him makes it easy.⁴⁹

F. AN IGNORANCE OF THE MORAL LAW.

Most of the defects in modern, Evangelical Christianity can be traced to its antinomian character—its denial of and aversion to the reality, significance and authority of the Moral Law.

1. An ignorance of the Moral Law necessarily means a nebulous and relativistic concept of sin, for Scripture views sin in absolute terms as transgression of God's Law (1 Jn. 3:4).⁵⁰ When sin remains nebulous or is thought of in mere psychological terms, humanistic counseling and psychology often replace authoritative preaching, the convicting power of the Spirit and the necessity of biblical repentance.

NOTE: At this point, we should define and describe sin in all its heinousness and varied manifestations as directed against God Himself:

- *Sin is rebellion against God's Law.* All and every sin implies God. All and every sin also implies a Divine standard or Law (1 Jn. 3:4). A true, biblical God-consciousness is the best preventive from sin.
- *Sin is a perversion of God's nature and character.* Idolatry twists our perception of the immutable, eternal, infinite God in His majesty and absolute holiness. Man is prone to worship the "god" of his own imagination.

Mark that the Apostle Paul could never become a mere "tourist":

Acts 17:16. Now while Paul waited for them at Athens, his spirit was stirred in him], when he saw the city wholly given to idolatry [τοῦ Παύλου παρωζύνητο τὸ πνεῦμα αὐτοῦ ἐν αὐτῷ θεωροῦντος κατείδωλον οὔσαν τὴν πόλιν].

- *Sin is a denial of God's priority* by putting some one or thing before Him. Whatever takes our priorities, time, finances, deepest thoughts and greatest love—or whatever becomes an end in itself—is idolatry and sin! "For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." (Matt. 6:21).

The dearest idol I have known,

⁴⁹ John Newton, *Letters*, I, pp. 340–347.

⁵⁰ Πᾶς ὁ ποιῶν τὴν ἁμαρτίαν καὶ τὴν ἀνομίαν ποιεῖ, καὶ ἡ ἁμαρτία ἐστὶν ἡ ἀνομία.

Whate're that idol be,
 Help me to tear it from Thy throne,
 And worship only Thee

—William Cowper

- *Sin is insincerity or hypocrisy before God.* The God of Scripture is omnipresent and omniscient. He knows our hearts better than we do!
- *Sin is a defiance of God's authority.* It is self-willed refusal to submit to his revealed will. What could possibly be in God's will that would not be the highest good? Yet from the very beginning, fallen man has sought to call God into account rather than submit to the highest good (Gen. 3:9–13; 4:3–14; Rom. 9:14–21).
- *Sin is a willful ignorance of God's immanence.* God is not only omnipresent, he is immanent, i.e., he fills all space fully, intelligently, morally and completely in all His attributes (Jer. 23:23–24). This is a great comfort in danger, a great incentive to believing prayer, but also a great witness against the awful, wicked nature of sin.
- *Sin is a defiance of God's revealed will.* The very essence of the Christian mind and will should be that God's will "be done on earth, as it is in heaven," i.e., willingly, completely, and without opposition (Matt. 6:10). Sin sets itself against this will.
- *Sin is a denial of God's justice.* It takes lightly the precious blood of Christ which has redeemed us, and despises the infinite sufferings of our loving Savior (Heb. 10:26–31; 1 Pet. 18–20).
- *Sin is a refusal of God's righteousness.* Every sin possesses its own wicked self-righteousness that stands impudently in the face of God. There are ultimately only two kinds of righteousness for man: the imputed righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ or one's own self-righteousness (Rom. 3:21–26; Titus 3:5).
- *Sin is an abuse of God's goodness.* His goodness should lead us to repentance, not presumption or wicked indulgence (Rom. 2:4).
- *Sin is a repudiation of God's grace.* His grace views us as wholly undeserving of his loving kindness, yet enables and sustains us (Eph. 2:5, 8–10). Sin tramples and disdains such free and sovereign grace.
- *Sin is a rejection of God's mercy.* His mercy views us as suffering the ravages of indwelling sin and remaining corruption (Psa. 103:8–18; Psa. 136; Eph. 2:4). Sin repudiates this mercy for its wicked self-indulgence.
- *Sin is a betrayal of God's love.* How can any true believer lightly betray or spurn the infinite, glorious, self-sacrificing love of our heavenly Father (Jn. 3:16; Jas. 4:4; 1 Pet. 1:18–20; 1 Jn. 4:9–10)?
- *Sin is presumption upon God's providence.* Divine providence should produce a pervasive God-consciousness, not a wicked presumption upon the Divine character (Psa. 19:13). Every willful sin presumes upon the forbearance of God.

- *Sin is a presumption upon God's will and ordained way.* Prayerlessness is sin! It presumes upon God and leaves one to determine issues for himself without recourse to God and His Word. Insincere prayer, or public prayer simply for an effect, is breaking the Second Commandment.
 - *Sin is a maligning of God's holiness.* He is absolutely holy and demands such from his own (Rom. 6:15–22; 1 Pet. 1:15–16). How can any true believer take even one willful, deliberate sin lightly?
 - *Sin is a polluting of God's moral purity.* How repulsive must be our sins to a Holy, morally perfect God! He cannot bear with them, except through the imputed righteousness and constant intercession of Christ (Hab. 1:13). How precious to us ought to be the grace of God in Christ which keeps us from judgment!
 - *Sin is a despising of God's wisdom.* At the very heart of any sin is the horrible thought that we are wiser than God, that such sin is better than his will and purpose for our lives (Rom. 11:33–36).
 - *Sin is deceit and hypocrisy in the face of God.* God knows all things, including the human heart and mind. Yet outwardly religious persons pretend to know and serve him with their actions while their hearts are slaves to sin and under its reigning power, thus tainting whatever they do (Rom. 6:16–18).
 - *Sin is a presumption upon God's remembrance.* Men believe that simply because they lightly commit sin and then forget it that God will do likewise. Any and every sin which is not repented of, and forgiven must be dealt with scripturally (Rom. 6:1–6; Rev. 20:11–15).
 - *Sin is impatience with God's providence.* Presuming to move ahead of Divine providence is actually assuming the Divine prerogative and taking matters into one's hands which belong to God alone (Gen. 15:1–6; 16:1–5; 18:9–15; Psalms 19:12–14).
 - *Sin is an insult to God's intelligence.* God knows. God sees. God judges. God chastens (Heb. 12:3–15). Could it possibly be otherwise? Sin necessarily includes a deficiency in or a refusal of the true knowledge of God.
 - *Sin is a provocation of God's anger.* His love is holy, righteous and consistent, and he will chasten sufficient to correct (Heb. 10:31; 12:3–15).
2. An ignorance of the Moral Law necessarily means a high view of man's alleged "native ability" and "free will," failing to scripturally comprehend the utterly devastating effects of the Fall and sin (Rom. 6:17–18; Eph. 2:1–5).
 3. An ignorance of the Moral Law necessarily means a defective view of God's love. The holy, righteous and gracious love of God to both saints and sinners is usually either deluded to an emotion or stripped of its moral character.

4. An ignorance of the Moral Law necessarily means a low or cheapened view of grace, the gospel and of salvation in general, with an emphasis on the experimental and subjective rather than the doctrinal. The awful reality and power of sin determines the nature and character of salvation!
5. An ignorance of the Moral Law necessarily means a low view of repentance, or a foregoing of this truth altogether, as sin becomes relative and subjective (Acts 17:31).
6. An ignorance of the Moral Law necessarily means a low view of the gospel invitation. Psychological pressure to “make a religious decision” replaces the universal command to repent (Acts 17:31)! Conviction of sin is seen as a light matter. Religious “decisions” are made for a variety of issues—a bothered conscience, deliverance from addiction, family unity, finding meaning in life, etc. Biblical conversion is from the reigning power and condemnation of sin!
7. An ignorance of the Moral Law necessarily means a perverted view of conversion and Christian experience and the necessity of a holy, godly and converted life. Dispensational antinomianism has given us “easy-believeism,” and the “carnal Christian” heresy.
8. An ignorance of the Moral Law usually means a carnal security and a general lack of seriousness. Dispensational antinomianism denies the Lordship of Jesus Christ in salvation (Acts 2:36).⁵¹

Modern Evangelical Christianity possess all of these with its denigration of the awful seriousness of any and all sin, its worldly entertainment and lack of holiness, its “easy-believeism,” “carnal Christian” heresy, denial of the Lordship of Christ in present Christian experience (Acts 2:36) and a smug “carnal security” which rests, not in the imputed righteousness of Christ, but a religious decision!

G. THE PERPETUITY OF THE MORAL LAW.

There are nine considerations:

1. *God is immutable.* The nature, character and self-revelation of God must determine the relevance and perpetuity of the Law—not our own thinking or feelings. The Moral Law is the transcript of God’s moral self-consistency or absolutely righteous character and immutable

⁵¹ ἀσφαλῶς οὖν γινωσκέτω πᾶς οἶκος Ἰσραὴλ ὅτι καὶ κύριον αὐτὸν καὶ χριστὸν ἐποίησεν ὁ θεός, τοῦτον τὸν Ἰησοῦν ὃν ὑμεῖς ἐσταυρώσατε.

nature. This is why the Moral Law and its abiding principles reoccur in the New Testament and have a necessarily close affinity with the Gospel (Matt. 22:37–39; Rom. 7:12, 14; 8:1–4; Gal. 3:24; Tim. 1:5–11; 6:14–16; Jas. 2:8; 1 Pet. 1:15–16).

2. *Man as the image-bearer of God.* The law was ontologically embedded in man's nature at creation, constituting him a rational, morally-responsible being existing in a Creator-creature relation. This is often termed "natural law" and is described in Rom. 2:11–16.⁵²

¹⁴ 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:

¹⁵ 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;

Man in his fallen, sinful condition is epistemologically bankrupt, and needs the constant witness of the Moral Law inscripturated so he is faced with his sinfulness and remains without excuse before God.

Rom. 1:18–22. ¹⁸ For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven [Ἀποκαλύπτεται γὰρ ὀργὴ θεοῦ ἀπ' οὐρανοῦ] against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness [τὴν ἀλήθειαν ἐν ἀδικίᾳ κατεχόντων]; ¹⁹ Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them [φανερὸν ἐστὶν ἐν αὐτοῖς]; for God hath shewed *it* unto them. ²⁰ For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, *even* his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse [ἀναπολογήτους]: ²¹ Because that, when they knew God, they glorified *him* not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations [ἀλλ' ἐματαιώθησαν ἐν τοῖς διαλογισμοῖς αὐτῶν], and their foolish heart was darkened [ἐσκοτίσθη ἡ ἀσύμετος αὐτῶν καρδιά]. ²² Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools [φάσκοντες εἶναι σοφοὶ ἐμωράνθησαν]...

This explains why fallen, sinful man **(1)** is by nature a legalist in religion, seeking by his own alleged good works to earn acceptance before God—and why he naturally hates grace and the gospel! **(2)** Why he needs the Moral Law in a codified form.

3. *There must be a moral law for God's moral creatures.* God is a God of order, as witnessed in the physical, moral and spiritual realms. As there are physical laws to govern physical creation, so there must be

⁵² "without law" [ἀνόμως] must refer to being without the law in a codified form of explicit Commandments.

moral laws to govern moral creatures. All of God's moral creatures live in either obedience or disobedience to him.

Note: Ancient civilizations and cultures all had their moral codes, e.g., *Code of Hammurabi* [c. 18th century BC]. Men and societies have outgrown every other moral code—except the Moral Law of God—sin is still sin before God and in the human conscience!

4. *The Moral Law was codified, not instituted at Mt. Sinai.* The Moral Law formed an essential part of man's being from creation to Moses (Rom. 5:12–14).⁵³

¹² Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned: ¹³ (For until the law sin was in the world: but sin is not imputed when there is no law. ¹⁴ Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression, who is the figure of him that was to come.

As sin existed and death reigned, it gave testimony to the existence of the law, although it existed as “natural law” written in man's inner being and did not yet exist in a codified form!

5. *The uniqueness of the declaration and inscripturation of the Moral Law.* The Decalogue stands unique in the manner of its declaration and inscripturation. No other statue or law was given in this manner. “And God spake all these words...” (Ex. 20:1). God thundered out His Moral Law—The Ten Commandments—audibly to all Israel at Mt. Sinai and then twice inscribed them in Tables of stone with his own fiery finger (Ex. 19–20; 31:18; Dt. 5:1–22; 9:10).⁵⁴

This was the one and only time they all heard the voice of God! Further, God spoke not only to the assembled nation, but to each individual personally—the Moral Law is framed in the singular—“Thou” “Thee” and “Thy”!

6. *The Moral Law was not abrogated by the Lord Jesus Christ.* Cf. 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.” The context indicates that our Lord refers to the Moral Law (v. 21[sixth Commandment], 27–28 [Seventh Commandment], 43–44 [the entire second Table]).

⁵³ (1) This statement is framed in the neg. for emphasis. (2) Adam sinned against a known, specific commandment.

⁵⁴ This was the one and only time in which all Israel heard the voice of the Lord God clearly and distinctly—when He declared the Decalogue!

The following verse is self-explanatory:

Rom. 10:4. For Christ *is* the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth [τέλος γὰρ νόμου Χριστὸς εἰς δικαιοσύνην παντὶ τῷ πιστεύοντι].⁵⁵

The weakness of the Old Covenant was that the heart remained unchanged and religion was largely external, except for an elect remnant of true believers. *The problem was and is not with the Law, but with the heart and nature of fallen, sinful man.* Under the New or Gospel Covenant, the heart or inner being is transformed through regenerating grace to conform in principle to the Moral Law.

Any denial of this reality is a denial of Divine grace in regeneration, conversion, adoption and sanctification—and this strikes at the very heart of practical antinomianism.

7. *Under the New or Gospel Covenant, the content of the Law has been modified and its administration has been changed:*

- *Its content has been modified*, i.e., the Ceremonial Law with its Levitical priesthood and sacrificial system has been fulfilled in the Person and Work of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Civil Law with its social restrictions and dietary laws were largely national and historical. The Old Testament distinctives of the covenant people of God [national Israel] were essentially physical, dietary and ceremonial; the New Testament distinctives of God's covenant people [believers] are spiritual.⁵⁶

The Moral Law remains as the eternal, immutable revelation and expression of God's righteous character!

- *Its administration has been changed.* The Moral Law, once written on tables of stone, is now written afresh in the heart:

Jer. 31:31–34. ³¹ Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: ³² Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day *that* I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the

⁵⁵ The essential meaning of τέλος is fulfillment or consummation, not necessarily termination. Liddel & Scott, *Greek–English Lexicon*, pp. 1772–1773.

⁵⁶ Although Christian liberty never sets aside self-control and modesty, The modern legalistic restrictions on diet, dress and drink are more Old Covenant than New.

LORD: ³³ But this *shall be* the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law [אַת־תִּוְרָתִי נִתְּנָהּ] in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. ³⁴ and they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more. [Quoted in Heb. 8:8–12].⁵⁷

Ezk. 11:19–20. ¹⁹ and I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within you; and I will take the stony heart out of their flesh, and will give them an heart of flesh: ²⁰ That they may walk in my statutes, and keep mine ordinances, and do them: and they shall be my people, and I will be their God.

Ezk. 36:25–27. ²⁵ Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. ²⁶ A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. ²⁷ and I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do *them*.

2 Cor. 3:3. *Forasmuch as ye are* manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart.

8. *Faith does not abrogate the Moral Law, but rather establishes it.* (Cf. Rom. 3:31).

Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law.

There is but one God and thus only one way of justification—by faith. Faith appropriates the imputed righteousness of Christ, and therefore answers to the demands of the Law!

9. *The Moral Law will be the Divine standard on the final Day of Judgment* (Rom. 3:19–20). The whole human race will be judged by this eternal, immutable standard of righteousness.

H. THE ESSENTIAL PURPOSE OF THE MORAL LAW.

The historical and traditional three-fold use of the Law: **(1)** To convict of sin and lead the sinner to the Lord Jesus for salvation. **(2)** To restrain sin in society. **(3)** As the rule of life for the believer. We can explore and enlarge upon these with the following:

1. *For the Unbeliever.*

⁵⁷ ...λέγει κύριος· διδοὺς νόμους μου εἰς τὴν διάνοιαν αὐτῶν καὶ ἐπὶ καρδίᾳς αὐτῶν ἐπιγράψω αὐτούς...

- a. The Law is a sentence of condemnation and death, as the unbeliever is still under the Covenant of Works and condemned in his own self-righteousness! [We must not think in terms of an “Adamic covenant,” or a “Dispensation of Innocency,” etc., as though it pertained to Adam alone]. All men are either in union with Adam and so under condemnation, or in union with Christ, and thus justified from the condemnation of the Law.
- b. The Moral Law aggravates the sinfulness of man’s nature. Cf. Paul’s experience:

Rom. 7:7–8. ⁷ What shall we say then? *Is the law sin?* God forbid. Nay, I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet. ⁸ But sin, taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence. For without the law sin was dead.

- c. As the God-ordained medium of conviction of sin, man knows exactly the stringent, immutable demands of a righteous, just and Holy God! Sin is not merely what the preacher makes it out to be!

“The man who does not know the nature of the law cannot know the nature of sin. and he who does not know the nature of sin cannot know the nature of the Savior!” —John Bunyan

Rom. 5:20a Moreover the law entered [παρεισήλθεν], that the offence might abound...

Rom. 7:13. ...that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful [ἵνα γένηται καθ’ ὑπερβολὴν ἁμαρτωλὸς ἢ ἁμαρτία διὰ τῆς ἐντολῆς].

Mark the experience of the Apostle Paul in Acts 9 and Romans 7!

Acts 9:3–5. ³ and as he journeyed, he came near Damascus: and suddenly there shined round about him a light from heaven: ⁴ and he fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? ⁵ and he said, Who art thou, Lord? and the Lord said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest: *it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks* [σκληρόν σοι πρὸς κέντρα λακτίζειν].

What were these “goads”? He leaves us in no doubt—the Moral Law of God. See Rom. 7:7–8:9.⁵⁸

[Charles Bridges]...Those, indeed, who dispense with the law from their ministry, acknowledge no medium of conviction but the cross. But did not our Lord employ the Moral Law with the young ruler, for this express purpose? Was it not also the appointed means of bringing the Apostle to the spiritual

⁵⁸ No chapter division at Rom. 7:25–8:1. The subject of the believer and the law extends from Rom. 6:15–8:9.

apprehension of his sin? Its cognizance of every thought, imagination, desire, word, and work, and its uncompromising demand of absolute and uninterrupted obedience, upon pain of its everlasting penalty—convince the heart of its guilt, defilement, and wretchedness, and leave the sinner without excuse and without help; under the frown of an holy and angry God; prepared to welcome a Saviour, and lost forever without him. Thus is the prayer—"God be merciful to me a sinner"—forced even from him, whose external deportment had been, "touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless." He now sees in himself the very character of sinfulness and misery to which the Gospel addresses itself; and, stretching out the hand of desire and faith, he receives the free gift of Christ.⁵⁹

The Moral Law restrains sin in society. When man continues to rebel against God's Law, God gives men up to their own wickedness and judgment. See Rom. 1:24–32. The three signs of a reprobated society abandoned by God are: **(1)** the removal of all moral barriers of moral restraint (Rom. 1: 24–25). **(2)** open homosexuality and lesbianism (Rom. 1:26–27). **(3)** complete social breakdown (Rom. 1:28–32).

Rom. 1:24–32. ²⁴ Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves: ²⁵ Who changed the truth of God into a lie [οἷτινες μετήλλαξαν τὴν ἀλήθειαν τοῦ θεοῦ ἐν τῷ ψεύδει], and worshipped and served the creature [ἐσεβάσθησαν καὶ ἐλάτρευσαν τῇ κτίσει] more than [παρὰ] the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen.

²⁶ For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature: ²⁷ and likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompence of their error which was meet.

²⁸ and even as they did not like to retain God in *their* knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind [ἐδοκίμασαν τὸν θεὸν ἔχειν ἐν ἐπιγνώσει, παρέδωκεν αὐτοὺς ὁ θεὸς εἰς ἀδόκιμον νοῦν], to do those things which are not convenient; ²⁹ Being filled [πεπληρωμένους] with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of [μεστοὺς] envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers, ³⁰ Backbiters, haters of God, despiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, ³¹ Without understanding, covenantbreakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful:

³² Who knowing the judgment of God [οἷτινες τὸ δικαίωμα τοῦ θεοῦ ἐπιγινόντες], that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them.

2. For the Believer.

⁵⁹ Charles Bridges, *The Christian Ministry*, pp. 223–225.

- a. We are dead to the law and its curse as a sentence of condemnation by virtue of our union with Christ and the imputed righteousness of His active and passive obedience (Col. 3:1–3).
- b. The Moral Law has been re-written upon our hearts (Jer. 31:31–34; Ezk. 11:19–20; 36:25–27) and our personalities have been re-created in principle in righteousness, holiness of the truth and knowledge. In short, grace brings us into a principle of conformity to God's Law

Romans 8:1–4. *There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.* ² For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death. ³ For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: ⁴ That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

Eph. 4:22–24. ²² That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; ²³ and be renewed in the spirit of your mind; ²⁴ and that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.

Col. 3:9–10. ⁹ Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds; ¹⁰ and have put on the new *man*, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him:

Rom. 2:28–29. ²⁸ For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither *is that* circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: ²⁹ But he *is* a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision *is that* of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise *is* not of men, but of God.

Col. 2:11–14. ¹¹ In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ: ¹² Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with *him* through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead. ¹³ and you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses; ¹⁴ Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross;

- c. The Law is the essence of the Christian ethic. Christian love in its expression is necessarily and objectively defined by Law (Rom. 13:8–10). The Law is fulfilled in love; love is defined by Law—apart from which love must be stripped of its moral character and left undefined and relative.
- d. The Law is for the believer's humility. Before its absolute demand for holiness and righteousness, the believer is the very epitome of weakness and left without any merit except in the imputed

righteousness and sanctifying grace of the Lord Jesus Christ (Rom. 7:7–13).

- e. The Moral Law is our rule of life under the conditions of the New or Gospel Covenant. What Commandment is no longer sin or in effect? [The Sabbath is a creation ordinance, and declares God’s sovereignty over our time, and commands an organized life].

Sanctification is conformity to the moral character of God. Although the Law cannot sanctify, it remains the Divine standard of holiness and righteousness, as it reaches into the very heart, inclination, motivation and implementation of virtually everything in our lives.

- f. The righteous demands of the Law cause us to glory in our redemptive standing in Christ by grace. (Rom. 5:1–2; Gal. 3:13; 6:14; Phil. 3:7–9).

I. THE LAW AND THE GOSPEL IN THEIR PROPER RELATION.

The preaching of the Law is not necessarily “legal” or “legalistic preaching.” As there is a legalistic way of preaching the Gospel, so there is an evangelical way of preaching the Law.

We have considered this issue under “The Nature of the Moral Law.” We leave this aspect with several quotations:

Mark the following statements:

[Charles Bridges] There can be no question, that the preaching of the law in its true character and connection forms a constituent part of the ministry of the Gospel. Some indeed, most inaccurately identify the preaching of the law with legal preaching. Others preach the law independently of the Gospel....But, as there is a legal mode of preaching the Gospel, so there is an evangelical mode of preaching the Law.

....Those, indeed, who dispense with the law from their ministry, acknowledge no medium of conviction but the cross. But did not our Lord employ the moral law with the young ruler, for this express purpose? Was it not also the appointed means of bringing the Apostle to the spiritual apprehension of his sin? Its cognizance of every thought, imagination, desire, word, and work, and its uncompromising demand of absolute and uninterrupted obedience, upon pain of its everlasting penalty—convince heart of its guilt, defilement, and wretchedness, and leave the sinner without excuse and without help; under the frown of an holy and angry God; prepared to welcome a Saviour, and lost forever without him.⁶⁰

[John Calvin] ...the law is nothing else but a preparation unto the Gospel.⁶¹

⁶⁰ Charles Bridges, *The Christian Ministry*, pp. 223–225.

⁶¹ Quotation taken from Charles Bridges, *Ibid.*, pp. 233–239.

[Rogers of Dedham] Let none speak against the preaching of the law; for it is the wholesome way, that God himself and his servants in all ages have taken. The law first humbles; then the Gospel comforts.⁶²

[William Gurnal] The sharp point of the law must prick the conscience, before the creature by the promises of the Gospel be drawn to Christ. The field is not fit for the seed to be cast into it, till the plough hath broken it up; nor is the soul prepared to receive the mercy of the Gospel till broken with the terrors of the law.⁶³

[John Newton] Ignorance of the nature and design of the law is at the bottom of most religious mistakes. This is the root of self-righteousness, the grand reason why the Gospel of Christ is no more regarded, and the cause of that uncertainty and inconsistency in many who, though they profess themselves teachers, understand not what they say nor whereof they affirm.⁶⁴

[Charles Bridges] We cannot indeed have too much of the Gospel; but we may have too little of the law....Indeed, all the prevalent errors in the Church may be traced to this source. We should never have heard of Methodist perfection—Mystic dependence upon the inward light [Quakerism]—Antinomian delusion—inconsistent profession of orthodoxy—Pharisaical self-righteousness—or Pelagian and Socinian rectitude of nature—if the spiritual standard of the law had been clearly displayed, and its convincing power truly felt.⁶⁵

[C. H. Spurgeon] There is no point upon which men make greater mistakes than upon the relation between the law and the Gospel. Some men put the law instead of the Gospel; others put the Gospel instead of the law; some modify both and preach neither; and others entirely abrogate the law, by bringing in the Gospel. Many think that the law is the Gospel, and who teach that men by good works may be saved. On the other hand, many teach that the Gospel is a law, by obedience to which men are meritoriously saved. A certain class maintain that the law and the Gospel are mixed, and that partly by the law, and partly by grace, men are saved....

...The object of God in sending the law was "that the offense might abound."...The law is not faulty, but sin uses it as an occasion of offense, and rebels when it ought to obey...The law increases the sinfulness of sin, by removing all excuse of ignorance....

As concerning the Human Heart. The law causes the offense to abound... By discovering sin to the soul. When once the Holy Ghost applies the law to the conscience, secret sins are dragged to light, little sins are magnified to their true size, and things apparently harmless become exceedingly sinful....The fountains of the deep are broken up, the chambers of imagery are opened, the innate evil of the very essence of fallen man is discovered....The law cuts into the core of the evil, it reveals the seat of malady, and informs us that the leprosy lies deep within....He who once thought that he could repent and

⁶² Bridges, *Op. cit.*, p. 234.

⁶³ *Ibid.*

⁶⁴ John Newton, *Works*, I, p. 340.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 228

believe at pleasure, finds in himself no power to do either the one or the other.”⁶⁶

Finally, from a Sonnet on the Law and the Gospel by Ralph Erskine (1685–1752):

The Law’s a tutor much in vogue,
To Gospel–grace a pedagogue;
The Gospel to the Law no less
Than its full end for righteousness.

When once the fiery Law of God
Has chas’d me to the Gospel–road;
Then back unto the holy Law
Most kindly Gospel–grace will draw.

When by the Law to grace I’m school’d;
Grace by the Law will have me rul’d;
Hence, if I do not the Law obey,
I cannot keep the Gospel–way.

When I the Gospel–news believe,
Obedience to the Law I give;
And that both in its fed’ral dress,
And as a rule of holiness.

What in the Gospel–mint is coined,
The same is in the Law injoin’d:
Whatever Gospel–tidings teach,
The Law’s authority doth reach.

The Law most perfect still remains,
And every duty full contains:
The Gospel its perfection speaks,
And therefore gives whate’er it seeks.

Law–threats and precepts both, I see,
With Gospel–promises agree;
They to the Gospel are a fence,
and it to them a maintenance.

A rigid master was the Law,

⁶⁶ C. H. Spurgeon, “Law and Grace,” *The New Park Street Pulpit*, Vol. I, pp. 285–290.

Demanding brick, denying straw;
 But when the Gospel–tongue it sings,
 It bids me fly, and gives me wings.

—Ralph Erskine⁶⁷

J. THE EXPLICIT AND IMPLICIT PREACHING OF THE LAW

Unless one notes both the explicit and implicit use of the Law, he might well misunderstand the place of the Law in the evangelistic ministry of our Lord and the inspired Apostles.

1. *The explicit use of the Law is quite evident* in the preaching of our Lord, as noted in the cases of the “rich, young ruler” (Matt. 19:16–26; Mk. 10:17–27; Lk. 18:18–27), and the “lawyer” (Lk. 10:25–37).

This explicit use of the Law also seems to be evident in the ministry of Stephen and the subsequent conversion of the Apostle Paul (Acts 6:8–15; 7:58–60; Acts 9:1–8; Rom. 7:7–13; Phil. 3:1–9).

2. *There are far more examples of the implicit use of the Law* in both the preaching of our Lord and that of the Apostles.

- In our Lord’s ministry examples can be taken from his interview with the Samaritan woman at the well (Jn. 4:1–29)⁶⁸ and the woman taken in adultery (Jn. 8:1–11).⁶⁹
- Note must be taken of the inspired preaching of Peter (Acts 2:23–24; 3:13–15; 4:10; 5:26–33), Stephen (Acts 7:51–54) and Paul (Acts 13:26–30), charging the Jews with the murder of the Son of God—a clear breaking of the Sixth Commandment.

⁶⁷ Extracted from Ralph Erskine, “The Believer’s Principles concerning the Law and the Gospel” (A sonnet containing 386 verses), *Section III*, “The Harmony betwixt the Law and the Gospel.”

⁶⁸ Our Lord brought the woman up to a spiritual level in their conversation, then through his questioning concerning her husband, brought about a conviction of sin (the seventh commandment—she was living in adultery). The conversation then turned intensely to spiritual matters and culminated in her conversion.

⁶⁹ What is missing in this episode is the man who had allegedly been with her, as she was taken in the very act of sexual sin. The Law stated that both were guilty of death. When our Lord mentioned sin [applied the Law], the Scribes and Pharisees are greatly convicted and turned and left—probably because one or all of them had been guilty of this very sin, and perhaps, at least one of them, with this very woman.

- The implicit preaching of the Law is also evident in the Apostle Paul's defense before the Areopagus in Athens (Acts 17:22–31)⁷⁰ and in his discourse with Felix and Drusilla (Acts 24:24–25).⁷¹

K. LEGALISM AND ANTINOMIANISM.

Legalism and Antinomianism are the two extremes with reference to the Moral Law.

1. *Legalism* is the attempt at self-justification before God through self-righteous works with no need of Divine grace.⁷² Cf. the testimony of the Apostle Paul as to his supposed legal perfection:

Phil. 3:6. (v. 4–6). Concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless [κατὰ δικαιοσύνην τὴν ἐν νόμῳ γενόμενος ἄμemptος].⁷³

2. *What is Antinomianism?* [ἀντί + νόμος = “against the law”]. Satan in the guise of the serpent was the first antinomian! Mark the following:

Gen. 2:16–17. ¹⁶ and the LORD God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: ¹⁷ But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die [מֹות תָּמוּת inf. absol.].

Gen. 3:4. and the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die: (Satan casts his word directly against the law of God). [לֹא-מֹות תָּמוּת], strong neg + inf. absol.].

3. There have been several types of antinomianism in Christian history:

⁷⁰ Paul's mention of “righteousness” implies the moral character of God in the context of final judgment. It must be understood that the court of the Areopagus met to hear and judge new or different religious and philosophical views, and that Paul was making a formal defense before them. This sermon was doubtless a summary of many days' preaching in the marketplace. His preaching there evidently had much more content (Acts 17:16–21).

⁷¹ The wicked Felix (Drusilla, his young wife, was a Jewess, and so knowledgeable of the Law) was brought under conviction when Paul “reasoned of righteousness, temperance [sexual continence] and judgment to come.” This implies the preaching and application of the Law as expressing the moral self-consistency of God.

⁷² There are only two types of righteousness for man: self-righteousness by the works of the Law and the imputed righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ by faith.

⁷³ γενόμενος ἄμemptος, the aor. ptc. of γίνομαι. Paul actually thought in his self-righteousness that he had achieved a blameless state under the law!

- *The Dualistic Antinomianism* of early Gnosticism,⁷⁴ which divided the physical life from the spiritual, so that sin was not taken into account. The first idea of a “Carnal Christian” heresy!
- *Classic and Historical Antinomianism*. This dates from the Reformation Era. Its basis is an undue emphasis upon eternal justification, and teaches that because God views us as justified from eternity, one’s sins in time and experience are never considered.
- *Christocentric Antinomianism* A more modern teaching that since the believer is in union with Christ who kept the Law for him, God sees no sin in him or will deal with him concerning any sin. A determining statement: “It is not the *sin* question, but the *Son* question!”
- *Dispensational Antinomianism*. By its very nature, Dispensationalism is inherently antinomian. Until the nineteenth and early twentieth century, no one thought or taught that the Moral Law of God had been abrogated or was only a legal document given to national Israel alone—that national Israel was “under the law” and we, as NT believers, are now “under grace.” *This is the popular teaching of Fundamentalism and much of Evangelical Christianity*. Both Dispensational antinomianism and “New Covenant Theology”⁷⁵ hold that the Moral Law was given to national Israel as a legal document and has absolutely no claim upon either the sinner or the NT Believer.⁷⁶

The subject of the Law of God is considered irrelevant by most within Fundamental and Evangelical Christianity. It is presupposed upon the principles of a Dispensational, antinomian hermeneutic (which, among other things, unduly separates the New Testament from the Old) that “Israel was under the Law, but believers today are under

⁷⁴ This dichotomy or dualism was certainly characteristic of Docetic [δοκέω, to seem] Gnosticism.

⁷⁵ New Covenant Theology seeks to assume a middle position between Covenant Theology and Dispensational Theology.

⁷⁶ Taught by both Dispensationalism and New Covenant Theology. See Alan Cairns, *Dictionary of Theological Terms*, pp. 31–33, 135–137, 303–306. New Covenant Theology holds that the 3-fold distinctions within the Law are non-entities and the law remained one, thus all have been abrogated.

grace.” A Dispensational approach, which relegates the Law to a given “dispensation” in a past era of redemptive history, does not square with the Analogy of Faith,⁷⁷ especially with the mention and use of the Law in the New Testament Scriptures.

Dispensationalism and its attitude toward the Moral Law is epitomized in the following religious song:

This view—that believers are “under grace” and so “free” from the Law—is epitomized in the following hymn, “Once for All,” which unwittingly confuses the glory and grace of the New Covenant with antinomianism:

Free from the law, O happy condition,
Jesus has bled and there is remission;
Cursed by the law and bruised by the fall,
Grace hath redeemed us once for all.

The believer is *not* “free from the Law,” He is *dead* to the Law as a sentence of death and condemnation by virtue of his union with Christ. He is redeemed from the curse of the law through the redemptive work of the Lord Jesus.

NOTE: “Dispensation” derives from the Gk. οἰκονομία, the law or administration of a household, hence the Eng. “economy.” There are two great dispensations, the Old [dispensation, covenant, Testament] and the New [dispensation, covenant, Testament]. Modern Dispensation-alism, however, finds many “dispensations” in God’s redemptive dealings with men.

Dispensationalism is an inclusive, literalistic hermeneutical approach which views the Scriptures as divided into various well-defined time-periods, “economies,” “ages” or “dispensations.” In each dispensation God reveals a particular purpose to be accomplished to which men respond in either faith or unbelief. These dispensations or time-periods are seen as the successive stages of progressive revelation. Although the number of ages varies from five to many dispensations [ultra-Dispensationalism], the common seven dispensations are: “Innocency” [the era of unfallen Adam], “Conscience” and “Human Government” [from Adam’s fall to Noah], “Promise” [from Abraham to Moses], “Law” [from Moses to Christ], “Grace” [from Pentecost to the Rapture] and a literal “Millennium” [1,000 year reign of Christ on Earth].

⁷⁷ The “Analogy of Faith” refers to the principle that “Scripture interprets Scripture.” The use of the term presupposes that the Scriptures are the self-attesting, non-contradictory Word of God. It is synonymous with the whole or inclusive teaching of Scripture as it bears upon any one given point of Divine truth.

Dispensationalism fragments the Scriptures and destroys any reality to “the analogy of Faith,” i.e., “Scripture interprets Scripture.”

The essential element in the Dispensational hermeneutic is a rigid literalism that makes the Old Testament determinative in interpretation and seeks to make the New Testament conform to the Old as the standard of literalism. Non-Dispensational theology makes the New Testament determinative and explanatory of the Old.

Dispensationalism minimizes the redemptive work of the cross, holding that “the church” is a parenthesis between God’s dealings with Israel. Thus, we have the “dispensation of grace” between two legal dispensations which focus on Israel. The alleged future “Kingdom age” will prove much more effective than the “age of Grace” for a thousand years!

Dispensationalism relegates the “Dispensation of Law” to the period between the giving of the Law at Mt. Sinai to the Cross. According to such thinking this view, “New Testament Believers are not under the Law, but under grace,” i.e., the “Dispensation of Grace” extends from the Cross to the Second Advent of our Lord. According to Dispensational and New Covenant Theology, the Moral Law was simply a legal document given to national Israel with no relevance to the NT believer. “Grace” has now replaced “law.”

Dispensationalism teaches that Israel exchanged law for grace in Ex. 19:8 at Mt. Sinai. This “Dispensation of Law” allegedly lasted from Sinai to the Cross.

Ex. 19:8. and all the people answered together, and said, All that the LORD hath spoken we will do. and Moses returned the words of the people unto the LORD.

Ans: The people were simply and rightly owing allegiance to God and obedience to His covenant! Any other answer would have been open and utter rebellion against the Lord God and His Word! This covenant was reiterated in full detail in Deuteronomy to the second generation as a *Suzerain Treaty* between Almighty God and His subjects. Their obedience to the Law was demanded by God in the terms of this covenant and the Law was meant for their good! (Dt. 6:24; 10:13; 12:28).

Ex. 19:3–6. ³ and Moses went up unto God, and the LORD called unto him out of the mountain, saying, Thus shalt thou say to the house of Jacob, and tell the children of Israel; ⁴ Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and *how* I bare you on eagles’ wings, and brought you unto myself. ⁵ Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth *is* mine: ⁶ and ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation. These *are* the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel.

Dt. 5:27–29. ²⁷ Go thou near, and hear all that the LORD our God shall say: and speak thou unto us all that the LORD our God shall speak unto thee; and we will hear *it*, and do *it*. ²⁸ and the LORD heard the voice of your words, when ye spake unto me; and the LORD said unto me, I have heard the voice of the words of this people, which they have spoken unto thee: they have well said all that they have spoken. ²⁹ O that there were such an heart in them, that they would fear me, and keep all my commandments always, that it might be well with them, and with their children for ever!

Dt. 6:17–18. ¹⁷ Ye shall diligently keep the commandments of the LORD your God, and his testimonies, and his statutes, which he hath commanded thee. ¹⁸ and thou shalt do *that which is* right and good in the sight of the LORD: that it may be well with thee, and that thou mayest go in and possess the good land which the LORD sware unto thy fathers...

Dt. 6:24. and the LORD commanded us to do all these statutes, to fear the LORD our God, for our good always, that he might preserve us alive, as *it is* at this day.

Dt. 10:12–13. ¹² and now, Israel, what doth the LORD thy God require of thee, but to fear the LORD thy God, to walk in all his ways, and to love him, and to serve the LORD thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul, ¹³ To keep the commandments of the LORD, and his statutes, which I command thee this day for thy good?

Dt. 12:28. Observe and hear all these words which I command thee, that it may go well with thee, and with thy children after thee for ever, when thou doest *that which is* good and right in the sight of the LORD thy God.

Dt. 30:15–16. ¹⁵ See, I have set before thee this day life and good, and death and evil; ¹⁶ In that I command thee this day to love the LORD thy God, to walk in his ways, and to keep his commandments and his statutes and his judgments, that thou mayest live and multiply: and the LORD thy God shall bless thee in the land whither thou goest to possess it.

Dt. 31:12–13. ¹² Gather the people together, men, and women, and children, and thy stranger that *is* within thy gates, that they may hear, and that they may learn, and fear the LORD your God, and observe to do all the words of this law: ¹³ and *that* their children, which have not known *any thing*, may hear, and learn to fear the LORD your God, as long as ye live in the land whither ye go over Jordan to possess it.

Obs: The Moral was for all people within the land, not just the Hebrews.

Dispensationalism is inherently antinomian, as it considers the Moral Law to have been abrogated by our Lord. It has also historically embraced the following doctrines and practices:

- (1) A denial of the Lordship of Jesus Christ [*contra* Acts 2:36].⁷⁸
- (2) A corresponding “easy-believeism,” which denies the necessity of repentance, etc.
- (3) The “Carnal Christian” heresy

[Lewis Sperry Chafer]...Those *believers* who are dominated by the flesh respond to the flesh and those that are dominated by the Spirit respond to the Spirit (Rom. 8:5). In any case the carnal or fleshly mind functions in the realm of spiritual death and the spiritual mind in the realm of

⁷⁸ Acts 2:36. ἀσφαλῶς οὖν γινωσκέτω πᾶς οἶκος Ἰσραὴλ ὅτι καὶ κύριον αὐτὸν καὶ χριστὸν ἐποίησεν ὁ θεός, τοῦτον τὸν Ἰησοῦν ὃν ὑμεῖς ἐσταυρώσατε.

spiritual life and peace (Rom. 8:6)...Too much emphasis can hardly be given to the fact that the *Christian* may function in his life either in the realm of spiritual death—separation from God—or the realm of things related to the Holy Spirit...The *Christian* is saved and safe in Christ, yet in his manner of life he may prove σαρκικός or πνευματικός.⁷⁹

- (4) Dispensationalism unscripturally separates positional sanctification from both definitive and practical or progressive sanctification, and thus makes sanctification in the life and experience optional, coinciding with it's "carnal Christian" teaching."

[Lewis Sperry Chafer]...every believer is now said to be sanctified positionally, holy, and by so much a saint before God. This position [union with Christ] bears no relationship to the believer's daily experience more than that it should inspire him to holy living....As positional sanctification is absolutely disassociated from the daily life, so experimental sanctification is absolutely unrelated to position in [union with] Christ.⁸⁰

The Scriptures, however, make the believer's union with Christ determinative of all valid Christian experience!

4. *The relation between Antinomianism and Legalism:* One inevitably leads to the other. Man, as the image-bearer of God, must have law. When man casts off God's Law, he inevitably constructs one of his own—a graceless, legalistic system of man-made "do's and don'ts."
5. *There is no "antinomian grace."* Grace brings the believer into a principle of conformity to the Law of God (Rom. 8:1–4; 1 Jn. 2:3–5). Although the Law itself does not possess the power to sanctify [the failure of the Old Covenant, Rom. 6:14; 8:3–4], it is our standard for sanctification as it expresses the moral self-consistency or perfect righteousness and holiness of God (Jer. 31:31–34; Ezk. 36:25–27; Rom. 8:3–4; Eph. 2:5, 8–10; Heb. 8:1–13). Cf. also 1 Pet. 15–16.

L. SOME QUESTIONS AND OBJECTIONS ANSWERED

1. WHAT IS THE ROOT-PROBLEM OF EVERY SOCIETY?

The root-problem of any given society is the individual human heart, steeped in sin, deceitful (Jer. 17:9), and set in rebellion against God and His Law (Rom. 8:9). Men hate any legislation against sin because they love sin and are its willing bondslaves (Rom. 6:17–18)! They want to reserve the "right" for themselves to be out-laws!

⁷⁹ Lewis Sperry Chafer, *Systematic Theology*, VII, p. 70

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 279–280.

2. THE GREAT OBJECTION: "YOU CANNOT LEGISLATE MORALITY!"

The question is incoherent and self-righteous. The answer is simple and two-fold: **(1)** We are *not* legislating morality. God has already done so in the coherency of the Decalogue. **(2)** This complaint does not stop man from legislating immorality.

