

The Quarterly Journal



THE NEWSLETTER PUBLICATION OF PERSONAL FREEDOM OUTREACH

VOL. 18, NO. 2

APRIL-JUNE 1998

EDITOR: KEITH A. MORSE

There Ought to Be a Law - Or Should There?

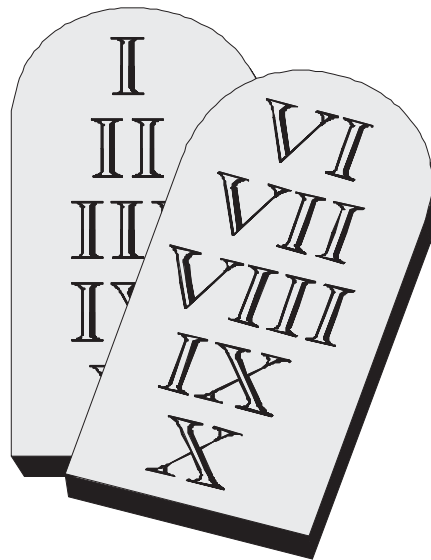
The Old Testament Law and the New Testament Church

by G. Richard Fisher

One thing that ties together all cults, aberrational teachers or sects with cultic tendencies is an insistence on salvation by works. Dave Breese, in *Know The Marks of Cults*, defines a cult as a "religious perversion" and "devotion to a religious view or leader centered in false doctrine."¹ He further shows that a false basis of salvation is nothing more than an attempt to merit salvation through human works and human effort. In many cases the works system draws heavily from Old Testament law or extrabiblical rules. These rules, doctrines and practices are extrapolated by twisting many Old Testament verses.

For instance, "soul sleep" is taught by Seventh Day Adventists and Jehovah's Witnesses from the Book of Ecclesiastes without regard for the context, progression, message or intent of the book.

For most Evangelical Christians, salvation by works is an easy teaching to refute and all would agree that we are not saved by works (Ephesians 2:8-9) or by the law (Galatians, Romans 4-5). Righteousness does not come by the works of the law but by grace



through faith. Grace is God's free and unmerited favor bestowed on the unrighteous even in the face of their demerit. It is not what we do for God, but accepting what God has

done for us through Jesus' life and work on the cross which saves us.

HOW THEN SHALL WE GROW?

The much more difficult question is in regard to sanctification or Christian growth. There are great misunderstandings and divisions among believers in the area of law and grace as they affect sanctification. How much law or just what laws do we need to obey to be sanctified? Arbitrarily imposing certain portions of the Old Testament on the Christian life seems, at best, inconstant, speculative and subjective. The issue can easily lead to misunderstanding and divisiveness. Studying the relationship of Old Testament law to the believer requires patience, passion and prayer.

In theological circles, the issue of how much law applies to the believer

(continues on page 12)

Inside this Issue:

THE NON-NOURISHING MIX OF CHICKEN SOUP	PAGE 2
THE BASIC LIFE PRINCIPLES OF BILL GOTHARD	PAGE 4
THE "CLOSING" OF THE WAY INTERNATIONAL	PAGE 5

accused them of destroying the youth of America. He has two published booklets condemning these and other artists. If testimonials were sought, no doubt hundreds of thousands have been blessed and encouraged by these people's gifts.

When asked during last October's phone conversation why he had a staff person with a family member who sang Sandi Patty numbers in her concert, Gothard said, "It shows how broad-minded we are." What it shows is a double standard. Gothard does not run his internal business in accord with his own strict demands on others.

WHAT WAS NOT COVERED

The team's response never got around to addressing *The Quarterly Journal* critique's concerns over Gothard's legislating the sex relations of his married followers, sexual abstinence in marriage, his claim that he

has God's order of worship, his teachings on how women should dress and wear make-up, his incredible misinterpretations of key words such as grace and faith, his forbidding of partnerships, his legislating many minor areas of life by imposing obscure Old Testament passages, the elitism of his followers, the testimonials of spiritual harm and church splits, and other issues. The response given is hardly a response at all.