Throughout the centuries, the Moral Law of God has never been equaled; indeed, it has formed the basis of the national laws and jurisprudence of Western Civilization!

3. YOU WOULD DEMAND THE DEATH PENALTY FOR A VARIETY OF SINS WHICH ARE ACCEPTABLE IN MODERN SOCIETY—EVEN BREAKING THE SABBATH!

Answer: This confuses the Civil Law given to national Israel with the Moral Law. Every violation demanded the death penalty. Sin is still sin!

Regarding the Sabbath; it was and is a creation ordinance. The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath. Properly considered, the Sabbath looks back to creation, then to the cross and forward to the state of glory.

4. WHAT OF THE MORAL LAW AND ITS RELATION TO THE STATE?

Prov. 14:34. Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin *is* a reproach to any people.

a. All equitable human law is but a reflection of Divine Law. The Moral Law of God has formed the basis of law and jurisprudence throughout Western Civilization. English Common Law found its basis in the Moral Law of God. All of the American colonies reflected the Moral Law in their original constitutions. Mark the following quotations:

- President John Adams in a letter to Thomas Jefferson (Nov. 4, 1816):

"The Ten Commandments and the Sermon on the Mount contain my religion."⁸¹

- Samuel Adams, in 1772, in a paper entitled "The Rights of the Colonists," wrote:

Just and true liberty, equal and impartial liberty in matters spiritual and temporal, is a thing that all men are clearly entitled to by the eternal and immutable laws of God and nature, as well as by the law

⁸¹ William J. Federer, *The Ten Commandments and Their Influence on American Law*, p. 18.

of nations, and all well-grounded municipal laws, which must have their foundations in the former.⁸²

- Daniel Webster, the great American statesman declared:

...If we and our posterity shall be true to the Christian religion, if we and they shall live always in the fear of God and shall respect His commandments,..we may have the highest hopes of the future fortunes of our country.

But if we and our posterity neglect religious instruction and authority; violate the rules of eternal justice, trifle with injunctions of morality, and recklessly destroy the political constitution which holds us together, no man can tell how sudden a catastrophe may overwhelm us and bury all our glory in profound obscurity.⁸³

- James Madison (1751–1836), the “Father of the Constitution,” and Fourth President of these United States, *is reputed to have said*:

We have staked the whole future of American civilization, not upon the power of government, far from it. We have staked the future of all our political institutions upon the capacity of each and all of us to govern ourselves, to control ourselves, to sustain ourselves according to the Ten Commandments of God.⁸⁴

- b. The United States Constitution: an example of humanistic law and pluralism. “We the People...” vs. “And God spake these words...”

It is vital to understand that the framers of our Constitution assumed or presupposed a “Christian basis” to provide a moral base and consensus upon which a Constitutional Republic could consistently function. It *cannot* consistently function in a secularized, pluralistic society!

- c. When fallen, sinful man rules by human consensus, he is no longer in a nation under “the rule of law” [singular], but of “laws” [plural], and these inevitably become contradictory and incoherent! and now we are a nation without moral boundaries!
- d. When human consensus rather than the Moral Law becomes norm, we inescapably have “the tyranny of the majority”...and now... “the tyranny of the minority”!

⁸² Ibid, p. 27.

⁸³ Ibid, p. 29.

⁸⁴ Quoted from the 1958 calendar of Spiritual Mobilization by Frederick Nymeyer, *Progressive Calvinism*. South Holland, Ill: Progressive Calvinism League, 1959, IV, p. 31; Federer, Ibid, 193, 280–281. This quotation does not occur in any of his known speeches or letters.

- e. We have a duty to reflect God's Law in our laws, making necessary distinctions between the Civil and Moral Laws.
- f. Our true hope for this society is a return to biblical morality—for converting grace and a time of revival or spiritual awakening which alone will transform the hearts of men!

IV

An Exposition of The Moral Law as Contained in the Decalogue

A. FIVE GENERAL OBSERVATIONS CONCERNING THE MORAL LAW.

1. FALLEN, SINFUL MAN NATURALLY REBELS AGAINST GOD'S AUTHORITY.

Fallen, sinful human beings seek to be their own “god,” and determine for themselves what is right or wrong. The objective Divine standard raises their hostility toward the triune, self-revealing God of Scripture.

Rom. 8:5–9. ⁵ For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit. ⁶ For to be carnally minded *is* death; but to be spiritually minded *is* life and peace. ⁷ Because the carnal mind *is* enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. ⁸ So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God. ⁹ But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.

2. ONE'S ATTITUDE TOWARD THE MORAL LAW IS AN EXPRESSION OF ONE'S WORLD-AND-LIFE VIEW.

Fallen, sinful human beings tend to be empirical or existential and relativistic in their approach to reality. Everything must be scientifically tested by observation or experience. This is anthropocentric [*homo mensura*].⁸⁵ So is the modern existential or subjective approach which denies any absolutes. Such leaves fallen, sinful man epistemologically bankrupt, i.e., without a sufficient basis for knowledge and truth claims. The biblical Christian has a world-and-life view which is grounded in a “revelational epistemology,” in Divine revelation which has been inscripturated.

3. FALLEN, SINFUL INDIVIDUALS ARE BY NATURE OUTLAWS BEFORE GOD'S MORAL LAW.

An outlaw is a person who chooses to be outside the law in certain areas of his life and activities, while wanting the law to protect him, his

⁸⁵ *Homo mensura*, “man the measure [of all things].”

family and his property. Sinners want God's blessing and protection while rebelling against His Moral Law in given areas.

4. THE DANGER OF WORSHIPPING THE GOD OF OUR OWN IMAGINATION.

Both unbelievers and believers must beware of creating their own "god" in their own imagination and thus side-stepping the Moral Law of God. There is a great tendency to twist the Commandments of God or lessen their force.

5. WE ARE ALL GUILTY BEFORE THE MORAL LAW OF GOD.

No one other than our Lord Jesus Christ has perfectly kept God's Moral Law. We are all guilty before God as law-breakers. Each of us has broken each and every one of the Ten Commandments! Sadly, and either knowingly or unknowingly, we often do so even as *Christians* who stand in need of confession, repentance and forgiveness!

NOTE: the following two examples: (1) The First Commandment, "Thou shalt have no other Gods before me" forbids anything coming before God in our lives—any object, person, idea or concept. Whatever takes over the priority of our thoughts, our finances, our desires, or determines our priorities and morality is our "god"—vehicles, sex, power, education, travel, relatives [husbands, wives, children], money, careers, unsanctified day dreams, etc. (2) The Sixth Commandment, "Thou shalt not Kill," as case law, not only forbids outright murder but all that leads up to the overt act—anger, malice, gossip and hatred.

B.THE BIBLICAL, HISTORICAL AND THEOLOGICAL CONTEXT OF THE GIVING OF THE DECALOGUE

Exodus 19:1–20. In the third month, when the children of Israel were gone forth out of the land of Egypt, the same day came they *into* the wilderness of Sinai. ² For they were departed from Rephidim, and were come *to* the desert of Sinai, and had pitched in the wilderness; and there Israel camped before the mount. ³ and Moses went up unto God, and the LORD called unto him out of the mountain, saying, Thus shalt thou say to the house of Jacob, and tell the children of Israel; ⁴ Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and *how* I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto myself. ⁵ Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth *is* mine: ⁶ and ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation. These *are* the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel. ⁷ and Moses came and called for the elders of the people, and laid before their faces all these words which the LORD commanded him. ⁸ and all the people answered together, and said, All that the LORD hath spoken we will do.

Obs: The 10 Commandments were given in the context of the covenant relationship the LORD God had to His people through power and deliverance.

And Moses returned the words of the people unto the LORD. ⁹ and the LORD said unto Moses, Lo, I come unto thee in a thick cloud, that the people may

hear when I speak with thee, and believe thee for ever. and Moses told the words of the people unto the LORD. ¹⁰ and the LORD said unto Moses, Go unto the people, and sanctify them to day and to morrow, and let them wash their clothes, ¹¹ and be ready against the third day: for the third day the LORD will come down in the sight of all the people upon mount Sinai. ¹² and thou shalt set bounds unto the people round about, saying, Take heed to yourselves, *that ye go not* up into the mount, or touch the border of it: whosoever toucheth the mount shall be surely put to death: ¹³ There shall not an hand touch it, but he shall surely be stoned, or shot through; whether *it be* beast or man, it shall not live: when the trumpet soundeth long, they shall come up to the mount.

¹⁴ and Moses went down from the mount unto the people, and sanctified the people; and they washed their clothes. ¹⁵ and he said unto the people, Be ready against the third day: come not at *your* wives. ¹⁶ and it came to pass on the third day in the morning, that there were thunders and lightnings, and a thick cloud upon the mount, and the voice of the trumpet exceeding loud; so that all the people that *was* in the camp trembled.

¹⁷ and Moses brought forth the people out of the camp to meet with God; and they stood at the nether part of the mount. ¹⁸ and mount Sinai was altogether on a smoke, because the LORD descended upon it in fire: and the smoke thereof ascended as the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mount quaked greatly. ¹⁹ and when the voice of the trumpet sounded long, and waxed louder and louder, Moses spake, and God answered him by a voice. ²⁰ and the LORD came down upon mount Sinai, on the top of the mount: and the LORD called Moses *up* to the top of the mount; and Moses went up.

Obs: The people had to prepare themselves to receive the Word of God. The LORD God revealed Himself in awesome majesty and glory with earthquakes and fire! This would be the one and only time that they, as a people, would hear the very voice of God speaking to them!

Deut. 5:2–6. ² The LORD our God made a covenant with us in Horeb. ³ The LORD made not this covenant with our fathers, but with us, *even* us, who *are* all of us here alive this day. ⁴ The LORD talked with you face to face in the mount out of the midst of the fire, ⁵ (I stood between the LORD and you at that time, to shew you the word of the LORD: for ye were afraid by reason of the fire, and went not up into the mount;) saying, ⁶ I *am* the LORD thy God, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage.

C. THE PROLOGUE TO THE DECALOGUE

1. THE GRAMMAR OF THE VARIOUS TEXTS.

- a. Ex. 19:8. “And all the people answered together, and said, All that the LORD hath spoken we will do. and Moses returned the words of the people unto the LORD.”

כָּל אֲשֶׁר-דִּבֶּר יְהוָה נַעֲשֶׂה, the emph. is upon the phrase before the vb. [LXX: πάντα ὅσα εἶπεν ὁ θεός ποιήσομεν καὶ ἀκουσόμεθα].

NOTE: the added καὶ ἀκουσόμεθα, a stronger confirmation, Cf. v.5, which reads: “If indeed hearing you will hear my voice...” בְּקוֹלִי אִם-שָׁמוּעַ תִּשְׁמָעוּ [Pi'el inf. absol with Qal. perf.] LXX echoes with

[ἐὰν ἀκοῇ ἀκούσῃς τῆς ἐμῆς φωνῆς]. The people understood this as their covenant obligation before God!

- b. Ex. 20:1–3. “And God spake all these words, saying, ² I *am* the LORD thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. ³ Thou shalt have no other gods before me.”

וַיְדַבֵּר אֱלֹהִים אֶת כָּל-הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה לֵאמֹר: God Himself spoke distinctly from Mt. Sinai the very words of this law. V. 2 יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ, [LXX: ἐγὼ εἰμι κύριος ὁ θεός σου]. “Yahweh, the self-existent, Covenant-keeping Lord thy Mighty One!” The Name “LORD,” or Yahweh, “Jehovah” [יְהוָה] derives from the imperf.vb. הָיָה, “to be,” i.e., the Self-existent, immutable LORD.⁸⁶

This mighty power was demonstrated in their deliverance from the house of slaves and through the Red Sea—and now in the awesome demonstration at Mt. Sinai.

The LORD reveals Himself personally and emphatically as Israel’s God. The singular is emphasized in אֱלֹהֶיךָ and ὁ θεός σου. He is a personal God who necessarily has a personal relationship to each of His spiritual children.

The singular throughout must be noted. The LORD God addresses Himself to each and every individual person.

He follows with His revelation of power, deliverance, goodness, authority and ownership: הוֹצֵאתִיךָ מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם מִבֵּית עֲבָדִים: אשר לִפְנֵי אֱלֹהִים אֲחֵרִים עַל-פָּנַי: “Out of the house of slaves.” Imperf with לא, a perpetual prohibition. No other gods before my face! LXX: οὐκ ἔσονται σοι θεοὶ ἕτεροι πλὴν ἐμοῦ. Emph. pers. pron.

With this Divine, emphatic, intensely personal revelation comes regulation. The Lord God as our Deliverer has the sole claim of our worship!

⁸⁶ אֱלֹהֶיךָ, Qere, or what is read for יְהוָה, Kethib, what is written. The name “Jehovah” is a combination of the Consonants for יְהוָה with the vowel-pointings for אֱלֹהֶיךָ. Cf. Ex. 3:14, אֱלֹהִים אֲשֶׁר אֱלֹהִים, imperf.

- c. Dt. 5:2–3. “² The LORD our God made a covenant with us in Horeb. ³ The LORD made not this covenant with our fathers, but with us, *even us*, who *are* all of us here alive this day. ⁴ The LORD talked with you face to face in the mount out of the midst of the fire...”

The Moral Law is binding upon each succeeding generation of men.
 פְּנִים | בְּפָנִים דִּבֶּר יְהוָה. “Face-to-face” emph. pos. [LXX:
 πρόσωπον κατὰ πρόσωπον ἐλάλησεν κύριος πρὸς ὑμᾶς. This is
 figurative speech for the most intimate personal exchange possible.

2. OBSERVATIONS ON THE PROLOGUE AND DECALOGUE AS A WHOLE.

- a. This was the only time that the nation as a whole heard the voice of the LORD God. They heard it distinctly in the context of the Lord’s awesome power, glory and authority.
- b. Each Commandment presupposes the Prologue before it, emphasizing the power, authority, goodness and grace of the LORD God.
- c. Although the Mountain quaked and fire and the voice of a trumpet caused the people to tremble in fear, the context of the giving of the Law was one of grace and mercy.

Dt. 6:1–3. Now these *are* the commandments, the statutes, and the judgments, which the LORD your God commanded to teach you, that ye might do *them* in the land whither ye go to possess it: ² That thou mightest fear the LORD thy God, to keep all his statutes and his commandments, which I command thee, thou, and thy son, and thy son’s son, all the days of thy life; and that thy days may be prolonged. ³ Hear therefore, O Israel, and observe to do *it*; that it may be well with thee, and that ye may increase mightily, as the LORD God of thy fathers hath promised thee, in the land that floweth with milk and honey.

- d. The revelation of the LORD God as “I am the LORD thy God” reveals His sole right and claim to their worship. He had executed judgment upon the gods of the Egyptians. Every other “god” was and is false.

Each plague was directed against one of the Egyptian gods: Blood against *Nilus*, the sacred river god (Ex. 7:12). Frogs against *Hekt*, goddess of reproduction (Ex. 8:6). Lice [gnats] against *Seb*, god of the earth (Ex. 8:17). Flies [beetles] against *Khephera*, the sacred scarab beetle (Ex. 8:24). Murrain [plague] against *Apis* and *Hathor*, sacred bull and cow (Ex. 9:3). Boils against *Typhon*, the evil-eye god (Ex. 9:10). Hail, against *Shu*, god of the atmosphere (Ex. 9:23). Locusts, against *Serapis*, protector from locusts (Ex. 10:14). Darkness, against *Ra* the

sun god (Ex. 10:22). Death of the first-born against *Ptuh*, the god of life (Ex. 11:5).⁸⁷

- e. The revelation of the LORD God as Deliverer from slavery implies that He owned Israel by virtue of his delivering power and authority! They belonged to Him. Such a revelation and declaration were not arbitrary. He had heard their groanings and answered their prayers!
- f. The LORD God delivered them from “the house of slaves” so they were free to serve Him. The Moral Law was given in the context of grace, mercy and freedom, not legalism and restriction! The absence of the Law is not freedom, but lawlessness!
- g. The largely negative form of the Decalogue must never overshadow its positive revelation of Divine love and grace and our reciprocal love to God and to our neighbor.
- h. The Moral Law was not given as a set of restrictions or as a burden, but for the good of God’s people!

Dt. 6:22–25. ²² and the LORD shewed signs and wonders, great and sore, upon Egypt, upon Pharaoh, and upon all his household, before our eyes: ²³ and he brought us out from thence, that he might bring us in, to give us the land which he swore unto our fathers. ²⁴ and the LORD commanded us to do all these statutes, to fear the LORD our God, for our good always, that he might preserve us alive, as *it is* at this day. ²⁵ and it shall be our righteousness, if we observe to do all these commandments before the LORD our God, as he hath commanded us.

Dt. 10:12–15. ¹² and now, Israel, what doth the LORD thy God require of thee, but to fear the LORD thy God, to walk in all his ways, and to love him, and to serve the LORD thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul, ¹³ To keep the commandments of the LORD, and his statutes, which I command thee this day for thy good? ¹⁴ Behold, the heaven and the heaven of heavens *is* the LORD’S thy God, the earth *also*, with all that therein *is*. ¹⁵ Only the LORD had a delight in thy fathers to love them, and he chose their seed after them, *even* you above all people, as *it is* this day.

Dt. 12:28. Observe and hear all these words which I command thee, that it may go well with thee, and with thy children after thee for ever, when thou doest *that which is* good and right in the sight of the LORD thy God.

Dt. 30:8–9. ⁸ and thou shalt return and obey the voice of the LORD, and do all his commandments which I command thee this day. ⁹ and the LORD thy God will make thee plenteous in every work of thine hand, in the fruit of thy body, and in the fruit of thy cattle, and in the fruit of thy

⁸⁷ Adapted from Giesler, *A Popular Survey of the Old Testament*, p. 56.

land, for good: for the LORD will again rejoice over thee for good, as he rejoiced over thy fathers:

- i. God's people had been freed from "the house of slaves" to worship and serve Jehovah! This alone is true freedom!

Obs: Consider the two Great Mountains: Sinai and Calvary. God has spoken from both. The Moral Law was given at Sinai; Calvary answers its claims. God the Father and God the Son are not in conflict or divided in their purpose. NT believers are delivered from the house of slaves—the reigning power and condemnation of sin—that we might serve the Lord in the freedom of grace.

- j. All other ancient codes and laws, although seemingly advanced for their time, have faded into oblivion, e.g., the *Code of Hammurabi* [c. 18th century BC]; the Moral Law of God—The Decalogue—continues in full force in its nature, relevance and perpetuity. It does so because it is the transcript of God's moral self-consistency—His immutable righteous and holy character!
- k. Consider the "Mountains" of Scripture and Divine revelation: Mt. Sinai and the burning bush (Gen. 3), Mt. Sinai and the giving of the Moral Law (Ex. 20; Dt. 5), Mt. Gerizim and Ebal and the reiteration of the Covenant (Josh. 8), Mt. Carmel (1 Kgs. 18), Mt. of Transfiguration (Matt. 17) and Mt. Calvary (Lk. 23). Each Mountain witnessed a revelation of God and his truth!

V

The First Commandment

Quest. : What is the First Commandment?

Ans: The First Commandment is, "I am the LORD thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. Thou shalt have no other gods before me."

Quest.: What is the significance of the First Commandment?

Ans: The First Commandment requires man to know and worship God, and to acknowledge him to be the only true God in every sphere of life.

A. ANALYSIS AND EXPOSITION

There are three realities in this First Commandment: (1) A Revelation, (2) a Declaration and (3) a Prohibition.

The First Commandment forms an introduction to the remainder of the Decalogue through the self-revelation of God. It is based on Who God is and what He has done.

- 1) *A Revelation* of the Lord God: “I am the LORD thy God...” God reveals himself as *Yahweh* (יהוה), his proper name—the self-existent, immutable, covenant-keeping God. “Thy” is singular, emphasizing the individual relationship that necessarily exists between a personal God and any individual. It also implies that every man has a “god”. “God” is *Elohim* (אלהים), the basic name for God as almighty [omnipotent].

We are creatures, and are driven to God by our needs. The LORD God is Self-existent and Self-sufficient, and reveals himself in power and truth.

- 2) *A Declaration* of deliverance with power: God delivered his people from Egypt by power and blood redemption. They belonged to him completely. The Moral Law was given to a delivered and redeemed people for their life of freedom under Law. Paganism surrounded men with religious and superstitious barriers; Divine Law means true freedom!
- 3) *A Prohibition* against any and all false “gods.” Regulation or legislation always accompanies Divine Revelation! Note—they had left their polytheism in Egypt and were headed toward a polytheistic Canaan!

לֹא יִהְיֶה לְךָ אֱלֹהִים אֲחֵרִים עַל-פְּנֵי: strong. Neg [לא] with imperf., a perpetual prohibition. The rest of the prohibitive commandments use the strong negative לא with the imperfect, meaning “absolutely not, not ever!”

NOTE: Negative commands or prohibitions occur in the imperfect and jussive, not the imperative. The imperfect with the negative particle לא expresses an absolute [categorical] and permanent prohibition with the second person, as in the Decalogue. By contrast, the imperfect second person with the negative particle אל expresses an immediate and specific prohibition without reference to its duration.

The words “...I am the LORD thy God...” [אֲנִכִּי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ] implies that man has an instinct for God—he must inherently worship someone or something. This Commandment implies that the very nature of man as God’s image-bearer prompts him to worship. God is absolute, and exercises his sovereign, totalitarian right over his people by forbidding the acknowledgment of any other “god.”⁸⁸ The singular reveals that the

⁸⁸ The Heb. reads “before my face” (עַל-פְּנֵי), the LXX reads “There shall not be to you another god besides me” (οὐκ ἔσονται σοι θεοὶ ἕτεροι πλην ἐμοῦ). Both imply that no other deity is to be acknowledged.

Lord God is a personal God and that He addresses Himself to every individual!

עַל־פָּנַי, “Before my face.” In the context of the omnipotence, omnipresence and omniscience of the LORD God, there is absolutely no place for another “god.” The LORD God asserts his absolute place in the lives, minds and hearts of his people.

B. THE LORD GOD IS THE ALL–ENCOMPASSING, LIVING REALITY.

1. This First Commandment is the foundation for all true religion. Everything derives from the nature and character of the LORD God and his commands.

This First Commandment is further a call to faith in the invisible God Who is known by His acts and His Word.

2. The LORD God is the one true and living God.

Dt. 5:26. For who *is there* of all flesh, that hath heard the voice of the living God [אֱלֹהִים חַיִּים], LXX: θεοῦ ζῶντος] speaking out of the midst of the fire, as we *have*, and lived?

Josh. 3:10. and Joshua said, Hereby ye shall know that the living God [אֱלֹהִים חַיִּים]. LXX: θεὸς ζῶν] *is* among you, and *that* he will without fail drive out from before you the Canaanites...

Jer. 10:10. But the LORD *is* the true God [יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים אֱמֶת], he *is* the living God [הוּא־אֱלֹהִים חַיִּים], and an everlasting king:...⁸⁹

Acts 14:15. ...Sirs, why do ye these things? We also are men of like passions with you, and preach unto you that ye should turn from these vanities [τούτων τῶν ματαίων]⁹⁰ unto the living God [τὸν θεὸν τὸν ζῶντα], which made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all things that are therein:

Heb. 10:31 *It is* a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God [θεοῦ ζῶντος].

All other “gods” are fictitious. They are the products of the imaginations of fallen, sinful men who deify the elements of nature and demonic powers.

Rom. 1:22–25.²² Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools,²³ and changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things.

⁸⁹ Jer. 10:10. Note the masc. sing indep. pron. הוּא.

⁹⁰ τούτων τῶν ματαίων, idols are considered as useless, vanities.

²⁴ Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves: Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen [οἱ τινες μετήλλαξαν τὴν ἀλήθειαν τοῦ θεοῦ ἐν τῷ ψεύδει καὶ ἐσεβάσθησαν καὶ ἐλάτρευσαν τῇ κτίσει παρὰ τὸν κτίσαντα, ὅς ἐστιν εὐλογητὸς εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας, ἀμήν]

Dt. 32:17. They sacrificed unto devils, not to God; to gods whom they knew not, to new *gods that* came newly up, whom your fathers feared not.

1 Cor. 10:20. But I say, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils, and not to God:

Rom. 6:10–12. ¹⁰ Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. ¹¹ Put on the whole armour of God [τὴν πανοπλίαν τοῦ θεοῦ], that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil [τὰς μεθοδείας τοῦ διαβόλου]. ¹² For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world [πρὸς τοὺς κοσμοκράτορας τοῦ σκότους τούτου], against spiritual wickedness in high *places*.

3. The worship of the image as a means to power. Most pagan idols were rather crude representations of men or beasts. What was the significance of the idol or image? As a religious object or representation, it was the vehicle for contact with the given “god.” The golden calf or bull god was meant to be a representation of the Lord!

C. GOD IS ABSOLUTE: NO DIVISION BETWEEN SACRED AND SECULAR.

God is absolute, and thus his rights over man and his Law–Word are absolute. Because God is absolute, and every fact is created and defined by God, the whole realm of created reality and humanity is sacred, i.e., it cannot be divided into “secular” and “sacred”. Everything without exception exists by and for God, and is to glorify him.

Rev. 4:11. Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are [ἦσαν] and were created.

1 Cor. 10:31. Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.

He is to be absolutely sovereign over every sphere of life and activity. Thus, the acknowledgement of, and submission and obedience to God in every sphere of life is the very essence of worship.

The LORD God has exclusive rights over his own. This is true in both the Old Testament and the New. The New Testament and Gospel Covenant emphasize the sovereign crown rights of the Lordship of Jesus Christ.

D. MAN AS THE IMAGE-BEARER OF GOD AND WORSHIP.

As the image-bearer of God, man needs no command to worship; rather, he needs direction for his worship. Man was created with an instinct for God, and this instinct remains, though perverted by the Fall. Every nation, tribe, and culture has its religion and its worship. This First Commandment presupposes that man will worship someone or thing.

E. WHAT IS PROHIBITED IN THE FIRST COMMANDMENT.

This Commandment prohibits everything that would deviate from the knowledge, fear and worship of the one true God.

- *The First Commandment prohibits any deviation from or perversion of the self-revelation of the Lord God of Scripture.* It condemns every false view of God:

1. The First Commandment prohibits *atheism*. There are self-professed atheists that seek to deny their God-given instinct for God (Psa. 14:1; Rom. 1:28–32; 2:14–16). This Commandment condemns such as willful sin.
2. The First Commandment prohibits a *false theism*. There are many, who, though not self-professing atheists, yet practically live as if there were no God, i.e., thoughts of God and the Law-Word of God have no determining effect upon their lives. This is also condemned as willful sin.

Psa. 14:1 The fool hath said in his heart, *There is no God*. They are corrupt, they have done abominable works, *there is none that doeth good*. [אֵין אֱלֹהִים נָבֵל בְּלִבּוֹ אֵין אֱלֹהִים].⁹¹

1 Sam. 16:6–7. ⁶ and it came to pass, when they were come, that he looked on Eliab, and said, Surely the LORD'S anointed *is* before him. ⁷ But the LORD said unto Samuel, Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; because I have refused him: for *the LORD seeth* not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart.

3. The First Commandment prohibits *polytheism*. Polytheism, the belief in many “gods,” is a perversion of the truth of the only one true God.

1 Cor. 8:4–6. ⁴ As concerning therefore the eating of those things that are offered in sacrifice unto idols, we know that an idol *is* nothing in the world, and that *there is* none other God but one. ⁵ For though there be that are called gods, whether in heaven or in earth, (as there be gods

⁹¹ Psa. 14:1, אֵין. “nothing, naught,” i.e., “God is nothing.”

many, and lords many,) ⁶ But to us *there is but* one God, the Father, of whom *are* all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom *are* all things, and we by him.

Polytheism was a necessity for fallen, sinful mankind which could not bring all the Divine attributes and characteristics into One Being. It enables men to avoid the issue of absolute Divine sovereignty; consistent Christian theism necessarily posits an absolutely sovereign God.

4. The First Commandment prohibits *religious pluralism*. Postmodern philosophy is characterized by such ideas as the deconstruction and reconstruction of language, existentialism, relativism and religious pluralism. Religious pluralism holds that all religions are equal and contribute to religious truth. Christianity is but one religion among many, and there are allegedly many roads which lead to God—Christianity, Islam, Judaism, Hinduism, mysticism, “New Age” religions, etc.

E.g., the meditation room at U.N. headquarters in NY. The stone in the middle of this room: “We may see it as an altar, empty not because there is no god, but because it is dedicated to the god whom man worships under many names and in many forms.”⁹²

5. The First Commandment prohibits *dualism*. Some hold to equally good and evil principles or personages vying for control of the universe and its destiny. Jehovah has revealed himself as the sovereign Lord in absolute power. The great burden of Isaiah and Jeremiah was that the LORD God was the only true God and all other gods were vanity. Cf. Isa. 6:1–3; 10:5–15; 41:4; 42:8; 43:3, 11–15; 44:6–8, 24–28; 45:5–7, 18–22; 46:3–4, 9–11; 48:5–7, 12; 49:26; 51:12–16; 60:16; 66:1–2. (See also: Ex. 20:1–2; Psalms 115:3; Daniel 4:35).
6. The First Commandment prohibits *henotheism*. Monotheism is the concept of one God. The Scriptures teach monotheism. Henotheism is the idea that although a given people might have their “one god” (a tribal or national deity) other gods did or do exist in as real a

⁹² Quoted by Leslie B. Flynn, *Now a Word from our Creator*, p. 33.

sense. The wording of this commandment cannot and must not be interpreted in this way.⁹³

7. The First Commandment prohibits *pantheism*. Pantheism holds that God is identical with the universe, i.e., a denial of the Creator–creature relation that the Scriptures carefully maintain (Gen. 1:1–3; Jn. 1:1–3; Rom. 1:25; Heb. 1:6–12).
8. The First Commandment prohibits *panentheism*. Panentheism (a mixture of theism and pantheism) holds that God is the universe and yet more than the universe, a complex being who is himself in the process of change.⁹⁴
9. The First Commandment prohibits *religious ignorance*. The witness of God to himself in creation renders man utterly inexcusable and calls for Divine wrath (Rom. 1:18–20). The witness of God in his inscripturated self–revelation is completely sufficient for faith, life and worship (Jn. 1:18; 2 Tim. 2:15; 3:16–17; Heb. 1:1–3). We know the LORD God through the revelation of His attributes. Theology and worship are inherently related!
10. The First Commandment prohibits *any form of religious neutrality*. To seek to be religiously neutral toward the self–revealing, triune God of Scripture is itself exceedingly sinful. The absolute or totalitarian claims of God upon every human being cannot be ignored (Dt. 6:4–5; Rom. 3:23).
11. The First Commandment prohibits *religious negligence*. Religious negligence, indifference, and indolence are all equally condemned as sinful violations against the supreme love and obedience every person owes to God (Dt. 6:4–5; Matt. 22:37).

NOTE: The thought of Dt. 6:5 in the term “might” is “with all the combined energies of your being!” The Heb. reads **וּבְכָל־מְאֹדְךָ**. The LXX reads ἐξ ὅλης τῆς δυνάμεώς σου. The whole person, body and soul, is to be harnessed into the fervent worship of God!

⁹³ “Henotheism,” fr. ἓν, one and θεός, “God.” Radical [unbelieving] biblical critics have sought to explain the God of Israel in terms of the evolution of a tribal deity that eventually became the God of Christianity.

⁹⁴ This is the basis of modern “Process Theology” [“Open Theism”], which maintains that God is in transition and thus the future remains undefined and unknown, even to God.

12. The First Commandment prohibits *all insincere worship and profaneness*. The very essence of the Moral Law commands a consummate love for God and neighbor.
13. The First Commandment prohibits *religious hypocrisy*. True religion begins in the heart or mind and cannot be false in outward deportment without being exceedingly sinful as living a lie (Psa. 139:1–4; Jn. 8:44; Rom. 1:24–25).
14. The First Commandment prohibits *inter-faith worship, prayer or fellowship*. Ecumenism and Pluralism seek not only to join together all the various sects of Christendom, but also to embrace other religions. This is simply modern polytheism.⁹⁵
15. The First Commandment prohibits *any and all forms of idolatry*. Not all idols are material, or made of wood, stone or precious metals. Idolatry begins in the heart with making or putting anything before God. The “god” of one’s imagination may be lust (immorality, pornography, homosexuality or other various sexual perversions), beauty (1 Tim. 2:9–10), strength, health, physical development, athletic ability, mental powers, education, social or political ambition or position, etc. Material “gods” may include food and drink, health foods (Phil. 3:19; 1 Tim. 4:1–6), clothing, jewelry, cosmetics (1 Tim. 2:9–10; 1 Pet. 3:3–5), wealth, possessions such as automobiles, boats, homes, property, etc. (Eph. 5:5; Col. 3:5). Activities may become “gods”—employment, careers, hobbies, sports, social interests, social, educational, political or even religious organizations, radical environmentalism (Rom. 1:25), entertainment, etc. There are also idols of flesh and blood—one’s self or one’s own life and safety, one’s family, friends or associates (Lk. 14:25–27).

NOTE: An idol is anyone or anything material or immaterial, physical, mental, emotional, religious, or even spiritual, that takes preeminence in the thought-life or outward life and necessitates the time, energy or service that properly belongs to God (1 Jn. 5:21).

⁹⁵ This also condemns the modern approach to study Christianity in the context of “Comparative Religions”. As revealed religion, Christianity stands unique. Seeking to find common elements or sources with other religions necessarily undermines the Christian faith and Divine inspiration.

Indeed, an idol is anyone or thing which becomes an end in itself! Every human being without exception is to some extent an idolater!

F. DUTIES ENJOINED IN THE FIRST COMMANDMENT.

Although this commandment is framed in the negative, it enjoins positive duties:

1. God must have absolute priority in the thoughts, actions and worship of every man in every sphere of life and activity. That is his sovereign right as Creator and Ruler of this universe (Rom. 11:36; 1 Cor. 10:31).
2. Man must know God. As God is infinite and man is finite, he can only know God as he has been pleased to reveal himself in both nature and Scripture (Rom. 1:18–25; 2 Tim. 3:16–17).
3. Man must have a filial fear of God. To know God properly through his self-revelation is to fear him. To fear him leads man to worship him (Ex. 20:20; Dt. 6:2; 13:4; Psa. 86:11; Eccl. 12:13–14). The Israelites were taught to fear God as he judged the “gods” of Egypt in the plagues and delivered them by a mighty hand (Ex. 3:19–20; 6:6; 9:13–14; 11:9; 12:12; Rom. 9:17). Believers are taught to fear God by reading his Word, realizing his power, his hatred of sin, his absolute holiness and righteousness, and experiencing his chastening hand (Heb. 12:3–12).
4. The one true God must be the sole and true object of man’s worship. This necessarily demands heart-worship and not mere outward religion, as true worship begins in the heart and mind (Dt. 4:29; 10:16; 6:4–5; Psa. 19:8, 14; 37:13; Matt. 22:37; Rom. 2:28–29).
5. To scripturally worship God, fallen, sinful man must approach him through the Lord Jesus Christ as Mediator, Redeemer, Savior, Surety and Great High Priest. The truth of the Gospel is an essential part of God’s Law–Word (Jn. 14:6; Acts 4:12; 1 Tim. 2:5).
6. Worship implies service. True worship cannot remain theoretical, abstract or detached from the remainder of the life, but must be expressed in the totality of the life (Ex. 20:5; Dt. 11:13; Matt. 4:8–10; Rom. 12:1–2).

G. FINAL OBSERVATIONS.

1. This First Commandment finds its ultimate fulfillment in the worship of and obedience to the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Scriptures reveal the triune Godhead: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Not three gods, but One God in three Persons. This is revealed in Scripture in four statements:

- God the Father is God (Matt. 11:25).
- God the Son is God (Isa. 9:6; Jn. 1:1–3, 14, 18; Col. 2:9)
- God the Spirit is God (Gen. 1:1–2; Acts 5:3–4; 2 Cor. 3:17).
- There is only One God (Dt. 6:4; Isa. 44:6–8; 1 Cor. 8:4–6).

Mark the Q & A of our Catechism:

Quest.: Who are the Divine Persons involved in the Covenant of Grace, and what is their respective work?

Ans: The Divine Persons involved in the Covenant of Grace are the Father, who elects, predestinates, effectually calls, justifies and adopts the elect; the Son, who is their Mediator, Representative, Surety, Redeemer and Great High Priest; and the Holy Spirit, who applies to the elect the redemption purchased by Christ.

2. King Solomon, like many, fell to the triad of money, power and sex! Although exceedingly wise in many ways, he became a sexual addict and through this became an idolater!

1 Kings 11:1–8. But king Solomon loved many strange women, together with the daughter of Pharaoh, women of the Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Zidonians, and Hittites; ² Of the nations *concerning* which the LORD said unto the children of Israel, Ye shall not go in to them, neither shall they come in unto you: *for* surely they will turn away your heart after their gods: Solomon clave unto these in love. ³ and he had seven hundred wives, princesses, and three hundred concubines: and his wives turned away his heart. ⁴ For it came to pass, when Solomon was old, *that* his wives turned away his heart after other gods: and his heart was not perfect with the LORD his God, as *was* the heart of David his father. ⁵ For Solomon went after Ashtoreth the goddess of the Zidonians, and after Milcom the abomination of the Ammonites. ⁶ and Solomon did evil in the sight of the LORD, and went not fully after the LORD, as *did* David his father. ⁷ Then did Solomon build an high place for Chemosh, the abomination of Moab, in the hill that *is* before Jerusalem, and for Molech, the abomination of the children of Ammon. ⁸ and likewise did he for all his strange wives, which burnt incense and sacrificed unto their gods.

Neh. 13:23–26. ²³ In those days also saw I Jews *that* had married wives of Ashdod, of Ammon, and of Moab: ²⁴ and their children spake half in the speech of Ashdod, and could not speak in the Jews' language, but according to the language of each people. ²⁵ and I contended with them, and cursed them, and smote certain of them, and plucked off their hair, and made them swear by God, *saying*, Ye shall not give your daughters unto their sons, nor take their daughters unto your sons, or for yourselves. ²⁶ Did not Solomon king of Israel sin by these things? yet among many nations was there no

king like him, who was beloved of his God, and God made him king over all Israel: nevertheless even him did outlandish women cause to sin.

Even the godliest of persons may be turned aside to idolatry through sexual weakness, addiction or even opportunity—or through some other means which cause us to put something or someone before God.

3. Wrong views of God necessarily result in wrong, i.e., sinful behavior. E.g., consider that the nature of the God determines the nature of His or its worship! E.g., Ba'al and immorality, and Moloch and child sacrifice by fire.
4. The LORD God will brook no rivals. He is rightly jealous and demands our whole-hearted worship and devotion!

VI

The Second Commandment

Quest.: What is the Second Commandment?

Ans: The Second Commandment is, “Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of *any thing* that *is* in heaven above, or that *is* in the earth beneath, or that *is* in the water under the earth: thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God *am* a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth *generation* of them that hate me; and shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments.” (Ex. 20:4–6)

Quest.: What is the significance of the Second Commandment?

Ans: The Second Commandment requires that man receives, observes and keeps pure and entire all such religious worship and ordinances as God has appointed in his Word.

A. ANALYSIS AND EXPOSITION.

This Second Commandment may be summarized in four parts: A Prohibition, a Revelation, a Retribution and an Expectation.

1. A *Prohibition* against making any object or representation with the intention of using it in idolatrous worship. [לֹא תַעֲשֶׂה-לְךָ פֶסֶל]. An absolute and perpetual command. The Commandment is addressed to each Israelite in the singular “thou” [תַּעֲשֶׂה, 2 pers. masc. sing.] emphasizing individual responsibility, binding upon every single human being.

The prohibition does not refer to all representations or reproductions, as the entire prohibition is concerned only with objects of worship. There was finely wrought and intricate artwork in the Tabernacle and later Temple. But there were no representations of Deity or objects of worship! Cf. the brazen serpent (Numb. 21:1–9). But when it became an object of worship, it was destroyed by Hezekiah (2 Kgs. 18:4).

We “see” the LORD God with the “eye” of faith, thus He is not limited or distorted by any visible representation.

Man’s great desire to see God is fulfilled in the Lord Jesus Christ who is God manifest in the flesh.

2. A *Revelation* of the character of Jehovah God i.e., the self-existent, immutable, covenant-keeping God as a jealous God. Heb. Reads: **כִּי אֲנֹכִי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ אֵל קָנָא**. The force of this Commandment derives from the preceding Commandment, the totalitarian claims of God upon his people, and his covenant-relationship to them. It is re-enforced with a revelation of Divine zeal and jealousy or vengeance.

NOTE: In modern, Western society, names may mean very little, but God revealed himself in another era, in other languages, and to a culture in which names carried great significance. It is in this very important context that the names of God must be understood. Mark the biblical significance of a name: (1) A name was not only for personal identification, but also for personal revelation (Ex. 3:13–15; 6:3; 34:14; 1 Sam. 25:25). (2) A name might be associated with a promise or oath because of its great significance (Gen. 17:1; 31:13; 32:9; Ex. 3:6; Lk. 1:13, 59–65). (3) A name may be used synonymously for the person himself (Gen. 12:8; Gen. 26:25; Ex. 20:7). (4) A name was used synonymously with one’s reputation or significance (Gen. 12:2; Ruth 4:11). (5) A name was taken from the nature or character of a person or animal, by reputation, observation or anticipation (Gen. 17:9; 25:22–26; Ruth 1:20–21; 2 Pet. 2:22). (6) A name was often associated with a great event, historical incident, or could be associated with a Divine promise or analogy (Gen. 16:3; 17:5, 9, 15; 32:28; 35:9–10, 18 Hos. 1:1–2:23; Lk. 1:13, 59–65).

“a Jealous God” (**אֵל קָנָא**, *qanna’*, noun, formed from the Pi’el inf., and so intensive). The connotation is that of righteous zeal. The term “jealous,” i.e., the idea of a “wounded love” is inadequate. This zeal is not focused against the idol, but on the unfaithful worshipper. God is a God Who will certainly avenge Himself on those who prove unfaithful to his covenant!⁹⁶

⁹⁶ Cf. BDB, p. 888; *TWOT*, II, p. 802; W. A. van Gemeren, *Dict. OT Theology. & Exegesis.*, III, pp. 937–940.

2. A *Retribution* against sinners [idolaters] and their posterity to the fourth generation. Hatred toward God is manifested as unfaithfulness or disobedience, love as faithfulness or obedience (1 Jn. 2:3–5). With regard to God, neutrality is impossible.

We never sin only unto ourselves or by ourselves. Our sin necessarily affects the lives of others. The sins of the parents are often visited upon subsequent generations. Without entering into a lengthy theodicy, family influence, diseases, the evil influence of ill-gotten gains or relationships tend to taint the following generations. Such can only be stopped through Divine grace!

As God is the source of all things, his jealousy or vengeance is perfectly justified, and without taint. Idolatry, or covenant-violation throughout the Scriptures is equated with spiritual adultery or fornication against Jehovah as Israel's "husband" in their covenant-relationship. The figure is carried into the New Testament with believers (Lev. 20:1–8; Jer. 23:10–22; Ezk. 16:1–63⁹⁷; Hos. 1:1; 2:8, 13; Jas. 4:4–5). The penalty for adultery was death, so, too, spiritual adultery receives the severest penalty!

NOTE: Idolatry brings Divine moral judgment. Idolatry is destructive of society, as a perverted concept of God removes the one true basis for any absolute, law, morality, ethics and order, and results in increased moral depravity and lawlessness—the fragmentation and disintegration of society spiritually, religiously, morally, ethically, socially and politically. When man becomes the source of truth and law, society exists in a fragmented and arbitrary state under Divine judgment (Psa. 9:17; Rom. 1:18, 24–32). A corrupt people produces a corrupt state.

4. An *Expectation* of extended Divine mercy for those who are obedient. The promised mercy of God outreaches his judgment upon idolatry. The term "thousands" refers either to people or to generations. Cf. Dt. 7:9, where it refers to a thousand generations in the same context.

[Lev. 26:1–13. The blessings and freedom Israel was to experience by keeping themselves free of idols.]

⁹⁷ God does not euphemize his truth. His Word is very graphic—even blunt—when describing the awful wickedness of idolatry. Cf. v. 17, where Idolatry is described under the figure of female sexual self-stimulation. Taking silver or gold, and making "Images of men" (זָכָר צִלָּם, the semblance of a male. The LXX: εἰκόνας ἀρσενικὰς, likeness of a male) The term in this context refers to a phallic symbol. "...and didst commit whoredom with them" refers to masturbation.

Dt. 7:8–11. ⁸ But because the LORD loved you, and because he would keep the oath which he had sworn unto your fathers, hath the LORD brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you out of the house of bondmen, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt. ⁹ Know therefore that the LORD thy God, he *is* God, the faithful God, which keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love him and keep his commandments to a thousand generations; ¹⁰ and repayeth them that hate him to their face, to destroy them: he will not be slack to him that hateth him, he will repay him to his face. ¹¹ Thou shalt therefore keep the commandments, and the statutes, and the judgments, which I command thee this day, to do them.

“A thousand [generations]” is synonymous with “forever.” Cf. the Scriptures, where the Lord God is faithful to his covenant because of David.

2 Kgs. 11:11–13. ¹¹ Wherefore the LORD said unto Solomon, Forasmuch as this is done of thee, and thou hast not kept my covenant and my statutes, which I have commanded thee, I will surely rend the kingdom from thee, and will give it to thy servant. ¹² Notwithstanding in thy days I will not do it for David thy father's sake: *but* I will rend it out of the hand of thy son. ¹³ Howbeit I will not rend away all the kingdom; *but* will give one tribe to thy son for David my servant's sake, and for Jerusalem's sake which I have chosen.

Every King of Judah was compared either favorably or unfavorably with David. Every King of Israel was compared with “Jeroboam the son of Nebat who caused Israel to sin.”

B. THE FIRST AND SECOND COMMANDMENTS

Man as the image-bearer of God possesses a religious instinct, and so needs no command to worship; he rather needs direction for his worship because of his sinful, fallen nature.

The First Commandment reveals the Object of our worship; the Second, the mode of our worship. In the First, God reveals himself as the one true God; in the Second, he reveals his nature and how he is to be worshipped. The First points us to the one true God; the Second points us to the one true religion. The First opposes all false gods; the Second opposes all self-willed worship. The Second Commandment reveals how the First Commandment is to be kept.

C. ROMANISM AND LUTHERANISM

1. Both Romanism and Lutheranism merge this Second Commandment with the First, then divide the last Commandment into two to preserve

the total number.⁹⁸ This was done in both cases to avoid the issue of using images and pictures in worship.

2. To explain away the force of the Commandment against image-worship, Rome attempts a two-fold defense:

- First, an artificial distinction between “worship” (λατρεία) and “adoration” (ὑπερδουλεία), “veneration” (προσκυνήσις) and “honor” (δουλεία) to representations of Christ, Mary and the saints. God alone, Rome alleges, is worshipped, but representations of Christ, Mary, the saints and martyrs are adored, or venerated and honored—but bowing, kneeling, genuflecting and prayers to the ones adored necessarily become worship.
- Second, Romanism, followed by Lutheranism, calls images or pictures “books for the laity,” or aids to worship. These are all prohibited by the Second Commandment.

3. What is iconoclasm? [Gk: εἰκονοκλαστής, “image-breaker”]. It is the destruction of religious objects of worship. History reveals that some groups, termed iconoclasts destroyed the images of the Romish church. Is there biblical precedent?

Dt. 7:25. The graven images of their gods shall ye burn with fire: thou shalt not desire the silver or gold *that is* on them, nor take *it* unto thee, lest thou be snared therein: for *it is* an abomination to the LORD thy God.

The Church Fathers were divided on the use of images, but the Romish Church prevailed in image-worship. The Muslims were iconoclastic, as were the followers of Carlstadt and the forces of Oliver Cromwell.

D. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE PROHIBITION

Why does this prohibition against image-worship exist? There are three reasons, and each must be given serious consideration:

1. *The spiritual nature of God.* God is spirit, and so must be worshipped in spirit and in truth (Jn. 4:24⁹⁹). Idolatry destroys true spiritual worship

⁹⁸ The Romish division, compensating for omitting the Second Commandment, separates coveting one’s neighbor’s wife from coveting property. The division as given in Luther’s *Small Catechism* separates the neighbor’s house from coveting his wife and other property.

⁹⁹ πνεῦμα ὁ θεός, καὶ τοὺς προσκυνοῦντας αὐτὸν ἐν πνεύματι καὶ ἀληθείᾳ δεῖ προσκυνεῖν. The statement πνεῦμα [emph. pos., anarth.] ὁ θεός is a const. emph. that God is spirit.

and the possibility of progress in faith and comprehension. It tends toward the static—the outwardly sensual, ritual and formal—as the mind becomes limited to the image or visible representation.¹⁰⁰ God as spirit is incorporeal [without bodily parts],¹⁰¹ and is described as the invisible God, dwelling in unapproachable light, whom man has never and can never literally see (Dt. 4:15–19; Jn. 1:18; 5:37; 1 Tim. 6:15–16).¹⁰²

No intelligent being wants a caricature of himself, twisted and distorted. Any image or idol of God is nothing more than a caricature, or perversion—a finite, sensual misrepresentation of his infinity, immensity, majesty, holiness, glory and faithfulness (Rom. 1:23).

NOTE: God graciously accomodates every legitimate need of man. He has abundantly provided all that man legitimately needs for his life, enjoyment, physical and mental satisfaction. He created man as a sexual being and ordained marriage as the legitimate expression of man's sexual nature. The need for man to see God has been fulfilled in the incarnation of the eternal Son of God, God manifested in the flesh through the assumption of a true and full, viable human soul, body and nature (Isa. 7:14; 9:6; Matt. 1:23; Jn. 1–3, 14, 18; 10:30; 14:6–10; Col. 1:15–17; 2:9; 1 Tim. 3:16; Heb. 1:1–12). Men saw his human nature, not his Divine nature, although that nature showed through the human at the transfiguration (Matt. 17:1–2; Mk. 9:2–3; Lk. 9:28–29, 32; 2 Pet. 1:16–18). We apprehend this truth by faith.

¹⁰⁰ Cf. Rom. 1:23, 25. By idolatry, man seeks to bring God down to his level. However, this only occurs in his imagination and not in reality. It is the characteristic of fallen man that he has exchanged the truth of God for “the lie” (οἱ τινες μετήλλαξαν τὴν ἀλήθειαν τοῦ θεοῦ ἐν τῷ ψεύδει) and worships and serves creation by willfully side-stepping (ἐλάτρευσαν τῇ κτίσει παρὰ τὸν κτίσαντα) the Creator!

¹⁰¹ References to God's hands, feet, wings, eyes, etc., are anthropomorphisms [human expressions] to help finite man understand the various characteristics of an infinite, incorporeal God.

¹⁰² The anthropomorphic manifestations of God in the Old Testament: the representation of God before the elders of Israel (Ex. 24:1, 9–11), the “Angel of the Lord” (Gen. 16:7ff; 22:11; Ex. 3:2; Josh. 5:13–15; Judg. 6:11–23; 13:3–23), the human likenesses seen by the prophets (Ezk. 1:25–28), or by others (Dan. 3:23–28), etc., are termed “Theophanies” (θεός, “God,” and φανερός, manifest) and were pre-incarnate manifestations of the eternal Son of God, the Lord Jesus Christ. These were not incarnations, but simply anthropomorphic manifestations. The post-ascension appearances of the glorified Lord Jesus Christ are termed “Christophanies” (Acts 9:1–6, 17, 27; 1 Cor. 15:8; Rev. 1:10–18).

2. *The deity and the idol.* An image or idol was not the “god” itself, but merely a symbol or representation of the given “deity,” whether of a false “god” or of the one true God. Each visible symbol or image was meant to portray a given characteristic or attribute (Acts 14:11).¹⁰³ The golden calf [bull god] made and engraved by Aaron (Ex. 32:1–8), the image made by Micah (Judg. 17:1–11), and the calves [bull gods] made by Jeroboam (1 Kgs. 12:26–31), were meant to be—not pagan idols—but representations of Jehovah in his might or power!

NOTE: This is why Aaron represented the golden calf as “These *be* thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt.” The same was true of Jeroboam. Micah made the image, then took a Levite as his priest and thought that Jehovah would then bless him!

3. *The LORD God is both immanent and transcendent.* As immanent, He fills all space in the fullness of His Divine attributes. This term is more intensive than mere omnipresence. As transcendent, He is above, beyond and separate from His creation. Idolatry seeks to grasp the immanence of God, but falls into pantheism. It seeks to localize God in the idol and attribute Divine attributes to creation (Rom. 1:23–25). Those who would emphasize the transcendence of God fall into Deism and thus, an “unknowable god.”
4. *The worship of the image as a means to power.* What was the significance of the idol or image? As a religious object or representation, it was the vehicle for contact with the given “god,” an avenue through which to gain its power through manipulation (sorcery,¹⁰⁴ incantation, sacrifice, etc.).

This is why Aaron made the golden calf (Ex. 32:1–8), and why the Israelites brought the Ark of God into their camp to gain victory over the Philistines (1 Sam. 4:1–8). But God was not represented by the calf, nor necessarily limited to the Ark, and Israel was judged because of one and defeated because of the other—the failure of a fetish and of an idolatrous mentality. The same is true with the brazen serpent made by

¹⁰³ The statement was that “the gods have *come down* to us,” implying that the gods were actually in the heavens, and were only represented by images or men.

¹⁰⁴ Magic is the manipulation of supernatural forces through natural means, hence the alleged need for physical elements such as idols, images, fetishes, potions, etc. These are considered as avenues to power, prophecy or protection.

Moses on Divine command (Numb. 21:6–9). When it became an object of religious worship centuries later, it was destroyed by King Hezekiah (2 Kgs. 18:4).

The use of the Urim and Thummim, an immediate means of discerning God's will (Ex. 28:30; Numb. 27:21; 1 Sam. 30:7–8), did not always produce an answer—God was not limited to a pouch in a priest's vestment—he could not be conjured by means of physical manipulation at the self-will of man (1 Sam. 28:5ff).

NOTE: When King Saul could not conjure Jehovah to get an answer, he went to a spirit-medium to seek counsel. This demonstrates the image or idolater mentality in its search for power through manipulation. Many modern, professing Christians attempt the same type of manipulation through "prayer," neither recognizing God for who he is nor submitting to his sovereign will and purpose. Bereft of a scriptural knowledge of God, these are deluded into thinking that answers to prayer may be obtained through [God may be manipulated by] perseverance, emotions and self-sacrifice—the exact process used by the prophets of Baal in 1 Kgs. 18:20–29!

To limit Jehovah to any religious object or image is a blasphemous caricature, a departure from Divine revelation and prohibition, and the substitution of a pagan mentality for biblical faith and obedience.

E. SELF-WILL AND WORSHIP

1. God determines how, when and with what he is to be worshipped. There is no place for human self-will in Divine worship (Col. 2:23).
2. This was the sin of Cain. He was determined that God should accept him and his "offering" on his terms, not in the manner which God had revealed (Gen. 4:1–12; 1 Jn. 3:11–12).
3. God is gracious in his demands, and will not accept the embellishments or additions of human innovation (Ex. 20:25–26), a pragmatic approach (1 Sam. 15:17–24), or worship that he has not commanded (Lev. 10:1–3).
4. Man must worship something or someone. He is incurably religious. As the image-bearer of God, he possesses an instinct for God. He is thus, in his fallen, sinful state, prone to idolatry.
5. Those whose worship is not biblical and honoring to God are classified as hating Him.

F. THE IRRATIONALITY, INSANITY AND CRIMINALITY OF IDOLATRY.

Isa. 44:9–20. (1) The man wears himself out making an idol of metal and wood, and spares no expense for its completion (v. 9–14). (2) Part of the wood he uses to keep himself warm and to cook his food (v. 15–16). (3) From the left over wood, he makes a “god” (v. 17). (4) The Lord declares that such people do not consider the utter irrationality and insanity of such idolatry (v. 18–20):

Isa. 44:19–20. ¹⁹ and none considereth in his heart, neither *is there* knowledge nor understanding to say, I have burned part of it in the fire; yea, also I have baked bread upon the coals thereof; I have roasted flesh, and eaten *it*: and shall I make the residue thereof an abomination? shall I fall down to the stock of a tree? ²⁰ He feedeth on ashes: a deceived heart hath turned him aside, that he cannot deliver his soul, nor say, *Is there* not a lie in my right hand?

Thus, idolatry is only irrational and insane; it is criminal.

G. MENTAL IDOLATRY

Not all idolatry is physical or material. There is an unscriptural mental idolatry that limits one’s concept of God. Mental idolatry distorts the truth of God in one’s thinking in such realities as his nature, character (Ex. 5: 2; Psa. 50:21–22; Isa. 29:15; 36:2–20), moral self-consistency (Psa. 73:9–11; Zeph. 1:12) or power (Gen. 20:9–11; 1 Kgs. 20:23, 28–29; 2 Kgs. 5:1ff¹⁰⁵). Thus, one—even without a material idol—yet worships the “god” of his own imagination or gives himself to someone or thing which assumes priority in his life. Thus, The Apostle John ends his first Epistle with the words, “Little children, keep yourselves from idols. Amen” (1 Jn. 5:21).

H. THE PRIMACY AND CENTRALITY OF THE WORD OF GOD.

The LORD God was very emphatic about Israel not seeing a form or shape, but only hearing His voice! God has primarily revealed Himself through his creation [natural revelation] and His Word [Special Revelation].

Dt. 4:12–16. ¹² and the LORD spake unto you out of the midst of the fire: ye heard the voice of the words, but saw no similitude; only ye *heard* a voice. ¹³ and he declared unto you his covenant, which he commanded you to perform, *even* ten commandments; and he wrote them upon two tables of stone....⁵ Take ye therefore good heed unto yourselves; for ye saw no manner of similitude on the day *that* the LORD spake unto you in Horeb out of the midst of the fire: ¹⁶ Lest ye corrupt *yourselves*, and make you a graven image, the similitude of any figure...

¹⁰⁵ Although God was peculiar to Israel, and Syria was its enemy, God was also sovereign over Syria and its victories over Israel.

Dt. 4:33–36. ³³ Did ever people hear the voice of God speaking out of the midst of the fire, as thou hast heard, and live? ³⁴ Or hath God assayed to go and take him a nation from the midst of *another* nation, by temptations, by signs, and by wonders, and by war, and by a mighty hand, and by a stretched out arm, and by great terrors, according to all that the LORD your God did for you in Egypt before your eyes? ³⁵ Unto thee it was shewed, that thou mightest know that the LORD he *is* God; *there is* none else beside him. ³⁶ Out of heaven he made thee to hear his voice, that he might instruct thee: and upon earth he shewed thee his great fire; and thou heardest his words out of the midst of the fire.

The Word of God, now inscripturated, is the primary means by which God has revealed himself to us. Thus, the preaching and teaching of the Word remains the primary and central emphasis of Christianity!

Psa. 138:2. ...thou hast magnified thy word [אִמְרֶיךָ] above all thy name.¹⁰⁶

I. WHAT DUTIES ARE ENJOINED IN THE SECOND COMMANDMENT?

The following duties are enjoined by this Second Commandment—God is to be worshipped in complete, unswerving obedience to his revealed will and specific commands and not in any other way or by any other means (Dt. 12:32):

1. It is the primary duty of every professing Christian to diligently search the Scriptures to see that every aspect of both faith and life are in strict obedience to the Word and revealed will of God.¹⁰⁷
2. The true worship of God is simply the worship that he himself commands—without any additions (Lev. 10:1–3) or deletions (Matt. 28:20). This is known as “the regulative principle”—worship is to be scriptural, and that which is unscriptural (contrary to the explicit or implicit teaching of Scripture, innovative, pragmatic or merely traditional) must be avoided.
3. The true worship of God is spiritual, and so necessarily includes the proper preparation and the right attitude of heart and mind (Jn. 4:24).

¹⁰⁶ אִמְרֶיךָ, “word, utterance.” LXX: τὸ λόγιόν σου.

¹⁰⁷ How very many simply presume that what they believe and practice are scriptural! How very few today even consider that what they believe and practice might not be scriptural—and how few there are who search the Scriptures to align themselves to the Word of God in any area of their faith or practice! Religious tradition, self-deception and an ignorant disregard for the authority of Scripture characterize the worldly, self-seeking, pleasure-oriented professing Christians of our existential and irrational age and society!

The mere outward mechanics of religion are not sufficient (Isa. 29:13–14; Matt. 15:2–9).

4. The true worship of God is necessarily in the context of his truth. True worship cannot occur in the realm or context of error or heresy (Jn. 4:24; 17:17; 2 Tim. 4:3–4).
5. The true worship of God in the New Testament or Gospel economy necessarily includes all that God has ordained for the individual believer (Heb. 12:14; 1 Pet. 1:15–16) and the church—faithfulness to the worship of God through the local church (Heb. 10:25), prayer (Eph. 6:18; 1 Thess. 5:17), the reading of the Scriptures (2 Tim. 2:15; 3:15), doctrinal instruction (2 Tim. 3:16; Titus 1:9–11), public preaching (Rom. 10:14–15; Eph. 4:11–16; 2 Tim. 4:2–4), the observance of the ordinances (Matt. 28:18–20; Mk. 16:15–16; 1 Cor. 11:18–34), the giving of tithes and offerings (Mal. 3:8–10; 1 Cor. 9:6–14; 2 Cor. 9:5–7; Gal. 6:6–9), and godly, biblical discipline (1 Cor. 5:1–4, 11–13; 11:18–20, 30–32).

J. PROHIBITIONS: EXPLICIT AND IMPLICIT IN THE SECOND COMMANDMENT.

The Second Commandment explicitly and implicitly prohibits any deviation from the ordained worship of God, including the following examples:

1. The making or using of any representations of Deity—Father, Son or Holy Spirit. Crucifixes are certainly idolatrous.¹⁰⁸ Even so-called “symbols,” such as the shepherd, lamb or dove are highly questionable, as they are symbolic representations of Deity.
2. Any worship, veneration, or adoration of any such religious article or place (Jer. 7:1–15) is expressly forbidden. Art and sculpture, and even religious art in themselves are not prohibited, as God himself commanded such, e.g., the cherubim on the Ark of the Covenant (Ex. 25:16–22), the figures in the fabric of the Tabernacle (Ex. 26:1ff), the pomegranates and bells on the priest’s garments (Ex. 28:31–35), the lions, oxen, palm trees and cherubim for the Temple of the Lord (1 Kgs. 7:24–25, 36), etc.

¹⁰⁸ A crucifix is unscriptural for two reasons: first, because it is a caricature of Christ, and second, because it keeps him upon the cross, denying his finished work as evidenced in the resurrection.

3. Any human additions or embellishments upon the simplicity of Divine worship is strictly forbidden.

Ex. 20:22–26. ²² and the LORD said unto Moses, Thus thou shalt say unto the children of Israel, Ye have seen that I have talked with you from heaven. ²³ Ye shall not make with me gods of silver, neither shall ye make unto you gods of gold. ²⁴ An altar of earth thou shalt make unto me, and shalt sacrifice thereon thy burnt offerings, and thy peace offerings, thy sheep, and thine oxen: in all places where I record my name I will come unto thee, and I will bless thee. ²⁵ and if thou wilt make me an altar of stone, thou shalt not build it of hewn stone: for if thou lift up thy tool upon it, thou hast polluted it. ²⁶ Neither shalt thou go up by steps unto mine altar, that thy nakedness be not discovered thereon.

Such embellishments have traditionally taken over much of modern worship. Does our liturgy or music determine our worship?

4. All and every false doctrine is forbidden. E.g., The denial of the Trinity, subordinationism (i.e., that the Lord Jesus Christ is ontologically subordinate or inferior to God the Father), the denial of the absolute sovereignty of God, the teaching of free-will (the power of contrary choice), conditional predestination and election, the apostasy of true believers, etc. False doctrine is not merely a difference in theological opinion, but is error or heresy which derives from a perversion of God and his truth.
5. All false religious practices are forbidden. E.g., a sacramentarian approach to the ordinances which give them saving virtue, the use of evangelistic methods such as the “invitational system,” and “altar call,” which God has neither ordained nor sanctioned, but are in reality opposed to the very nature of the free and sovereign grace of God and also counter to biblical evangelism.¹⁰⁹
6. The substitution of another organization for the church as the God-ordained institution for this Gospel economy, i.e., any para-church organization that supplants the local church and its ministry, including “Christian” day schools and colleges.

¹⁰⁹ The invitational system is based upon the supposed ability of the sinner to comply with God’s commands. This is a denial of the biblical teaching on free and sovereign grace and also a substitution of psychological manipulation for the effectual work of the Holy Spirit.

7. The addition of such organizations within the church that God has not commanded, such as “Sunday schools”¹¹⁰ or special services geared to separate families, e.g., “Children’s Church,” in which uncalled and unqualified persons are often put into a teaching position in the context of the local church, and so set aside the God–ordained–and–called teaching leadership.

NOTE: “Children’s Church” is not truly a “church,” where families are together in corporate worship and the parents’ authority and discipline are recognized. Children need to observe their own parents in corporate worship as their God–ordained examples, and they also need the discipline and exposure to the evangelistic and didactic preaching and teaching of the congregational service. “Children’s Church” is destructive of solemn, serious worship, of true corporate worship, of parental discipline and oversight, of consistent Gospel preaching, and of biblical growth in grace and knowledge.

Such practices negate the Scriptures, the reality of a Divine call to minister or teach the Word (Eph. 4:11–16; 1 Tim. 3:1–7), and are ultimately detrimental to the spiritual life and confessional soundness of the church. Alleged talents or gifts that stand opposed to the clear teaching of Scripture simply do not exist in a truly spiritual context.

8. Pragmatic or entertainment types of worship, which are manifestly man–centered and patterned after the world, not after Scripture.

In the second Commandment God takes away every possible form of image, whether visual or audible, to remove all proud, skillful, man–centered, technique–driven worship. All man–made models and figures must go, and then the shutters of heaven will roll aside so that we may

¹¹⁰ Our objection is not against Bible classes *per se*, but against the unscriptural way in which these are conducted. [These ought to be called “Bible Classes.” “Sunday schools” were originally secular, not religious. The name, however, has become traditionally accepted]. Some argue that Sunday schools *are* the church—and are left with a nebulous view of an undisciplined “church” largely comprised of many unconverted children. Others argue that the Sunday school is *not* part of the church (in order to exonerate the place of women teachers and circumvent the regulative principle). Then it must be asked how such a pragmatic approach can be taken to the work of God and how such a man–made addition be promulgated by God’s church. Bible classes and Bible studies are, of course, a legitimate part of the church’s teaching ministry—if they conform in principle and practice to the Scriptures.

perceive by faith the glory and greatness of our Heavenly Father and of our Savior.¹¹¹

9. The relatively recent innovative placing of women as teachers or leaders in the context of the church (1 Cor. 14:34–35; 1 Tim. 2:7–15).

NOTE: The issue of women teaching or leading in worship can only be allegedly dismissed in three ways:

(1) Our Lord gave a great place to women in his personal ministry. True, but they were always in a submissive, supportive role and never in a place of leadership, never were recognized among his official Twelve Disciples or Apostles, and were never ordained to any ministry,

(2) that such commandments were temporary or dealt with local situations—a denial of other Scriptures (e.g., 1 Cor. 11:1–16, which places the headship of the man on a prior creation and headship basis; 1 Tim. 3; Titus 1, which follow the consistent doctrine that only men are to be in church leadership). If these commands were only temporary and local, then what other issues in the Scripture might be likewise set aside as temporary or local on the same principle?

(3) that men and women are equal before God in Christ, and so no distinctions should be made for women in leadership in the church (e.g., Gal. 3:28). If this argument were valid, then the Scripture is self-contradictory and God himself is irrational—as one passage can successfully refute another!

The historic issue of women in church leadership derived from the Women's Rights Movement, which began in the sixteenth century (inherited from Renaissance and Enlightenment rationalism), from later Wesleyan Arminianism, the irrationalism of modern Pelagianism under Charles G. Finney, and the nineteenth-century Abolitionist movement to free the slaves. Women looked upon themselves as slaves in a male-dominated society and began to revolt. This anti-scriptural, humanistic movement found its way into the churches and is today largely unquestioned.

Humanistic philosophy, traditional religion, and the ascendancy of psychology and sociology over theology, can neither change the truth nor exonerate error. What, indeed, could feminism add to the virtuous woman of Proverbs 31:10–31? Is she not completely fulfilled?

8. The practice of choirs¹¹² or special music in the worship service in which women are leading the congregation in public worship. If it is

¹¹¹ Peter Masters, *God's Rules for Holiness: Unlocking the Ten Commandments*, p. 38.

¹¹² Church choirs are inherited from Romish tradition, which in turn, derives from the Old Testament Levitical singers, not New Testament Gospel Christianity. Congregational singing, as an aspect of true corporate worship, is closer to the spirit and practice of the New Testament.

not scriptural worship, then it must either be pragmatism or entertainment, and neither have any place in the church of God.

9. The use of pictures [caricatures] of “Jesus” in either teaching or worship. As Jesus Christ our Lord is the eternal Son of God, and so Deity, such portraits, pictures or flannelgraph representations are a violation of the Second Commandment. Only the human nature of our Lord can be seen, and thus a false impression, though subtle, is necessarily given. The mind is limited by the visible representation.

Further, the New Testament itself makes a distinction between the earthly life of our Lord and his risen and exalted state—a truth completely obliterated in any visible representation (2 Cor. 5:14–17). The eye of faith, however, is not static, but can and should progress through the Word and Spirit.

K. THE LORD JESUS CHRIST IS GOD MANIFEST IN THE FLESH AND THE ONLY DIVINELY-ORDAINED AND REVEALED IMAGE OF GOD. HE IS THEREFORE TO BE WORSHIPPED AS SUCH.

The Scriptures reveal the Lord Jesus Christ to be fully and truly God manifest in the flesh. Man’s innate desire to see the one true God is fulfilled in Jesus Christ! In the union of His two natures—Divine and Human—He forever remains the God–Man, the visible image [revelation and representation] of the invisible God.

Jn. 1:1–3. In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ² The same was in the beginning with God. ³ All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made....And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.¹¹³

Isa. 9:6. For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.

Jn. 10:30. I and my Father are one.¹¹⁴

¹¹³ Ἐν ἀρχῇ ἦν ὁ λόγος, καὶ ὁ λόγος ἦν πρὸς τὸν θεόν, καὶ θεὸς ἦν ὁ λόγος. 2 οὗτος ἦν ἐν ἀρχῇ πρὸς τὸν θεόν. 3 πάντα δι’ αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο, καὶ χωρὶς αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο οὐδὲ ἓν. ὃ γέγονεν ¹⁴ Καὶ ὁ λόγος σὰρξ ἐγένετο καὶ ἐσκήνωσεν ἐν ἡμῖν, καὶ ἐθεασάμεθα τὴν δόξαν αὐτοῦ, δόξαν ὡς μονογενοῦς παρὰ πατρός, πλήρης χάριτος καὶ ἀληθείας.

¹¹⁴ ἐγὼ καὶ ὁ πατὴρ ἓν ἐσμεν. Neut., showing unity; masc. would deny the Trinitarian nature of the Godhead.

Rom. 9:5. Whose are the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen.¹¹⁵

Phil. 2:9–11. ⁹ Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: ¹⁰ That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of *things* in heaven, and *things* in earth, and *things* under the earth; ¹¹ and *that* every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ *is* Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Col. 2:8–9. ⁸ Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ. ⁹ For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.

1 Tim. 3:16. and without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory.

Titus 2:13. Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ;¹¹⁶

Heb. 1:5–12. ⁵ For unto which of the angels said he at any time, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee? and again, I will be to him a Father, and he shall be to me a Son? ⁶ and again, when he bringeth in the firstbegotten into the world, he saith, and let all the angels of God worship him. ⁷ and of the angels he saith, Who maketh his angels spirits, and his ministers a flame of fire. ⁸ But unto the Son *he saith*, Thy throne, O God, *is* for ever and ever: a sceptre of righteousness *is* the sceptre of thy kingdom. ⁹ Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity; therefore God, *even* thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows. ¹⁰ and, Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the works of thine hands: ¹¹ They shall perish; but thou remainest; and they all shall wax old as doth a garment; ¹² and as a vesture shalt thou fold them up, and they shall be changed: but thou art the same, and thy years shall not fail.

Jude 1:4 For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ.¹¹⁷

Do we worship the Lord Jesus Christ as we ought in the fullness of His person and his attributes and offices?

¹¹⁵ ὁ ὢν ἐπὶ πάντων θεὸς εὐλογητὸς εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας, ἀμήν.

¹¹⁶ προσδεχόμενοι τὴν μακαρίαν ἐλπίδα καὶ ἐπιφάνειαν τῆς δόξης τοῦ μεγάλου θεοῦ καὶ σωτῆρος ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, two const. wherein both substantives refer to the same person or thing.

¹¹⁷ καὶ τὸν μόνον δεσπότην καὶ κύριον ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦν Χριστὸν ἀρνούμενοι. a const. wherein both substantives refer to the same person or thing.

VII

The Third Commandment

Quest.: What is the Third Commandment?

Ans: The Third Commandment is, “Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain; for the LORD will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain.” (Ex. 20:7)

Quest.: What is the significance of the Third Commandment?

Ans: The Third Commandment requires the holy and reverent use of God’s names, titles, attributes, word, works, and institutions, and prohibits their profanation in any way.

A. ANALYSIS AND EXPOSITION

This Commandment is two-fold in its analysis:

1. *A Prohibition Declared.* The construction connotes a perpetual prohibition—“never ever!”¹¹⁸ It must be noted that in this Commandment, God changes from the first pers. of address, as in the First and Second Commandments, to the third pers. to focus on the glorious name of Yahweh.

Ex. 3:13–14. ¹³ and Moses said unto God, Behold, *when* I come unto the children of Israel, and shall say unto them, The God of your fathers hath sent me unto you; and they shall say to me, What *is* his name? what shall I say unto them? ¹⁴ and God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM: and he said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you.

When the Lord revealed himself to Moses at the burning bush, he revealed himself as “I am that I am” [אֶהְיֶה אֲשֶׁר אֶהְיֶה]. Qal. Imperf., implying The LORD’S Self-existence, transcendence and immutability. The LXX: ἐγώ εἰμι ὁ ὢν. He is thus the covenant-keeping who is to be believed and obeyed.

The name of God—implying both his personal name [יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים]¹¹⁹ as the personal, self-existent, immutable, covenant-keeping or faithful God—and also including everything and every way whereby he has revealed himself—is not to be taken in vain.¹²⁰ The LORD God is

¹¹⁸ לֹא תִשָּׂא אֶת־שֵׁם־יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ לְשׁוֹן, Qal. Imperf. with לֹא.

¹¹⁹ יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים is the Personal Name of God.

¹²⁰ The name of God is a compendium of his inclusive self-revelation.

extremely jealous of the use of His name, as it reveals who and what he is—it is His primary self-revelation.

Ex. 33:17–19. ¹⁷ and the LORD said unto Moses, I will do this thing also that thou hast spoken: for thou hast found grace in my sight, and I know thee by name. ¹⁸ and he said, I beseech thee, shew me thy glory. ¹⁹ and he said, I will make all my goodness pass before thee, and I will proclaim the name of the LORD before thee;...

“Take” [תִּשָּׂא]. The primary meaning of נָשָׂא is “to lift up,” or to exalt, then “to take or carry,” and finally, “to use.” Thus, the primary reference of this Commandment is to worship, not simply to misusing God’s name in cursing or blasphemy.

“Vain” (שָׁוְיָ), has the sense of “emptiness, deceitful, nothingness, worthlessness”. The LXX: ματαίω, “futile, useless, void of result”. The connotation is that God’s name is not to be taken in any way less than that which properly and reverently reflects his true nature, worth, honor, glory and majesty.

2. *A Warning Issued.* The Lord (יְהוָה)—the faithful God who keeps his covenant—word will *never* hold the profaner of his name “guiltless” (נִקָּה), i.e., “clean, innocent, acquitted.”¹²¹ The LXX: οὐ γὰρ μὴ καθαρίσῃ,¹²² “not by any means clean, i.e., religiously acceptable”. Divine judgment or chastening is a certainty for the profaner.

NOTE: The Hebrew language makes a distinction between the *Qere* [what is spoken and the *Kethib* [what is written]. The Jews had a great fear of misusing the name *Yahweh* [יְהוָה], so the “Unpronounceable Tetragrammaton *YHWH*” is always read as “*Adonai*.” The Consonants יהוה are used with the vowel-pointings of אֲדֹנָי. When transliterated into English we have the name “Jehovah.” We can, however, take God’s name in vain without actually using it, by our attitude, worship, words, actions and lifestyle!

B. FIRST–THIRD COMMANDMENTS

The First Commandment reveals the Object of our worship—the one true God; the Second, the mode of our worship—true spirituality; the Third, our inward-attitude toward God in worship—true reverence and awe, or a proper frame of spirit. There can be no true worship without a scriptural

¹²¹ לֹא יִנְקָה, Qal. Imperf with לֹא, “never ever!”

¹²² The Gk. double negative for emph. (οὐ...μὴ) seeks to equate the strong Heb. negative לֹא.

knowledge of God; with an unprepared heart; an inward attitude of hypocrisy, negligence or indolence; an accommodation to false doctrine or practices; or with an unwillingness to conform utterly to the Scriptures.

C. THE PRORITY OF WORSHIP.

The Third Commandment is primarily concerned with our worship. There is to be nothing in our worship, our preaching, our prayers or our walk and life-style which is not God-honoring.

Such practices as modern religious entertainment, worldly or sentimental music, an insincere or mere outward religious formalism are prohibited in this Commandment. As God is Absolutely holy, righteous and sovereign, and every fact is a created fact (Gen. 1:1), reality and life cannot be divided into secular and sacred. All is sacred. We must not become practical atheists!

Psa. 14:1. The fool hath said in his heart, *There is no God...* NOTE: This is nothing less than practical atheism [אֵין אֱלֹהִים] “no” is אֵין, i.e., nothing, naught—God has becoming meaningless to this fool!

D. BLASPHEMY—PROFANITY—SWEARING—CURSING

There are many ways in which God’s name can be taken in vain apart from worship. Blasphemy, profanity, swearing and cursing are the four major explicit means of violating this Commandment:

1. *Blasphemy.* Blasphemy, railing or reviling is willful, injurious speech (βλασφημία) against the majesty of God (Matt. 12:24–32; Rom. 2:21–24).
2. *Profanity.* The term “profanity” presupposes God’s name. Profanity specifically refers to the irreverent use of God’s name or religious objects. The term derives from *pro*, “before,” and *fanum*, “temple, shrine, sanctuary,” and thus before [or outside] the temple [abode of the “god”] and hence “common, secular,”¹²³ outside the realm of God.”¹²⁴ God, however, is the God of all created reality, omnipresent, immense and immanent. There is nothing apart from him, nothing secular,

¹²³ The division between secular and sacred is humanistic, and arbitrarily presupposes a finite or limited “god”. God is absolute and every fact is a created fact, thus every area of life is sacred!

¹²⁴ Gk: βέηλος, “threshold,” hence, accessible, trodden, unhallowed, profane.

common or profane. Thus, to profane anything associated with God is to take his name in vain (Matt. 5:33–37).

3. *Swearing an oath.* Swearing may refer to coarse language in general, but it refers specifically to an oath which invokes or refers to the name of God or some religious object as a means of enforcing one's veracity or determination. Swearing an oath may be either righteous and legitimate or sinful, i.e., taking God's name in vain (1 Sam. 14:44;¹²⁵ 1 Kgs. 17:1; Matt. 5:33–37).
4. *Cursing.* Cursing may refer to coarse language in general, but it technically refers to calling down the wrath or judgment of God upon an enemy or evil-doer. Cursing may be either legitimate or sinful (Lev. 24:11; Numb. 23:8; Dt. 27:15–25; Josh. 6:26; 1 Sam. 17:43; 2 Kgs. 2:23–24; 2 Tim. 4:14).¹²⁶

E. CURSING: THE MOST USELESS SIN

Matt. 5:36. Neither shalt thou swear by thy head, because thou canst not make one hair white or black.

Cursing is the most useless and senseless of sins. Unlike idolatry, it is transparently irreligious and immediately reveals the hypocrite. Unlike murder, there is not even the possible momentary satisfaction of revenge. Unlike lying or stealing, it brings not even temporary advantage. Unlike immorality, it brings no momentary pleasure whatsoever, nor does it satisfy any lust. Unlike covetousness, which is necessarily thoughtful, it is irrational and unthinking.

Why, then, is cursing so prevalent? Mankind, created in the image of God, has the gift of speech to praise God and communicate with one another. Blasphemy, cursing or swearing is the awful expression of depraved

¹²⁵ “God do so to me and more also if...” is perhaps the most common oath in the Old Testament.

¹²⁶ Elisha cursed the teen-age gang (וְנַעֲרִים קְטָנִים...יְלָדִים) [LXX, παιδάριαι...παῖδας] lit: insignificant youths...young men,) and two sow bears killed forty-two of them. They threatened, belittled and mocked God's prophet, and God judged them immediately in answer to Elisha's curse. The imprecatory Psalms are prayers for God's judgment on David's enemies. He prayed as the Lord's Anointed, and his enemies were God's enemies. Cf. Ps. 35:4–8; 40:14–15; 59:11–15; 69:22–28; 109:6–19. Paul prays for the Lord to properly judge Alexander the coppersmith for his wickedness against the truth of the Gospel and those who preached it.

sinners, who are spiritually impotent to create, and can only articulate the frustration of their perverted “god-complex” by vocalizing their hatred and disdain for both God and man in wicked and destructive terms. Words become weapons, oaths become frustrated incantations, and cursing becomes a perverted theology of self-destruction.

The very gift of speech, meant to declare God’s truth and make society coherent, rather profanes God’s name, perverts the truth, and fragments society (Rom. 3:13–14)!

F. CIVIL AND RELIGIOUS OATHS

A civil or religious oath is an acknowledgement that God is the all-encompassing, living reality, that he is morally self-consistent, immanent and will infallibly bring men into judgment. It further acknowledges his lordship and rule over all human and religious government, and the validity and priority of his Law. Thus, oaths are to be taken seriously and perjury is a serious offence to both God and man. A civil oath without God’s Law-order is, however, meaningless, as witnessed daily in the modern courts.

Is it lawful take a civil or religious oath? Some maintain that all such oaths—a political oath of office, testifying under oath in legal matters, religious oaths or vows—are forbidden by our Lord (Matt. 5:33–37).¹²⁷ In answer, it must be noted that Scripture records such oaths in a positive way. A vow or oath is a serious matter and is not to be taken lightly (Eccl. 5:1–6). God blesses the person who gives an oath and remains faithful to his word, despite personal loss (Psa. 15:4). Many biblical personalities gave their oaths under suitable circumstances: e.g., Abraham and Eliezer (Gen. 24:2–9),¹²⁸ Jacob (Gen. 28:18–22; 31:44–55) and Ruth (Ruth 1:17). Paul called upon God to be his witness (Rom. 1:9; 9:1; 2 Cor. 1:23; Gal. 1:20; Phil. 1:8), an angel takes an oath (Rev. 10:5–6), our Lord himself

¹²⁷ “...ye have heard that it hath been said by them of old time, Thou shalt not forswear thyself, but shalt perform unto the Lord thine oaths: but I say unto you, Swear not at all....But let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil.”

¹²⁸ In taking this oath, Eliezer put his hand under Abraham’s thigh, referring to the reproductive organ, as the strongest possible oath, hence the idea of our Eng. “testicle,” “testify,” “testimony,” “testament,” etc. Man naturally seeks some basis to give strength, force or perpetuity to his oath.

testified under oath (Matt. 26:59–64), and God himself gave his oath (Isa. 454:22–23; Heb. 6:13–18).

What did our Lord mean in Matt. 5:33–37? The entire passage is corrective of traditional teaching which had obscured the truth and heart-reality of the Law (See esp. v. 17–24, 27–28, 31–32). The Jews feared to explicitly take God’s name in vain, so they swore by religious objects, places or heaven.¹²⁹ They had two types of oaths, i.e., oaths that referred to God directly or “heavy,” oaths, and those which did not, but rather mentioned something religious, i.e., “light” oaths. The “light” oaths, to which our Lord referred, had no true religious “weight,” as they did not explicitly use the name of God, and so were not religiously binding. Such swearing had become common.

He corrects this implicit profaning of God’s name, first, by stating that the pervasiveness of the oath implied God, and secondly, by stating that a true believer is to be taken at his word as completely honest and faithful. There would be no need for such implicit profaning of God’s name in conversation. Thus, our Lord’s command pertains to conversational swearing and is not a prohibition of civil or proper religious oaths.

G. DUTIES ENJOINED

Every prohibition implies a legitimate and consistent positive duty, as God’s Law is inclusive of every sphere of life and activity, and God alone has the prerogative and power of positive law.¹³⁰ The following examples are included and implied in this Commandment:

1. The name of God—his inclusive self-revelation in his name, word, works or institutions—is to be hallowed, honored and revered. The Model Prayer begins at this very truth!

Matt. 6:9. After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name [ἀγιασθήτω τὸ ὄνομά σου].

2. As true Christianity is taking the name of Christ—identifying with him—in the totality of faith and life, everything connected with the believer’s faith and life is included within the bounds of this commandment (2 Tim. 2:19).

¹²⁹ For the Jewish reluctance to pronounce the proper name of God for fear of explicitly breaking this Commandment, see Analysis and Exposition the discussion of “LORD” [יהוה] concerning the *Qere* and *Kethibh*.

¹³⁰ Only the LORD God can truthfully claim declare eminent domain!

3. Everything related to godly, scriptural worship must be approached with awe and sobriety. There is no place for hypocrisy, deceit, unscriptural tradition, formalism, innovation, pragmatism, negligence,¹³¹ indolence or dissatisfaction.
4. The truth of God—all biblical doctrine—is to be carefully and seriously studied, believed and obeyed. The Word of God remains His special Self-revelation.

Psa. 138:2. I will worship toward thy holy temple, and praise thy name for thy lovingkindness and for thy truth: for thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name [כִּי־הַגְדַּלְתָּ עַל־כָּל־שְׁמוֹךָ אֱמִרְתְּךָ].

5. We are to live as unto the Lord Jesus Christ in all things, for the Father has made him “Lord.”

Acts 2:36. Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ [ὅτι καὶ κύριον αὐτὸν καὶ χριστὸν ἐποίησεν ὁ θεός, τοῦτον τὸν Ἰησοῦν ὃν ὑμεῖς ἐσταυρώσατε].

Lk. 6:46. and why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say? [Τί δέ με καλεῖτε· κύριε κύριε, καὶ οὐ ποιεῖτε ἃ λέγω;].

H. PROHIBITIONS: EXPLICIT AND IMPLICIT

Biblically, the command not to profane God’s name is comprehensive. It implies and includes the following examples:

1. Worshipping God in an unscriptural manner or in an unthinking way. Every true believer must search and study the Scriptures with a view to aligning himself to the truth of God in every area of both faith and life. Modern Christians believe in “God,” but how often it is the “god” of their own imagination, as sadly reflected in their attitude, irreverence and unscriptural, irrational attempts at religion (Matt. 6:9; 28:20; 1 Tim. 2:14–15)! Cf. such things as casual Christianity, religious jokes using God’s name or religious merchandising.
2. Praying in a flippant, irreverent or indolent manner. Also praying for things, situations or persons in a way contrary to God’s character or revealed will.