Gothard's organization, in being defensive, unbalanced and slanderous, has become its own worst enemy. Fair-minded people can see through the convoluted thinking and *ad hominem* attacks. Much heat has been generated, but no light. It is unfortunate that we do not see in the tone or words of the team's response reasoned and biblical interpretation or the principles touted at the Gothard seminars. It is an "us-or-them" siege mentality that does little to further the

cause of dialogue or the cause of Christ.

Endnotes:

1. The back issue of *The Quarterly Journal* containing this article is available from PFO for \$3.00 postpaid. Mail your request, along with payment to PFO-Saint Louis.
2. A photocopy of Bill Gothard's original seven-page response may be obtained from PFO. Send \$1.00 for copying and postage to PFO-Saint Louis.
3. Wilfred Bockelman, *Gothard, The Man and His Ministry: An Evaluation*. Santa Barbara, Calif.: Quill Publications, 1976, pg. 146.
4. *The Greek New Testament With English Notes*. London: A.J. Valpy, 1831, Vol. 1, pg. 129, emphasis added.
5. Jay Adams, *More Than Redemption*. Phillipsburg, N.J.: P&R Publishing Company, 1979, pg. 31, footnote 30.
6. See further, David Hagopian and Douglas Wilson, *Beyond Promises*. Moscow, Idaho: Canon Press, 1996, pg. 235.
7. John Murray, *The Imputation of Adam's Sin*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1959, pp. 22-23.

THERE OUGHT TO BE A LAW

(continued from page 1)

is called the continuity/discontinuity issue: How much continuity or discontinuity is there as far as the law continuing as a ruling code for the New Testament believer? The issues are difficult and Christians of good will can and do differ.

Stephen Westerholm, Associate Professor of Biblical Studies at McMaster University in Ontario, addresses the longstanding difficulties of the issue:

"The question how those with Christian faith should relate to the divine law of Israel was a burning issue in the first Christian century and has remained a crucial subject for Christian theology and ethics ever since. Different answers have of course been given."²

Commenting on the Apostle Paul's statement in Romans 6:14 ("You are not under law but under grace"), Professor of Old Testament at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, Thomas McComiskey says:

"The use of the word *under* denotes dominion. Believers are not under the dominion of law, but under the dominion of 'grace.'"³

McComiskey then addresses "the ethic of the ancient law" and adds, "Under 'grace' man has the capability of fulfilling the ideal of the law (Rom. 3:31)."⁴

The "ideal of the law," as far as its specifics, ends up in the eye of the beholder.

It seems clear that imposing obscure or not-so-obscure portions of the Old Covenant on the Church can be a fertile ground for the rise of cultic teaching and manipulation. It can be anyone's guess as to what the "ideal of the law" is. After all, who is the final authority on what and how much of the Old Testament we must observe? How do we define "ideal of the law"? Teachers of Theonomy⁵ would go as far as to want the Old Testament death penalty (for adultery and homosexuality and other sins) imposed on American democracy.

From the Ebionites⁶ or Judaizers (c. A.D. 100s) to the Anabaptists (c. A.D. 1500s), this certainly is not a new debate as Westerholm noted. George Williams, Harvard professor, in his 924-page treatment of these 16th century rebaptizers, notes:

"The Anabaptists differed among themselves as to the degree to which the pattern and institutions of the people of the Old Covenant and their Scriptures were appropriate."⁷

Another subculture of debate is the varieties and variances within the Messianic Movement. Mart DeHaan expresses deep concern over these "Torah observant people" and says:

"I am afraid some Torah-observant people are all too ready to accept a principle Paul rejected. He rejected the idea that law-keeping could be a means of spiritual growth (Galatians 3:1-3). ... I'm convinced that the rediscovery of Torah (Old Testament teaching) can be of great benefit to a church that has forgotten its

roots, and to unbelievers who need to see the way in which Jesus fulfilled the Scriptures. But to suggest that Gentile believers in Jesus would be more obedient if they lived like Jewish forefathers (with beards, mezuzahs, phylacteries, kosher diet, Sabbath law, and Festival observance) is to miss the spirit and freedom of the Gospel of Christ. Few things could be worse for the Gospel than to suggest to a Gentile world that to become a more obedient believer in Jesus, you must begin to live outwardly like a Jew. Paul stood against that idea, and we should too."⁸