¹³¹ Cf. Isa. 48:10, “Cursed *be* he that doeth the work of the LORD deceitfully,” or negligently (רַמְיָה), “deceitful, slothful, negligent”. The LXX: ἀμελῶς, “negligently”.

3. Imploring God's name to an unworthy end, such as calling on God for safe-keeping and then committing illegal or sinful actions that would counter such prayers through personal endangerment.

Gen. 27:20. and Isaac said unto his son, How *is it* that thou hast found *it* so quickly, my son? and he said, Because the LORD thy God brought *it* to me.

4. Committing to a church covenant, unthinkingly, without taking it seriously, or lightly acting in disobedience to one's covenant-obligations before God (1 Tim. 2:14–15; Matt. 18:20; Eph. 4:11–19, 25–32; Col. 3:9–17; Heb. 10:25).
5. Preaching false doctrine or the teachings of men in the name of the Lord.
6. Living or having a lifestyle which is contrary to God and His Word. Hypocrisy and insincerity in one's profession of faith, i.e., taking God's name as a believer, but being without faith or acting in either unbelief or in an ungodly manner.

Mic. 4:5. For all people will walk every one in the name of his god, and we will walk in the name of the LORD our God for ever and ever.

7. Murmuring against God's providential dealings in our lives.

Eph. 5:20. Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ;

8. Profaning, dishonoring, misusing, or taking the name of God lightly or frivolously in thought, word or action.

2 Tim. 2:19. Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his. and, Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity.

9. Using euphemistic substitutes for God's name as an expletive, in trivial oaths, or casual conversation (Matt. 5:33–37). Such expletives may be references to the Divine attributes as "Goodness!" "Mercy!" Common modern expressions have derived from God's names, such as "Gosh!" "Golly!" "Gad!" [God] "Doggone it!" "Darn it!" "Dad Gummit!" [God damn it] "Gee!" "Jeeze!" [Jesus] "Cripes!" "Jiminy Christmas!" "Jiminy Cricket!" "Jeepers Creepers!" [Jesus Christ].¹³²

¹³² Some might object by stating that such sayings are now so commonly accepted that they have probably lost their original designation. That is just the point—we must not speak trivially or thoughtlessly (Matt. 12:36–37). These examples were taken from research taken from Leslie B. Flynn, *Now A Word From our Creator*. Wheaton: Victor Books, 1976. p. 57.

10. Perjury in any civil or religious matter. Perjury is calling upon the God of truth to witness to a lie (Jn. 8:44; 14:6). Apart from God and his Law, perjury is ultimately meaningless. One simply swears by no one and nothing—a graphic instance of legal irrationalism.

VIII The Fourth Commandment

Quest.: What is the Fourth Commandment?

Ans: The Fourth Commandment is, “Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work: But the seventh day *is* the sabbath of the LORD thy God: *in it* thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that *is* within thy gates: For *in* six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them *is*, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it.” (Ex. 20:8–11)

Quest.: What is the significance of the Fourth Commandment?

Ans: The Fourth Commandment reveals that God is sovereign over time, and requires man to keep as holy unto God such times as he has appointed in his Word.

A. ANALYSIS AND EXPOSITION

The Fourth Commandment reveals the absolute sovereignty of God over man with regard to the use of his time—labor, rest, recreation and worship. The Sabbath, reflecting the rest of God upon finishing the work of creation, comes to man as a Divine blessing and gift, not a restriction or burden.

The Fourth Commandment contains the strongest language and grammatical const. of any of the Commandments!

Ex. 20:8–12. Each word is significant: “Remember” [זָכוֹר], inf. absol., used for emphasis or intensity. “Sabbath day” [אַת־יּוֹם הַשַּׁבָּת] is lit: “the day of rest.” “To keep it holy” [לְקַדְּשׁוֹ], Pi’el imp., and so intensive, “to set it apart, sanctify it as distinct.” [LXX: μνήσθητι τὴν ἡμέραν τῶν σαββάτων ἁγιάζειν αὐτήν]. aor. imp. and pres. inf.

Deut. 5:12–15 uses the terms “keep” [שָׁמַר], inf. absol., “keep, guard, preserve.” LXX: φύλαξαι τὴν ἡμέραν τῶν σαββάτων ἁγιάζειν αὐτήν], aor. imp. The underlying meaning is to “pay careful attention to.”¹³³ and

¹³³ W. A. van Gemeren, *OT Dict. Theol & Exeg.*, IV, p. 182.

“observe” [לִשְׁמֹר, LXX: φυλάσσεσθαι], “to guard or keep watch,” implying putting forth effort. The division is four-fold:

1. *The Remembrance of the Sabbath.* “Remember...” refers to the phrase “to keep it holy”.¹³⁴ The first mention of the Sabbath since creation (Gen. 2:2–3) is in Ex. 16:22–30. Mark carefully that this was before the giving of the Decalogue at Mt. Sinai!
2. *The Recognition of Work.* Six days are the God-given time-frame for work. Note that six days of work are not necessarily commanded, but rather that all man’s work is to be done within six days that he might rest on the seventh: The opening words “Six days shalt thou labour...” must not be arbitrarily separated from the remainder of the statement, “...and do all thy work,” implying a six-day time-frame for work that the Sabbath might remain separate as a day of rest. The commandment is for an organized lifestyle.
3. *The Rest from Work.* The Sabbath was not exclusively for Israel, as it pertained also to “slaves” and “strangers.” Nor was it exclusively for man, as it also included animals and even the land itself.¹³⁵
4. *The Reason for the Sabbath.* The weekly Sabbath for man reflects God’s rest (רָחַץ, rest, repose, be quiet) after the finished work of creation (Gen. 2:2–3; Ex. 31:13–17). This “rest” was not due to tiredness; it was a rest of joy, pleasure, accomplishment and anticipation. This is vital to understanding the essence of the Sabbath. Note must be taken that in the reiteration of this command, it also becomes a covenant-sign between God and Israel because he redeemed them from their bondage in Egypt. Thus, the Sabbath was also a national distinction peculiar to Israel and ultimately possessed a redemptive significance (Dt. 5:15–17).

B. THE FIRST-FOURTH COMMANDMENTS

The First Commandment reveals the absolute sovereignty of God over our worship; the Second, the spirituality of our worship; the Third, our

¹³⁴ LXX uses the aor. pass. imp., μνήσθητι followed by a pres. inf., τὴν ἡμέραν τῶν σαββάτων ἀγιάζειν αὐτήν.

¹³⁵ The seven-year Sabbath and Jubilee Sabbath also included the land itself—a fact very important in God’s dealings with Israel (Lev. 26:33–35, 43; 2 Chron. 36:20–21). The Sabbath laws for Israel are mentioned by God through Moses and the prophets more than any other laws in the Old Testament.

inward—attitude in worship. The Fourth Commandment reveals the absolute sovereignty of God over our time—work and rest, worship and vocation, labor and recreation.

C. THE SABBATHS OF ISRAEL

The weekly Sabbath was not the only “Sabbath” that God commanded Israel to observe. There were weekly, monthly and yearly Sabbaths, one observed every seven years, and one observed every fifty years. Some were purely rest—days and some were feast—days, and some were days of corporate worship. To correctly understand the full significance of the weekly Sabbath, one must understand the whole Sabbath—principle commanded by God. Following is a short study on the various “Sabbaths”:

1. *The weekly Sabbaths* (Gen. 2:2–3; Ex. 20:8–11; Dt. 5:12–15; Rom. 14:5–6; Col. 2:16–17). These Sabbaths were observed every seventh day. Three issues must be noted:

- Every Sabbath except the weekly Sabbath was related in some way with seasons—either months or years. The weekly Sabbath was ordained as a day of rest patterned after God’s creation rest, and also because of Israel’s deliverance from Egypt.
- Israel at Sinai was under the Egyptian solar calendar of thirty-day months, and not the later solar–lunar calendar,¹³⁶ thus the ancient Hebrew Sabbath was not simply every Saturday, but every seventh day as the days of the week varied within each thirty-day month.
- At the monthly and yearly feasts, there were to be “convocations” or assemblies of the people, but not on the weekly Sabbath—the people were to remain in their tents or homes. The weekly Sabbath was primarily for rest, not worship. Weekly synagogue Sabbath gatherings for worship (Lk. 4:16) were established during or after the Babylonian captivity as a matter of necessity and tradition, not by Divine command.

¹³⁶ As the months were constant in the number of days, the seventh day of a given week was variable. To fill out the necessary five additional days, they added three at the end of the sixth month and two at the end of the twelfth month. The later Jewish solar–lunar calendar was not used until 359 AD. See R. J. Rushdoony, *Institutes of Biblical Law*, pp. 134–136.

- During the weekly Sabbath rest, the family would doubtless reiterate the redemptive history of Israel, orally passing along the truth of their covenant relationship from parents to children. The weekly Sabbath thus had a redemptive significance (Dt. 5:12–15; 6:1–9).
2. *The monthly* [“New moons”] *Sabbaths* (Numb. 28:11–15; Rom. 14:5–6; Col. 2:16–17). Originally, these Sabbaths were only sacrificial days, and became Sabbath-rests through later tradition (Amos 8:4–6).
 3. *The Passover* (Ex. 12:1–20, 43–50; Numb. 28:16–25). This was a yearly Sabbath observance followed by the Feast of Unleavened Bread which began and ended with a Sabbath and a holy convocation [assembly].
 4. *The Feast of Unleavened Bread* (Ex. 12:15–20; Numb. 28:17). This Feast immediately followed the Passover with two Sabbaths.
 5. *The Feast of Weeks* [Pentecost] (Lev. 23:15–21; Acts 2:1–41). This was fifty days after the Passover, and was a Sabbath on the first day of the week, immediately following [the day after] the seventh Sabbath.
 6. *The Feast of Trumpets* (Numb. 29:1–40). This yearly feast and Sabbath preceded and coincided with the feast and Sabbath of the Day of Atonement.
 7. *The Feast of Tabernacles* (Lev. 23:24–44). This yearly feast followed the Day of Atonement (יום כיפור). Several Sabbaths were celebrated during this feast on the first, ninth, tenth and fifteenth days (Lev. 23:24, 27, 32, 34).
 8. *The Sabbatical Year* (Ex. 23:10–11; Lev. 25:1–7, 18–22). An entire Sabbatical year was proclaimed every seventh year for the poor, the strangers, the domestic and wild animals, and the land itself. God promised such a bountiful harvest on the sixth year that Israel could eat of it until the ninth year. One of the reasons that God sent Israel into captivity was so that the land could enjoy its Sabbaths (Lev. 26:33–35, 43; 2 Chron. 36:20–21)!
 9. *The Year of Jubilee* (Lev. 25:8–18). Every fifty years was a Year of Jubilee (יובל, ram’s horn or coronet), or seven Sabbatical years plus one year. This year began on the Day of Atonement. It was a year of the redemption of any land and the redemption or freeing of all bondservants.

The Sabbath—principle of Israel was a principle of rest for man, animals and the land, instituted by God, that looked back to creation and Israel’s deliverance from Egypt, looked to God in covenant–relationship, and looked ahead prophetically to the redemption of the whole creation. This principle was also a principle of celebration. Both typically anticipated the redemption–rest in the Lord Jesus Christ and future glory (Dt. 5:12–15; Rom. 8:18–23; Heb. 4:1–11;¹³⁷ 2 Pet. 3:7–18).

D. DIFFERENT VIEWS OF THE WEEKLY SABBATH

Of all the Commandments, the fourth has been the most controversial in its interpretation. There are five basic views:

1. The Sabbath is the seventh day and is to be perpetually kept on the seventh day, as God has not commanded the day to be changed. (Seventh–Day Adventism, Seventh Day Baptists).
2. The Sabbath is part of the Moral Law, and not the ceremonial or civil laws, and so perpetual. It has been changed to the first day of the week biblically because of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. Sunday is now the “Christian Sabbath”, i.e., the day has been changed; the significance has not. (*Canons of Dort*, *Westminster Confession of Faith*, some Reformed tradition, etc.).
3. Although God gave no specific command, since the resurrection of our Lord Christians have met on the first day of the week (Matt. 28:1; Acts 2:1ff; 20:7; 1 Cor. 16:2; Rev. 1:10), thus, the Sabbath has been replaced by the “Lord’s Day” by apostolic example and practice. (some Reformed tradition, Evangelicals, etc.).
4. Because the Sabbath was fulfilled in the Lord Jesus Christ, only a one–day–in–seven–rest and worship principle remains for man. Any day of the week will suffice, as the New Testament teaches that all days are alike (Rom. 14:5–6; Gal. 4:9–11; Col. 2:16–17). (Luther, Calvin, some Evangelicals, etc.).
5. The Lord Jesus Christ is the fulfillment of the Law, including the Sabbath (Rom. 10:4; Heb. 4:1–11), therefore the Sabbath institution was limited solely to Israel and has no relation to Christians. Christians

¹³⁷ Heb. 4:1–11. Every instance of the term “rest” in v. 1–11 is either the vb form καταπαύω, or the noun κατάπαυσις, “to rest, be quiet, still, cease, restrain.” In v. 9, however, the term is, lit: “There yet remains for the people of God a Sabbath–rest [ἄρα ἀπολείπεται σαββατισμός].”

meet on the first day of the week because it is the day of Christ's resurrection and has been the practice since the apostolic era (modern Dispensationalism, most Fundamentalists, some Evangelicals, etc.).

E. THE PROVISIONAL AND THE PERPETUAL

To be biblical and consistent, one must make a distinction between the provisional [ceremonial, civil] and the perpetual:

1. The Sabbath [rest and worship]—principle is perpetual, as reflected in both God's creation—rest (Gen. 2:2–3; Ex. 20:11) and the need for man to rest, i.e., the Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath (Mk. 2:27).
2. The Sabbath—principle pointed ahead to the redemptive rest in the Lord Jesus Christ (Dt. 5:12–15; Heb. 4:1–11), and so has a typical significance which will find complete fulfillment in the final redemption of man and the earth (Rom. 8:18–23; 2 Pet. 3:13).
3. The Sabbath was a covenant only to Israel in relation to their deliverance from Egypt, their national identity, their culture and the land (Dt. 5:14–15; 2 Chron. 36:20–21).
4. Although the weekly Sabbath had peculiar reference to national Israel, it was not part of the ceremonial or civil law, but of the Moral Law as a rest—day, implying perpetuity.
5. The redemptive aspect of the weekly Sabbath was the reality of the redemptive purpose and history which was reiterated by the family as the covenant—entity under the Old Covenant (Dt. 5:12–15; 6:1–9), and the church as the covenant—entity under the New or Gospel Covenant (Eph. 2:11–22; Heb. 10:25).

F. THE PERPETUAL AND THE ESCHATOLOGICAL

What, then, in essence, is the perpetual and ultimate significance of the Sabbath? The Sabbath is described as “the Sabbath of the Lord God,” i.e., his Sabbath and is traced back to his primeval rest of celebration, accomplishment satisfaction [“all was very good”] and anticipation (Gen. 2:1–3). The national or covenant significance to Israel was both temporary and typological (Ex. 16:25–30; 23:10–12; 31:13–17; Dt. 5:12–15), awaiting its true and full significance among believers within the New or Gospel Covenant (Heb. 4:1–11).

Believers are now brought into union with Christ and so rejoice in his finished redemptive work and “rest” by faith in him. We celebrate our

glorious salvation. The note of anticipation of that “rest which remaineth for the people of God” (Heb. 4:9) awaits the future glorification of believers (Rom. 8:14–23) and the restoration of creation which, again, will render everything pristine and “very good” in the creation of “new heavens and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness” (2 Pet. 3:7–13). With creation ultimately and infallibly restored, and the elect of God finally and fully redeemed, the full and final rest of God will be accomplished.

The Sabbath then, ought to be a celebration of our redemption, a delight, a rest, both physical and spiritual, and an anticipation of that glory which is to come.

G. SATURDAY OR SUNDAY?

While it is true that in neither the Old or New Testaments did God explicitly change the weekly Sabbath from the seventh to the first day, the following must be considered:

1. Since the resurrection of our Lord, Christians have met on the first day of the week (Matt. 28:1; Acts 2:1ff¹³⁸; 20:7; 1 Cor. 16:2; Rev. 1:10).¹³⁹ The first day (traditionally “Sunday”) thus distinguishes Christian worship from Jewish worship. This was the inspired apostolic practice throughout the New Testament.¹⁴⁰
2. Although the other nine Commandments are clearly reiterated in the New Testament, the Fourth Commandment is never reiterated for Christians or contained in such a listing (Matt. 5:17–19; 22:34–40; Rom. 1:18–32; 3:19–31; 13:8–10; 14:5–6; 1 Tim. 1:8–11).
3. In the context of religious days, months and seasons, there is a principle of Christian liberty with regard to observance, which would be the very place to enforce the Fourth Commandment had it been perpetual as a covenantal Sabbath (Rom. 14:5–6; Col. 2:16–17).
4. In the context of religious days there is a warning against the perpetuation of Jewish traditions (which would include the weekly

¹³⁸ The Day of Pentecost was the first day of the week.

¹³⁹ The resurrection, more than any other redemptive truth, became the focal-point for New Testament Christianity for both Jews and Gentiles.

¹⁴⁰ Ignatius, writing c. 106 A.D., states that Christian worship was universally held on the first day of the week. Other early Church Fathers witness to the same.

Sabbath) that would seduce from the Gospel and the finality or fulfillment in the redemptive work of the Lord Jesus Christ (Gal. 4:9–11; Col. 2:16–17; Heb. 10:25¹⁴¹).

H. SABBATH OR LORD'S DAY?

Is the first day of the week (Sunday) the “Christian Sabbath” or the “Lord’s Day”? If the former, then how is it to be observed? If the latter, then what has changed?

1. THE “CHRISTIAN SABBATH”

If the day has been changed from the seventh to the first, from a day of physical rest (as God originally ordained) to a day of corporate worship, and from a sacralist, theocratic society to a composite society, can we have the same thing? No. If the regulations of the Jewish Sabbath were transferred to first-day worship, then the family would remain at home, eat cold food, have no warmth, do no unnecessary labor, not travel to church meetings, or cause anyone else to work on their behalf, etc. Modern Sabbatarians must rely on Jewish tradition and the pre-crucifixion and resurrection custom of our Lord (Lk. 4:16; Acts 17:2¹⁴²), and not an explicit Divine command to enforce corporate worship or church attendance on the weekly “Sabbath”. The weekly Sabbath, as originally instituted, demanded rest, not worship. The “Christian Sabbath” must remain necessarily and extremely modified, as there can be no exercise of the death penalty for disobedience (Ex. 31:14; Numb. 15:32–36), and, in a modern, composite society, little or no community compliance.

NOTE: In a sacralist or monolithic society where there is but one religion for the community (in such a community, sin and crime are co-extensive), then there might be Sabbath compliance. This was true of the Sabbath or “Blue Laws” (called such because they were first published in Britain on blue paper and shipped to the American colonies to be posted) in our

¹⁴¹ The Jewish believers addressed in the Epistle to the Hebrews evidently left the Christian assemblies, which met on the Lord’s Day [first day of the week] and returned to the Synagogues, which met on the seventh day. To do so, argues the author throughout the epistle, would be to renounce Christ and the Gospel.

¹⁴² The Apostle Paul attended the Sabbath synagogue services for evangelistic purposes. He was not simply perpetuating a Jewish Sabbath (Acts 13:14–49; 14:1ff; 16:13; 17:1–3, 10; 18:4–8, 19; 8–9). The converts from the synagogue ministry were evidently separated and formed into a church, which met on the first day of the week as a distinctly Christian assembly.

society until recent times, restricting Sunday shopping and recreation. Today in a composite society (a sub-society composed of Christians in a largely non-Christian society), Sabbatarianism is necessarily modified.

Again, is Sunday Sabbath-breaking a disciplinary offense in a church equal to the sins of theft, adultery or perjury?¹⁴³ Even strict Sabbatarians must concede the necessary principle of differentiating between the provisional and the perpetual—but are forced to do so, not solely on the basis of Scripture, but on the basis of a necessary and traditional pragmatism.

The idea of a “Christian Sabbath” traditionally tends to become increasingly legalistic, and, as with Jewish tradition,¹⁴⁴ modern Christian Sabbatarianism has made its own long list of rules and regulations for the “Sunday Sabbath”. These have become absolutely contrary to God’s original purpose of giving the Sabbath rest to man as a gift and blessing—a day of physical rest and celebration.

NOTE: A suitable example may be found in Richard Baxter, *The Christian Directory*, pp. 470–473. This has been summarized as:

...rise early on Sunday morning; pray in private; have family devotions; go to church (and do not sleep in church); after returning home, while the noon meal is being prepared, pray in private and review everything said in church; enjoy a festive meal with conversation about the love of our Redeemer or something fitting for Sunday; after the meal, gather as family for a psalm or for singing and instruction; go to church once more; come home and gather as family to call upon God in prayer and song and to rehearse the sermon; thereafter eat, but not too much, just as at noon; after the evening meal, question the children and servants about what they had learned during the day; sing a psalm and conclude with prayer; and end the day with holy thoughts! J. Douma, *The Ten Commandments*, p. 151.

Holding to the idea of a “Christian Sabbath,” and substituting worship and spiritual exercises for rest, Baxter sought to weigh down the Christian much the same as religious tradition did to the Jew! One might have to rest for at least a day after such “spiritual exercises”!

¹⁴³ The regulations or traditions for Sabbath-keeping vary from church to church even within certain denominations. There is definitely no complete conformity to the Old Testament regulations, only to certain very general principles.

¹⁴⁴ Jewish tradition formulated long lists of restrictions for the weekly Sabbath. Such restrictions far exceeded the clear command of God and completely obscured the true purpose of the Sabbath.

2. THE “LORD’S DAY”

Differentiating between what was provisional (ceremonial, temporary, and peculiar to national Israel in covenant with God) and perpetual, the Lord’s Day retains the essence of the Divine intention: one-day-out-of-seven for physical rest and redemptive reiteration. As the Sabbath finds its true and final fulfillment in the redemptive work of the Lord Jesus Christ and future glory, the Lord’s Day also becomes a day of corporate worship for God’s people on the first day of the week.

The Lord’s Day, however, is more than merely physically resting and “going to church”. In its true fullness, it celebrates the finality of redemption in Christ and anticipates the final rest of God’s people in future glory. It should include the celebration by faith of final spiritual redemption—rest (Dt. 5:12–15; Rom. 8:18–23; Heb. 4:1–11; 2 Pet. 3:13).

I. OLD COVENANT AND NEW COVENANT OBSERVANCE

Is there a continuity, a point-of-contact or parallel between the Sabbath in the context of the Old Covenant and the Lord’s Day in the context of the New Covenant? Yes. Under the Old Covenant the covenant people of God rested and worshipped every seventh day. The covenant institution in this context was the family. During their weekly day of rest, the father would reiterate their redemptive history as the people of God, giving this day not only significance as a day of rest, but also a day redemptively set apart or distinctly sanctified unto the Lord (Dt. 5:12–15; 6:1–9). This was an act of worship. Under the New or Gospel Covenant, the covenant institution is the church, the people of God, the redeemed—not the family. These meet together every seven days on a day distinctly sanctified to acknowledge their spiritual rest in the finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ. They meet to worship, to reiterate their covenant relationship, realign their common faith, and contemplate in praise and preaching the full and final redemption of creation through the Lord Jesus Christ (Rom. 8:17–23; Heb. 4:1–11; 10:25; 2 Pet. 3:13).

J. DUTIES ENJOINED

Making the necessary distinctions between the provisional and the perpetual, and between the Old Covenant and the New, exactly what duties are enjoined by the Fourth Commandment as fulfilled in the Lord’s Day?

1. We must recognize the sovereignty of God over our lives and the use of our time. All time belongs to God. There is no part of our lives that is

irreligious or secular, and so to be defined or spent apart from the context of God's Law–Word.

2. Man was created to work. Work is man's natural environment and purpose. Not work, but exhaustive toil was the result of the Fall (Gen. 1:26–28; 2:15; 3:17–19). Work is sacred, and ought to be pursued as the individual calling of God and performed to his glory. Work that truly glorifies God in intent and content is an act of worship (1 Cor. 10:31).
3. Man was created to live in an immediate seven–day cycle of work and rest. Our Lord declared that “the Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath” (Mk. 2:27). God so created us that if we violate the one–day–in seven–principle, we will lose our productivity and eventually suffer what is commonly termed a “burnout”. It is said that after the French Revolution (1789–) and introduction of the metric system, a ten–day week was imposed. It was soon returned to a seven–day routine, as society quickly lost its productivity. The Sabbath–principle coincides with man's nature as a creation ordinance.
4. This commandment presupposes an ordered or organized life, in which ordinary labor is completed within the six days to free the one day for physical rest, the worship of the church, and the celebration of redemption.
5. There ought to be a regular, weekly, corporate, realignment of one's common faith and covenant relationship with the people of God (Heb. 10:25).
6. The believer should exercise himself in works of necessity (Matt. 12:1–12), mercy (Matt. 12:1–12) and piety (Heb. 10:25) from a truly thankful heart.
7. The believer is to be industrious to the extent that he can help others (Eph. 4:28).
8. Setting apart the Lord's Day necessarily means godly worship and hymns, not the music of the world.
9. The Lord's Day is a Holy Day, not a “holiday.”

K. PROHIBITIONS: EXPLICIT AND IMPLICIT

Making the necessary distinctions between the provisional and the perpetual, the Old Covenant and the New, what does the Fourth Commandment forbid?

1. The keeping of this day as unto the Lord is a testimony to the unbelieving world that we live in obedience to the whole of God's Word and acknowledge his sovereignty over our time and energies. It is a testimony also against those professing Christians whose "faith" enables them to pick and choose what parts of God's Word they think authoritative. The attitude of mind and heart ought to be that of joy and glory in the Lord, and of sweet anticipation for that future glory and restoration of all things.
2. This Commandment prohibits indolence, incompetence, laziness and disorganization (2 Thess. 3:10–12). One has to work before one can rest!
3. This Commandment condemns performing unnecessary work on the Lord's Day that should have been—and *could* have been—done during the other six days of the week, but for sinful procrastination or the sake of extra money.
4. Energy should not be dissipated to the extent that it interferes with the corporate worship of the congregation.
5. The principle of one-day-in-seven for physical rest should not be violated. Modern society suffers from chronic fatigue because of social, vocational and self-imposed demands and habits contrary to God's revealed will for necessary rest.
6. This Commandment forbids boredom. Boredom derives from a lack of productive labor, a sinful inattentiveness to one's work, rest or worship; or from an unscriptural concept of rest.
7. Energies should not be completely dissipated in pleasure or self-indulgence. Rest and not pleasure is man's primary need in the context of work. The Sabbath-rest was made for man, i.e., the constitutional nature of man spiritually, mentally and physically needs periodic rest. God has ordained such rest as a gift and blessing. The Lord's Day should truly be the first day of the new week, not simply the last day of the weekend, a time to attend to the public means of grace in a physically and mentally exhausted state because time and energies have been wholly spent on pleasure or recreation.
8. The mind and physical frame ought to be rested, and thus attentive to the spiritual realignment to Divine truth and promises as believers corporately celebrate redemptive rest in the Lord Jesus (Rom. 4:1–11) the final redemption of creation (Rom. 17–23; 2 Pet. 3:13).

9. This Commandment stands opposed to the modern welfare state which holds that it is the duty of the state to tax productive workers to provide care for others who do not work or are unwilling to work (2 Thess. 3:10–12).

NOTE: Whatever our view, we must beware of becoming legalistic. It is relatively easy to become Pharisaical with regard to the Lord's Day and issuing certain rules which tend toward legalism.

IX The Fifth Commandment

Quest. : What is the Fifth Commandment?

Ans: The Fifth Commandment is, "Honour thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee. (Ex. 20:12)

Quest.: What is the significance of the Fifth Commandment?

Ans: The Fifth Commandment requires man to preserve the honor, and to perform the duties belonging to all in their positions and relations as legitimate superiors, inferiors or equals.

A. ANALYSIS AND EXPOSITION

The Fifth Commandment, as it represents the extension and representation of Divine authority in human relationships, forms a connection between the first four (the "First Table of the Law," or man's responsibility toward God) and the final six Commandments (the "Second Table of the Law," or man's responsibility toward man).

We might call these final Six Commandments "Secondary Commandments," not because these are less important, but rather that these—love to our neighbor—are the outcome and consequences of our primary love to God. We must love God before our parents, our husbands or wives, or anyone else!

It is vitally important to note that God begins with the family, which he has ordained is the most basic social unit and foundational to all human relationships.

The division of this Fifth Commandment is two-fold:

1. *The Divine Mandate to Honor Father and Mother.* “Honor” (כִּבֵּד), an intensive command¹⁴⁵ with the sense of “weighty, heavy, not to be taken lightly”. Mark that the command is to “honor,” not “love” or “obey,” and so possesses the greatest and highest connotation. Both “father” and “mother” are included, as both possess authority over the offspring. The Hebrew language had no collective term for “parents.”

The term “father” is of very broad application, referring to all legitimate authority, as the family is the primary social institution ordained by God.

NOTE: To the Hebrew mentality, “father” referred to anyone who was due respect or in a place of authority, influence or leadership. It is biblically used to refer to literal, physical fathers (Gen. 15:15; 27:19; Heb. 12:9), to patriarchs or celebrated ancestors (Ex. 3:6; Jn. 8:39; Jas. 2:21), to someone or thing as progeniture or source (Job 38:28), to God as a spiritual father (Psa. 89:26; Isa. 63:16; Mal. 1:6; 2:10; Matt. 6:9; Jn. 8:41; Rom. 8:13–16; Eph. 3:19¹⁴⁶; Phil. 1:2), to an idol (Jer. 2:27), to kings or rulers (1 Sam. 24:11; Isa. 22:21; 38:5; 49:23), to superiors (Acts 22:1), to counselors, advisors or prophets (Gen. 45:8; 2 Kgs. 2:12; 6:21; 13:14), to spiritual leaders (2 Kgs. 13:14; 1 Cor. 4:15–17; 1 Tim. 1:2, 18; 2 Tim. 1:2; 2:1; 1 Pet. 5:13), to those who instruct others (2 Kgs. 2:12; Prov. 1:8, 10, 15), to those in a close relationship (2 Sam. 7:14; 2 Kgs. 2:12; Job 31:18; Heb. 1:5), to those who provide for or protect others (Job 29:16; Psa. 68:5; Jer. 31:9), to those whose character is emulated (Ezk. 16:3, 45; Jn. 8:28–49; Rom. 4:12, 16–17), and generally as a title of the greatest respect.

The negative implication is that we must not dishonor our parents. We must honor them for their position under God, not necessarily for their persons, as they and we are both sinners and might at times fail, sin and come short of biblical godliness.

2. *The Divine Promise of Longevity in the Land.* “Land” [הָאָרֶץ], soil, land. LXX: τῆς γῆς. This may be taken either as personal length of life generally or as remaining in the land through blessing and obedience—or the promise of both. “Giveth” [נָתַן], Qal. ptc. “is giving you.” LXX: δίδωσίν, pres. ind. act.

¹⁴⁵ כִּבֵּד. The form is Pi’el imp., an intensive imperative, “greatly, seriously or intensively honor...”. LXX reads τίμα, pres. act imp. of τιμάω, “[continue to] honor, regard, revere, acknowledge the status of” someone.

¹⁴⁶ “Family,” lit: πατριά, “fatherhood”. Every fatherhood or family reflects the Divine fatherhood, i.e., God is the great archetype of fatherhood.

The Gospel application to New Testament believers and to their children is for long life upon “the earth,” and is based on the LXX, with some modification.¹⁴⁷ The promise of longevity as the norm is stressed, rather than a covenant–relationship limited to a geographical area. Those who are disobedient to authority and dissipate in life–style (given to lawlessness, violence, criminal activities, immorality, drug–abuse, and various other sinful addictions) usually live shorter lives.

Further, as the family is the basic and primary God–ordained social entity, and its maintenance is necessary for the preservation of society at large, the promise in principle remains valid in both its specific and general sense.

NOTE: The Apostle Paul writes that this Commandment is the first with promise (Eph. 6:1–3). The first Commandment with promise is the Fourth, promising blessing to thousands who love God. The term “first” probably refers to the first in importance as the first in the Second Table, not necessarily in order.

B. GOD’S ORDERED UNIVERSE AND AUTHORITY

The created universe exists within the context of Divine Law—spiritual law, moral law, social law and physical law. Because Divine Law rules in every sphere, order has been established and is maintained. Every sphere—theology (based upon Divine revelation or God’s Law–Word), science (only possible through the physical laws of the natural order), society (with families, communities, nations and their civic and judicial systems of law) and the church (ordered according to Divine Law–Word)—is established and maintained because man lives in a God–ordered universe.

All order or authority thus derives from God. When the Divine order is maintained in any given sphere, there is blessing; when the Divine order is disobeyed and disregarded, there is contradiction, confusion, irrationality, anarchy, dissolution and failure.

Socially, the Divine order extends downward to the human race from God the Father, to the Lord Jesus Christ, to the man, to the woman, and then to the children (Gen. 1:26–28; 2:18–24; 3:16; Eph. 3:14–15; 5:22–24; 1 Cor.

¹⁴⁷ Paul quotes the LXX in Eph. 6:2–3 as to the command, τίμα τὸν πατέρα σου καὶ τὴν μητέρα, then appropriates the promise with the modification, “upon the earth” rather than “the good land which the Lord thy God giveth thee,” although the same term (τῆς γῆς, “the land” or “the earth”) is used.

11:3, 7–9, 12; Col. 3:18–20; 1 Pet. 3:1–7). The family is thus the microcosm of the human race as ordained by God.

C. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE FAMILY

The family is ordained by God as the primary social unit or entity, not the individual. When the individual becomes the primary social unit, there is fragmentation, contradiction, confusion, and anarchy—because the Divine order is disobeyed, and every man does that which is right in his own eyes (Judg. 17:6; 21:25). There remains no social vehicle or context for the preservation and transmission of Divine truth, morality, authority or responsibility (Gen. 1:26–28; Prov. 30:11–14, 17; Rom. 1:18–32; 2 Tim. 3:1–7). Such fragmented social disorder spreads like poison throughout a disintegrating society. Although human government must begin with individual self-government through regenerating grace, the family is the primary social entity.

The family is the God-ordained microcosm of the human race. It is in the context of the family that the children are taught the truth of God, evangelized, inculcated with a Christian world-and-life view, disciplined and taught to recognize and respect God-given authority, instructed in morality, develop social and manual skills, learn responsibility and a God-honoring work ethic, learn the history of the family and culture, and are prepared to function within society as godly, decent, responsible, law-abiding citizens. The family, then is:

1. *The first “church.”* Under the headship of godly parents, the family becomes the child’s first “church”¹⁴⁸ as he is instructed in the Word of God, hears the truth of the Gospel, learns to worship God in spirit and in truth, and is taught Christianity in both faith and practice by precept and example. His parents stand in the stead of God to him, and he is to learn to fear and honor God through fearing and honoring his parents and recognizing their God-given authority (Eph. 6:1–4; Col. 3:20–21).

True, scriptural discipline endeavors to inculcate a God-consciousness within the child, and so must never end with the parents. True parental discipline must demonstrate that the parents themselves are the faithful

¹⁴⁸ The term “church” is here used, not of a Gospel assembly, but by a very general application or accommodation of the family as bound by parental authority under God and providing a God-given context for worship, discipline and instruction.

servants of God. The neglect of family worship is disobedience and reaps a just and horrible reward!

2. *The first “society.”* It is the child’s first society, where he develops social skills, proper behavior and respect for legitimate authority.¹⁴⁹ The child is to listen to and reflect the model presented by his father and mother, not his siblings or a gang, both of which often become family substitutes.
3. *The first “school.”* It is the child’s first school, where he learns the basic moral, social, academic and physical skills of life and productivity in the loving, disciplined, moral atmosphere God has ordained. It is in the family that boys and girls learn by both precept and example what godly men, husbands and fathers, women, wives and mothers are to be.¹⁵⁰ It is in the context of the family that absolute biblical truth,¹⁵¹ morality, honesty, responsibility and industry are inculcated.
4. *The first “employment.”* It is the child’s first employment, as he learns to act and live responsibly in the context of sharing and caring through work and cooperation.

When the God–ordained institution of the family is threatened, society is endangered; when the family is strengthened, society is safe–guarded.

D. DISOBEDIENCE TO PARENTS.

Although this sinful behavior is considered acceptable in our day, the greatest judgment sits upon those who disobey or “curse” their parents:

¹⁴⁹ A consistently godly home is the best defense against the sub–cultures and gang–mentalities of our day.

¹⁵⁰ One’s concept of responsible love, marriage and the family is learned through the example of one’s parents. A disorderly, sinful home is perpetuated from generation to generation by example. Thus, apart from the grace of God, the iniquities of the fathers are visited upon their children for succeeding generations.

¹⁵¹ Cf. Eph. 6:1, “Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right.” This is a statement referring to absolute truth. “Rightness” and “wrongness” are realities in the context of God’s Law–Word. The modern idea that all truth is relative stands diametrically opposed to the absolute truth of God.

Ex. 21:17. And he that curseth [וַיִּקְלַל]¹⁵² his father, or his mother, shall surely be put to death.

Lev. 20:9. For every one that curseth [וַיִּקְלַל] his father or his mother shall be surely put to death: he hath cursed his father or his mother; his blood *shall be* upon him.

Dt. 21:18–21. ¹⁸ If a man have a stubborn and rebellious son, which will not obey the voice of his father, or the voice of his mother, and *that*, when they have chastened him, will not hearken unto them: ¹⁹ Then shall his father and his mother lay hold on him, and bring him out unto the elders of his city, and unto the gate of his place; ²⁰ And they shall say unto the elders of his city, This our son *is* stubborn and rebellious, he will not obey our voice; *he is* a glutton, and a drunkard. ²¹ And all the men of his city shall stone him with stones, that he die: so shalt thou put evil away from among you; and all Israel shall hear, and fear.

Prov. 30:17. The eye *that* mocketh at *his* father, and despiseth to obey *his* mother, the ravens of the valley shall pick it out, and the young eagles shall eat it.

Listen to the hymn writer Isaac Watts' in a song for children:

Let Children that would fear the Lord
Hear what their teachers say;
With reverence hear their parents' word,
And with delight obey.

Have you not heard what dreadful plagues
Are threaten'd by the Lord,
To him that breaks his father's laws,
Or Mocks his mother's word?

What heavy guilt upon him lies!
How cursed in his name!
The raven shall pluck out his eyes,
And eagles eat the same.

But those that worship God, and give
Their parents honour due,
Here on this earth they long shall live,
And live hereafter too.¹⁵³

¹⁵² וַיִּקְלַל, Pi'el ptc. of קָלַל "to slight, take lightly, hold in contempt." The usual words for curse are [אָרַר], a curse or imprecation and [אָלַה], an oath.

¹⁵³ *Divine Songs in Easy Language for the Use of Children*, Song XXIII, pp. 48–49.

The New Testament continues with condemnation, revealing disobedience to parents with the utter dissolution of a society!

Rom. 1:28–32. ²⁸ And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient; ²⁹ Being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers, ³⁰ Backbiters, haters of God, despiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, ³¹ Without understanding, covenantbreakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful: ³² Who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them.

2 Tim. 3:1–5. This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. ² For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, ³ Without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, ⁴ Traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than [μᾶλλον ἢ] lovers of God; ⁵ Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof [ἔχοντες μόρφωσιν εὐσεβείας τὴν δὲ δύναμιν αὐτῆς ἡρνημένοι]: from such turn away.¹⁵⁴

Listen to the words of an observant writer:

Youth today love luxury. They have bad manners, contempt for authority, no respect for older people, and talk nonsense when they should work. Young people do not stand up any longer when Adults enter the room. They contradict their parents, talk too much in company, guzzle their food, lay their legs on the table, and tyrannize their elders.¹⁵⁵

E. THE LARGER APPLICATION

1. AUTHORITY AND THE FALL

Had man not fallen, the human race would probably have existed in a family-oriented society composed of families and tribes [extended families] in its fulfillment of the Creation Mandate.¹⁵⁶ The “family,” the “church” and the “state” would have all been identical and co-extensive (Gen. 1:26–28). Note that we do see this in Scripture during the Patriarchal era.

¹⁵⁴ These so described are professing Christians!

¹⁵⁵ Socrates (c. 470–399 BC), quoted by Phillip Graham Ryken in *Written in Stone*, p. 131, quoted from Fran Sciacca, *Generation at Risk*, rev. ed., Chicago: Moody Press, 1991, p. 25.

¹⁵⁶ This, indeed was the theocratic government under God through Israel's early national history from the Exodus to the Hebrew Monarchy (Numb. 1:2–4, 16–18; 24:2; 33:54; Dt. 1:11–18; 29:10; Josh. 3:12; 7:1, 14, 16–18).

Human government since the Fall is largely based on the presupposition that man is a sinner, lawless at heart, and thus in need of constant protection and correction (Rom. 1:18–32; 13:1–7; 2 Tim. 3:16–17¹⁵⁷). Human government with its power to regulate and coerce [forcibly tax and take human life] as well as to protect for the common good is an accommodation to the results of the Fall. Thus, the Fifth Commandment, as case law, has a larger application to every aspect of human relationships.

2. ABSOLUTE AND RELATIVE AUTHORITY

Only God possesses absolute authority. Every human institution possesses only a derived or relative authority. When any human institution abrogates to itself absolute authority, it becomes perverted—atheistic,¹⁵⁸ arbitrary and totalitarian. It usurps the place of God. Human government, as ordained by God for fallen man, has been established for every sphere of life. The Divine command, in the context of man's fallen state and power of redeeming grace, may be illustrated in the following:

a. Husbands and Wives. The husband and father possesses a derived authority under the Lordship of Christ. He is not a dictator, but an obedient servant of Christ. His headship in the marriage and family is primarily spiritual, and it is in this spiritual context alone that he fulfills his position as the true head of the marriage and family in loving and providing for those whom God has placed under his care.

The wife and mother is to love, honor, obey and reverence her husband as her God-ordained head as she submits to Christ (1 Cor. 11:3, 7–9, 12; Col. 3:18–20; 1 Pet. 3:1–7). Obedience is the path of blessing. If the husband is either a tyrant or irresponsible, or the wife disrespectful and disobedient, the whole family becomes fragmented and God's order, purpose and blessing are forfeited.

Children, consciously or unconsciously reflect their upbringing to a great degree.

¹⁵⁷ The practical import of the Scriptures in the life necessarily include "reproof and correction," implying the effects of indwelling sin and remaining corruption in the thinking and actions of believers.

¹⁵⁸ "Atheism" (from α, "no," [alpha privative] and θεός, "God") is not necessarily a disbelief in a God or gods. It is thinking, speaking and acting without reference to God. Many professing Christians are in reality practicing atheists! Cf. Psal. 14:1, "There is no God" is [אֵין אֱלֹהִים], God is nothing.

b. Parents and Children. Parents do not have an absolute right over their children—that right belongs to God alone, who has limited family authority to protect, provide for and punish children (Dt. 21:18–21; Eph. 6:1–4; Col. 3:20–21).¹⁵⁹ Parents are obligated to instruct, discipline and lead their children to become godly, responsible, industrious adults (Dt. 4:9–10; 6:4–24; Eph. 6:1–4; 2 Tim. 3:14–15; 3 Jn. 4).