Some commentators, though well-meaning, artificially try to impose civil, ceremonial and moral categories on the Old Testament laws but this is not altogether satisfactory because different teachers disagree as to where one ends and the other begins. Seeing part of the Old Testament as "the moral law" is a category nowhere stated in Scripture. The Old Testament as a whole covenant cannot be dissected subjectively. Anything that God commands is moral.

The word "law" (Greek: *nomos*) can mean the Ten Commandments, all the specific laws given at Sinai, the five books of Moses, or the entire Old Testament depending on the context. It is important to note that Paul's most frequent use of the word has to do with all the divine requirements given to Israel to do. Unless the context clearly demands otherwise, Paul usually intends to convey a whole, unified law system and not just parts and pieces. Paul never makes an artificial distinction between civil, ceremonial and moral law. To try to do so creates a pseudo-hermeneutic.

Grace Theological Seminary founder, Alva J. McClain, speaks of the definite elements of the Mosaic Code (religious, moral and civil), as being an indivisible unity. These three categories, he says, are:

"...never separated into fragmentary and autonomous compart-

ments of human existence, but always finding their indivisible unity in God Himself as man's Creator and Sovereign."⁹

Pastor and author John Reisinger rightly observes:

"Everything that God commands is 'moral law' to the individual commanded. To pick up sticks on the Sabbath was one of the most immoral things that a man could do under the Old Covenant. This was not because there is anything inherently wrong with picking up sticks. The man was stoned to death because the Fourth Commandment, which was the covenant sign, specifically forbid any physical labor on the seventh day. A commandment that was ceremonial in nature became the highest moral duty possible when God made it the sign of the covenant."¹⁰

Reisinger further states his case:

"It was not immoral for a man to take a second wife under the same Old Covenant that had the man stoned to death for gathering sticks. The same 'Book of The Covenant' that commanded 'keep the Sabbath holy' also commanded a man to sleep with both wives when he took the second wife (Ex. 21:10)."¹¹

He further elaborates:

"The exact opposite is true of the above two examples under the New Covenant. The ceremonial sign, or Sabbath, of the Old Covenant ceased when the covenant, of which it was a sign, was done away in Christ. The Seventh Commandment was changed by Christ, the new Law-giver, and polygamy is now considered adultery. Polygamy was not a sin against the so-called 'moral law of God' according to the covenant under which David lived, but it is a sin according to the New Covenant under which a Christian lives today. The Bible defines moral duty according to the laws of the specific covenant under which an individual lives

and never by an imaginary code of 'unchanging moral law.'"¹²

The late founder of the Worldwide Church of God, Herbert W. Armstrong, popular Bible teacher Bill Gothard and others all have erred by arbitrarily imposing certain rules from the Old Testament. The mixing of law and grace for sanctification is the beginning of all kinds of legalism, error, bondage and manipulation. Gothard, for instance, regulates the times his followers may have sex relations in marriage from Leviticus 12 and 15, but does not insist on a purification ritual or any other number of rules and regulations which are also found in Leviticus. It is a pick-and-choose method that has Gothard's followers submitting to his "authority" alone.

Some may say that Christians are not under ceremonial law but under the moral law of the Old Testament. How then do we separate the moral law from its punishments? When did God drop the penalties attached to the violation of the moral laws of the Old Testament? To have one is to have the other. To try to help us out of the dilemma some will say that we are under the moral law, not for salvation, but only as a rule of life once saved. Simply stated, they say that now as Christians we are empowered to keep the moral law of the Old Testament.