When the children are neither instructed in godliness nor properly disciplined, or abused and disregarded, the family is destroyed.

c. Masters and Servants. Masters are to treat their servants or employees equitably, since they themselves are under God’s stewardship. Servants are to work honestly and responsibly performing their duties “as unto the Lord” (Eph. 6:5–9; Col. 3:22–4:1; Titus 2:9–10; 1 Pet. 2:18–20). When such God–ordained mandates are disregarded, then an antagonism necessarily develops between “labor” [the working class] and “management” [the ruling class], giving rise to either anarchy and revolution or to evil and arbitrary forms of totalitarian government (Fascism, Socialism, Communism).

d. Pastors and Churches. Pastors are to be faithful to God and his truth in the ministry of the Word to shepherd, preach, teach, feed, reprove, rebuke and exhort their congregations (Acts 20:26–28; Eph. 4:11–16; 1 Tim. 3:1–7; 2 Tim. 4:1–5; Titus 1:4–9). They are also to speak out against error and heresy (Titus 1:9–13). Churches are to care for their pastors (1 Cor. 9:6–14; 16:10–17; Gal. 6:6) and submit to their authority as it derives from the Scriptures (Heb. 13:7, 17).

e. State and Citizens. God has ordained human government for the sake of maintaining order and punishing criminals (Rom. 13:1–7). The state is only one of several governments that God has ordained. It is meant to function only in the limited civil sphere, and not in matters primarily related to the family or the church.

When the state reflects God’s Law–Word in its own laws, it is equitable and limited in its function; when it abandons a sense of God’s absolute authority, it necessarily becomes secularized, arbitrary and totalitarian. It usurps the place of God as the Divine or Messianic state.

¹⁵⁹ Pagan fathers in ancient societies had absolute power to abuse, maim, and even kill their children. Even the family, existing under God, has a limited authority.

NOTE: The Lord Jesus Christ acknowledged the existence of a composite society, i.e., rendering unto Caesar that which is Caesar's and unto God that which is God's (Matt. 22:15–22). Religious offences should be dealt with in a religious context, and civil offences in a civil context. The burning of witches or the execution of religious heretics betrays an Old Testament mentality that characterizes a sacralist state and lacks the balance and grace of New Testament Christianity.

Laws, however, for criminal offences such as murder, should remain for the acknowledgment of God and the maintenance of social order (Gen. 9:5–6; Numb. 35:11–34; Rom. 13:4). Rom. 13:4, “if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to *execute* wrath upon him that doeth evil” refers to the legitimate power and responsibility of the state to mete out capital punishment.

The modern idea of “the separation of church and state” is a perversion which is used to divorce God from society and reality, i.e., the promotion of an atheistic state separate from any Christian influence. This derives from an arbitrary concept of the “church”. The intention of the framers of the Constitution was to prohibit the government from promoting a state church, not to establish a secular state by separating the government from any and all forms of Christian influence.

Because God has ordained human government for the good of mankind and punishment of criminals, all laws are to be obeyed, taxes paid, and allegiance is to be given to all in legitimate authority (Rom. 13:1–7; Titus 3:1; 1 Pet. 2:13–17).

3. UNJUST AUTHORITY: CIVIL RESISTANCE AND DISOBEDIENCE

Is there a scriptural basis for civil resistance or disobedience? What of unjust government authority and the oppression of a people by a wicked ruler? Is there any basis for revolution? The following issues should be carefully noted:

- a. *Civil resistance on the part of Christians.* At the point man's law conflicts with faithfulness to God's Law–Word, the Christian must resist through all appropriate, God–honoring means, being faithful even unto death (Ex. 1:15–21; 1 Kgs. 18:3–4, 13; Dan. 3:12–18; 6:1–11; Rev. 2:10; 12:11).
- b. *Civil disobedience on the part of Christians.* Acts 5:29, “We ought to obey God rather than men,” has been used to further civil disobedience and commit overt criminal acts on the part of professing Christians. This has been the alleged scriptural justification for such diverse movements as “civil rights” marches and anti-abortion criminal violence. It should be noted that the apostles declared this to the Jewish Sanhedrin, a *religious* and not a *civil* court. Their actions and

declaration constituted a religious matter, not a civil matter, which would have necessarily been deferred to the Roman authorities.

Civil resistance may become civil disobedience only under the most extreme or intolerable circumstances—at the point in which there remains no redress and the government becomes so corrupt or tyrannical that it must be replaced with one which is established on godly principles (Prov. 29:2).

- c. *The right of revolution for an oppressed people.* A revolution is technically the overthrow of a political and social system or structure. Historically, Christians, holding to the biblical principles of legitimate state authority (Rom. 13:1–7; Titus 3:1; 1 Pet. 2:13–17), have made a very necessary distinction between a “war for independence” or “freedom from tyranny” and an anarchist “revolution”.

Those fighting for independence or freedom from tyranny sought to gather under a “lesser magistrate” or other recognized civil or military leaders who would own their cause, lead them, and thus retain a necessary civil order, rather than become lawless rabble, revolutionaries or anarchists.

NOTE: This was the case in the Huguenot wars of France (See *Vindiciae Contra Tyrannos*, or *The Vindication of Liberty Against Tyrants*, by Junius Brutus, 1579), the Dutch Civil War and the English Civil War under Cromwell (See *Lex Rex*, or *The Law and the Prince*, by Samuel Rutherford, 1644). This difference was also evidenced in the marked contrast between the American War for Independence (1776–1780) and the French Revolution (1789–).

The former was carried out under duly constituted leadership and maintained a civil and military order; the latter was an anarchist revolution which attempted to completely destroy the political, social and religious foundations and erase the past, and create out of its bloody chaos the first modern atheistic state based solely on the principle of human reason. The former succeeded because it had a sufficient moral base in a Christian consensus; the latter failed because Roman Catholicism could not provide a sufficient moral base, and the revolution further destroyed what religious base existed and so was inherently and totally morally relativistic. The absence of law is not freedom; it is lawlessness.

All legitimate principles of civil resistance or disobedience, then, are based on the presupposition that God’s Law reigns supreme over man’s law, and that man must not assume to usurp God’s ultimate authority.

4. THE STATE AS GOD

Civil government is only one sphere of law among several ordained by God, i.e., the family, the church and the state. All are to exist and function under God's Law–Word.

When the state abrogates to itself total jurisdiction—becomes totalitarian—in the formation and transmission of the culture,¹⁶⁰ it necessarily usurps the place of God.¹⁶¹ Christians have always had to contend with a deified concept of the state or its leaders.¹⁶² It either dominates the family and institutionalized religion or seeks to render them inconsequential.¹⁶³ In abandoning the reality of Divine Law and purpose [predestination], it simply substitutes its own.

NOTE: Man is a creature of purpose. He naturally hates Divine predestination because he desires to implement his own. E.g., Hegelianism, of the idea that “the state is God walking through the earth,” i.e., God is embodied in the national spirit or leaders of the people, a collective spark of Divinity in man; Social Darwinism, or the evolution of the state as manifest in a totalitarian government such as Marxism; Logical Positivism, or the idea society must be freed from the theological and metaphysical and brought into the scientific stage—individual consciousness replaced by a community consciousness of

¹⁶⁰ “Culture” is an inclusive term that denotes the religious, philosophical, intellectual and practical aspects of a given people or civilization. The term derives from the Lat: *cultura*, from *cultus*, worship. A given culture is inescapably an inclusive, practical expression of its faith.

¹⁶¹ Even humanistic law necessarily reflects Divine Law, but it is removed from the Divine into a merely human context. E.g., The sin and crime of rape is removed from the absolute moral self-consistency of God to the area of humanistic free-will, i.e., the difference does not derive from moral absolutes or the sacredness of marriage, but revolves about either consensual or forced sexual activity. Many laws for safety, health and even the disabled have a biblical basis (Lev. 19:14; Dt. 22:8).

¹⁶² Early Christians had to acknowledge Caesar as “Lord” and renounce Christ or be put to death, i.e., it was either *Καίσαρ Κύριος* (Caesar is Lord) or *Χριστός Κύριος* (Christ is Lord). In the Middle Ages, the Church of Rome ruled over and through the kingdoms of Western Civilization, and everyone outside Romanism was considered a heretic to be punished by death. Today, Christians are dealing with a secular state that usurps the place of God—the issue is the same.

¹⁶³ The primacy of the family is preempted by the statist educational and welfare systems and institutionalized Christianity is preempted by the sophistry of “the separation of church and state”.

scientific law—a secular, collectivist mentality. These humanistic philosophies are predominate in modern American thought.

The modern American secular, socialistic state furthers its own religion, Secular Humanism. It arbitrarily exacts its own tithe in the form of unjust taxation for the maintenance of a centralized government, immoral legislation and a welfare state. It seeks to absolutely control its citizens through its own program of indoctrination, the statist educational system.

5. THE STATE AS PARENT

God has ordained the parents to be the primary authority over, and the guardians, teachers and disciplinarians of their offspring. Parents abdicate this God-mandated responsibility in disobedience when they give their children up to be religiously taught by the church (“Sunday school”)¹⁶⁴ or academically taught by the state (the statist or government school system).

The idea that marriage should be abolished, the best males and females should be selected for breeding, that children belong to the state rather than the parents, and that the children ought to be “educated” in the statist system was first envisioned by Plato in *The Republic* (c. 360 BC), a seemingly innocuous work consisting of a dinner conversation among several friends. This has in principle become the blueprint for every socialistic and totalitarian government since ancient Greece—including modern Fascism, Nazism, Socialism, Marxism and Secular Humanism. It is the model for American secular, statist education.

The state is secular and totalitarian in its claims. It declares that it has “a compelling interest” in the education, care, conditioning and control of all children. Many teachers view themselves as the vanguard of a new world-order that is secular, anti-Christ and immoral in principle and precept. The state becomes “The Parent” and inculcates its humanistic, evolutionary, morally relativistic, radical environmental, pro-homosexual philosophy into the minds and shapes the lives of its “offspring”.

NOTE: The biblical role of a teacher is inclusive in shaping the thought-process, character and entire life of the student. Cf. Matt. 10:24–25, “The disciple [student] is not above *his* master [teacher]...It is enough for the disciple [student] that he be as his master [teacher], and the servant as his lord.” Lk. 6:40, “The disciple [student] is not above his master [teacher]: but every one that is perfect [has completed his education] shall be as his master [teacher].”

¹⁶⁴ The church’s teaching ministry to the children should supplement that of godly, responsible parents, not be the primary source of their spiritual education (Dt. 4:9–10; 6:4–7; Eph. 6:1–4; Col. 3:20–21).

The role of the teacher is to completely reproduce himself in his students—he is, indeed *in loco parentis* [in the stead of the parent].

How can Christian parents, whose God–mandated responsibility it is to instruct their children in the truth of God, discipline them with a God–consciousness, and seek to lead them to Christ and fit them to live responsibly—how can they give their children over to a system of indoctrination and conditioning that is absolutely destructive of every aspect of Divine reality and truth? What possible motive or argument could be that compelling? How can Christians be the “salt of the earth” and “the light of the world” (Matt. 5:13–14; Lk. 14:34–35) and give their children up to secular statist indoctrination? The judgment of God is certain upon such sinful disregard for God and his Word!

F. THE DUTIES ENJOINED

The duties enjoined in the Fifth Commandment are concerned with all legitimate, i.e., God–ordained authority, and include:

1. It is the duty of every child to obey its parents as the representatives of God’s mandated authority in the family and home.
2. It is the duty of Christian children to still respect and care for their parents when they are aged (Lev. 19:32; Prov. 23:22; 1 Tim. 5:32–8).
3. True Christian discipline is not physical or mental abuse, and must be practiced in a God–conscious context, not merely a parent–conscious context, i.e., authority does not culminate with the parent, but always with God, whom the parent represents and to whom the parent is himself or herself subservient.
4. It is the duty of Christian parents to faithfully indoctrinate, train, educate and discipline their children according to the Scriptures, and not give up this authority to others.
5. It is the duty of employees to faithfully serve their employers, and for employers to deal equitably with their employees.
6. Although the person himself may prove unworthy of honor, the office or position which he occupies must be upheld.
7. It is the duty of every Christian to obey the laws of society to avoid criminal prosecution, maintain a consistent testimony, and for conscience’s sake before God. This includes paying taxes and honoring the office of the magistrate (Rom. 13:1–7; 1 Pet. 2:13–17).
8. It is the duty of the civil government to execute incorrigible or career criminals.
9. It is the duty of all citizens to support their civil government, until that government becomes so corrupt and intolerable that all lawful means

fail, and civil disobedience is required to constitute another government upon godly principles.

G. THE PROHIBITIONS: EXPLICIT AND IMPLICIT

The prohibitions, both explicit and implicit, include:

1. This Commandment prohibits disobedience to all God-ordained authority.
2. This Commandment prohibits any and all disobedience and behavior disrespectful of one's parents.
3. This Commandment prohibits the abandonment or neglect of any parental duty mandated by God.
4. This Commandment prohibits the neglect of aged parents (Prov. 23:22) and such humanistic solutions to old age and infirmity such as euthanasia.
5. This Commandment prohibits involvement in tax evasion or non-payment protests, as all civil authority is, in principle ordained by God for the maintenance of society (Rom. 13:1–7; 1 Pet. 2:13–17).
6. This Commandment condemns the idea that the family is a democracy, which promotes an equality between the parents and children.
7. This Commandment condemns the idea that “it takes a village to raise a child”. When others, including siblings, attempt to rear a child, then that child's sense of parental authority is lost, and it does not distinguish between parental authority and the attempted control of others.
8. This Commandment condemns the attempt of the state to demand what belongs solely to God, and implies freedom of religion, conscience and all legitimate pursuits.
9. This Commandment condemns the state as a family-substitute in taxing income, property and inheritance,¹⁶⁵ which destroys the wealth and limits the future of the family.

¹⁶⁵ Through property taxation, property may be sold for taxes, *de facto* destroying the reality of private property to its citizens. The same holds true for inheritance taxation. The state replaces the family as the primary inheritor of wealth.

10. This Commandment by implication condemns same-sex relationships in alleged “family” relationships.

X The Sixth Commandment

Quest. : What is the Sixth Commandment?

Ans: The Sixth Commandment is, “Thou shalt not kill.” (Ex. 20:13)

Quest. : What is the significance of the Sixth Commandment?

Ans: The Sixth Commandment declares the sovereignty of God over life and death, and forbids the unlawful taking of human life, or whatsoever tends thereto.

A. ANALYSIS AND EXPOSITION

The Sixth Commandment declares the sovereignty of God over life and death. There is in this Commandment:

1. *A Negative Declaration.* “Thou shalt not kill.” [לֹא תִרְצֹחַ]. The verb is imperative and singular, emphasizing personal responsibility.¹⁶⁶ The strong or absolute negative [לֹא] is used with the imperf. The verb “kill” [רָצַח] refers specifically to shedding human blood, and not to killing in general.¹⁶⁷ The LXX reads οὐ φονεύσεις, referring specifically to the crime of murder.¹⁶⁸ “Murder,” although the central thought, is too narrow, as the Commandment pertains to all *unlawful* taking of human life, including voluntary and involuntary manslaughter, death by negligence, being an accessory to unlawful death, etc.

Some would read this Commandment environmentally to forbid the killing of animals and even plants, but the language refers specifically to human life.

¹⁶⁶ Qal. imperf. 2 pers. masc. sing. This is the absolute, perpetual prohibition.

¹⁶⁷ רָצַח occurs six times in the Heb. Old Testament (Ex. 20:13; Numb. 35:27; Dt. 4:42; 5:17; 1 Kgs. 21:19; Hos. 4:2). There are seven other terms translated “kill” in the Heb., referring to both human beings and animals: הָרַג, slay, kill; נָכַח, strike, slaughter; מוֹת, die, kill; שָׁחַט, slaughter, flay, dress; טָבַח, slaughter, butcher; זָבַח, slaughter for sacrifice; נָקַף, surround, strike off.

¹⁶⁸ οὐ φονεύσεις, fut. act. ind. 2nd pers. sing. The future is used as an imperative. φονεύω is one of six different terms in the LXX translated “kill,” and always refers to the murder of a human being.

2. *A Positive Implication.* The antithesis is that we are commanded to love God supremely and completely, and in this context, we are to love our neighbor as ourselves (Dt. 6:4–5; Matt. 22:36–40). The term “neighbor” is inclusive of any and all human beings without exception, including not only friends, associates, countrymen, or those of like faith, but “strangers” [foreigners] and even one’s enemies (Ex. 22:21; 23:9; Dt. 10:12–19; Matt. 5:43–48; Lk. 10:25–37; Rom. 12:19–21)!¹⁶⁹

B. THE FIFTH–TENTH COMMANDMENTS

The Fifth Commandment forms a connection between the first four (love to God) and the final five (love to neighbor), as it protects and perpetuates all God–ordained, proper authority. The Sixth protects human life, the Seventh protects the God–ordained institution of marriage, the Eighth protects one’s private property, the Ninth protects one’s reputation, and the Tenth protects everything pertaining to one’s neighbor by mandating the proper inward attitude toward others and what pertains to them.

C. GOD IS THE SOURCE OF ALL LIFE

God is the source of all life—plant, animal, human and angelic. As the Creator, Sustainer and moral Governor of creation, God is absolutely sovereign over both life and death (Dt. 32:39; Jn. 18:10–11; Rom. 11:33–36; Rev. 1:18). He both gives and takes life as his sovereign prerogative, and delegates the responsibility to man to both preserve and take life in terms of his Law–Word.

D. REVERENCE FOR LIFE

The Scriptures reveal that God cares for all living things—land, plants, animals, and man (Gen. 1:1–31; 2:15–24; Lev. 36:33–35, 43; 2 Chron. 36:20–21; Psa. 104:1–31; Matt. 6:28–30; 10:29–31; Acts 17:25; Rom. 8:19–23; Col. 1:17¹⁷⁰). In the created order there are different levels of life. Plant life sustains both man and beast. Animals provide food and clothing for man (Gen. 3:21). God has given man dominion over lesser

¹⁶⁹ This is the burden of our Lord’s corrective teaching—that one’s neighbor includes anyone with whom we come in contact. The Jews had traditionally limited this to one’s own close associates, social class or race.

¹⁷⁰ Col. 1:16–17, “For by him [the eternal Son of God] were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether *they be* thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him...and by him all things consist (τὰ πάντα ἐν αὐτῷ συνέστηκεν, lit: ‘in him all things cohere, or are held together’).”

creation and permits the killing of plant and animal life (Gen. 1:29; 9:1–5; Psa. 8:3–8; Matt. 6:28–30; Rom. 14:2, 6, 14–23; 1 Tim. 4:1–6). Thus, not all life is equal. Human life is distinct and unique because man was created in the image of God (Gen. 1:26; 9:5–6; Lk. 3:38; Acts 17:28–29; Eph. 4:24; Col. 3:10; Jas. 3:9). Human life thus possesses a derived value, never an inherent value (Gen. 9:5–6).

We are not to have a “reverence for life,” but a reverence for God and his Law–Word. The modern, evolutionary, humanistic—or mystical, New Age—idea that all “animal” [animal and human] life is equal (and thus “sacred” or to be held in “reverence”), and therefore one should be vegetarian in diet,¹⁷¹ for “animal rights,” and a radical environmentalist, is anti-scriptural.¹⁷² It is a denial of the scriptural teaching that animals are a lower creation than man, that man is to exercise godly, responsible dominion over all of creation under God (Gen. 1:26–28; Psa. 8:3–8), and that man is created uniquely in his image.

The Scriptures, however, do teach that there is to be a scriptural respect for all life because God has so commanded (Ex. 23:5; Dt. 20:19–20; 22:4, 6–7). Careless pollution or exploitation of the environment, wanton killing or destruction, animal or human abuse, is not exercising wise and godly dominion. While it is true that the material universe and present order of things are destined to be destroyed in future judgment (2 Pet. 3:7, 10–13), we are to exercise godly, responsible dominion in this present life to the glory of God as his vicegerents upon earth (Gen. 1:26–28; Lk. 19:13¹⁷³; 1 Cor. 10:31).

¹⁷¹ Vegetarianism for health reasons may be legitimate, but if for any alleged religious reasons, it is anti-scriptural (Rom. 14:2, 6, 14–23; Col. 2:16, 20–23; 1 Tim. 4:1–6).

¹⁷² Cf. 1 Tim. 4:1–5. As all reality derives from God, so all sin is against God. When any given society turns from God in its thinking (Rom. 1:28–32), it comes under moral judgment and begins to disintegrate.

¹⁷³ Cf. Lk. 19:11–28. This parable is concerned with our Lord’s absence between his first and second advents. It is illustrative of the faithfulness of his servants in his absence. We are to “occupy” (Πραγματεύσασθε), aor. mid. imp., implying a determined, concentrated or pointed effort to do business or trade) till he comes. The servants of Christ, with a sense of urgency and determination, are to seek to extend and promote the King’s business until he returns.

E. MURDER AND MANSLAUGHTER

The Sixth Commandment forbids the unlawful taking of human life. This mandate is very broad, and applies to premeditated murder (Gen. 4:6–8; Numb. 35:16–18, 20–21, 29–34; Dt. 19:11–13; Mk. 7:21–23; Gal. 5:19–21; 1 Tim. 1:9), voluntary manslaughter [crime of passion] (Numb. 35:22–28),¹⁷⁴ and being an accessory to murder (2 Sam. 11:1–27; 12:9).

Even involuntary manslaughter through negligence, carelessness, or “accident” (Ex. 21:28–29; Numb. 35:10–15; Dt. 19:1–10; 22:8)¹⁷⁵ is not to be taken lightly.

F. CAPITAL PUNISHMENT

Not all taking of human life is morally wrong; it is righteous when performed in obedience to the Law–Word of God. Indeed, not lawfully taking a human life in such circumstances is disobedience and brings Divine judgment (Gen. 9:6; Numb. 35:29–34; Dt. 19:11–13). God has mandated capital punishment for the unlawful taking of human life, and for murder in particular.

NOTE: The God–ordained Mosaic legislation, peculiar to that sacralist or monolithic society, mandated the death penalty for a variety of offences (in a sacralist society, sin and crime are co–extensive), including murder (Ex. 21:12–14; Numb. 35:29–34), voluntary and indirect manslaughter (Ex. 21:28–29), idolatry (Ex. 22:20; Lev. 20:2), adultery (Lev. 20:10–21), incest (Lev. 20:11–12, 14), bestiality (Ex. 22:19; Lev. 20:15–16), homosexuality (Lev. 20:13), fornication (Dt. 22:20–21), rape (Dt. 22:23–27), witchcraft (Ex. 22:18), filial rebellion [striking or cursing a parent] (Ex. 21:15; Lev. 20:9), Sabbath–breaking (Ex. 35:2; Numb. 15:32–36), blasphemy (Lev. 24:11–14, 16, 23), incorrigible criminality or delinquency (Dt. 21:18–21), refusing the decision of the priestly court (Dt. 17:8–13) and kidnapping (Ex. 21:16; Dt. 24:7).

Today, in our modern, secular society, sin is non–existent and crime has been both narrowed and re–defined in terms of “sickness,” “alternative life–styles” and “victimization”. The principle of restitution has largely been replaced by intrusion of insurance companies, leaving the perpetrator only indirectly affected.

Four issues need to be considered:

1. *God has delegated the power of capital punishment to proper human authority* (Dt. 19:1–13; Numb. 35:29–34; Rom. 13:1–7). In the early

¹⁷⁴ God commanded Israel to hold a court of inquiry to discern the exact nature of the situation that lead to death.

¹⁷⁵ Even though a person might be safe in the city of refuge, he could be killed by the avenger of blood [next of kin] if he left its sanctuary.

history of Israel, the executioner was the “avenger of blood,” or the next of kin within the family or tribe. At times, the judges and executioners were the men of a given city, and, in later times, the national leadership. Modern governments have judicial systems to try capital crimes. Capital punishment can never be personal, but must be judicial; justice, not revenge, is the issue. Personal vengeance by its very nature tends to be biased, irrational and inequitable (Gen. 4:23–24)¹⁷⁶; the judicial system seeks to be rational, impartial, just and equitable.

2. *The God-ordained, Mosaic legislation did not establish a prison system for either punishment or rehabilitation*, but under God dealt in terms of repentance, retribution, retaliation (*lex talionis*, or “life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, burning for burning, wound for wound, stripe for stripe.” Ex. 21:23–25; Lev. 24:17–21; Dt. 19:21) or restitution, with a very high interest (Ex. 21:1–14). Prisons were wards where one was temporarily detained until trial. Later references to prisons in Israel derived from the influence and authority of other governments over the Jews.
3. *The God-ordained, Mosaic legislation did not allow any mitigation of the death penalty for murder*, no plea bargain for capital offences, and no exception was made for either minors or those with diminished capacity [insanity plea] (Numb. 35:31–34). Further, if an animal was involved in a human death, that animal was killed, and, in some cases, the owner was also executed, as being ultimately responsible for the animal (Ex. 21:28–32). This is the high value God placed on human life because it reflects his person. To smite another human being is to strike out against God. All issues of life and death are necessarily theological.¹⁷⁷

¹⁷⁶ The import of Lamech’s statement seems to be that he killed a man who wounded him and then another for assaulting him. If any would seek to do him harm, he would kill them—fallen man’s ultimate answer to life’s greatest inter-personal problems is death through personal vengeance. Cf. Rom. 12:19–21. Personal vengeance seeks to supplant God, who alone has the right and prerogative to take vengeance.

¹⁷⁷ As all reality derives from God, so all sin is against God. When any given society turns from God in its thinking (Rom. 1:28–32), it comes under moral judgment and begins to disintegrate.

4. *What is the basis for the modern idea that capital punishment is morally wrong?* Every culture is the outworking of faith. An anti-scriptural, humanistic “faith” which sees truth as relative, man as the height of the evolutionary process, all life as “sacred,” denies the derived value of human life, and imputes an inherent value to it,¹⁷⁸ necessarily views the death penalty as unpardonable. Its reasoning is as follows: It would comprise the greater crime of society against the criminal than the criminal against his victim. Man is essentially good; he is evolving and thus perfectible. The real problem is the social environment. The whole society is collectively guilty, therefore it is wrong to single out and punish the individual. Rehabilitation, not execution, is the answer of the Social Darwinist. The life of the criminal, who is allegedly a victim of his social environment, is of more value than that of the fetus [unborn child]. Thus, those who oppose the death penalty are almost always pro-abortion. The medical model has replaced the biblical model, i.e., men are neither sinners nor criminals, but “sick,” or “victims,” as though criminal activity resulted from passively contracting a disease or was a matter of genetics or environment. Such is the irresponsibility, irrationality, existentialism and depravity of human beings in opposition to the Law–Word of God (Rom. 1:18–32; 3:9–23; Eph. 4:17–19).¹⁷⁹

G. ABORTION–EUTHANASIA–SUICIDE

According to God’s Law–Word, abortion is necessarily murder, the unlawful taking of a human life (Ex. 21:22–23¹⁸⁰; Job 10:8–12; Psa. 139:13–17; Lk. 1:41–44). Whatever is human life has always been uniquely human life, even at the very outset and in its most elementary form. There is no evolution in the womb, no point where cells, tissue, or

¹⁷⁸ Actually, once human life is considered to possess an inherent rather than a derived value, it invariably becomes devalued. Only when man is considered as created in God’s image does human life retain its true value and significance.

¹⁷⁹ It is of the utmost importance to note that at any given point in Scripture, man is held wholly responsible for his sin.

¹⁸⁰ The term “fruit” is *פֶּלֶא*, referring to a person, a child. Although the miscarriage of the unborn baby was not treated as murder, it must be noted that this occurred as a result of indirect action, not a willful abortion, and also that the penalty imposed eliminates any idea that the fetus was simply part of a woman’s own body.

animal life evolves into human life. It is anti-scriptural, anti-scientific and irrational to even suggest that a zygote [a fertilized human egg, embryo] or fetus [unborn baby] is simply a part of a woman's own body. It is clearly an entity in itself, the combination of the sperm of a man and the egg of a woman, the result is conception and the beginning of a distinct and unique life.¹⁸¹ Modern, Secular Humanism, being anti-Christian, immoral,¹⁸² materialistic and evolutionary, denies the existence of the human soul, sin and moral responsibility. But perversion of the truth changes neither the truth nor its necessary consequences. Murder by any other name changes nothing.

Euthanasia¹⁸³ is the counterpart to abortion. It is the killing of the aged, infirmed, insane and senile because these become a physical, psychological and economic burden to society. It is often termed "mercy killing" because it ends their suffering (taking them from mere physical suffering to that of the soul in torments? Heb. 7:27). In our modern, technological age, "death by natural causes" must be re-defined and great moral issues exist. We must differentiate among such realities as patient-assisted suicide, euthanasia without consent ["mercy killing"], passive euthanasia and termination of treatment. We must acknowledge that God alone has the prerogative to give and to take life. Cessation of treatment or life-prolonging technology may allow the patient to die of natural causes when life is wholly sustained by artificial means and recovery or improvement is hopeless. Even under seemingly simple circumstances, moral questions will always remain because technology in many instances has made "death by natural causes" almost abnormal.

Suicide is the unlawful taking of one's own life; it is self-murder. It is abrogating the Divine prerogative to give and take human life. Six suicides are noted in Scripture: Samson, Judg. 16:23-31; Saul and his armor-bearer, 1 Sam. 31:3-5; Ahithophel, 2 Sam. 17:23; Zimri, King of

¹⁸¹ The moral implications of in vitro fertilization are that the disposal of left-over fertilized eggs is thus murder.

¹⁸² Modern secular society is said to be "amoral," but this is impossible. Man as created in the image of God possesses a distinct moral character from which he can neither escape nor deny. He is thus either moral or immoral. There is no possibility of moral neutrality. The Apostle implies this in 1 Cor. 10:31.

¹⁸³ "Euthanasia" derives from the Gk: εὖ, "well, good," and θάνατος, "death". Lit: "good death."

Israel, 1 Kgs. 16:18–19; and Judas Iscariot, Matt. 27:3–5; Acts 1:16–19. There are two issues which should cause careful consideration:

1. *We should not judge too harshly in all cases.* There may be various reasons for suicide: insanity, cowardliness or extreme fear of torture, philosophical deliberation, extreme clinical depression, and terminal illness coupled with intense mental and physical suffering, etc. In our modern, technological era, medically-induced depression as an unavoidable side effect of drug therapy, a modern condition, may leave the patient completely detached from reality, suicidal and uncontrollable. Believers, of all people, should be extremely loving, patient, considerate and understanding toward those who endure great suffering and are in such danger.
2. *Ultimate self-sacrifice may be a commendable act, and not suicide.* Although questionable, Samson's death must be considered in the context of his entire life and the biblical record (Cf. Judg. 16:27–30; Heb. 11:32, 39). Our Lord stated that laying down one's life [voluntarily dying for another] for his friends was the highest act of love (Jn. 15:13). John mentions this in a Christian context (1 Jn. 3:16). Paul mentions the same to emphasize the greater love of the Lord Jesus Christ for sinners (Rom. 5:6–8). Husbands, if they are godly after the pattern of Christ, should be willing to die for their wives (Eph. 5:25–29). Voluntarily giving up one's life in self-sacrifice or for the sake of the Gospel with the right motive might be commendable. Consider the countless godly martyrs. Only God knows the heart and motivation (1 Cor. 13:3).

H. PASSIVE AND HIDDEN MURDER

1. PASSIVE MURDER.

Negligence which may result in death [negligent homicide] can be classified as "passive murder."

Dt. 22:8. When thou buildest a new house, then thou shalt make a battlement for thy roof, that thou bring not blood upon thine house, if any man fall from thence.

A railing or wall was to be constructed around the roof, as it was frequented by persons as a storage place, a place of prayer or a place of privacy.

To let another die when it could be prevented is also a breaking of the Sixth Commandment. Cf. Lk. 10:25–37. The "Good Samaritan" was the true neighbor to the man who fell among thieves and was left to die.

The priest and Levite, who passed him by were breaking the Sixth Commandment.

2. HIDDEN MURDER.

Murder begins in the heart. The Sixth Commandment not only forbids the overt act of unlawfully taking human life, it likewise prohibits every thought, motivation, inclination and action that tends toward that act. Thus, this Commandment condemns all unrighteous anger, vindictiveness, cursing, envy, jealousy, covetousness, hatred, malice, gossip and holding of a grudge etc.

All sin, including the unlawful taking of human life, begins in the heart. This is made absolutely clear by the teaching of our Lord (Matt. 5:21–22; Mk. 7:21–23) and the inspired writers (Gen. 4:6–8; Matt. 27:18; Mk. 15:10; Rom. 1:28–32; Gal. 5:19–21; Eph. 4:17–19; 1 Jn. 3:11–15). It should never be forgotten that the first human blood ever shed (the blood of righteous Abel), was shed in religious persecution because of envy!

Matt. 5:21–22. ²¹ Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment: ²² But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment: and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca [ῥακά, numbskull, empty-headed, one who is utterly lacking in discernment] shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool [μωρόε, fr. μωρός, extremely stupid, moral rebrobate] shall be in danger of hell fire.

Rom. 1:28–32. ²⁸ And even as they did not like to retain God in *their* knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient; ²⁹ Being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers, ³⁰ Backbiters, haters of God, despiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, ³¹ Without understanding, covenantbreakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful: ³² Who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them.

Gal. 5:16–23. ¹⁶ *This* I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh. ¹⁷ For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would. ¹⁸ But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law. ¹⁹ Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are *these*; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, ²⁰ Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, ²¹ Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told *you* in time past, that they which do such

things shall not inherit the kingdom of God. ²² But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, ²³ Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.

Eph. 5:29–32. ²⁹ Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers. ³⁰ And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption. ³¹ Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: ³² And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.

Col. 3:5–10. ⁵ Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry: ⁶ For which things' sake the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience: ⁷ In the which ye also walked some time, when ye lived in them. ⁸ But now ye also put off all these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth. ⁹ Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds; ¹⁰ And have put on the new *man*, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him:

Jas. 3:2–16. ² For in many things we offend all. If any man offend not in word, the same *is* a perfect man, *and* able also to bridle the whole body....⁵ the tongue is a little member, and boasteth great things. Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth! ⁶ And the tongue *is* a fire, a world of iniquity: so is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell.....the tongue can no man tame; *it is* an unruly evil, full of deadly poison. ⁹ Therewith bless we God, even the Father; and therewith curse we men, which are made after the similitude of God. ¹⁰ Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing....if ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth. ¹⁵ This wisdom descendeth not from above, but *is* earthly, sensual, devilish. ¹⁶ For where envying and strife *is*, there *is* confusion and every evil work.

1 Jn. 3:10, 14–15. In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother.... We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death. Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him.

I. PACIFISM AND WAR

Pacifism cannot be consistently drawn from the Scriptures. Pacifists strain certain passages, deny the right of self-defense, tend to alienate the Old Testament from the New, and practically become a burden to their fellow-countrymen in time of war.

War is a grim reality that demonstrates the awful truth of man's depravity. Wars of local or national defense, wars waged to deliver an inferior,

persecuted people, etc., may be termed just [righteous] wars; aggressive wars for national, territorial or economic gain would not. It should be noted, however, that the God-mandated war against the Canaanites was genocide—the utter destruction of an entire people, culture and race. Although it may be argued that such war was just, because of their sins (Gen. 15:16), the same could be argued against almost any other ancient and many modern nations.

The Canaanitish war was just, because God commanded it. God is absolutely righteous; therefore, whatever he commands is right.¹⁸⁴ Suffice it to say that in a time of legitimate war, killing is not unlawful, unless the motivation is personal vengeance or for personal gain, which remains murder. The soldier acts, not as an individual, but as an instrument of the state, although personally, he may act with malice and personal hatred and become guilty of murder.

J. SELF-DEFENSE

Self-defense is not only taught in Scripture, it is implied in the Sixth Commandment. In defending one's self or others he ought to protect, one is seeking to prevent a breach of this Commandment (5:25–29). A thief could be killed when breaking in at night, because the circumstances involved darkness, the possibility of hidden weapons or accomplices, and the means and motivation to seriously injure or kill the inhabitants of the house, etc. (Ex. 21:2–3). This was necessarily a form of self-defense.

The teaching of our Lord is very important, as it has been misused to teach pacifism (Cf. Matt. 5:38–48; Lk. 6:28–36). The reaction when smitten on the right cheek to turn the other [left] has not to do with legitimate self-defense, but suffering as a Christian. As most men are right-handed, this—and the context seems to support this interpretation—necessarily refers to a back-handed slap of contempt. We have a legitimate right to self-defense in light of the Sixth Commandment, but we may be called upon to personally suffer persecution as a Christian, and such may be endured by the grace of God (Matt. 5:9–12; Jn. 15:18–25; Rom. 12:19–21; 1 Pet. 2:12–25; 4:1, 12–19).

¹⁸⁴ Cf. The Divine command for the prophet Hosea to marry Gomer, a prostitute, as a sign to Israel. For Hosea to obey God—whatever he commanded—was a righteous act. Those who have difficulty with such issues have a deficient concept of the infinite nature and moral self-consistency of God, and seek to bring him down to a finite level and to subject him to a higher authority or standard.

Corporately and nationally, Christians may take up the sword as responsible citizens in reconstituting a righteous government. In self-defense, one may not use a greater degree of force without assuming the part of an aggressor. There may be a very thin line between legitimate self-defense and sinful assault.

NOTE: Cf. Gen. 4:23–24. The import of Lamech's statement seems to be that he killed a man who wounded him and then another for assaulting him. If any would seek to do him harm, he would kill them—fallen man's ultimate answer to life's greatest inter-personal problems is death through personal vengeance. Cf. Rom. 12:19–21. Personal vengeance seeks to supplant God, who alone has the right and prerogative to take vengeance.

K. SPIRITUAL MURDER

False doctrine kills the souls of men! The devil sought to murder the souls of Adam and Eve in the temptation and seduction through his lie:

Jn. 8:44. Ye are of *your* father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it.

Those who preach false doctrine, declaring peace when God has not are guilty of the souls of men! The “easy-believeism” of modern religion, the “carnal Christian” heresy, both of which delude people into thinking they are “saved” without converted lives is a prime example, as is the sacerdotalism of Rome. Is this not what our Lord referred to concerning causing one of His disciples to scandalize? Did not the Apostle Paul referred to the same?

Lk. 17:1–2. Luke 17:1 Then said he unto the disciples, It is impossible but that offences [τὰ σκάνδαλα] will come: but woe *unto him*, through whom they come! ² It were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he cast into the sea, than that he should offend [σκανδαλίση] one of these little ones.

Acts 20:26–27. ²⁶ Wherefore I take you to record this day, that I *am* pure from the blood of all *men*. ²⁷ For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God.

L. DUTIES ENJOINED

The Prohibition of the Sixth Commandment implies the positive mandate to love our neighbor as ourselves in a God-conscious context. Examples include:

1. Doing all we legitimately can to preserve our own lives and the lives of others.

2. Removing known sources of danger that would seriously harm or threaten the lives of others or ourselves.
3. Striving to practice temperance in all things pertaining to diet, drink and attitude.
4. Seeking proper and adequate nourishment, rest and sleep for the body, as it is the organ of life, belongs to God and is for his glory. Many burn themselves out working at school, employment, careers or hobbies in a sinful manner.

M. PROHIBITIONS: EXPLICIT AND IMPLICIT

From the Scriptures listed, the teaching of our Lord and the New Testament, it is clearly taught that not only is the outward act of unlawfully taking a human life condemned, but also every thought, word or act that tends toward such. Explicit and implicit examples include:

1. Living, speaking and acting in a thoughtless manner to our own harm or that of others.
2. Indirect or passive behavior that would result in the harm or death of another.
3. Assaulting or endangering another person's life or limb.
4. Failing to defend one's self or those under one's protection.
5. Seeking to ruin another's reputation or slander another's character because of envy, jealousy or anger.
6. Over-indulgence in food or drink. Gluttony¹⁸⁵ and drunkenness are forms of the loss of self-control¹⁸⁶ and detrimental to one's health.
7. Self-injury, such as cutting one's self, habits and practices that are harmful to our own health and the health of others.

NOTE: Self-cutting has its historical roots in paganism (Lev. 19:28; 21:5) and certain types of Romish flagellation (an attempt at self-atonement for

¹⁸⁵ Gluttony is not eating all one can, but rather the sinful habit of eating much more than one needs to maintain health and energy. The enjoyment of good food in moderation is not necessarily gluttony.

¹⁸⁶ The idea that alcohol is inherently sinful, or in some way defiles the "temple of God" [body] derives from Gnosticism. Cf. Rom. 14:14, 17, 20; 1 Tim. 4:1–6. The sin lies in the loss of self-control, the very opposite of being controlled by the Spirit of God. Cf. Gal. 5:23, "temperance" is ἐγκράτεια, or self-control, not abstinence.

sins). Modern flagellation is practiced in sado–masochistic circles as a form of sexual arousal. While contemporary self–cutting may be merely psychological, yet it derives from a perverted masochistic urge, which is in itself morbid and sinful. The Scriptures not only forbid cutting, but markings or tattoos.

Lev. 19:28. Ye shall not make any cuttings in your flesh for the dead, nor print any marks upon you: I am the LORD.¹⁸⁷

This would include such eating disorders as anorexia and bulimia, and also poor eating habits that eventually debilitate one's health. One's body does not belong to one's self, but to the Lord.¹⁸⁸

8. As the body belongs to God and is for his glory, one must avoid the abuse of drugs, tattoos (Lev. 19:28; 1 Cor. 6:12–20), body–piercing, etc.

NOTE: The Jews and other biblical cultures had piercing for earrings and nose rings as a perceived enhancement of beauty, but such practices do not legitimize much in modern body piercing. The former were meant to be seen by anyone; the latter, the piercing of eyebrows, lips, tongues and cheeks, fulfills the desire for the grotesque, and most are expressions of morbid self–obsession or, as in the piercing of nipples, navels, foreskins, scrotums and vaginas, etc., are intended for a perverted intimacy and sexual arousal. Such practices historically derive from Eastern pagan religion, while the contemporary originally derived from sources as homosexuality and sado–masochism. Of course, the sources and perverted philosophy behind such mean little to American youths, who cannot see beyond a current fad in the desire for the lawless and grotesque. These practices are a perverted declaration that one's body is for one's self–gratification of exhibition, the antithesis of biblical truth that one's body belongs to God (1 Cor. 6:11–20; 10:31).

9. Engaging in the type of activities that unduly and unnecessarily hazard the life or health through thrill–seeking.
10. Praying for protection, then acting in such a way as to invite harm or disaster. E.g., driving at excessive speeds or acting in “reckless endangerment” of one's self or others.

¹⁸⁷ “print. . . marks” [בְּבִשְׁרְכֶם וּכְתַבְתָּ קַעֲקָע לֹא תִתֵּן]. *emph. const. with imperf.* “in your flesh an imprint [tattoo] or incision thou shalt not ever give.” LXX: γράμματα [tattoo] στικτὰ οὐ ποιήσετε ἐν ὑμῖν.

¹⁸⁸ Although the New Testament puts no restrictions upon diet or drink (1 Tim. 4:1–6), habitually eating no food or only “junk food” to the exclusion of a sound, nutritious diet, has a necessarily detrimental effect upon the body and general health—and the body belongs to God (1 Cor. 6:20).

11. Not heeding the advice, counsel, treatment or medications prescribed by physicians for a known condition, sickness or disease, when there is no alternative treatment.
12. This Commandment condemns the modern [homosexually-oriented] philosophy of “Live and Let Live,” as we *are* our brother’s keeper, i.e., we are to love him as ourselves and be concerned about matters that concern him.
13. This commandment prohibits any form of “birth [conception] control” that is abortive.
14. This commandment forbids the willful destruction of any zygote or fertilized human egg [embryo].

NOTE: Stem cell research is necessarily performed with zygotes. DNA can only be “read” in a zygote, but not in a sperm cell or an unfertilized egg—fertilization, and thus human life—is a necessity. When fertilized human eggs [zygotes] are tested for DNA “misspellings” [anomalies] characteristic of some diseases, the diseased [“misspelled”] zygotes are discarded and several of those which are not misspelled are implanted in uterine. One is ultimately allowed to gestate and the others are selectively aborted. In some forms of artificial insemination or in vitro fertilization, several zygotes are formed, and those left over are simply discarded. When several are implanted in uterine, these can be, and are selectively aborted.

XI

The Seventh Commandment

Quest. 51: What is the Seventh Commandment?

Ans: The Seventh Commandment is, “Thou shalt not commit adultery.” (Ex. 20:14)

Quest. 52: What is the significance of the Seventh Commandment?

Ans: The Seventh Commandment forbids all unchaste thoughts, intentions, words and actions.

A. ANALYSIS AND EXPOSITION

As with the Sixth and Eighth Commandments, there is necessarily:

1. *A Negative Declaration.* “Thou shalt not commit adultery.” Again, the absolute negative [לֹא תִנְאָף] with the imperf. denotes a perpetual command which allows for no exception.¹⁸⁹ The commandment itself is very limited in principle, but must not be misconstrued. Although

¹⁸⁹ This is the absolute, categorical, perpetual prohibition.

“adultery”¹⁹⁰ is stated as the specific sin against God and man, this Commandment necessarily forbids any and all illicit sexual thoughts, illicit visual stimulation [pornography], intentions, words and actions, as all sin—including all sexual sin—begins in the heart (Prov. 4:23; Matt. 5:27–32; Jas. 1:13–16).

2. *A Positive Implication.* The obverse is that first, we must constantly sanctify our thoughts, intentions, words and actions, striving by the grace of God to keep them pure; second, as marriage is the natural state ordained for man by God, we must keep faithfully to our own wife or husband, fulfilling and being fulfilled in that intimate relationship of love which God has commanded (Gen. 2:18, 24–25; Prov. 5:15–19; 1 Cor. 7:2–6, 9; Eph. 5:25; Col. 3:19; Titus 2:4¹⁹¹; Heb. 13:4; 1 Pet. 3:7).

B. THE SEVENTH COMMANDMENT IN CONTEXT

As the Fifth Commandment protects the authority necessary for the maintenance and perpetuation of the family and subsequently all human government, and the Sixth Commandment gives the proper significance to human life (man is the image-bearer of God) which is necessary to the family and its God-ordained mandate and subsequently to society itself, the Seventh Commandment protects the God-ordained institution of marriage which is essential to the family and to all subsequent morality. These all separate man from brute creation and are foundational to the preservation of human society.

C. SEXUALITY CREATED BY GOD AND PERVERTED BY MAN

Man was created in the image and likeness of God, and therefore possesses an inescapable, rational and responsible moral quality and character (Gen. 1:26). Man was also created as a sexual being (God created them male and female, Gen. 1:27). Thus, human sexuality in itself is not inherently or morally wrong (everything that God created was “very good,” Gen. 1:31; Heb. 13:4), but God-given for man’s purpose (the fulfillment of the creation and cultural mandate), procreation (to

¹⁹⁰ לֹא תִנָּאֵף. LXX: οὐ μοιχεύσεις. The term in both Hebrew and Greek refers explicitly to adultery. The New Testament quotation in Matt. 5:27 is from the LXX.

¹⁹¹ Cf. Eph. 5:25; Col. 3:19; Titus 2:4 and 1 Pet. 3:7. God *commands* a loving and understanding relationship between husband and wife.

propagate the human race) and pleasure (to be the most intimate expression of human love).¹⁹²

God also ordained marriage as the proper, exclusive, pure, responsible and fulfilling context for the sexual relationship.

The idea of evolution, with its subsequent legislative approval in re-defining sexuality, has had a devastating effect upon human sexuality and the institution of marriage. It has divorced human sexuality from all morality, responsibility, true masculinity and true femininity. It has re-defined sexuality in terms of “free love” (sex devoid of moral barriers or commitment), “self-love” [autoeroticism], uni-sexuality, bi-sexuality, voyeurism, transvestism, prostitution, feminism, homosexuality, lesbianism, incest, pedophilia and even bestiality.¹⁹³ No legislation can abolish or blur the God-created distinctions between the sexes.

The idea of evolution has necessarily reduced human sexuality to a level lower than the brute. Any re-definition of any part of God’s laws is inherently sinful and wreaks spiritual, moral and physical havoc (Rom. 1:18–32).

And what can be said of “Christian homosexuals” or lesbians, i.e., “Christian perverts”? Such terms are mutually exclusive. Why not speak of “Christian whores,” “Christian serial killers” or “Christian pornographers”? Such blasphemous talk utterly contradicts the biblical teaching concerning the free and sovereign grace of God and the very nature of salvation—which is from the reigning power of sin.¹⁹⁴

¹⁹² Human sexuality is distinct from animal sexuality in many ways. One distinction is that God meant for humans to join for life, not be promiscuous as most animals. Another is that, unlike animals, men do not periodically become completely sexually absorbed to the exclusion of sleep and food [rut] or women go into estrus [heat], i.e., human sexuality is not mere animal instinct or a periodic God-created urge for the preservation of the species, but a God-ordained, intelligent, responsible, monogamous expression of love in an intimate relationship.

¹⁹³ If evolution were true, then man would not be God’s image-bearer, there would be no morality, no point at which sin entered the human race. All life would be equal, and therefore sexuality could be equally expressed in any way among any forms of life, and nothing would be unnatural.

¹⁹⁴ Cf. Rom. 6:1–23, where every believer’s union with Christ utterly necessitates a biblically-converted life. Cf. also 1 Cor. 6:9–11; Gal. 5:19–21; Col. 3:1–6; Heb. 13:4.

Religious acceptance of pervers derives from Arminianism [theological perversion] which distinguishes between the sinner and his or her sin, denies the realities of both justification and sanctification, and re-defines righteousness in terms of an unscriptural love devoid of moral character.

The contemporary concept of and obsession with sex is perverted. Sex has been divorced from God's Law, and therefore divorced from the true love which finds its legitimate fulfillment in marriage, responsibility, commitment and morality. Sex is thus commercialized, lust legitimized and perversion normalized. This age sees drugs and sex as merely amoral, recreational, escapist, or the ultimate quasi-religious experience.

NOTE: Sex and religion have always been closely related. Both tend toward the ultimate in feeling and experience. Man seeks the ultimate when he employs the organs or act of procreation. He did so when he offered up human life in sacrifice. It is not incidental that the unwilling sacrificial victim was usually a young virgin. There are records of public hangings in the Old West, which some of the spectators would attend to experience sexual arousal.

The strongest oaths were those which included the organ of procreation.¹⁹⁵ Prostitution was an integral part of ancient pagan worship. Cohabiting with the female Nile crocodile was the supreme religious act of certain priests in pagan Egypt. In some "primitive" [degenerate] societies, men had intercourse with the oldest woman [matriarch] of the clan as an alleged means of procuring power.

Because sex and religion enter into the depths of the body and soul, it should not be too shocking that immorality attaches itself to modern religion. Today, even in some conservative or fundamentalist denominations, adultery is all too common among both parishioners and ministers. Why? It may well be more than simple sexual lust. The following should be considered:

- Unregenerate ministers and parishioners, though outwardly professing Christians, are bereft of the Spirit, and so graceless, and under the reigning power of sin. Their only preventive is their hypocrisy—and hypocrisy has never proven to be an effective barrier to immorality.
- Even true believers, though delivered from the reigning power of sin, are still liable to indwelling sin and corruption. Scriptural spirituality and personal discipline must be maintained. Even true Christians may fall into sexual sin.
- Sex and religion are closely related as approaching ultimate experience, and both are usually highly or ultimately emotional unless tempered by

¹⁹⁵ See Gen. 24:2–3; 47:29. In taking this oath, Eliezer put his hand under Abraham's thigh, referring to the reproductive organ, as the strongest possible oath, hence the idea of our Eng. "testicle," "testify," "testimony," "testament," etc. Man naturally seeks some basis to give strength, force or perpetuity to his oath. It evidently pertained both to procreation and to one's descendants.

Divine truth. Religious irrationalism or emotionalism tends to break down spiritual and moral barriers.

- Although the pastor is neither a priest nor the woman a priestess, yet seducing the pastor is considered either an avenue to power or an act of power and control. Unregenerate individuals make no distinction between office and church politics.
- The pastoral seduction of a woman parishioner is closely related to priestly or cultish religious dominance, power, and control. The pastor is sometimes elevated to the position of a religious executive, and his position is maintained in terms of personal power and prestige rather than that of a God-called, spiritually-gifted man. In some churches the pastor is seen as the “alpha dog” of the pack and carnal women may compete for him or his attention in various ways. This is especially true when women are unscripturally placed in positions of leadership or work on the office staff. Such situations tend toward immoral behavior unless great and constant precautions are taken.
- The close relationships that necessarily develop within the context of a church congregation (being “members one of another”) tend to break down many social and emotional barriers, easily becoming seductive if true biblical spirituality is not maintained.
- Satan is active to destroy or discredit the work of God, and there is no more efficient way than to foment rumors of immorality or scandal in the church. Spiritual warfare is a reality for every believer (Eph. 6:10–20). Strong marital ties and proper deportment must be maintained within the context of the congregation.

D. MARRIAGE

God has ordained marriage as the oldest, most profound and intimate of all human relationships.¹⁹⁶ Second only to the individual relationship a human being possesses with God, it has a necessary logical and temporal priority over the parent–child relationship,¹⁹⁷ or any other human relationship (Gen. 2:23–24; Matt. 19:4–5). The biblical reasons for marriage include:

¹⁹⁶ What makes marriage distinct? Why is it more than merely living together? It is a covenant–relationship ordained by God and is sealed before both God and society by repeating vows that are meant to bind a man and woman together for life intimately, morally, socially and legally. Thus, marriage vows must never be taken lightly as only words or merely a matter of ceremony.

¹⁹⁷ Neither husband nor wife can faithfully maintain a scriptural marital relationship before God if either puts the children first in the relationship. Infants necessarily require much care and attention, but this reversal of priorities is sometimes sinful as the children are used as either a wedge or substitute for the emotional marital bond.

1. The truth that man and woman are incomplete in themselves. Although each is complete as to his or her humanness, each is incomplete as to sexuality, emotional equilibrium and social potential (Gen. 2:18).
2. The proper fulfillment of the Creation Mandate to populate the earth and subdue it under God (Gen. 1:26–28).
3. To provide suitable, godly headship, protection and nurture for the woman (Ruth 1:9; 1 Cor. 11:3, 7–9, 32–34; Eph. 5:22–33; 1 Pet. 3:1–7). In God’s ordered universe, a proper authority and corresponding submission reach to every relationship, including marriage.¹⁹⁸
4. To provide a suitable helpmeet for the man to help in the pursuit of his God–ordained calling (Gen. 1:28; 2:18, 21–23).¹⁹⁹
5. To avoid fornication and maintain God–ordained morality (1 Cor. 7:1–6, 9). All morality derives from God. There is no rightness or wrongness apart from him, no higher law to which he is accountable.²⁰⁰
6. To provide a godly, authoritative, moral context for the human race in the nuclear family (Gen. 2:24; 1 Cor. 7:1–5; Eph. 6:1–4; Col. 3:18–21²⁰¹; Titus 2:4–5).

¹⁹⁸ If this God–ordained authority and corresponding submission are not scripturally obeyed, then the marriage becomes sinfully dysfunctional. Since The Fall, the general tendency of the man is toward irresponsibility (Gen. 3:9–12), and the woman, toward dominating the marriage relationship (Gen. 3:16). Marriages, homes, churches and society itself suffer greatly from weak men married to domineering women!

¹⁹⁹ The God–ordained headship of the man is not based upon his superior strength or alleged intellectual nature (as opposed to the woman’s lesser physical strength and alleged emotional nature). It is based upon his prior creation and responsible position, the woman being taken from him by God and given to him as a helpmeet [עֶזֶר כְּנֶגְדּוֹ, one who reflected his image]. It was Adam, not Eve, through whom the human race fell.

²⁰⁰ Thus, God can both forbid a man to expose or cohabit with his brother’s wife (Lev. 18:16; 20:21), and yet institute the levirate marriage of a widow to her brother–in–law (who was usually already married) to produce an offspring to preserve a name in Israel (Dt. 25:5–10; Ruth 3:1–4:14. Cf. also Gen. 38:6–11).

²⁰¹ The effects of sin in the human race strike at the heart of the marriage and family relationship.

E. DIVORCE

According to God, the marriage bond can be broken by man (Matt. 19:6). Some would argue on the basis of Rom. 7:1–6, however, that there are no biblical grounds for divorce. The reference to Rom. 7:1–3 to prove that only death can break the marriage relationship, however, fails to take into account that the issue is to illustrate the believer's death to the condemnation of the Law and his subsequent union with Christ. Thus, as a didactic reference to marriage, the illustration breaks down, as it is the "husband" who dies in the marriage, but the "wife" [believer] in the reality of the believer's union with Christ (7:1–6). There is only one legitimate basis for divorce—fornication—though it is not necessarily commanded:

And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except *it be* for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery. (Matt. 19:9)²⁰²

"Fornication" (πορνεία) is a broader term than "adultery" (μοιχεία), and includes such illicit sexual activity as adultery, whore mongering, prostitution, homosexuality, lesbianism, bestiality, etc. Our Lord's teaching is that illicit sexual activity breaks the marriage bond. The adulterer, fornicator, whoremonger, homosexual or lesbian becomes "one flesh" with another (1 Cor. 6:15–16). Thus, such language is not limited to the marriage relationship.

Some would add abandonment of the marriage relationship as legitimate grounds for divorce (1 Cor. 7:9–16). The passage does not give any ground for believers to divorce, but pertains only to a believer married to an unbeliever who abandons the marriage relationship. If the marital relationship cannot be maintained because of abandonment by the unbelieving husband or wife, there is a *de facto* divorce, i.e., the unbeliever has departed and the believer is not bound.²⁰³

Grounds or freedom to re-marry is an altogether different issue, which will not be discussed, except that once divorced and remarried, the parties

²⁰² A woman divorced for a non-sexual reason establishes a new relationship when she marries, and in that breaks the former by a different and new sexual union, and hence commits adultery, as does the man who marries her.

²⁰³ As the issue is the departure of the unbeliever, there is almost always the probability of immorality being involved in the abandonment of the marriage partner.

cannot divorce the second time and then re-marry their original partners, as this breaks down all moral and marital barriers (Dt. 24:1–4).

Divorce and remarriage were not issues in the Old Testament as they are today, as those who were judged for sexual transgressions were executed, leaving the living partner free to remarry.

F. TWO BIBLICAL STUDIES: NEGATIVE AND POSITIVE

1. A negative study: David and Bathsheba.

The sad and sinful adultery of David and Bathsheba is a classic study in sexual sin (2 Sam. 11–12). It began with David being someplace other than where he should have been—with his army in the field. He lusted after Bathsheba, even after he knew she was a married woman. He committed adultery with her and then had her husband murdered. Their child died, and David gave occasion for the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme. He restored four-fold: his daughter, Tamar, was raped by her half-brother, Amnon (2 Sam. 13), His son, Absalom, usurped the kingdom, fomented a civil war and was killed (2 Sam. 13–18) as was his son, Adonijah (1 Kgs. 1–2).

2. A positive study: Joseph (Gen. 39:6–20).

Joseph was physically well-built and very handsome²⁰⁴ as he matured into manhood.²⁰⁵ Potiphar's wife began to lust after him because of his personal attractiveness and position, and sought to seduce him.²⁰⁶ Joseph refused. The attempted seduction became a constant threat, so

²⁰⁴ יִיפְסַע יְהִיפֶהוּ דָאֵר וְיִיפֶהוּ דְמִרְיָאָה, Lit: "Joseph was fair in form and fair in face." LXX: Καὶ Ἰωσήφ καλὸς τῷ εἶδει, καὶ ὥραϊος τῇ ὥψει σφόδρα. "And Joseph was beautiful in [physical] form, and exceedingly beautiful [handsome] in countenance." The reference to Joseph's physique infers that he had done enough hard work to be very muscular.

²⁰⁵ As Joseph had been promoted at that time to the highest possible position, it is very probable that he was at least in his mid-to-late twenties and so in the very bloom of life and strength.

²⁰⁶ וְנָמִי וְשָׁכְבָה Qal. imp. "Lie with me!" The LXX reads: ...κοιμήθητι μετ' ἐμοῦ. aor. imp. ἐμοῦ emph. "Sleep with me!" Both the Heb. and Gk. are in the imp., connoting a determined and urgent entreaty. Both are euphemisms for sexual intimacy.

Joseph avoided her altogether.²⁰⁷ As he was in the house alone for business purposes, she accosted him physically, grabbing him.²⁰⁸ He immediately fled, leaving his outer garment in her hand. She fabricated the lie that Joseph attempted to rape her. Potiphar became angry and put Joseph into prison.²⁰⁹

NOTE: Joseph's refusal is a classic study in its content:

- *It was immediate and definite.* "...he refused..." He did not wait for temptation to gain a hold upon his mind or heart. He acted, it seems, almost by instinct. He seemed to recoil from such a thought. This seems quite in accord with his general character. He was a young, vulnerable man, but he was also a godly man, and also both responsible and trustworthy. It behooves us to consider all things and take immediate and definite action in moral and ethical situations. No one should be left in ignorance as to our moral persuasion! The Christian's world-and-life view should be part of his testimony.
- *It was intelligent.* His reasoning shows that he was not given to irrational behavior or could be easily deceived or seduced. His whole response reveals both a high intelligence and a moral foundation which seemed unassailable. Irrational religion is a weak religion as feelings and impressions take precedence over the truth. A religion founded on Divine truth is by nature intelligent, as it derives from an intelligent God who has given his Word to be understood. True spirituality is primarily intellectual, as both our objective reality and subjective experience is to derive from the propositional truth of Scripture.
- *It was consistent.* He gave every rational reason that was necessary to end any thought of seduction:
 - (1) He argued his position with his master Potiphar, who had placed him in a position of utmost trust and confidence. Such an act would inevitably lead

²⁰⁷ ולא...להיות מֵהָ "to be with her" implies a complete avoidance of her company.

²⁰⁸ The root תִּפֶּשׂ signifies to seize. This action implies some violence and attempted close physical contact on her part to force his body to hers to sexually arouse and so seduce him.

²⁰⁹ The usual punishment for such criminal behavior as attempted rape by a slave was torture and death. Joseph was only imprisoned. The possible providential reasons are: (1) Potiphar might well have had reason to discount his wife's fabrication. From ancient inscriptions, Egyptian women moved freely among the men of that society and had a reputation for unfaithfulness, self-indulgence and moral looseness. Potiphar's wife lived and belonged in that society, and probably did very much as she pleased in her high position. (2) Such behavior was completely out of character for Joseph, to whom Potiphar had entrusted everything without reserve. To execute Joseph would have been to definitely put an end to his own prosperity and blessing, for he perceived that God was with Joseph.

to repetition of the same—the breaking of a great trust and loyalty, adultery and betrayal. Such a relationship would necessarily lead to all sorts of infidelity.

- (2) He argued his own standing as the greatest servant—a position that had taken years to achieve, and was achieved because of his skill and responsible character and actions. This he would be a fool to jeopardize. He was not the type of person to irrationally throw everything away in a moment.
- (3) He argued the sanctity of marriage—something she was more than willing to abandon. She was his master's wife. She belonged to him, and not to any other man. To break the marriage vow would be to introduce utter deceit, distrust and devastation within the house and every relationship. Joseph clearly saw this and wanted to impress her with the same reality.
- (4) He argued the reality of God. This was an outrageous sin, the greatest sin that could be committed against God and against Potiphar.²¹⁰
 - *It was wise.* He never charged her directly with sin, but pointed to the horrible fact of such sin. She was his master's wife, and he, except for such intimacy as she wanted from him, was under her control. He was in no position to directly accuse her, although his answer must have filled her with rage as a woman scorned.
 - *It was godly.* He pled the reality and moral self-consistency of God. He also sought to impress her with the enormity of her words and her intentions. He sought to give the proper defense for himself as a godly man, and also sought to convict her of what she was attempting to do. His theology determined his morality—this was his impeccable testimony!

G. SEXUAL PERVERSION

Sexual perversion is any sexual relationship or activity outside the marriage bond. It may be either “natural” (i.e., concerned with one's self or the other sex)—masturbation,²¹¹ voyeurism, fornication, adultery, prostitution, etc.; or “unnatural” (i.e., forced sex, denying the differences between the sexes, or sexually attracted toward the same sex)—rape, child molestation, transvestism,²¹² uni-sexuality, bi-sexuality, homosexuality

²¹⁰ הַרְהָה הַגְדֹּלָה דְּהַזָּאת. Note the rep. of the def. art. “The words are emphatical in the original, this! this wickedness! this great one!” (John Gill, *Commentary*, I, p. 201). LXX reads: ...πὼς ποιήσω τὸ ῥῆμα τὸ ποιηρὸν τοῦτο...“...how can I do this thing, this wickedness, this!...”

²¹¹ The Scripture mentions masturbation only once (Ezk. 16:17). Within the marriage relationship, autoeroticism [sexual self-stimulation] may be a sinful avoidance of fulfilling the married partner's needs and desires because of selfishness, intimidation, belittlement, etc.

²¹² Confusing or denying the God-ordained separation of the sexes is specifically forbidden by God (Dt. 22:5).

and lesbianism,²¹³ sodomy, incest, pedophilia and bestiality. Pornography may depict either natural or unnatural sexual activities.²¹⁴

H. SEXUAL DISEASES AND DIVINE JUDGMENT

There is certain Divine judgment upon sexual immorality. This judgment is both present and providential in the form of moral reprobation, the emotional and social stigmas of scandal, sexually transmitted [venereal] diseases (Ex. 15:26; Dt. 7:15; 28:27, 60; Prov. 7:23; Rom. 1:24–28),²¹⁵ and also direct and final (Gal. 5:19–21; Col. 3:5–6; Heb. 13:4).

Sexually transmitted diseases have become epidemic as a result of the socially wide-acceptance of immorality and homosexuality. Not only AIDS, but all forms of sexual diseases are on the increase, and many are becoming not only incurable, but even untreatable with modern medicine as resistance is increased through prolonged use of antibiotics. God is not mocked.

I. THE TEACHING OF OUR LORD ON MARRIAGE, DIVORCE AND ADULTERY

As with many passages of Scripture, the teaching of our Lord has often been misconstrued or misrepresented. There are four passages concerning marriage, adultery and divorce which may need clarification:

²¹³ Cf. Rom. 1:26–27, where the Apostle, rather than using the common words for men and women, uses the terms “males with [in] males” (ἄρσενες ἐν ἄρσενι) and “females” (θῆλειαι) turning to unnatural sins, describing human beings as having been degraded and abandoned to the mere sexual level in unnatural lust.

²¹⁴ “Pornography,” from πορνεία, the general term for “fornication” and γράφω, “write”. Thus, any written or pictorial depiction of illicit sexual activity meant to sensually stimulate without any redeeming spiritual or moral value by way of either instruction or warning. This certainly separates art and even some passages of Scripture from pornography.

It must be noted that the alleged benefit of certain materials to either stimulate the sexual drive or “enhance” the marriage relationship is still pornography, and stands in direct opposition to the explicit and implicit teaching of Scripture (Matt. 5:27–28; Prov. 5:15–19). Can one become aroused by observing someone other than one’s husband or wife either being provocatively exposed or engaging in sexual activity and not sin?! All and any personal fulfillment must ever be subservient to God’s Law–Word.

²¹⁵ These diseases necessarily directly or indirectly included sexual maladies.

Matthew 5:27–30. Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery: but I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart. and if thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast *it* from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not *that* thy whole body should be cast into hell. and if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off, and cast *it* from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not *that* thy whole body should be cast into hell.

There are two issues for consideration in our Lord’s teaching on the subject of lust and adultery:

1. Why did our Lord frame the issue in a traditional way—“ye have heard that it was said by them of old time” (v. 27)—when the words came directly from God in the Seventh Commandment? He was not countermanding Scripture, but correcting Jewish tradition, which taught that only the overt act was sin. He stated that sin begins in the heart and the lustful look and thought is already heart-adultery before God (v. 28). Here, as in other instances, the Law applies to thoughts, inclinations and motivations as well as overt sinful activity. The Law literally strikes at the very heart of the matter.
2. The extreme warning in v. 29–30 to “cut off the right hand” and “pluck out the right eye” must be taken figuratively and not literally.²¹⁶

NOTE: Such figurative language is common in Scripture. E.g., Prov. 23:1–3, “Put a knife to thy throat, if thou be a man given to appetite” is a warning to watch one’s self when dining with a ruler in the context of political intrigue. E.g., the judgment of God upon wicked young people who despise their parents’ counsel: “The eye *that* mocketh at *his* father, and despiseth to obey *his* mother, the ravens of the valley shall pick it out, and the young eagles shall eat it” Prov. 30:17.

The solemn significance is that one must take the most immediate, radical and drastic measures against even all initial forms of sin for the sake of his soul in light of eternal judgment!

Matthew 5:31–32; 19:3–9. It hath been said, Whosoever shall put away his wife, let him give her a writing of divorcement: but I say unto you, That whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery: and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery.

²¹⁶ Origen, (c. 185–254 AD) as a teenager emasculated himself because of sexual lust. It is recorded that some Romish priests have followed his example. But as sin resides in the heart and mind, it must be dealt with spiritually by grace, not physically by amputation (Jas. 1:13–16).

The Pharisees also came unto him, tempting him, and saying unto him, Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause? and he answered and said unto them, Have ye not read, that he which made *them* at the beginning made them male and female, and said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh? Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder. They say unto him, Why did Moses then command to give a writing of divorcement, and to put her away? He saith unto them, Moses because of the hardness of your hearts suffered you to put away your wives: but from the beginning it was not so. and I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except *it be* for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery.

When teaching on the subject of divorce, our Lord reiterated the original God-ordained institution of marriage in contrast to the traditional teaching of his day:

1. The Pharisees asked a question about grounds for divorce. There were two schools of interpretation, the school of Hillel, which taught a great variety of reasons for divorce, and the school of Shammai, which taught that the only reason was fornication. It will not do to imply that our Lord was simply siding with the disciples of Shammai—he was expounding his own Law and honoring the Word of God!
2. He begins, not by answering their question, but by reiterating the true nature of marriage—a monogamous, life-long, intimate relationship ordained by God—one that men should not put asunder. He intimates that their very attitude and approach to the subject of divorce were from the wrong direction.
3. He answers their second question by stating that Moses gave the divorce law because of their calloused condition, that this was an accommodation to a sinful people, and not the original intention of God in marriage.
4. He then states that fornication is the one legitimate reason for divorce. If someone divorces his wife for any other or lesser reason, he causes her and her new husband to commit adultery when she remarries.²¹⁷

John 8:2–11. and early in the morning he came again into the temple, and all the people came unto him; and he sat down, and taught them. and the scribes and Pharisees brought unto him a woman taken in adultery; and

²¹⁷ In the biblical cases, stemming from Old Testament culture, it was the man who had the prerogative to divorce the woman because the woman had no legal standing in that culture to initiate a divorce.

when they had set her in the midst, They say unto him, Master, this woman was taken in adultery, in the very act. Now Moses in the law commanded us, that such should be stoned: but what sayest thou? This they said, tempting him, that they might have to accuse him.

But Jesus stooped down, and with *his* finger wrote on the ground, as *though he heard them not*. So when they continued asking him, he lifted up himself, and said unto them, He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her. and again he stooped down, and wrote on the ground. and they which heard *it*, being convicted by *their own* conscience, went out one by one, beginning at the eldest, *even* unto the last: and Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst.

When Jesus had lifted up himself, and saw none but the woman, he said unto her, Woman, where are those thine accusers? hath no man condemned thee? She said, No man, Lord. and Jesus said unto her, Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more.²¹⁸

Some have misconstrued our Lord's words on this occasion, "Woman, where are those thine accusers? hath no man condemned thee?...Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more" as teaching that he did not condemn adultery, but simply forgave it—and therefore so should we. Mark the following:

1. The Scribes and Pharisees interrupted our Lord's teaching by leading (ἄγουσιν) a woman having been caught (κατειλημμένην) in the very act of committing adultery (ἐπ' αὐτοφώρῳ μοιχευομένη) into the middle (ἐν μέσῳ) of a group of his listeners.
2. Their purpose was to publicly embarrass him, and force him to pass sentence upon her as an adulteress—to act the part of a civil magistrate.
3. If he sided with God's Law, he would have to condemn her to death, endangering himself with the Roman authorities as one fomenting sedition against Roman law (the Jews did not possess the power of capital punishment). He would further alienate himself from the "publicans and sinners," with whom he had his greatest hearing. If he refused, he was then publicly on record as opposing the very Law he claimed to uphold (Matt. 5:17–20).

²¹⁸ The Critical Text brackets this passage. The TR retains it. Although it may not originally have been located in its present position, yet most consider it a "text looking for a context, as it bears the marks of genuineness. The teaching of this passage is in accordance with our Lord's teaching in other passages.

4. His initial reaction was silence, which they misinterpreted as an embarrassed silence, and so they continued to taunt him for an answer.²¹⁹
5. He finally answered according to the Law, which called for at least two witnesses to begin the stoning. His answer implied that these were likely guilty of this very sin—and possibly even with this very woman whom they were so callously and brutally using in attempting to publicly embarrass him.
6. They were all convicted by their own consciences and left the woman with our Lord in the middle of the group of hearers. There were then no witnesses to her adultery.
7. It must be noted that, had this case been legitimate, the man would have been apprehended and brought along also, as the Law demanded (Lev. 20:10), but that was not the case.
8. The point is, that our Lord always refused to assume the part of a civil magistrate and to pass temporal judgment upon anyone (Lk. 12:13–15; Jn. 8:15). He used such occasions to enforce scriptural and moral principles and warnings (Lk. 12:13–48; Jn. 8:11–19).
9. Although he did not issue a condemnation as a civil magistrate, as Lord he did command her to leave, and to stop sinning [this sin].²²⁰ Implying that her behavior was sinful. Thus he honored the Law of God, which demanded witnesses, delivered this woman in the absence of such witnesses, and sent her forth not to return to her sinful behavior. But there was absolutely no condoning of adultery on his part! Christ came as the Savior, not a policeman, the Redeemer, not a civil magistrate. But one day he *will* sit as sovereign Judge over all men (Jn. 5:22, 26–27; Phil. 2:9–11).

J. THE DEATH PENALTY AND CHURCH DISCIPLINE

The Law of God remains unchanged as to its requirement of the death penalty for immorality. God will execute righteous sentence on the final day of judgment. What, then, is the responsibility of the church in dealing

²¹⁹ οὐ οὖν τί λέγεις;...τοῦτο δὲ ἔλεγον. The imperf. and the emph. pers. pron. draw a graphic picture of the repetitive taunt, “But you, what do you say? But you, what do you say?”

²²⁰ πορεύου, [καὶ] ἀπὸ τοῦ νῦν μηκέτι ἁμάρτανε. “Go! and from now on, no longer commit [this] sin!”

with this sin? The church's power is neither capital nor corporal,²²¹ but spiritual, moral and ethical. The church is neither to overlook nor to casually forgive such sin. It is rather to exercise discipline and exclude the offending member (1 Cor. 5:1–13). The church has a primary and immediate duty to God to keep itself spiritually and morally pure. Remember that faithfulness to God, not ministering to offending members, is primary, and that God's Law is exactly that—Law.

NOTE: The great and primary concern of the church in cases of immorality is to maintain the purity of the church, not to recover the offender, to save the marriage, or keep the matter private—as modern, sociologically-based religion supposes. Cf. 1 Cor. 5:1–13. Cf. this principle in every matter of church discipline, Matt. 18:15–17. It is in the context of exclusion under biblical church discipline that subsequent counseling ought to take place. Extended counseling without church discipline has no basis in Scripture.

The action of the church is to be decisive and immediate. Is this unloving or unkind? No. It is scriptural. What if the offender repents? Repentance that issues from getting caught is not biblical repentance. True repentance that is completely voluntary, and issues forth in suitable scriptural fruits, forms the basis for scriptural forgiveness and re-admission to church membership.²²²

K. MODERN TECHNOLOGY AND SCRIPTURAL CONSISTENCY

Modern technology has tended to complicate moral and ethical issues. The Moral Law must be applied, and can be applied in principle for consistency. An example is artificial insemination for human conception. If the components are the husband's sperm and the wife's egg, then what moral barriers have been transgressed? But if the sperm donor is someone other than the husband, unquestionably the moral barrier has been crossed into the realm of adultery, whether the instrument used was mechanical [a syringe] or phallic [a human penis]. Another example is in vitro

²²¹ The church does not possess military or civil power (Rom. 13:1–7; 2 Cor. 10:3–4; 1 Pet. 2:12–14). Society itself, when reflecting Divine Law to a given extent, punished the immoral with either capital or corporal punishment. Under old English and Puritan Law, immorality was punished corporally and publicly by putting the offender in stocks in the town square. This accusation was written on a placard over his or her head, "For Ungodly Carnal Knowledge". This statement eventually became abbreviated as a sign over the stocks [F.U.C.K.], and eventually entered our language as the "F" word.

²²² If the matter has been resolved within the marriage relationship between the husband and wife through voluntary repentance and forgiveness, then it is not a church matter, but should the church become involved, even through pastoral counseling, then the church is bound before God to take appropriate action.

fertilization, in which human eggs are medically fertilized outside the body and then a fertilized egg is inserted into the womb. What are the issues? A sperm donor other than the husband means “laboratory adultery”. If life begins at conception, then to dispose of the other embryos [zygotes] is plainly murder, breaking the Sixth Commandment. If a “surrogate” mother is involved, the same confusion is produced and the same moral barrier is transgressed—bringing another into the intimate process of conception and pregnancy. Man is reduced to the medical model and the animal level.

What of birth control? Without dealing at length with this delicate issue or its pros and cons, it should be noted that this was never a scriptural issue. Many children were and are considered the blessing of God (Gen. 24:60; Psa. 127:3–5). Technology has enabled man to change this. Two issues, however, may be safely approached: first, children are an integral part of the marriage relationship, and certainly pertain to the Creation Mandate (Gen. 1:26–28). Therefore a purposely childless marriage is unscriptural; second, any form of birth control that is abortive is decidedly anti-scriptural (e.g., I.U.D., etc.), as it breaks the Sixth Commandment.

L. SPIRITUAL ADULTERY

Scripturally, there is a distinct parallel between physical and spiritual adultery. In ancient times, male and female prostitution²²³ were closely linked to pagan worship. The Canaanites were to be exterminated because of their religious, gross forms of sexual perversion. One thousand prostitutes served the shrine or *Akro-Korinthus* above the ancient city of Corinth in Paul’s day. The issue is more than the mere physical act of sexual intercourse. There is a breaking of a covenant oath and bond, and the greatest betrayal of trust and commitment. God often illustrates his relationship to his own people in both the Old and New Testaments by the marriage relationship—the most profound and intimate human relationship possible—to portray the horrible sin of turning from him to either idols (e.g., Ex. 34:15–16; Lev. 17:7; 20:5–6; Numb. 14:33; 1 Chron. 5:25; Ezk. 16; 23; Hosea) or to one’s own selfish, worldly, sinful desires (1 Cor. 6:15–17²²⁴; Jas. 4:1–4).

²²³ The reference to “the price of a dog” has probable reference to the money obtained through homosexual prostitution (Dt. 23:18). Cf. also Rev. 22:15.

²²⁴ Although the context is concerned with sexual sin, the immediate context necessarily includes the spiritual aspect of fornication.

M. DUTIES ENJOINED

The Seventh Commandment enjoins certain positive duties, including the following examples:

1. We must cultivate a scriptural God-consciousness in our daily lives (Prov. 15:3).
2. We must take positive steps to retain purity of thoughts, words and actions: “keep the heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life” (Prov. 4:23). We must make a covenant with our eyes (Job 31:1). Positive communion with God through the private [prayer and the study of the Scriptures] and public [worship, preaching, godly fellowship] means of grace are absolute necessities.
3. We must be extremely careful concerning our sexuality. Because sexuality—with its natural affinity and urge mentally and physically—is an inescapable part of human life, temptations to sexual sin are much more dangerous than other forms (2 Tim. 2:22).²²⁵
4. We must remember that sexuality is God-created and God-given, and he has ordained it only for the marriage relationship. We are to desire and love only our marriage partner.
5. As all sin begins in the heart, mind, or inner being, we must constantly be on guard against all temptation and solicitation to sin. Sin must be mortified at the very outset (Rom. 6:17–18; 8:11–14; Col. 3:5–6; Jas. 1:13–16). This means a positive, definite, scriptural dealing with all and every impure thought or inclination.
6. We must avoid exposure to anything that would encourage mental, audible or visual lust and temptation, including provocative actions, materials, music, songs, conversation or entertainment.
7. We must seek to keep every human relationship chaste and holy. Christian conversation is intended to edify, not degrade or seduce (Eph. 4:29; Col. 4:6; Jas. 1:26; 2:2–18).
8. We must remember that there is no excuse for sin—even sexual sin—in the life of the believer (1 Cor. 10:8, 13).

²²⁵ We are to resist the devil (Jas. 4:7; 1 Pet. 5:8–9), but flee youthful lusts! τὰ...νεωτερικὰς ἐπιθυμίας φεῦγε. def. art., i.e., those lusts associated in particular with youthfulness. “Flee” pres. imp. “keep on fleeing away from, avoiding, shunning such!”

9. We must remember that our bodies belong to God, not for us to use or abuse as we otherwise would or might (Rom. 12:1–2; 1 Cor. 6:13–20; Thess. 4:3–7).
10. We must seek to fortify the marriage relationship in a godly, positive manner. The “due benevolence” within the marriage relationship must be practically maintained (1 Cor. 7:2–5).
11. Those who are not married, unless given the gift of celibacy (Matt. 19:10–12; 1 Cor. 7:6–9), should work to make themselves marriageable in the Lord (Gen. 2:18; 1 Cor. 7:1–6; 1 Tim. 5:11–15). Remember, Adam was, is and ever shall be the only one given a wife by God in his sleep!

N. PROHIBITIONS: EXPLICIT AND IMPLICIT

The Seventh Commandment, reaching as it does, to the very heart and mind, and including inclination and motivation, prohibits such as the following:

1. Undue exposure to immoral or pornographic materials, conversations or situations, even those that masquerade as “art” or “artistic expression” (Job 31:1; Isa. 3:16; 2 Pet. 2:14).
2. Continually thinking about sex, and not mortifying sexual fantasies (Rom. 8:13; Col. 3:5–6) and replacing them with godly and wholesome thoughts (Phil. 4:8).
3. Sinful idleness and over-indulgence, which leads to passive, spiritual indolence and weakness in temptation (Ezk. 16:49; Hos. 4:11).
4. Seeking the company of ungodly persons (1 Cor. 15:33; Jas. 4:4).
5. Perverting the marriage bed by either prostituting it in giving or withholding sexual relations, or unscripturally abstaining and so opening one or the other marriage partner to Satanic temptation (1 Cor. 7:2–5).
6. Complaining to others of one’s marriage relationship in such a way that it opens the issues of intimacy, i.e., unfulfilled desires or passions.
7. Being obsessed with one’s sexual fulfillment or satisfaction as the end or goal of the marriage relationship. When sex is made ultimate, it necessarily becomes perverted and self-centered. It is not sex, but obedience to God and seeking his glory that is the biblical end of the marriage relationship!

8. Reducing any relationship to the mere sexual level or seeking to seduce anyone to such a level by looks, actions or intimations (Prov. 6:12–14; Isa. 3:16).
9. Being a mother first and a wife second. This is perverting the God–ordained order, and may be used to prostitute, control or neglect the sexual aspect of marriage (1 Cor. 7:2–5).
10. Giving so much time and energy to employment or recreation that none is left to maintain the marriage relationship in a proper balance.

XII

The Eighth Commandment

Quest. 53: What is the Eighth Commandment?

Ans: The Eighth Commandment is, “Thou shalt not steal.” (Ex. 20:15).

Quest. 54: What is the significance of the Eighth Commandment?

Ans: The Eighth Commandment forbids anything that does or may hinder or detract from our own or another’s person, wealth, or inward or outward estate.

A. ANALYSIS AND EXPOSITION

As with the Sixth and Seventh Commandments, there is both:

1. *A Negative Declaration.* “Thou shalt not steal.”²²⁶ As in the other negative Commandments, the absolute negative [לֹא תִגְנוֹב] is used with the imperf, denoting a perpetual prohibition. The immediate command, as applied throughout the scriptural analogy of faith, forbids any unlawful taking or diminishing of anything belonging to one’s self or to another.
2. *A Positive Implication.* As this command is applied throughout Divine revelation, it may be summarized in the truth that every man is to be industrious as to his own property and rights, and also be practically concerned about the person and property and rights of others.

²²⁶ לֹא תִגְנוֹב. This is the absolute, categorical, perpetual prohibition. The Hebrew root (גָּנַב) translated “steal” has the connotation of secrecy, to carry away with stealth. The LXX reads οὐ κλέψεις, imp. fut. Source of the Eng. “kleptomania”.

B. THE EIGHTH COMMANDMENT IN CONTEXT

There are three necessary thoughts concerning this Commandment in the context of the Moral Law:

1. Each Commandment has a direct relation to the prologue in Ex. 20:1–2, “And God spake all these words, saying, I *am* the LORD thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.” God owned the nation of Israel as their Redeemer and Deliverer. Thus, he had absolute authority over them through his Law.
2. As Jehovah delivered them out of the house of bondage, they should understand both slavery and freedom (The Eighth Commandment includes the prohibition of kidnapping for the purpose of slavery, especially in the context of the Sixth—Eighth Commandments).
3. There is an immediate relation among the Sixth, Eighth and Ninth Commandments, as he who steals a person or his property is presumably also ready to both kill and lie.

C. THE BASIS OF AND NECESSITY FOR PRIVATE PROPERTY

1. FALLEN, SINFUL HUMAN PRESUMPTION

It is naturally and commonly thought that when any individual earns, receives, finds or inherits property, it is his by right to do with as he deems fit as its sole owner and possessor. Is the possession of private property a right? What is the source of such a right? Is private property a necessity? What is the original purpose for private property? How is man to use what he has earned, been given or inherited? What exactly is private property? These questions, considered irrelevant by many, are rightfully answered—not by Communism, Capitalism, Liberalism, political activism or philanthropy—but by the Scriptures.

2. EVERYTHING BELONGS TO GOD

Ultimately, man owns nothing. He is a creature of God who depends upon him for everything (Acts 17:24–25), including his every breath (Gen. 2:7; Psa. 104:29; Isa. 2:22; Dan. 5:23; Acts 17:25) and daily sustenance (Matt. 6:11, 19–33). The entirety of created reality belongs to—is owned by—Almighty God. “...the most high God, the possessor of heaven and earth...” (Gen. 14:19, 22). “The earth is the LORD’S,

and the fullness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein.” (Psa. 24:1). “...all the earth is mine.” (Ex. 19:5).²²⁷

Not only does God own all things, including the human body (1 Cor. 6:13, 19–20), but he has the power to give health and sickness (Ex. 15:26; Dt. 7:15; 28:27, 60; 32:39; Prov. 7:23; Jer. 30:17), to give or take mental and physical ability (1 Kgs. 4:31; Psa. 18:29, 32–34; 119:98; Dan. 4:30–35), and both give in life and take in death (Dt. 32:39; Neh. 9:6; Lk. 12:5; Acts 17:24–25; Rev. 1:18). From him is every ability or disability (Ex. 4:10–12; Lk. 1:18–20; Jn. 9:1–3; 2 Cor. 12:5–10), and he alone gives power to get wealth:

Dt. 8:1–18. All the commandments which I command thee this day shall ye observe to do, that ye may live, and multiply...And thou shalt remember all the way which the LORD thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee, and to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart...and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna...that he might make thee know that man doth not live by bread only, but by every *word* that proceedeth out of the mouth of the LORD doth man live. Thy raiment waxed not old upon thee, neither did thy foot swell, these forty years. Thou shalt also consider in thine heart, that, as a man chasteneth his son, so the LORD thy God chasteneth thee. Therefore thou shalt keep the commandments of the LORD thy God, to walk in his ways, and to fear him. For the LORD thy God bringeth thee into a good land...thou shalt not lack any *thing* in it...Beware that thou forget not the LORD thy God...Then thine heart be lifted up, and thou forget the LORD thy God...And thou say in thine heart, My power and the might of *mine* hand hath gotten me this wealth. But thou shalt remember the LORD thy God: for *it is* he that giveth thee power to get wealth, that he may establish his covenant which he sware unto thy fathers, as *it is* this day.