The problem is the Scriptures. Luke 2:21-39 and Mark 7:8-13 show that the "Law of Moses" is the "Law of God" and is one law including moral, ceremonial and civil elements, all of which are inseparable from punishments and penalties. The law, the law of Moses and the Old Covenant are terms that are used interchangeably.

There are those who wrongly refer to Sunday as the "Christian Sabbath." The earliest post-apostolic writers, taking the lead from the apostolic pattern, testified that the Sabbath was done away. They clearly saw Sunday as the substitute and replacement for the Jewish Sabbath.¹³ Sunday was not seen as a mutation of the Sabbath but as a day standing on its own merits

with its own meaning.

The Apostle Paul takes up the law issue with the believers in Galatia. J.B. Lightfoot, the 19th century British scholar, describes the digression of the Galatians in wanting to go back under law this way:

“The pure and spiritual teaching of Christianity soon ceased to satisfy them. Their religious temperament, fostered by long habit, prompted them to seek a system more external and ritualistic.”¹⁴

GOODBYE HAGAR

Paul addresses the law system of the Old Covenant in Galatians 4:22-31. He presents two symbols: those of a free woman and the slave Hagar. He states “which things are symbolic. For these are the two covenants” (v. 24). This is plain enough. The Old Covenant in total is Hagar, the slave woman. Paul then goes on, “These are the two covenants: the one from Mount Sinai which gives birth to bondage, *which is Hagar*” (v. 24). Remember Hagar equals the Old Covenant, which in turns equals bondage.

Paul then pictures the New Covenant in symbol as Isaac, a free son. Isaac is “persecuted” by Hagar (v. 29) and the two are incompatible. Then Paul’s startling statement: “*Cast out the bondwoman*” (v. 30). Paul reaffirms in the following verse: “*We are not children of the bondwoman but of the free.*” It really cannot get any clearer than this. We may learn lessons from Hagar but she no longer tells us what to do. We are to cast her out, that is, get rid of her. Why turn to Hagar when you have Jesus?

The obvious outworking of this is stated in the next verse: “Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free and do not be entangled with a yoke of bondage” (Galatians 5:1). Some might say that Paul only had the rite of circumcision in mind but that is impossible to hold because he stated clearly that he was speaking of two covenants (4:24).

Lightfoot comments on the Hagar figure:

“The Law and the Gospel cannot co-exist; the Law must disappear before the Gospel. It is scarcely possible to estimate the strength of conviction and depth of prophetic insight which this declaration implies. The Apostle thus confidently sounds the death-knell of Judaism at a time when one-half of Christendom clung to the Mosaic law with a jealous affection little short of frenzy ... Having escaped from the slavery of Heathenism, they would fain bow to the slavery of Judaism.”¹⁵

Author and former pastor of Moody Church in Chicago, Dr. Harry A. Ironside, concludes that casting out the bondwoman means: “we have nothing to do with the legal covenant but we are the children of the covenant of grace.”¹⁶

BRING IN THE EXECUTIONER

This is not to say that God cannot and does not use the law to bring condemnation, guilt, and conviction to unbelievers. This is an ongoing function of the law (1 Timothy 1:9-10). The law kills (2 Corinthians 3 and Romans 7:9-13) and it is only Christ and the Spirit who give life. Once being made alive, we are not then delivered back to our executioner. Our allegiance is now to our Deliverer.

The false objection to the above is that talk like that means one is a lawless libertine living in license. But we do not continue in sin because we are under grace. Anyone saying that simply does not understand life under grace or New Testament sanctification. Before that is explained, consider a few more telling points.

Paul was accused of being a libertine (Romans 6). That Paul’s enemies accused him of promoting iniquity proves that he insisted that both the ritual and moral demands of the Old Testament, as a covenant, were done away. Because of this he was accused of encouraging sin (Romans 3:8, Galatians 2:17, 5:13).

Hebrews 8 speaks of a better covenant (v. 6). It is better in its com-

mands, has a superior Mediator and is better in its empowerment by grace and the Holy Spirit. There is no denying that Hebrews 8:8-13 teaches that we are under a new and superior covenant. In fact, all of the Book of Hebrews shows that to mix the two covenants is to regress, not progress. Hebrews 12:18-24 dramatically states that we have not come to the Old Covenant and Sinai, but to the new and far superior covenant.

NO MORE PENCILS, NO MORE BOOKS

To consider another figure used by the Apostle Paul, we turn to Galatians 3 where Paul likens the Old Covenant to a tutor (v. 24, “the law *was* our tutor”). Then with clarity Paul declares; “After faith has come we are *no longer under a tutor*” (v. 25). Whether it be old “Hagar” or the “tutor,” they no longer have to have a governing relationship over us. We are no longer underneath (Greek: *hupokato*) the law. Jesus has interposed Himself between us and the law and we are now “under” Him as we’ll see.

The misunderstanding many Christians have in their thinking is that without the law we are lawless. They then begin a frustrating exercise of willy-nilly picking and choosing what they subjectively and arbitrarily think would apply from the Old Testament. Again, this is to misunderstand the New Testament teachings of life under grace and in the Spirit and cause incredible confusion as well as legalism and division.

Ironside spells out the implications of no longer being under the law as the tutor or schoolmaster:

“We are here told that we are not only freed from the law as a means of attempting to secure justification, but are also freed from that law as a means of sanctification, for we have so much higher a standard in Christ risen from the dead, and are to be occupied with Him. ... Anyone having the wonderful teaching that came from the lips of the

Lord Jesus Christ, and the marvelous unfolding of the epistles showing what a Christian ought to be, has this new standard of holiness, which is not the law given at Sinai, but the risen Christ at God's right hand, and as I am walking in obedience to Him my life will be a righteous life, and so, 'after that faith is come we are no longer under the pedagogue.'"17

GETTING IT RIGHT

Paul states a principle in 1 Corinthians 9 (noted by Ironside), that starts us on a road of understanding the life under grace. Under grace we are not lawless or without law. Verse 21 states, "to those who are without law, as without law (not being without law toward God, but under law toward Christ)." The words "under law toward Christ" are literally enlabeled to Christ.

Christ established a New Covenant in His blood. He is the new Moses and certainly has established enough commands and guidelines in the New Covenant to help us live and grow. Jesus is our law and lawgiver. The New Covenant is our Declaration of Independence and that covenant comes with motivating and enabling power of grace.

Former professor of Greek at Dallas Theological Seminary, Charles Ryrie, elaborates on being enlabeled to Christ:

"This does not mean that there is no law in this age of grace. Quite the contrary is true, for the New Testament Epistles speak of the 'perfect law of liberty' (Jas. 1:25), the 'royal law' (Jas. 2:8), the 'law of Christ' (Gal. 6:2), and the 'law of the spirit of life' (Rom. 8:2). It is the commands contained in these Epistles which compose the law of Christ, and it will be recognized immediately that there are hundreds of such commands covering every area of Christian living. Not only are these teachings extensive but they are so definite that they may be termed a law."18

As believers we are enlabeled to Christ. We are given grace and the Holy Spirit to empower and motivate us to respond lovingly and willingly to *His New Covenant* laws. This incredible provision of grace "teaches us that denying ungodliness and world lusts we should live soberly, righteously and godly in this present world" (Titus 2:12).

We are disciplined by grace if we are responding correctly to the New Covenant and to the Holy Spirit. Grace is our teacher (Greek: *paideuo*), our trainer and our instructor. We now obey our new instructor because we want to.