Man is thus simply a steward of the abilities, time, reputation, achievements, advantages, health, wealth or other property given to him by God. He has nothing that he can ultimately call or treat as his own. Everything he is and has must be considered as delegated to him by God for responsible use according to his Law–Word. Thus, man is to:

- Trust God for everything, i.e., live in the context of faith and exercise a faithful, godly stewardship over what God has entrusted to him (Gen. 14:21–23; Psa. 31:15; Matt. 4:10; 6:11, 19–33; Phil. 4:13)

²²⁷ Cf. also Gen. 1:1; 18:25; 24:3; Josh. 3:13; Ezra 5:11; Psa. 47:2, 7; 50:10; 89:11; 97:5; 115:16; Dan. 2:20–21; 4:17, 25, 32, 34–35; Micah 4:13; Zech. 6:5; 14:9; Matt. 11:25; Lk. 10:21; Acts 7:49; 17:24; 1 Cor. 10:26, 28; Rev. 11:4.

- Live in loving obedience and utter submission to God’s revealed will (1 Sam. 15:22–23; Matt. 6:9–10; 26:39, 42; Mk. 14:36; Jn. 4:34; 5:30; 6:38; Rom. 12:2; 1 Thess. 5:18; Heb. 10:7, 9²²⁸; 1 Pet. 4:1–2; 1 Jn. 2:15–17; 5:14)
- Seek to be responsible and industrious in the context of his calling to dominion, i.e., use his mental, physical and material resources in a manner by which he may scripturally glorify God (Gen. 1:26–28; 31:1–12, 41–42; Prov. 10:16; 13:11; 14:23; Eccl. 9:10; 2 Thess. 3:10–12)
- Better himself to the best of his God–given abilities (Prov. 10:4–5; 12:24; Eccl. 9:10; Matt. 24:44–47; 25:21, 23; Eph. 6:5–8; Col. 3:22–24; 1 Pet. 4:11)
- Acknowledge the hand of God in both weal and woe (Job 1:13–22; Hab. 3:17–19)
- Rejoice, acknowledge and honor God with his tithes and offerings (Gen. 28:20–22; Dt. 14:22–26; Mal. 3:8–10; 1 Cor. 16:2; 2 Cor. 9:7)
- Give to God all the glory (1 Cor. 10:31)

These realities must govern the worship, thinking, purpose, motivation, education, business or labors, location or re–location, recreation and anticipation of every human being. Spiritual concerns—not parental, filial, social or economic—are absolutely primary, and everything without exception must be subordinated to these (Matt. 6:33).

3. PRIVATE PROPERTY AND THE CREATION MANDATE

The Creation Mandate to “have dominion over...all the earth...to multiply, replenish the earth and subdue it” (Gen. 1:26–28) is humanity’s “Magna Charta,” its Primal Charter, Original Commission or Divinely–given Constitution. Man was created to work and to exercise godly, responsible dominion under God, and to find meaning, fulfillment, enjoyment and blessing in the fruits of his labor (Gen. 2:7–8, 15; 39:5;

²²⁸ The references to the Lord Jesus Christ, the true and perfect “Servant of the Lord,” as completely subservient to the will of the Father in his earthly life and purpose, are fully appropriate, as he is our example.

Lev. 25:18–23; Dt. 28:1–13; Prov. 10:22; Mal. 3:10–12).²²⁹ Man is the trustee of the earth under God.

The Creation Mandate is thus the moral basis for private property, as the accumulation of wealth [private ownership of property] is necessary for its fulfillment. Thus, private property is a God–given, inalienable right.²³⁰ Man in this context has a right to the ownership [stewardship] of property, if he has earned it legitimately, been given it, or inherited it. It is a God–given sacred trust. Therefore, all property without exception must be responsibly held and used according to the revealed will and Law–Word of God. Upon this ordinance of God is founded the pervasive Commandment, “Thou shalt not steal,” as the thief necessarily steals both from man the steward and God the ultimate owner.

4. THE BIBLICAL WORK ETHIC

It is in the context of man as the image–bearer of God and the Creation Mandate that we must view the biblical work ethic. Man is meant to work as God’s servant, i.e., to exercise a godly, responsible, consistent stewardship. Every task is to be approached, performed and completed “as unto the Lord” (Eccl. 9:10; Eph. 6:5–8; Col. 3:22–24; 1 Pet. 4:11). This is to remain true, especially for the believer, despite the curse and its subsequent effect upon work as exhausting and, at times, frustrating toil (Gen. 3:17–19; Eccl. 2:10–11, 17–24).

The biblical work ethic finds its fullest and highest expression in the context of a converted life–style. Dominion begins with self–government, and self–government begins with regeneration (Jn. 3:3). This is characterized by a transformed personality, a consistent biblical morality and ethic, and a positive industry and zeal toward God, his Word, and his people:

²²⁹ Work was not part of the curse. Man was created to work (Gen. 1:26–28; 2:15, 19–20). The exhaustive toil associated with the curse because of sin has made man’s labor frustrating and often doomed to a measure of futility (Gen. 3:17–19).

²³⁰ Some would base inalienable and other rights on “natural law,” i.e., the law of nature. All laws, however, are created laws. The self–revealing, triune God of Scripture is the God of nature, and every law, “natural” or otherwise derives from him.

- The grace of God necessarily evidences itself in a transformed personality and converted life–style (Rom. 6:17–18; 2 Cor. 5:14–17²³¹).
- The biblical work ethic, explicitly (Gen. 2:15; 3:17–19) and implicitly (Eph. 4:28) demands that believers be gainfully employed or self-sufficient under God.
- As every legitimate calling is holy under God, every believer should prepare himself and develop the skills necessary to serve God, maintain himself and advance in responsible stewardship.
- The biblical work ethic demands that believers recognize their stewardship, and labor as unto the Lord (Eph. 6:6–7; Col. 3:22–24).
- The biblical ethic prohibits believers from constantly being in debt (Rom. 13:8).²³² A habitual debtor’s life–style is necessarily a form of slavery. One forced into the service of mammon cannot serve God as he should (Matt. 6:24), and possesses no positive testimony for God, his church or Christianity in general.²³³
- The biblical mandate is practical, positive and plain: If one does not work, he does not eat, i.e., the church does not dole out financial or nutritional aid to anyone who is not as productive as he could be (2 Thess. 3:10–12). There is a scriptural and logical order for helping those both within and without the local assembly:

NOTE: These are the biblical principles of responsibility for acts of charity both on the part of an individual believer and the church. Christian love is to exist and be evidenced in the context of biblical truth (Phil. 1:9–11).

²³¹ The reference of being a “new creation” stands in the context of our Lord’s earthly life and resurrection. We no longer know Christ as he walked on this earth. He is now the ascended, glorified, sovereign Lord by means of a death, resurrection and ascension into glory. Thus, every true convert is to be considered, not as he was in his old, sinful life, but in his new, converted state. The old life and life–style have passed away.

²³² “Owe no man any thing” (Μηδενὶ μηδὲν ὀφείλετε), pres. imp. of prohib., i.e., “In absolutely no way be constantly getting into debt!” or “Stop getting into debt!”

²³³ There are many who are forced to miss public worship and fellowship, and to neglect their families—because they lack the initiative and discipline to remain as debt-free as possible. This is sinful.

1. The primary sphere of responsibility is personal. The individual believer is personally responsible to care for himself and to see to his own needs (Gal. 6:5; 1 Thess. 4:11–12; 2 Thess. 3:10–12).
 2. The secondary sphere of responsibility is the family. The family has the responsibility before God to care for its individual members so that the church as a whole is not burdened (1 Tim. 5:3–8).
 3. The third sphere of responsibility is with the individual Christian. Believers may voluntarily give to others in personal, voluntary acts of charity. The Scriptures place the emphasis upon such acts (Matt. 6:1–4; Acts 6:1–4; Gal. 6:2; Eph. 4:28; Phil. 2:4; 1 Tim. 6:17–19; Heb. 13:16; Jas. 1:27; 1 Jn. 3:16–18).
 4. The final sphere is that of the local church on a corporate and voluntary basis. The church as a local, corporate body or assembly has a primary responsibility to care for its own members (Acts 4:34–35; 1 Cor. 12:25–26). The church as a corporate body may give toward the help of poor believers in general or to certain believers in particular who are otherwise utterly destitute (Acts 11:27–30; 1 Cor. 16:1–3; 2 Cor. 8:1–9:15; Phil. 4:10–19). Any help that goes beyond the boundaries of the membership is completely voluntary and must be either in the context of helping fellow-believers or helping the lost in the context of evangelism. The New Testament states very little with regard to helping the unregenerate in any way, and then only in a personal context (Matt. 5:38–48; Rom. 12:17–21). Mere philanthropy apart from a Gospel context is foreign to the nature of the church.
 5. The responsibility of Christians as taxpayers. As responsible citizens and taxpayers, believers are already involuntarily and unscripturally taxed by the government to sustain the socialistic welfare system. Those in need who are not under the nurturing care of the church can apply to the various social and religious agencies for help.
- Truly converted persons must not only be diligent and industrious (Rom. 12:8, 11); they must also labor so they can be generous. In the context of the biblical work ethic the former thief must stop stealing, get honest employment, and thus be able to help those in need (Eph. 4:28).²³⁴

²³⁴ This principle of a converted life–style has been termed “dehabitation and rehabilitation,” i.e., replacing a sinful habit with a positive, productive, converted one. To merely stop a sinful habit or life–style without replacing it with one that is scriptural, is not a Christian principle.

5. WHAT IS PRIVATE PROPERTY?

In the context of Scripture, the absolute ownership of God, and the responsible stewardship of man under God, what is private property?²³⁵

George Dana Boardman answers by quoting Dr. Elisha Mulford:

The ground of the right in the existence of property, and the right to property, is in the vocation from God...Property is the material for the work of man in his vocation on the earth, and in that alone is the ground of its right. If property becomes in itself an end, then personality is subjected to the things which it possesses. If it be held apart from the vocation of man and the moral relations and obligations involved in that, then it becomes mere possession, the instrument of a selfish interest, and the means for the degradation of personality.

....Dr. Brownson's definition of property is as profound as it is beautiful—'Property is communion with God, through the material world.'²³⁶

It is then a sense of self and of personal ownership that derives from the very essence and nature of man, which effectively separates him from the brute and from the dehumanizing status of the slave.

D. THE GOD-COMPLEX OF FALLEN, SINFUL HUMANITY

1. MAN'S NATURE AND CALLING

Man was created and called to exercise godly dominion over the earth under God (Gen. 1:26–28). As he was created for this purpose, intelligent, responsible dominion was more than his calling, it was also an inescapable part of his nature. It was and is man's inherent nature to exercise dominion.

2. THE FRUIT OF THE FALL

The apostasy of man from God in the person and sin of Adam centered on his seeking to be his own "god" and determining for himself what was right and wrong (Gen. 3:1–6), i.e., seeking autonomy with relation to his calling and nature. It is not the existence of property which is sinful or wrong, nor the desire for such; it is rather the great spiritual and moral transition from the Creation Mandate under God to the attempted autonomy of fallen, sinful man in his "god-complex". His nature became perverted, but the urge to dominate remained, divorced

²³⁵ "Property," derives from the Lat. *proprius*, "own, individual, particular," hence proprietor or owner; from *peculiaris*, "private property, one's own, peculiar".

²³⁶ George Dana Boardman, *University Lectures on the Ten Commandments*. Philadelphia: The Judson Press, 1952 reprint. pp. 250–251.

from the equitable, sanctifying and directing effect of God's Law-Word.

From this unhallowed, selfish urge to autonomously dominate the earth and everyone and everything in it derives all envy, jealousy and pride; every act of personal, marital and social strife; rape, theft, robbery, pillage, plunder and murder; personal, corporate and national oppression; every form of government which denies to its subjects private property—absolute Monarchy, Communism and Socialism;²³⁷ and every attempt at ecclesiastical dominance, religious politics and persecution.

Fallen, sinful man, both individually and collectively, is a squatter and vandal on God's earth. Thus stands the necessity of God's Law-Word, "Thou shalt not steal."

E. COMMUNISM AND CHRISTIANITY

Some socialists have alleged that the early church at Jerusalem practiced a type of "communism" because they had all things in common (Cf. Acts 2:44–45; 4:32–5:11). What are the issues?

1. This was a voluntary sharing or joint-ownership, not Socialism. No one was forced to do this to be a member of the Jerusalem church.
2. Ananias and Sapphira could have kept their property or sold it and kept the entire selling price. They lied about the price so they could appear to have given all. This lie was Peter's point, not their keeping back part of the money.
3. The situation at Jerusalem was unique with a large number of widows and others who had been abandoned by their unconverted families and had to be cared for (Acts 6:1–3). Finally, our Lord prophesied that Jerusalem would fall and be destroyed in judgment (Matt. 24), so church members who owned property, believing our Lord, liquidated it and gave it to the church for the common needs. Most shortly left Jerusalem under the persecution by Saul (Acts 8:1–4).

²³⁷ While denying to their subjects the right to private property, all totalitarian forms of government assume the place of God, and thus arrogate to themselves the exclusive right to property—and seek to enslave their subjects through unjust taxation.

F. MONEY AND EVIL

The common misquotation and misunderstanding of 1 Tim. 6:10 needs to be corrected. Money is *not* “the root of all evil,” but rather “the love of money is the root of all kinds of evil...”²³⁸ Poverty is not to be equated with spirituality. Often it is the result of indolence and disorganization. Nor is financial or material prosperity wrong in itself—until it begins to hurt the spiritual prosperity of one’s soul (3 Jn. 2). A scriptural concept of private property—including money—is that it is but part of a stewardship that is to be wisely used under God.

G. TYPES OF THEFT

Although the Eighth Commandment is primarily directed against the personal theft of material property, as with each of the Commandments, it is “exceeding broad” (Psa. 119:96). The great variety of theft, robbery, fraud and oppression that exists among men is prohibited by this Commandment. The following lists are only illustrative and suggestive:

1. THEFT OF MATERIAL OR FISCAL PROPERTY

The primary thrust of the Eighth Command is against all types of theft of material property. This would include personal theft, or stealing property from another, failing to return borrowed property or pledges (Ex. 22:25–27; Lev. 19:13; Dt. 24:10–18; Psa. 37:21), making late payments through indolence.

Vandalism and arson, or purposely destroying or diminishing the value of another’s property is theft. This includes corporate vandalism, or demonstrations by various “political special interest groups” or “racial minorities” that destroy either public or private property. Employer and employee theft, failing to compensate for loss (Ex. 21:26–27), unjustly withholding wages (Ex. 12:35–36),²³⁹ or manufacturing and releasing inferior products must be included. Fraud (Lev. 19:11–14), forgery, embezzlement, counterfeiting, and other types of misrepresentation, either of persons, products or finances constitutes theft. Exorbitant court settlements, excessive interest, are means of “legalized” theft.

Extortion (Ex. 22:21–23), racketeering, and other forms of dishonest gain, either based upon an oppressive threat or an unrealistic concept of

²³⁸ ...ρίζα γὰρ πάντων τῶν κακῶν ἐστὶν ἡ φιλαργυρία... Lit: “For [a] root of all kinds of [pl.] evil is money.”

²³⁹ The Egyptians owed the Israelites 430 years’ back wages.

“chance” and without the mutual consent of just payment for services rendered constitute a type of theft.

Bankruptcy, or failing to honestly and ethically settle indebtedness is theft. Tax evasion, or refusing to honor the civil authorities that God has ordained for the good of citizens, even though the government may be unjust in its dealings, is theft (Rom. 13:1–7; 1 Pet. 2:13–17).²⁴⁰

2. THEFT OF INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY

Not all property is material. There is the widespread theft of ideas, literary work and other personal intellectual property. Plagiarism, copyright and patent infringement are all too common in this technological age.

3. THEFT OF FREEDOM

The context of the Sixth—Ninth Commandments, the statements of the Mosaic law (Ex. 21:16), and the Apostle’s reiteration in 1 Tim. 1:8–10 stress the idea of man-stealing for the purpose of slavery. Kidnapping was very common in ancient societies for the purpose of selling captives into slavery. This was the sin and crime of Joseph’s brethren (Gen. 37:23–28). This practice continues in some Eastern countries.

But what exactly is freedom as opposed to slavery? It is not the state of being personally, religiously, morally, socially or politically autonomous; it is rather being free only to become a faithful and consistent servant to God—true freedom exists only under God’s Law,²⁴¹ and it exists only in the context of being God’s slave!²⁴² In short, relative freedom is a condition to be used for God’s glory.

²⁴⁰ The Roman government was certainly not completely just, yet Paul commanded the payment of taxes and Peter commanded honor to rulers (1 Pet. 2:13–17). When Paul mandated prayer for all rulers, Nero was at that very time Emperor of the Roman Empire (1 Tim. 2:1–4). When should one stop paying taxes? Only at the point he is forced to take up arms under a just civil magistrate to reconstitute a just government.

²⁴¹ As stated previously, the absence of law is not freedom; it is lawlessness.

²⁴² Cf. Rom. 6:17–18. Every man is either a willing bonds slave of sin or of righteousness. Salvation is not freedom to sin or to become autonomous; it is rather a change of masters. Cf. Rom. 1:1; 1 Cor. 9:19–22.

4. THEFT BY GOVERNMENT

There is not only personal and corporate theft, there is the characteristic theft of governments against each other and against their own citizens or subjects.

Stronger, more powerful nations become the oppressors of smaller and weaker nations in order to plunder their lands, resources and population, or put them under “economic sanctions” to break their economies. Nations that lose wars are subject to “war reparations,” or financial compensation for loss of persons and goods—simply because they lost the war, not because one was right and the other wrong. “Might makes right” is the key to international politics.

Governments unduly tax [commit theft] against their own citizens to support themselves and perpetuate their power and control (1 Sam. 8:5–20). They oppress their subjects by “state capitalism”²⁴³ and anti-scriptural taxation on income, property and inheritance. The productive members of society are taxed [robbed] in the welfare system to care for the indolent (Lev. 19:9–10; Dt. 23:24–25; 26:10–14; 2 Thess. 3:10–12). The legal system breaks down under the weight of perjury, bribery and injustice (Ex. 23:1–3, 6–7; Lev. 19:15; Dt. 27:19; Isa. 1:23). Government inflation devalues the monetary system through debased or fiat currency (Lev. 19:35–37; Isa. 1:22).²⁴⁴ The state assumes the place of God over its subjects to steal their property by the sovereign exercise of “eminent domain” and property taxation (Lev. 25:13–17; Dt. 27:17).²⁴⁵

²⁴³ Communism and Socialism are *not* anti-capitalistic, they are totalitarian, anti-private capitalistic [abolition of private property] systems replaced by state capitalistic systems in which the state owns all property.

²⁴⁴ Fiat money is currency that has no material backing [gold or silver], but is simply created by the government and backed by increasing inflation or government debt. The government (and the Federal Reserve System, a *private* banking concern) is the biggest and only “legal” counterfeiter because it assumes an absolute position of power and issues its fiat currency.

²⁴⁵ “Eminent domain” presupposes that the state owns all property—a blatant and arbitrary declaration of absolute sovereignty. Through the anti-scriptural realities of eminent domain and property taxation, private property does not actually exist. One’s “private property” may be confiscated without compensation or sold for non-payment of taxes.

NOTE: Human government, divorced from Divine Moral Law, has been notorious for its arbitrary and contradictory use of “law”. Frederick Bastiat very plainly clarifies the real issue:

...law by no means confines itself to its proper functions. and when it has exceeded its proper functions, it has not done so merely in some inconsequential and debatable matters. The law has gone further than this; it has acted in direct opposition to its own purpose. The law has been used to destroy its own objective: it has been applied to annihilating the justice that it was supposed to maintain; to limiting and destroying the rights which its real purpose was to respect. The law has placed the collective force at the disposal of the unscrupulous who wish, without risk, to exploit the person, liberty, and property of others. It has converted plunder into a right, in order to protect plunder. and it has converted lawful defense into a crime, in order to punish lawful defense.

....No society can exist unless the laws are respected to a certain degree...When law and morality contradict each other, the citizen has the cruel alternative of either losing his moral sense or losing his respect for the law.²⁴⁶

5. LEGALIZED THEFT

“Legalized theft” is not limited to the government, but practiced by large corporations, small businesses and individuals through a variety of means. The machinations of lawyers able to use the “loopholes” in the legal system to pervert it for personal gain.

6. THEFT OF TIME

Time is a finite and precious commodity (Psa. 90:9–12; Eph. 5:15–17; Rev. 10:5–6). It should be neither wasted nor stolen. Employees may steal time from their employers by being “clock-watchers,” and doing minimal labor. We may waste time that could be profitably spent. We may take the time of others and thus keep them from their duties and accomplishments. Those who have no personal sense of time themselves are usually the worst offenders toward others (Prov. 25:17).

7. PASSIVE OR SELF-THEFT

A person may even rob or commit theft against himself by wasting time, lose opportunities through indolence (Prov. 18:9; 24:30–34; 26:13–14; 28:19; Rom. 12:11), or constantly getting into debt (Rom. 13:8). Many could advance themselves spiritually, educationally, financially or socially—but either remain passive, lack the initiative or

²⁴⁶ Frederick Bastiat, *The Law*. The foundation for Economic Education, Inc., Irvington-on-Hudson, New York, 1950, p. 8. Quoted by T. Robert Ingram, *Op. cit.*, pp. 97–98.

are consumed with recreational activities and non-productive interests (Prov. 18:9, 15–16).

Through outright sin, indiscretion, or abuse of “Christian liberty” one can rob himself of his reputation and usefulness for God, and bring ruin upon himself, his family and his church.

8. MORAL THEFT

Moral theft includes any loss in the moral sphere—e.g., the exploitation of another for selfish purposes, the ruining of another’s reputation (Lev. 19:16), and using one’s own reputation for gain to endorse questionable entities. It certainly includes the sexual seduction of a young man or woman to deprive either of their virginity and morality (Ex. 22:16–17; Lev. 19:20; Prov. 2:16–19; 6:23–26). David stole Uriah’s wife (2 Sam. 11–12).

9. SPIRITUAL AND RELIGIOUS THEFT

There is a variety of such awful sins and crimes. Professing Christians rob God by withholding what is due him—their time, energy, worship, tithes and offerings (Ex. 22:29–30; 23:19; Dt. 17:1; Mal. 3:8–10). Preachers withhold truth from their hearers or preach error or heresy that deceives, seduces and destroys the souls of men (Jer. 5:31). Such wickedness breaks the First, Second, Third and Sixth Commandments also! The Pelagians and Arminians rob God of his glory with their humanistic doctrine of free-will and human ability.

Many are unfaithful to the public means of grace and so rob God of his proper time (Heb. 10:25). Others rob their pastors by withholding their financial (1 Cor. 9:6–14; 1 Tim. 5:17–18) and spiritual support (Eph. 6:18–20; Phil. 1:19). Sadly, many professing Christians are the exact religious counterpart of their welfare relatives in the world.

10. ACCESSORY TO THEFT AND RESPONSIBILITY FOR PROPERTY

The Moral Law holds anyone as an accessory who has knowledge of theft or even a potential situation that would mean loss, and so as guilty before God as the thief as either an accessory or witness to threatened liability. Further, one is fully responsible for any property left in his care and for any loss that he might cause through carelessness (Ex. 22:1–15). Divine Law demands positive, personal accountability (Ex. 23:4–5; Dt. 22:1–4;).

11. PERMISSIBLE THEFT?

Is theft ever permissible or justifiable? Romanism holds that some sins, such as theft to save life from starvation or lying [mental reservation] to preserve safety and life are justifiable sins or crimes. This principle is allegedly based upon Scripture. The issue of justifiable falsehood is considered under the Ninth Commandment. What of theft? The alleged scriptural basis is Prov. 6:30–31, “Men do not despise a thief, if he steals to satisfy his soul when he is hungry; But *if* he be found, he shall restore sevenfold; he shall give all the substance of his house.”

There are two issues of the utmost importance. First, if the thief were caught, he was still to be treated as a base criminal and put under the most severe penalty. There is no justification for his theft whatsoever.²⁴⁷ Second, the context (vv. 24–35) reveals that the statement concerning the thief is part of a warning against adultery, and cannot stand alone grammatically, syntactically or contextually. The thief and adulterer are put on the same level for comparison in order to show that the adulterer (unlike the thief) can never compensate for his sin and crime against the offended person, whatever he might do. There is here absolutely no scriptural basis for justifiable theft.

H. REPENTANCE–RESTITUTION–RETRIBUTION: THE GRACE OF LAW

The Law of God teaches forgiveness upon repentance and restitution (Matt. 3:8; 18:21; Lk. 17:3–4). Repentance without restitution, when the latter is possible, is not valid. Restitution of lost or stolen property is with a high rate of interest because of the nature of the crime and the added loss of productivity during the time of loss or theft (Ex. 22:1–14).

In some sins or crimes, restitution is impossible, therefore the thief must be sold into servitude (Ex. 22: 3) or retribution must be exacted by the principle of the *lex talionis* (Ex. 21:23–27). In cases of capital offences, the offender must suffer accordingly (Ex. 21:12, 15–16; Lev. 20:9–16; Numb. 35:31–34). Restitution or retribution—not imprisonment—is the Divine principle.

²⁴⁷ The exorbitant restitution of seven-fold is higher than any restitution ever commanded, i.e., twofold, fourfold and fivefold (Ex. 21:37; 22:1–3, 8). This excess reveals that he must further seek to appease the one robbed, and is inexplicable apart from the context of vv. 24–35.

The Moral Law should never be considered cruel or harsh. It remains just and even gracious in the principle of forgiveness upon repentance and restitution.

In some cultures (e.g., Islamic) the thief has his hand amputated upon the first offence, and his arm upon the second. This is brutal and ungodly because there is no principle of forgiveness and restitution—and without the hand, the thief is even more prone to steal because the possibility of productivity is greatly decreased.

Consider the overly-righteous exclamation of King David when he heard of the man whose ewe lamb was taken and slain for a meal for a stranger. To restore four-fold was proper, but to put a man to death for such an act was irrational and over-reaching, above and beyond the Law of God—and God judged David from his own mouth (2 Sam. 12:1–12). We ought to beware that we do not react overly righteous, but within the context of God's Word.

I. THE CASE OF ZACCHAEUS

The case of Zacchaeus (Lk. 19:1–10) is a glorious illustration of both saving grace and the principle of the Eighth Commandment. Zacchaeus was the commissioner of Taxes in Jericho, the rich region situated at the crossroads of the major trade routes to the coast to Egypt and into Arabia. It was also the center of the balsam trade. Zacchaeus was a very wealthy and powerful individual.

1. His sudden conversion is a remarkable instance of the sovereign grace of God (Lk. 19:4–6).
2. His declaration was not made to the multitude, but to our Lord (Lk. 19:7–8).
3. The significance of the present tense verbs in this statement: “I give...I restore...!” [δίδωμι...ἀποδίδωμι]. The whole incident hinges upon our translation and understanding of these words!

NOTE: Are these to be taken as historical pres.? or futuristic pres.? If the historical pres., then this becomes a defense of his good works, i.e., he was in the habit of doing such good works?! This would be a vindication of his previous and present actions. If the futuristic pres., then a vow and commitment to begin to perform these acts at once! These must refer to the immediate future! Cf. v. 9, “Today is salvation come to this house...!” The transformation of his heart and mind immediately began to reveal themselves in a transformed attitude and generosity!

Bishop Hall notes that his liberality was immediate, not *postmortem*! The work of God is furthered with present issues and provisions, not something which is in the nebulous future! Present needs mean present efforts and supplies!

An old preacher once noted that most people want to serve God after they're dead! They put God's work in their wills—because they cannot use or spend their money then, anyway! He then remarked that God must kill some Christians to make them useful!

4. "...Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor..." [Ἰδοὺ τὰ ἡμίση τῶν ὑπαρχόντων μου κύριε δίδωμι τοῖς πτωχοῖς]. "Behold!" [Ἰδοὺ, an exclamation]. To Zacchaeus, this reveals a transformed heart and mind!

What an amazing declaration—not merely half of my income, but half of "my possessions, my substance!" [ὑπαρχόντων μου].²⁴⁸ What a change of heart for a man who was before selfish, a thief, an extortioner and bent on accumulating as much wealth as possible! He had more than he would ever need, use, or, perhaps ever spend, and so he unloaded his burden of wealth on the poor!

Some may have good intentions but never act upon them. Grace brings action!

5. "...and if I have taken anything from any man by false accusation..." [καὶ εἴ τι νόσ τι ἐσυκοφάντησα]. A 1st class cond., "since!" He openly admits his extortions and sinfulness in his business dealings! There were no "Ifs" in his mind! When we begin with "If I've done thus and thus..." we are not coming clean!

"By false accusation" [ἐσυκοφάντησα]. The term he uses is the source of our word "sycophant," an informer, or one who flatters for his own ends and for financial gain. From "σύκος, "fig," and φαίνω, "to show," Lit: a "fig shower." The history of this term is interesting:

Zacchaeus does not seek to present himself before God or men as someone he is not. He boldly confesses his sins to our Lord, and he does so openly and publicly!

²⁴⁸ ὑπαρχόντων, one's substance.

6. "...I restore *him* fourfold." [ἀποδίδωμι τετραπλοῦν]. This reveals that Zacchaeus, despite his secular life, still knew the Law of God! He not only understood the Law, but went far beyond it in his restitution! His sin was outright theft, and he did not disguise it or minimize it!

If a person cheated another or wrongfully took from him, he was to restore the principle amount and add a fifth part to it.

Numb. 5:7. Then they shall confess their sin which they have done: and he shall recompense his trespass with the principal thereof, and add unto it the fifth *part* thereof, and give *it* unto *him* against whom he hath trespassed.

A thief was to restore four-fold if the property could not be returned. If the thief was caught, he would make restitution. If the thief was caught with the stolen property, he was to restore double.

Ex. 22:1–4. If a man shall steal an ox, or a sheep, and kill it, or sell it; he shall restore five oxen for an ox, and four sheep for a sheep.² If a thief be found breaking up, and be smitten that he die, *there shall* no blood *be shed* for him.³ If the sun be risen upon him, *there shall be* blood *shed* for him; *for* he should make full restitution; if he have nothing, then he shall be sold for his theft.⁴ If the theft be certainly found in his hand alive, whether it be ox, or ass, or sheep; he shall restore double.

Zacchaeus would have been within the bounds of the Law had he vowed to pay back the principle and add the fifth part, but he acknowledges that his sin was outright theft—he dealt with his heart-sins, and did not minimize them in any way! Thus, he vows to restore four-fold! Without question, we have a vivid example of “works meet for repentance!”

XIII

The Ninth Commandment

Quest. 55: What is the Ninth Commandment?

Ans: The Ninth Commandment is, “Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour.” (Ex. 20:16)

Quest. 56: What is the significance of the Ninth Commandment?

Ans: The Ninth Commandment requires both the maintenance and the promotion of truth between human beings, and of our own and of our neighbor’s good name, especially in witness-bearing.

A. ANALYSIS AND EXPOSITION

As with the preceding three Commandments, the analysis—according to the analogy of faith (the inclusive teaching of Scripture, which forms the

ultimate context for a proper understanding of the Law)—is necessarily twofold, to which a note of explanation is added:

1. *A Negative Declaration.* As with every negative Commandment, the absolute negative [לֹא־תִעֲנֶה בְּרֵעֶךָ עַד שֶׁקֶר:] is used with the imperf., thus a perpetual prohibition. The LXX corresponds with οὐ ψευδομαρτυρήσεις κατὰ τοῦ πλησίον σου μαρτυρίαν ψευδῆ.

“Bear false witness” [שֶׁקֶר...לֹא־תִעֲנֶה] implies a court of law. The Scriptures expand this to truthfulness in all human relationships.

The repetition of this Commandment in Dt. 5:20 reads שָׁוְא, “false, deceptive, empty, vain worthless,” implying any unfounded evidence whatsoever.²⁴⁹ The phrase “against thy neighbor” [בְּרֵעֶךָ] is emphatic.²⁵⁰ “Thy Neighbor” [רֵעֵךְ]. originally meant, “associate, friend, companion.”²⁵¹ (LXX: τοῦ πλησίον σου, someone near).

Our Lord expanded “neighbor” to include anyone and everyone with whom we come in contact or have any relation to, including relatives, associates, strangers, and even enemies (e.g., the “Parable of the Good Samaritan,” Lk. 10:30–37 and Matt. 5:43–48. Cf. also Gal. 6:10).

2. *A Positive Implication.* This can be summarized succinctly in the words of Scripture itself, “Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself,” i.e., maintain and promote truthfulness and equity to all those with whom we come in contact or have any relation to—within the bounds of Scripture.
3. *A Note of Explanation.* Israelitish courts were both civil and religious institutions. The court was comprised of ten elders from among the people, and sat daily at the city gate, hearing and administering justice (Dt. 21:19; 22:15, 18, 21; 25:7–10; Ruth 4:1–2).

²⁴⁹ Deut. 5:20 changes שֶׁקֶר to שָׁוְא Cf. Keil and Delitzsch, *The Pentateuch*, II, p. 124.

²⁵⁰ לֹא־תִעֲנֶה בְּרֵעֶךָ עַד שֶׁקֶר: i.e., “You shall not bear against your neighbor false testimony.” The LXX follows with οὐ ψευδομαρτυρήσεις κατὰ τοῦ πλησίον σου μαρτυρίαν ψευδῆ, “You shall not falsely testify against your neighbor a false testimony,” emph. by repeating the words “false testimony”.

²⁵¹ The Eng. “neighbor” derives from OE. *néahgebúr*, from *néah*, nigh or near; and *gebúr*, dweller, from LG. *boor* [Dut. *boer*], farmer, peasant, one who dwells in proximity.

Priests (some later termed “lawyers” because of their position) explained the exact meaning of the Law if necessary (Dt. 17:9, 12; 19:17; 24:8). Judges, if present, made rulings (Dt. 16:18–20; 17:9, 12).²⁵²

As there were no detectives, no defense or prosecuting attorneys, no lengthy trials or investigations, and no advanced technology or forensic science, everything was based on the account of two or three witnesses—from minor issues to matters of life and death (Numb. 35:30; Dt. 17:6–7; 19:15).

Justice was administered immediately after deliberation on a daily basis. The witnesses literally held the power of life and death in their testimony (Prov. 18:21; 1 Kgs. 21:8–14), thus the utmost necessity for absolute truthfulness under oath and for a plurality of witnesses concerning a capital offense (Deut. 17:6; 19:15). If perjury were discovered, the offender was to receive the same punishment due the defendant (Dt. 19:16–21).

B. THE NINTH COMMANDMENT IN CONTEXT

The Third Commandment forbids perjury against God, the Ninth forbids perjury against our fellow man. The Fifth Commandment guards the rights of authority, the Sixth guards the rights of person and life, the Seventh guards the rights of marriage and family, and thus of society; the Eighth guards the rights of property. The Ninth Commandment guards the rights of both name and reputation, and so necessarily guards the system of justice which is absolutely essential to society itself (Psa. 11:1–4; Isa. 1:17, 23, 26).

C. GOD IS THE SOURCE OF ALL TRUTH

1. SECURING THE TRUTH

The purpose of this Commandment is to secure the truth among men, which is absolutely essential to preserve individual life, reputation, justice and society. When truth is considered relative, i.e., existential or apart from God-ordained absolutes, the very foundation of society is potentially destroyed, for human society is based upon the presupposition that men are speaking the truth to one another.

²⁵² The judges were sometimes referred to as “gods” (אֱלֹהִים) because they represented God in dealing with absolute justice in matters of life and death (Cf. Ex. 21:6; Ex. 22:8–9 [Heb. Reads אֱלֹהִים]; Psa. 82).

NOTE: Existentialism bases all on subjective experience, perception and interpretation. It is the denial of objective reality. It holds that all is relative—that there are no absolutes. Man finds meaning for himself in his own experience and tendencies. This is the result of denying and turning from the Law–Word of God, and thus God–defined reality. Existential philosophy has always existed when man has turned from God, and thus from objective, God–created reality and meaning. Existentialism characterizes fallen man in his futile attempt to implement his “god–complex” in the real world.²⁵³ It is not a modern phenomenon. It existed in ancient Israel—“and every man did that which was right in his own eyes” (Dt. 12:8; Judg. 17:6; 21:25; Prov. 3:7; 12:15; 16:2; 21:2; 30:12; Isa. 5:21). Note that legal oaths, omitting the name of God, are essentially existential (not based on any objective truth) and thus ultimately meaningless.

2. FALLEN HUMANITY AND THE LIE

This is the awful plight of man in turning from God and thus from any possibility of absolute and objective truth or reality. Fallen man has purposely “exchanged the truth of God for ‘the lie,’” and thus the whole realm of humanity is based on a universal principle of falsehood with its depraved results (Psa. 58:3; Rom. 1:18–32).

NOTE: Rom. 1:25, Lit: “They are such ones as (οἵτινες, qual. pers. pron., emph. character) exchanged (μετήλλαξαν) the truth of God for the lie (τὴν ἀλήθειαν τοῦ θεοῦ ἐν τῷ ψεύδει), and worshipped and served creation, by–passing (παρὰ, implying their culpability) the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen.” Cf. Rom. 3:13–14; 8:7–8.

This principle of falsehood may be relatively mild in the form of flattery or social politeness, or malignant in the form of perjury and other malicious lies—yet it remains the one pervasive characteristic of fallen mankind.

Untruthfulness permeates societies in politics, business, education, and in family and personal relationships.

3. LYING A DEVILISH SIN

The nature of falsehood derives from the devil. He put forth the first lie (Gen. 3:1–6), and is called the father of lies (Jn. 8:44). Satan or the devil is described in Scripture as the destroyer (Rev. 9:11), adversary (1 Pet. 5:8), deceiver (Eph. 6:10; Rev. 20:10) and slanderer or accuser (1

²⁵³ The “god–complex” of man is revealed in his futile attempt at autonomy—to give his own meaning to everything—to determine for himself what is right and wrong.

Tim. 3:6–7; 1 Jn. 3:8; Rev. 12:10).²⁵⁴ His intent is to destroy God’s law–order by opposition, deceit and accusation. Every lie reflects this devilish principle. Thus, every liar is in league with the devil and is set against the law–order of God.

Lying is not a “small sin,” but stands against the God of all truth and His Word.

4. A REVELATIONAL EPISTEMOLOGY

Epistemology is the science or theory of the origin, nature, methods and limits of knowledge. It is foundational to philosophy and all science. Fallen, sinful mankind is epistemologically bankrupt (Rom. 1:18–25). To secure the truth, man must turn to the objective, authoritative Law–Word of God, to Divinely–ordained absolutes, i.e., to a “revelational epistemology.”

NOTE: There are three Greek terms for knowledge: γινώσκω, “come to know, become acquainted with, understand.” (Cf. Gnosticism) οἶδα, “perception, fullness of knowledge.” (Rom. 8:28). ἐπίσταμαι, “to understand, to fix one’s thoughts upon, to be assured, know for certain.” ἐπιστήμη, is also used for both intellectual power, scientific knowledge and artistic skill. It is from this term that the word *epistemology* is derived. (occ. some 15 times in the NT). For Scriptural examples of this term, cf. Mk. 14:68; Acts 10:28; 15:7; 18:25; 19:15, 25; 20:18; 22:19; 24:10; 26:26; 1 Tim. 6:4; Heb. 11:8; Jas. 3:13; 4:14; Jude 10.

The six revealed realities found in Genesis 1:1—the presuppositional stance of Scripture, the revelational nature of Scripture, the absolute self–existence of God, his absolute sovereignty over his creation, the Creator–creature distinction and the reality that every fact is a created fact, and thus are no “brute” facts—are foundational for all worship, theology, apologetics, and for every aspect of the Christian life. As Christians, we are always challenged at the point of our faith, and our faith is always challenged at its point–of–contact with the Word of God.

This was true of Adam and Eve. They were tempted at the point their faith was grounded in the Word of God. Every challenge or attack and every temptation comes to believers at this very same and crucial point as it did to our first parents—and for the very same reason—to separate us from the Word of God.

Our faith, if it is biblical, is not irrational; it is necessarily intelligent and consistent, as it is God–given. This God–engendered faith primarily enables us to believe that the Bible is the very Word of God inscripturated.

²⁵⁴ “Satan” (ἑβραϊστί, Σατάν, *Satan*), “liar in wait, adversary”. “Devil” (διάβολος), “adversary, accuser, slanderer”. “Accuser” (κατήγωρ). “Apollyon” (Ἀπολλύων), “destroyer.”

Everything else flows from this one vital reality—our comprehension of and response to the gospel, our understanding of Bible doctrine, our growth in grace, our spiritual maturity and our service for the Lord Jesus Christ. This is the vital connection between the Scriptures and faith.

The Bible is the foundation of our “revelational epistemology,” our sole rule of both faith and practice—and, whatever the challenge or attack, this is the ground which must be held at all costs. To love its Author, to study it thoroughly, to live in humble obedience to its mandates, and to maintain its absolute authority and truthfulness before an unbelieving world, is the primary calling and task of every Christian.

The only approach to truth and knowledge is in and through the Word of God (Jn. 17:17). God is not only true, he is the source of all reality, truth and meaning. Apart from him, there is no truth—only empirical speculation at best and utter (spiritual and moral) irrationality at worst.

D. THE TONGUE

God created man in his image and likeness, as a rational, morally-responsible being to exercise godly dominion over creation. To fulfill this mandate, man was created with the faculty of speech to commune with God and communicate with his fellow man.

Sin has dreadfully perverted the use of the tongue. The very instrument created to praise God turns to curse him—and to curse one’s fellow man.

The tongue reveals the fullness of the heart or inner being and expresses its depraved nature. (Matt. 12:34; Mk. 7:21–23; Rom. 3:13–14; Jas. 2:2–12). Speech is “the exhalation of the soul”.

The believer is mandated to exercise dominion over his heart and tongue (Prov. 4:23; Rom. 6:14–18; Gal. 5:23; Eph. 4:22–25, 29–31; Jas. 1:26; 2:2–12). All government necessarily begins with self-government, and self-government necessarily begins with regeneration. A changed heart is necessary for a changed tongue, and a sanctified personality is essential to mortifying the sins of the tongue (Rom. 6:12–13; 8:13; Col. 3:5, 9–10).

E. TYPES OF FALSEHOOD

1. WHAT IS A LIE?

A lie is a statement, action or impression (e.g., a gesture or inflection of the voice that insinuates a contrary meaning) that one knows to be false, made with the intent to deceive. A lie is thus (1) perpetrated consciously and intentionally, and (2) perpetrated with the intent to deceive or do harm. There is a seeming infinite variety of falsehood. The following lists are for the sake of categorizing the variety, and are only suggestive and illustrative:

2. THE MALICIOUS LIE

The malicious lie (Lat: *mendacium perniciosum*) is an outright falsehood meant to deceive, injure or detract from another. Such includes perjury (a false oath under law), slander (a false personal statement defaming a person, his character or his reputation) and libel (slander in print). These are direct and determined crimes and sins forbidden by the Ninth Commandment. The issue is that these and many others are the sinful and criminal attempt to both deceive and to do injury. To these may be added gossip (sinful repetition of either true or unfounded rumors about another), backbiting (to speak maliciously about another behind his back, i.e., in his absence), lying through silence or concealing the truth when one should speak, speaking when one should keep silence, insinuations, misrepresentations or twisting and slanting the truth (e.g., quoting another out of context), half-truths, breaking covenants or contracts, false advertising, etc. There are four areas of particular concern:

- a. *Gossip and backbiting.* These sins are commonly accepted as characteristic of human nature and so are minimized or tolerated within the church. The truth is, that such sins are as horrendous and as destructive of lives and reputations as immorality, and so must be taken seriously and dealt with accordingly (1 Cor. 5:11–13; Col. 3:5–10).
- b. *Silence as sin and speaking as sin.* One must exercise godly discernment as when to speak and when not to speak. Sometimes, it is sinful not to speak, and at other times, sinful to speak. Under certain circumstances, one must speak out for the truth or commit sin (Ex. 23:1–2; 1 Sam. 19:4–5; Psa. 50:18; Prov. 12:22), and at others, remain silent to protect one's self or another from those who have no right to know certain information (Prov. 11:9–13). At other times, we must discern how much truth ought to be revealed or concealed (1 Sam. 16:1–5). We must seek to maintain a clear conscience before God in accordance with his Word (Acts 23:1).
- c. *Slander within the family.* The family circle, by its very nature as a group of closely-related individuals, tends toward informality and undue familiarity—and is necessarily tainted by sin (Eph. 5:21–33; 6:1–4; Col. 3:18–21; 1 Pet. 3:1–7). It is all too common for husbands, wives and children to speak against each other to those outside the family. This is slander. There are issues, problems and

circumstances that ought to remain within the family circle and not be divulged to anyone outside unless the sinfulness or criminality is of such a nature that the family cannot and will not scripturally deal with it—and then only to those who are in proper authority. Not everyone deserves to hear things that should remain private, and others should not be exposed to issues that are inevitably slanted from a given personal perspective (Dt. 22:13–21). Husbands and wives must be shown mutual respect, and the husband and father recognized as head of the household under the Lordship of Christ; parents must be honored before God and man.

- d. *Spiritual Falsehood*. False teachers damn the souls of their converts. Cults and “isms” destroy the lives of many. Romanism, Pelagianism and Arminianism are all founded upon God–dishonoring falsehood. Such spiritual or religious lies, however sincerely held by their adherents, are never to be countenanced or taken lightly (2 Cor. 11:13–15; Gal. 1:6–9; Titus 1:9–14).²⁵⁵ and what can be said of those who lightly consider and are false to their own church covenant? Surely God will bring them into account, for they are lying unto God and not merely unto their fellow members (Acts 5:1–4; Eph. 4:25).

3. THE JOCLAR LIE

The jocular lie (Lat: *mendacium iocosum*) is an untruth spoken in jest or an exaggeration for the sake of humor.²⁵⁶ This includes story–telling of “tall tales,” teasing, or indulging in humor at another’s expense. When such in any way aggravates, injures or detracts from another, it ceases to be humor and becomes a sinful attack exasperating, deriding or belittling the person, his character or reputation (Prov. 26:18–19).

²⁵⁵ Not all tolerance is loving or godly. There is a sinful, ungodly religious tolerance, if doctrinal error is countenanced. The apostle calls false teachers messengers of Satan and imprecates their damnation! And this strong condemnation is inspired Scripture!

²⁵⁶ Cf. Eph. 5:4, “Neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient: but rather giving of thanks.” The term “jesting” (εὐτραπεία, “well–turned”), does not refer to humor or wit, but rather to coarse jesting or sexual innuendos in speech. Such “do not come up to the level of” (ἀνῆκεν, transl. “convenient”) Christian conversation.

4. THE POLITE LIE

The polite lie (Lat: *mendacium humilitatis*) is often termed a “white lie,” and includes terms of politeness or conformity to the rules of etiquette. When greeting someone with, “How are you?” few expect to listen to a literal, morbid, medical history. It is expected that one simply answer with “I’m Fine”—unless actually terminal. When signing a letter “Sincerely Yours,” addressing a reprobate politician as “The Honorable_____,” or refusing a second helping of delicious food through polite manners, one is conforming to the rules of etiquette.

When, however, a person is given to exaggeration or deprecation concerning himself or another, moral lines are easily crossed by a not-so-subtle braggadocio, pride or mock humility. Flattery may or may not be a serious offense, depending on the motivation. There is a difference between overlooking certain flaws and scheming to gain a personal, moral, financial or political advantage through falsehood (Psa. 12:2–4). Further, not enabling a person to prepare for death by withholding the reality of his or her terminal physical condition may be spiritually, morally and ethically tragic.

5. THE LIE OF NECESSITY

The lie of necessity (Lat: *medacium officiosum*) is ostensibly lying for another’s benefit or to save one’s self. If one seeks to extricate himself from the results or implications of a clearly sinful or criminal situation through falsehood, it is sin (Acts 25:10–11). If he does so for another, it is the same. In some situations, however, sin may not be involved on the part of another, and falsehood may deliver him from dire consequences. Further, under certain circumstances falsehood may not only be prudent, but necessary. Should it then always be condemned? This issue is discussed under the following section, “Is Falsehood Ever Permissible?”

F. IS FALSEHOOD EVER PERMISSIBLE?

1. LIES IN SCRIPTURE

The inscripturated Word of God is both truth and true, and because it is, it contains a truthful record of falsehoods. The list of lies recorded in the Scripture is lengthy. Following are examples which have occasioned a great amount of discussion and disagreement as to whether falsehood is ever permissible under any circumstances:

- The lies of both Abraham and Isaac that their wives were their sisters to save themselves from possible death (Gen. 12:11–20; 20:2–18; 26:7–11).
- The lie of the midwives Shiphrah and Puah to save the Hebrew male infants from death (Ex. 1:15–21).
- The lie of Rahab to deliver the two Israelitish spies from death (Josh. 2:1–21).
- The lie of Joshua and the Israelitish army to deceive and ambush the men of Ai (Josh. 8:1–26).
- The lie of Jael in giving refuge and comfort to Sisera, then killing him (Judg. 4:15–23; 5:24–27, 31).
- The half-truth given to Samuel from the Lord to deliver him from potential harm or death by King Saul (1 Sam. 16:1–5).
- The lie of David and Jonathan to Saul to excuse and protect David (1 Sam. 20:5–9, 25–34).
- The lie of David to Ahimelech the priest concerning the king's business (1 Sam. 21:1–2, 8).
- The lie of David to Achish, King of Gath, concerning his plundering of nearby villages (1 Sam. 27:8–12).
- David's ambush of the Philistines in the valley of Rephaim (2 Sam. 5:22–25).
- The lie of the woman of Bahurim to save the two spies of David from death (2 Sam. 17:19–20).
- The lie of the old prophet to deceive the prophet from Judah, resulting in the latter's death under Divine judgment (1 Kgs. 13:1–32).
- The lie of the prophet Micaiah and the lying spirit sent by God to bring Ahab to his death (1 Kgs. 22:5–28).
- The lies of Elisha to the Syrian army leading to their capture and correction (2 Kgs. 6:18–20).

Before answering the issues of these falsehoods, note the following:

2. PRINCIPLES CONSISTENT WITH SCRIPTURE

As moral choices may involve complex issues, acting in faith must be based on principles consistent with Scripture. Mark the following:

- *God is absolute; truth is relative to God.* This is *not* to say that truth is relative in itself, which is not true; it is relative to God. Thus, although God is true, truth is not God.²⁵⁷ To absolutize or deify truth is thus to depersonalize God or make him finite, by making him relative to truth.²⁵⁸ Truth exists, not apart from, but in the context of God. Man naturally hates the truth of an absolutely sovereign God. He desires that God himself be held accountable, either to man, the creature, or to some higher law or principle external to himself.

This moralistic approach is answered in the theodicy of Rom. 9:14–21. As truth exists in the context of God, he can and does make exceptions as to guiltiness or guiltlessness.

The Scriptures themselves give instances of violating the Law without guilt. E.g., David violated the Law by eating consecrated bread reserved for the priests only (Lev. 24:9; 1 Sam. 21:3–6), the priests labored in service on the Sabbath, but were guiltless (Matt. 12:1–8).

Further, although children must honor and obey their parents (Ex. 20:12; Dt. 5:16; Eph. 6:1–4), they must not be obeyed if their commands conflict with Scripture.

Murder is condemned (Ex. 20:13), yet a warfare of total extermination was at times commanded by God (Josh. 6:21; 1 Sam. 15:3), the thief could be killed (Ex. 22:2) and even the protected manslayer could be killed without guilt if he left the city of refuge before the death of the high priest (Numb. 35:26–28).

²⁵⁷ Cf. Jn. 14:6, “I am the Way, the Truth and the Life.” This emphasizes the absolute, the eternal, the source, as contrasted with the relative, the temporary and the derived. Our Lord as the truth stands in contrast to “the lie” that characterizes the world (Rom. 1:25). For an exposition of this verse, see footnote 287.

²⁵⁸ This is much the same as the heretical approach of “Christian Science,” which teaches that God is synonymous with Eternal Mind, Spirit, Life, Love, and Truth. It depersonalizes or abstracts God by absolutizing characteristics pertaining to God and thus *equating* them with God.

The Law prohibited a man from divorcing his wife then taking her back (Dt. 24:1–4), yet God commanded Hosea to marry a prostitute, and, after she left for her lovers and whoredoms, to take her back again and love her. Right or wrong, guilt or guiltlessness exists in the context of God, never apart from him.

- *There is a distinct difference between biblical faith and moralism.* The true believer stands in the imputed righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ; the moralist stands in his own self-righteousness. The moralist absolutizes [deifies] truth, and therefore cannot consistently think or act in terms of a biblical faith in making complex moral choices. He necessarily must condemn all falsehood, even if this places him in opposition to the principles and testimony of Scripture. For him, the highest righteousness is that he has not lied—whatever the circumstances. Acting in faith may often involve difficult moral choices. Not every situation presents itself in absolutely contrasting terms of right or wrong.
- *The notion of poetic justice is pagan, not biblical.* The moralist assumes the pagan, abstract and theoretical notion of poetic justice, i.e., that the whole truth must be told always, to everyone and anyone; and that virtue will always be rewarded and evil punished. How, then, do we account for Divine providence, chastening, and the martyrdom of countless millions of Christians (Rom. 8:35–36)? Or, if rather suffer death than lie, the moralist breaks the Sixth Commandment in the context, not of faithfulness to God, but of self-righteousness, in opposition to both scriptural precept and example.
- *Not everyone is entitled to the truth.* No enemy bent on harm to us or another is entitled to the truth. To tell the truth to an enemy to avoid breaking the Ninth Commandment (“Thou shalt not bear false witness”) and thus giving vital information or revealing location necessarily breaks not only the Sixth Commandment (“Thou shalt not kill”), but the very essence of the Law, “Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.” Further, matters of no concern to others preclude any obligation to inform them concerning a given situation or person.
- *Not everyone is entitled to all the truth.* There are times when only some of the truth may be revealed, due to: (1) the given situation, (2) the need for others to know, (3) the maturity or understanding of

the persons involved, or (4) the danger to anyone being protected from harm.

- *Justifiable silence is the same as falsehood.* To remain silent when one possesses knowledge or necessary information is the same as lying. There is but a slight difference from giving misinformation to withholding or giving no information.

3. QUESTIONS ANSWERED

Some questions may be answered and principles applied:

- Although God dealt graciously and mercifully with Abraham and Isaac, and blessed them in his covenant faithfulness, they both exposed their wives to physical and moral danger and were reproved by pagan rulers who had a higher concept of marriage and social justice than they had expected.
- The midwives acted in faith and with great moral courage because they feared the true God in a war-like situation—slavery, genocide and the extermination of his covenant people—and God blessed them for their actions.
- The Scripture does not separate the lie of Rahab from her faith (Heb. 11:31; Jas. 2:25). She believed the sentence of God against her own people and took the side of Israel. To deliver the spies would have meant their death. Her lie was an integral part of her works, and a small matter compared to saving these two lives and getting necessary intelligence back to Israel. She had come to faith in and a knowledge of the true God and acted in this context (Josh. 2:11–12). This was a justifiable, moral act in time of war.²⁵⁹
- The same is true concerning the military tactics and ambushes by Joshua and David. Military tactics which call for covert, subversive or deceptive action and misinformation are a necessary and strategic part of successful warfare. The action of Jael in killing Sisera was the culmination of a great victory against the enemies of Israel in

²⁵⁹ To condemn Rahab would be to condemn everyone who helped hide Jewish refugees from the Nazis and their extermination camps in World War II. For all the moralists who have ever condemned Rahab, it should be noted that the spies were evidently thankful, held her to her oath—and did not remain to remonstrate with her concerning any questionable moral issues associated with her falsehood.

wartime. The hiding of spies on the part of the woman of Bahurim was an act of loyalty to her king (the Lord's Anointed) in a time of war, and took great moral courage.

- As truth exists in the context of God, and therefore whatever God commands is right, the prophet Samuel was obedient and justified in revealing only part of the truth. The same holds true concerning the lying spirit sent from God to bring Ahab to destruction. The lies of Elisha occurred in the context of a military offensive against Israel in general and himself in particular. The lie of the old prophet remains an enigma in the scriptural record, except that God did speak through him concerning the disobedience of the man of God from Judah.

NOTE: God himself outfits both predator and prey in brute creation with camouflage for protection and predation—e.g., the spots of the fawn, the stripes of the tiger, the spots of the jaguar, the stripes of the zebra. Some butterflies [the Viceroy] mimic others [the Monarch] in colored patterns for protection against predation by certain birds. Some insects mimic plants for both protection and predation. Likewise with various poisonous and non-poisonous reptiles. This is all by creative design. Is the God of all truth purposely deceptive? To be consistent, must not the moralist find fault with creation? or with creation's God?

Should military units dress in bright red or blaze orange because they feel it wrong, immoral or unethical to wear camouflage? Should they signal their presence so the enemy will not be deceived as to their exact position? Should they refrain from using secret codes or disseminating misinformation? Without doubt, moralists would make poor soldiers. In light of alleged, absolute "military honesty," how are we to judge Joshua and the ambush of the men of Ai?

What is closer to truth and consistency in the moral realm, the self-righteous "purity" of the moralist or the faith of the believer who acts as consistently as possible to keep the essence of the Law in honoring God by faith and loving his neighbor as himself, and thus not giving information to an enemy bent on harm or murder?

G. THE FALSE PROPHETS

The false prophets of the Old Testament were cursed and judged by God for misleading Israel (1 Kgs. 18:19–40; 22:6–26; Jer. 14:14; Lam. 2:14).

What can be said of self-appointed [and thus not God-called] false prophets today who stand in pulpits declaring falsehood?

Even when preaching the truth and speaking to one another, it must be speaking the truth in love (Eph. 4:15).

H. A SCRIPTURAL STUDY IN FALSEHOOD

The incident concerning Ananias and Sapphira reveals the true nature of a lie (Acts 5:1–11). They lied about the price of the possession, intending to hypocritically present themselves as sacrificing for the Lord. Both were struck dead in Divine judgment, tempting the Lord to abandoned His work in the revival.

What if God killed people today for lying to Him or about His work? Some promise to help in God's work but renege; others promise to perform some tasks but never intend to follow through.

XIV

The Tenth Commandment

Quest. 57: What is the Tenth Commandment?

Ans: The Tenth Commandment is, “Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that *is* thy neighbour's.” (Ex. 20:17)

Quest. 58: What is the significance of the Tenth Commandment?

Ans: The Tenth Commandment forbids all discontent with our own estate, envying or grieving at the good of others, and all inordinate emotions or affections to anything or anyone that is theirs.

A. ANALYSIS AND EXPOSITION

An analysis and exposition of the Tenth Commandment necessarily includes three considerations:

1. *The Prohibition.* “Thou shalt not covet...” As in every negative Commandment, the absolute negative [לֹא תִחְמַד] occurs with the imperf.²⁶⁰ “Covet” (תִּחְמַד, from חָמַד) signifies “desire, delight in, covet”. LXX: οὐκ ἐπιθυμήσεις, fut. of imp., from ἐπιθυμία, a desire, craving, often transl. “lust”. Both רָנָא חָמַד can be used in either a good or evil sense, depending on the context. The prohibition is against an unlawful desire for what belongs to another. As in the Ninth Commandment, “neighbor” refers to anyone with whom we come in contact to whom we do good

²⁶⁰ This is the absolute, categorical, perpetual prohibition.

2. *The Presupposition.* As every sin begins in the heart or mind and then manifests itself in overt action, covetousness stands at the root of every sin and is presupposed in all the negative Commandments.
3. *The Inclusion.* The Romanists and Lutherans, as noted previously, divide the Tenth Commandment into two to compensate for omitting the Second Commandment against idolatry. They separate lasciviousness from covetousness, the Lutherans basing their division on Ex. 20:17, and the Romanists on Dt. 5:21. The entire Commandment, however, concerns covetousness and thus remains a unity.

B. THE TENTH COMMANDMENT IN CONTEXT

The Tenth Commandment strikes at the root of all and every sin. Every sin begins in the heart or mind (Prov. 4:23; Matt. 12:34–35; Mk. 7:21–23; Rom. 7:7; Jas. 1:13–16). The Tenth Commandment thus has an immediate relation to all the other Commandments. Almost every other Commandment is grounded in this final one, and is an expression of a covetous heart.

1. THE ABSOLUTE SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD

Positively, this relationship can be stated thus: God is sovereign over our worship (First and Second Commandments), our words and actions (Third Commandment), our time (Fourth Commandment), all authority (Fifth Commandment), our lives and bodies (Sixth Commandment), our bodies and morality (Seventh Commandment), our property (Eighth Commandment), all truth (Ninth Commandment) and our minds (Tenth Commandment). There is absolutely no sphere of our lives where we are to be or can be independent of God—no place for autonomy—even the deep recesses of our own hearts or minds. God claims the heart, mind and conscience as well as the body, soul and life.

2. THE UNITY OF THE LAW AND THE TENTH COMMANDMENT

As the Scripture not only forbids the overt act, but everything that leads to and culminates in that act, the Tenth Commandment is involved in breaking every Commandment:

- *The First and Second Commandments.* The covetous person is called an “idolater” because he has put himself (desirous for autonomy), something or someone before God as the supreme object of his attention and service in thought and subsequent action (Gen. 3:5–6; Matt. 4:10; 6:24; Eph. 5:5; Col. 3:5; 1 Tim. 6:10).

- *The Third Commandment.* Sacrilegious falsehood, blasphemy, perjury or cursing is committed in word and deed by an individual because he is covetous (2 Kgs. 5:20–27; Acts 5:1–4).
- *The Fourth Commandment.* The Sabbath–rest and the Lord’s Day worship ordained by God for man are broken unnecessarily through the inordinate desire to acquire more (Ezk. 22:8; Amos 8:4–6; Heb. 10:25).
- *The Fifth Commandment.* Disrespect for parents and higher authority characterizes the covetous person (Matt. 15:3–6²⁶¹; 1 Tim. 5:8; 2 Tim. 3:1–5).
- *The Sixth Commandment.* The covetous individual tends toward the diminishing of another (through fraud, theft or robbery) and even murder to acquire again (2 Sam. 11:1–4; 12:9–9; 1 Kgs. 21:1–16; Mica 2:2; Matt. 27:3–5; Acts 24:26; Jas. 4:1–4; 1 Jn. 3:11–15).
- *The Seventh Commandment.* The desire for sexual gratification is to be fulfilled in the marriage relationship, but the covetous person, discontent or lustful, wants the wife or husband of another (2 Sam. 11:1–4; Prov. 6:24–26; Matt. 5:27–28).
- *The Eighth Commandment.* Covetousness is the root of all theft (Josh. 7:21; 1 Cor. 6:9–10).
- *The Ninth Commandment.* Unjust judges take bribes, others perjure themselves, and still others simply lie to their own advantage because of covetousness (Ex. 18:21; 1 Kgs. 21:10; 2 Kgs. 5:20–27; Psa. 26:9–10; Amos 5:12; Matt. 28:11–15; Acts 5:1–4).

C. COVETOUSNESS: THE ESSENTIAL ISSUES

The sin of covetousness precedes and underlies all overt sinful actions. Thus, it is vital to biblically comprehend the exact nature of this sin, lest we excuse, nurture or misunderstand it.

²⁶¹ The Law commands honor (including the support) of parents. There was a traditional provision that a man could dedicate all of his wealth or estate to God and not fulfill this obligation, retract his oath and gift, thus avoiding his obligation to care for his parents. Cf. Mk. 7:11–13:

If a man shall say to his father or mother, *It is Corban*, that is to say, a gift, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me; *he shall be free*. and ye suffer him no more to do ought for his father or his mother; making the word of God of none effect through your tradition, which ye have delivered...

1. THE DESIRE TO ACQUIRE

The desire to acquire is not wrong. Private property, the accumulation of wealth, advancement and the taking of a wife, are essential to the fulfilling of the Creation Mandate. The Tenth Commandment forbids desiring or setting one's heart on what already belongs to another, and so thinking and acting in an unjust way to acquire it.

2. COVETOUSNESS—ENVY—JEALOUSY

The ideas encompassing covetousness, lust, envy and jealousy are interrelated and represented in Scripture by a variety of terms.²⁶²

- *Covetousness* is to set one's heart on what belongs to another, to long for with envy.
- *Lust* is a strong or intense desire to gratify the senses and so becomes covetousness as it finds its object or fulfillment in who or what belongs to another.
- *Envy* is a feeling of discontent and dislike because of the advantages or possessions of another and so is an aspect of covetousness.
- *Jealousy* is a watchful guarding of one's own or a resentful suspicion of another and so is an aspect of covetousness.

Note the following root words and examples:

- **חָמַד** (*chamad*), positively: beauty, pleasant, delight; negatively: covetous or inordinate desire. Translated “covet” in Ex. 20:17, “desire” in Ex. 34:24, “lust” in Prov. 6:25 and “delight” in Prov. 1:22.
- **אַוָּה** (*awah*), lust, covet, crave, be greedy and desire. Translated “covet” in Dt. 5:21, “desire,” Prov. 21:10, “longeth” in Dt. 12:20 and “lusteth after” in Dt. 14:26.
- **בָּצַע** (*batsa*'), to cut off [what is not one's own]²⁶³, plunder, and so be covetous, greedy of unjust gain. Translated “get” in Ezk. 22:27, “covetous” in Psa. 10:3, “greedy” and “gain” in Prov. 1:19 and “profit” in Psa. 30:9.

²⁶² It must be remembered that the Decalogue, as the epitome of the Moral Law, is a series of examples of case law representing much more pervasive principles.

²⁶³ In modern slang, the idea is that of “ripping off” someone.

- **קנא** (*qan'ah*). Translated “jealous” in Numb. 5:14, “envious” in Psa. 73:3 and “zeal” in 2 Kgs. 19:31.
- **ἐπιθυμέω** (*epithumeo*), to desire, crave, long for. Translated “lust after” in Matt. 5:28, “desire” in Lk. 22:15 and “covet” in Rom. 7:7.
- **ζηλόω** (*zelao*), to be heated, to boil, to burn with zeal, , to be moved with envy, hatred or anger. Translated “moved with envy” in Acts 7:9, “covet earnestly” in 1 Cor. 12:31, “desire” in 1 Cor. 14:1, “jealous over” in 2 Cor. 11:2 and “zealously affect” in Gal. 4:17.
- **ὀρέγομαι** (*oregomai*), to stretch one’s self to grasp something, reach after or desire. Translated “desire” in 1 Tim. 3:1 and “coveted after” in 1 Tim. 6:10.
- **φιλάργυρος, φιλαργυρία** (*philarguros, philarguria*), Lit: the love of silver. Translated “covetous” in Lk. 16:14 and “love of money” in 1 Tim. 6:10.
- **πλεονεξία, πλεονέκτης** (*pleonexia, pleonektes*), a greedy desire to have more, covetous, avaricious. Translated “have defrauded” in 2 Cor. 7:2, “make a gain” in 2 Cor. 12:17 and “covetous” in 1 Cor. 5:10.
- **φθόνος** (*phthonos*), envy. Translated “envy” in Matt. 27:18.

The covetous person sets his heart on (longs, craves, lusts after, or stretches out greedily and grasps) more and more, is envious of what others possess, seeks to obtain it unjustly (by fraud, theft, robbery, seduction), and is jealous (selfish) concerning what he already possesses. He sins in thought, inclination, motivation and implementation.

John D. Rockefeller, funder of Standard Oil, was once asked how much money did it take to make one happy. He answered, “Just a little bit more.”²⁶⁴ And he told the truth!

Eccl. 5:10. He that loveth silver shall not be satisfied with silver; nor he that loveth abundance with increase: this *is* also vanity.

John D. Rockefeller also said:

If your only goal is to become rich, you will never achieve it.

²⁶⁴ Quoted by both Ryken, p. 210 and Alister Begg, p. 215, although Begg attributed this to Nelson Rockefeller.

There is nothing in this world that can compare with the Christian fellowship; nothing that can satisfy but Christ.

Covetousness covers an inclusive, almost infinite variety of sinfulness. Some covet the material possessions of others—houses, real estate, vehicles, vacations, the ability and opportunity to travel and enjoy the things of this life. Others covet the physical beauty or strength of those who are more attractive or better-endowed than they. Many covet the riches of those who enjoy worldly prosperity.

Many sexually covet what they perceive to be the more handsome husbands or prettier wives of others. Some covet the youthfulness of others; others covet what they perceive to be a more understanding husband or compassionate, loving wife. Some covet the educational achievements of others. Many covet the social standing or prestige of others.

Others covet those who seem to have loving families and well-behaved children. Some covet political power. Some covet the ability and opportunity to sin that others seem to have in indulging themselves in immorality and wantonness. Some covet religious position, power and privilege. Some covet the spirituality of others, or their biblical or doctrinal knowledge. The list could be almost endless...

And how is such covetousness manifested? It is evidenced in envy, jealousy or covetous behavior in seeking to take from “the others” either by actually trying to take possession of property, seducing another’s husband or wife, etc., or by seeking to detract from them by derogatory speech, gossip, rumors, etc., to bring them down to one’s own level.

Corporate, government and national covetousness is evidenced in price-fixing, monopolies, the “re-distribution of wealth” and aggressive wars for more territory, resources and the “liberation” [enslavement] of ethnic groups. Such behavior is universally characteristic of fallen, sinful mankind.

Modern media advertising is pervasively based on the underlying realities of selfishness [“self esteem,” self-deserving], lust, gratification, covetousness, envy and jealousy. Media moguls are the meretricious ministers of mammon.

3. WHEN DO THOUGHTS OR DESIRES BECOME SIN?

Is there a difference between merely thinking or looking and lusting, between desiring and coveting, between the cognizant and the sinful? When do thoughts or desires become sin? The principle scriptural statement concerning this matter is Jas. 1:13–15:

Let no man say when he is tempted (πειραζόμενος, pres. ptc., in the process of being tempted), I am tempted of God (ὑπὸ θεοῦ πειράζομαι, from God [emph.] I am being tempted, i.e., that God is the source of my temptation. He can blame neither God nor the devil for his sin): for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man: but every man is tempted (ἐκαστος δὲ πειράζεται, but each is being tempted), when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed (ὑπὸ τῆς ἰδίας ἐπιθυμίας ἐξελκόμενος καὶ δελεαζόμενος, by his own [inherent] lust [desire, inclination] he is lured forth or seduced and baited). Then when lust hath conceived (εἴτα ἡ ἐπιθυμία συλλαβοῦσα, when this strong desire has conceived, seized, taken hold of the person), it bringeth forth sin (τίκτει ἁμαρτίαν, it gives birth to, produces sin): and sin, when it is finished (ἡ δὲ ἁμαρτία ἀποτελεσθεῖσα, and sin, when it is finished, accomplished, brought to its end), bringeth forth death.

Note the following:

- There is no sin in being tempted. Our Lord was faced with temptation, yet he was impeccable [he could not and did not sin]. Sin arises from the response to the temptation.
- We cannot blame either God or the devil for “making us sin”. We are fully responsible and culpable for our own sin.
- Falling to temptation or the solicitation to sin arises from the correspondence or affinity of the principle of indwelling sin and remaining corruption to that temptation (Rom. 7:7–25). As sinners, although saved from the reigning power of sin, we yet have some affinity for sin (Rom. 6:1–14). We are peccable [liable and vulnerable to sin].
- When the mind or heart is inclined or attracted toward the temptation with desire and willfulness, then the thought or desire becomes sinful.
- A situation may arise when these may seem blurred and simultaneous, yet the truth of Scripture must be maintained. The connotation and use of the term “covet” in Scripture and the process of temptation as described in this text lead us to conclude that thoughts and desires become sinful when the mind responds willfully or assents to the temptation.

- Temptation to sin must therefore be dealt with in a sanctified manner and mortified immediately, lest we sin (Rom. 8:11–13; Col. 3:5). Such sinfulness, though initially mental, will ultimately and inevitably evidence itself in some external form in our look, countenance or deportment—and, if not mortified at some point, tends toward and leads to the overt act. This leads to the next issue—

4. THOUGHT AND LIFE

Does covetousness include subsequent actions or does it merely concern the thought or inner inclination? The use of the term “covet” and its cognate terms in Scripture leads to the conclusion that covetousness includes the process from the first sinful impulse to implementation in the overt act. Mark the following:

- To limit covetousness merely to the mind or heart is to narrow the meaning and use of the scriptural connotation, which often explicitly or implicitly includes the subsequent or resulting inclination, purpose, characteristics, attitude and action.
- To limit covetousness to the internal and secret is to misunderstand fallen, sinful human nature. What is in the mind or heart must inevitably be expressed, however deceitfully or inadvertently it may be done. Some thoughts may be covetous and not be implemented in the overt act, yet they are unavoidably manifest in various ways—a look, a gesture, comments made (even seemingly “innocent” or casual remarks), an attitude toward others, subtle actions, etc. It is impossible to think or be inclined in a sinful manner and not evidence this in some overt way (Prov. 4:23; 23:7; Matt. 12:34–35; Mk. 7:21–23).
- The idea that covetousness is merely a matter of thought and therefore separate from the external, i.e., that thought and life may be separated, militates against the teaching of Scripture. It largely removes the force of the Moral Law from the activities of life. The source of such teaching probably derived from Gnostic and Pietistic principles. The Scriptures begin with heart-sin and consider the inner thought to be sinful as well as the overt act (Matt. 5:27–28; 1 Jn. 3:15).

NOTE: Gnosticism, following Neoplatonism, looking upon the material as inherently sinful or evil, taught a dualism that separated mind from body, the flesh from the spirit, and thus separated faith from life. Pietism,

reacting against the neo-Scholasticism of the post-Reformation era, emphasized personal holiness and tended to internalize religion. This helped produce contemporary, experience-oriented, existential religion. Although Pietism was characterized by some positive principles, it tended, with Gnosticism, toward asceticism, equated the acquiring of wealth with being unspiritual, and thus tended toward a retreatist mentality toward the world, i.e., the world belongs to the devil. Modern evangelicalism has retained such thinking through the influence of Wesleyan perfectionism.

5. THE OLDEST SIN

Covetousness is the oldest sin. It was the sin of Satan, who said that he would ascend and “be like the Most High” (Isa. 14:12–15). It was the sin of Adam, as he desired to be his own “god” and determine for himself what right or wrong (Gen. 3:1–6). Eve was completely taken up with the beauty and desirability of the forbidden fruit and fell to covetousness (Gen. 3:6). The root of this sin grows in the soil of discontent and the desire for more, for what properly belongs to another—persons, property, position, prestige or power.

6. LOVE AND LUST

What of the single Christian who is looking for a prospective husband or wife? Can he or she observe, meet, and seek a relationship with that person without covetousness or lust? Our Lord states in Matt. 5:27–28:

Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery (Οὐ μοιχεύσεις, quote from the LXX): but I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman (ὅτι πᾶς ὁ βλέπων γυναῖκα, that every single one who is characterized as continually looking upon a woman, i.e., a womanizer) to lust after her (πρὸς τὸ Ἐπιθυμῆσαι αὐτήν, for the purpose of lusting after her) hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.²⁶⁵

Consider the following:

- As “adultery” and not “fornication” is specifically stated, it is to be assumed that either the one looking or the one being looked at is married, i.e., belongs to another in a marriage relationship, and so brings the issue into the realm of covetousness.
- Seeking a godly wife or husband is not sinful. It is necessary to observe, become acquainted with, and establish a relationship with

²⁶⁵ Throughout this chapter, our Lord is restoring the Law to its spiritual fullness. The Rabbis taught that only the overt act was a sin. Our Lord emphasizes that all sin begins in the heart. Cf. Mk. 7:14–23.

that individual to make a godly, suitable choice for a life-long marriage relationship.

- Any serious relationship that tends toward marriage necessarily presupposes some type of spiritual, physical, moral, and social attraction, i.e., if the person under consideration for a marriage partner is godly, intelligent and serious, then such issues as the spiritual state and maturity, the ability to provide spiritual headship or recognize it in scriptural submission,²⁶⁶ the physical attractiveness, the social, educational and mental suitability, etc. ought to be considered.

NOTE: Setting aside all unrealistic idealism, pseudo-spirituality, and denial of the harsh realities of life, the physical attractiveness of the person is a major factor in choosing a marriage partner. God ordained a mutual physical attractiveness, and this is not sinful. Exceptional spirituality or even financial opulence can hardly compensate for physical ugliness (Gen. 2:25). Would Abraham's servant have enthusiastically approached Rebekah as an answer to his prayer had she obviously been unattractive [ugly] (Gen. 24:10–17)? Would Isaac have rejoiced in Rebekah for a wife if the servant had brought him a less than physically desirable woman? Would Isaac have been observed openly fondling his wife had she been unattractive to him? Evidently, he found her ravishing (Gen. 26:8).

The repeated commands and warnings against adultery presuppose a physical and personal attractiveness. Would a man normally be jealous of a slovenly, obese, or ugly wife (Numb. 5)? If Ruth had been homely, she would doubtless have died a widow, as Boaz was physically attracted to her when he first saw her, and it was this attraction that determined his personal actions, protection and generosity, and culminated in the levirate marriage (Ruth 2:5, 14–16; 3:1–3). A man is to be ravished with the physical and sexual attractiveness of his wife (Prov. 5:18–20). The virtuous woman was sexually satisfying to her husband (Prov. 31:11. Having “need of spoil [plunder]” refers either to the astute management of the household or to looking outside the marriage for what might be lacking in satisfaction). And what need be said of the Song of Solomon? Should physical attractiveness be lacking, the

²⁶⁶ The man seeking marriage to a woman must ask himself if he can provide the spiritual headship she needs and if she can submit herself to him as unto Christ. The reverse is true of the woman. She must ask herself if the man can provide the spiritual headship she needs, and if she can submit herself to him as unto Christ. If the answer to either of these necessary issues is negative, then either the relationship must end, or one, or the other, or both must change—if not, the intended marriage will remain far below the level God intended and will bring much sin, pain and sorrow.

temptation to observe others in a desirable manner might be greatly increased.

Once commitment has been made in anticipation of marriage, the thoughts, dreams and anticipations of married life are naturally entertained in the minds of both the man and woman. As such are then personalized or focused on a given individual, these may degenerate into lust. Great care must be taken to maintain a godly, pure relationship in mind and body until the marriage is consummated in God's blessing (1 Cor. 7:7–9; Phil. 4:8; 1 Tim. 5:2; 2 Tim. 2:22; Titus 2:6, 12–15).

D. FOUR SCRIPTURAL EXAMPLES OF COVETOUSNESS

1. Achan (Josh. 7:1–26; 22:20). Achan “saw, coveted and took” of the things dedicated to the LORD, caused 36 men to be killed in battle and caused the death of his entire family and the destruction of all that he had.
2. Ahab (1 Kgs. 21:1–25; 2 Kgs. 9:25–26). King Ahab coveted Naboth's vineyard. Naboth feared the LORD and would not sell the inheritance of his fathers in violation of God's Law. Jezebel had Naboth wrongly accused of blasphemy and he and his sons were stoned to death to clear out all inheritance. Ahab took possession, but Elijah withstood him and pronounced the utter destruction of his family, wife and kingdom.
3. Gehazi (2 Kgs. 5:15–27). Gehazi, servant to Elisha, coveted the wealth and the proposed gifts of Naaman of Syria. God smote him with leprosy and put a curse on his posterity.
4. Judas (Jn. 12:4–6; Matt. 26:14–15; 26:47–49; 27:3–8; Acts 1:16–19). The name Judas stands in infamy forever as the betrayer of our Lord. He had a covetous heart, was a thief and it led to our Lord's betrayal for 30 pieces of silver.

E. THE SIN OF COVETOUSNESS RIGHTLY VIEWED

The modern world and even modern religion excuses covetousness as a light matter. Not so Scripture. All sin begins in the heart and is usually stems from envy or covetousness in some form. It is idolatry.

Psa. 10:3. For the wicked boasteth of his heart's desire, and blesseth the covetous, *whom* the LORD abhorreth.

1 Cor. 5:11. But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one no not to eat.

1 Cor. 6:9–10. ⁹ Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, ¹⁰ Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God.

Eph. 5:5. For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God.

1 Tim. 3:1–3. This is a true saying, If a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work. ² A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach; ³ Not given to wine, no striker, not greedy of filthy lucre; but patient, not a brawler, not covetous;

1 Tim. 6:5–10. ⁵ Perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth, supposing that gain is godliness: from such withdraw thyself. ⁶ But godliness with contentment is great gain. ⁷ For we brought nothing into *this* world, *and it is* certain we can carry nothing out. ⁸ And having food and raiment let us be therewith content. ⁹ But they that will be [οἱ δὲ βουλόμενοι] rich fall into temptation and a snare, and *into* many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. ¹⁰ For the love of money is the root of all evil [ρίζα γὰρ πάντων τῶν κακῶν ἐστὶν ἡ φιλαργυρία]: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.

2 Timothy 3:1–5. This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. ² For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, ³ Without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, ⁴ Traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; ⁵ Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away.

James 4:1–4. From whence *come* wars and fightings among you? *come they* not hence, *even* of your lusts that war in your members? ² Ye lust, and have not: ye kill, and desire to have, and cannot obtain: ye fight and war, yet ye have not, because ye ask not. ³ Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume *it* upon your lusts. ⁴ Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God.

E. THE BLESSING OF GODLY CONTENTMENT

1 Tim. 6:8. . ⁶ But godliness with contentment is great gain.

Heb. 13:5 *Let your conversation be* without covetousness; *and be* content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.

Epilogue: From Sinai to Calvary

Ex. 20:18–21. ¹⁸ And all the people saw the thunderings, and the lightnings, and the noise of the trumpet, and the mountain smoking: and when the people saw *it*, they removed, and stood afar off. ¹⁹ And they said unto Moses, Speak thou with us, and we will hear: but let not God speak with us, lest we die. ²⁰ And Moses said unto the people, Fear not: for God is come to prove you, and that his fear may be before your faces, that ye sin not. ²¹ And the people stood afar off, and Moses drew near unto the thick darkness where God was.

The LORD God revealed himself unto Israel in his awesome power, glory, majesty and absolute righteousness. The invisible, glorious realities of God were visibly manifested at Sinai to the eyes, ears, bodies and hearts of the Israelites. They were terrified at the voice of the LORD God, his awesome display of might and the Commandment of his Holy Law. Mount Sinai was, on that day, a precursor to the final Day of judgment when the Moral Law shall judge all mankind, although the Moral Law was given for their good and blessing.

Rom. 3:19–20. ¹⁹ Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. ²⁰ Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law *is* the knowledge of sin.

The Moral Law, ontologically inscribed upon man's inner being at creation, then codified at Sinai, has continued to stand as the Divine sentence of condemnation upon all men as fallen sinners who hate the LORD God and his Law.

Rom. 8:6–8. ⁶ For to be carnally minded *is* death.... ⁷ Because the carnal mind *is* enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. ⁸ So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God.

Fallen, sinful mankind will not and cannot approach the triune, holy righteous God through the Law—through their own self-righteousness or works. What is desperately needed is a mediator, redeemer, a priest—one who can reconcile God to sinners and sinners to God. There is only one who can fulfill such requirements—the Lord Jesus Christ.

This brings us from Mount Sinai to Mount Calvary. From the sentence of death to the reality of the empty tomb and resurrection-life. It is through the Person and redemptive work of the Lord Jesus Christ alone that redemption, forgiveness of sin and reconciliation is possible.

He became incarnate as the “Last Adam,” the “Second Man,” i.e., as Representative Man to restore and exceed what the first Adam lost (Rom. 5:12–18; 1 Cor. 15:45–47). By his active obedience he completely fulfilled the demands of the Moral Law through his impeccable life lived before God,

men and the devil (Matt. 4:1–11; 17:5; Jn. 14:30; 2 Cor. 5:21; 1 Pet. 2:22; 1 Jn. 3:5). Through his passive obedience, culminating in his suffering and death, he fully and completely paid the Law's penalty. His resurrection was the great proclamation that the Father had received his redemptive work as finished and complete.

Rom. 3:21–26. ²¹ But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; ²² Even the righteousness of God *which is* by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference: ²³ For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; ²⁴ Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: ²⁵ Whom God hath set forth *to be* a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; ²⁶ To declare, *I say*, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.

Rom. 5:1–9. Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: ² By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God....⁵ And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us. ⁶ For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. ⁷ For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. ⁸ But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. ⁹ Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him.

Heb. 12:18–24. ¹⁸ For ye are not come unto the mount that might be touched, and that burned with fire, nor unto blackness, and darkness, and tempest, ¹⁹ And the sound of a trumpet, and the voice of words; which *voice* they that heard intreated that the word should not be spoken to them any more: ²⁰ (For they could not endure that which was commanded, And if so much as a beast touch the mountain, it shall be stoned, or thrust through with a dart: ²¹ And so terrible was the sight, *that* Moses said, I exceedingly fear and quake:) ²² But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, ²³ To the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, ²⁴ And to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant...

The New or Gospel Covenant, consisting in the redemptive work of the Lord Jesus Christ, is appropriated by faith, apart from self-righteous works and efforts. Saving faith lays hold of the Lord Jesus at the point of his perfect righteousness wrought out by his active passive obedience. We are justified by faith and brought into union with Christ, a spiritual transaction which is necessarily life-transforming.

Rom. 6:14. For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace.

Believers are no longer under a mere principle of outward obedience [οὐ γὰρ ἐστε ὑπὸ νόμον], but under the effectual dynamic of God's grace [ἀλλὰ ὑπὸ χάριν].

The Moral Law of God no longer lies upon the righteous as a sentence of condemnation [1 Tim. 1:9, “made for” οὐ κεῖται] “lie upon”], but remains as a rule of life in the context of free and sovereign grace in the work of the Lord Jesus and the grace of the Holy Spirit. Thus, there is no condemnation of any kind to those who are in Christ Jesus (Rom. 8:1), and the confession of our sins means their forgiveness through our Redeemer and Great High Priest (1 Jn. 1:8–10; 2:1). We can then rejoice as did David and say, “Blessed *are* they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed *is* the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin” (Rom. 4:7–8); And “O how love I thy law! it is my meditation all the day.”

The New or Gospel Covenant is preeminently one of free and sovereign grace which is revealed in effectual calling, regeneration, conversion, justification, adoption, sanctification and glorification.

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