In interpreting Titus 2:12, author John Strombeck writes:

"The truth that the grace of God, the very same grace which brings salvation, also teaches those who are saved how to live pleasing unto God, seems to have been entirely overlooked by many. ... Even among those who accept grace as the only means of salvation, exclusive of any works or merit on the part of man, there is regrettable neglect of emphasis on the fact that the spiritual life can be sustained, developed, and brought to perfection *only* by the operation of the same grace. Growth in spiritual life comes only by the grace of God. Peter admonished, 'Grow in grace' (2 Pet. 3:18). ... All impartation of spiritual truth, all instruction, all reproof, all admonition, all exhortation, and all chastening are elements of the discipline by grace. ... To reject the law as a teacher is not to say that there are no standards set for Christian conduct. Grace also sets standards but these are on a much higher plane. Those of the law are on a high human plane; those of grace on a divine plane. Furthermore, grace supplies that which is needed to live according to these ideals."19

A woman who worked for a man would serve him to be paid. How

different if she married him. She would then love him and serve him out of her heart, not for a paycheck. That roughly illustrates the two covenants. Far from being lawless, the woman in that love relationship would serve even more faithfully. She probably would be doing some of the same things done under the old arrangement but only because they are abiding things that become part of the new arrangement. She does them in relation to their place in the marriage not as a commitment to the old way as we'll see.

Strombeck further states:

"The discipline of grace brings to the mind and soul the goodness and beauty of God, His unfailing love, and His all inclusive provision."20

The New Covenant has laws and directives plus grace and Holy Spirit empowerment and these are what make the New Covenant so superior.

It is clear that the New Testament writers, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, had the task of formulating the commands, directives and ethics of the New Covenant. The Apostles' doctrines form part of the foundation of the new "law."

Suppose a citizen of a totalitarian country immigrated to the United States and became a citizen. Having chosen his new country of freedom, he would be a proud, well-motivated, joyful follower of the new laws of his new country and feel no constraint to go back to the past bondage. It would also follow that some of the same laws and ethics exist in both countries but that would not mean he was in any way obligated to the old country.

Jesus tells us to keep *His commandments* (John 14:15). The context, and especially verse 24, identifies the content of those commandments as the *words of Jesus* (see also John 12:48).

Consider the New Covenant precept as addressed by Peter: "That you be mindful of the words which were before spoken by the holy Prophets and of the *commandment* of us, the

Apostles of the Lord and Savior" (2 Peter 3:2).

We can be mindful of the Old Covenant and certainly we can see in it both negative and positive examples (1 Corinthians 10:6) from which we can learn but we are no longer under its commands as citizens of the household of God (Ephesians 2:19).

Consider these other verses that tell us about life under grace:

- 1 Corinthians 15:10 — "But by the grace of God I am what I am; and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me."
- 2 Corinthians 9:8 — "And God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work."
- 2 Timothy 2:1 — "Be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus."
- Hebrews 12:28 — "Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear."
- Hebrews 13:9 — "Be not carried about with divers and strange doctrines. For it is a good thing that the heart be established with grace."

SEEING IT RIGHTLY

We now are to relate to the Old Covenant in a different way. Its fulfilled prophecies and types are instructive and illuminating and it is illustrative in many ways. Although the Old Testament people are examples of prayer and patience to us (James 5:11, 17 and Hebrews 11), it does not necessarily follow that we are under all their commands and specific law structure. We can learn much from Noah's faith and persistence yet we do not build boats.

In 2 Chronicles 33:15, Manassah removed idols, which serves as an example and illustration that we need to cast down mental idols and idols of materialism. We can pray like Nehemiah but it does not follow that we take building materials to Jerusalem as he was directed.

Seeing God's people from Adam to Malachi as general examples is not the same as thinking we are under all the specifics of their commands and law structure. We can emulate their faith and trust in the context of our covenant while the specifics of our obedience are different than theirs and spelled out clearly in that New Covenant. Seeing Old Testament saints as both positive and negative examples is not the same as going back to a slavish legalistic bondage to a former dispensation.

As we read the Psalms, for instance, we realize the difference between a primary interpretation and a secondary application. We identify with the Psalmist in our trust of the unchanging God of the Psalms. And the Lord is still powerful on our behalf in whatever setting we find ourselves. Yet we realize that we are not in a theocracy like David. Going beyond Psalms as principles could get one in a real dilemma when it comes to the imprecatory (judgment) Psalms. The old adage: *All Scripture is to us — but not all Scripture is for us* is helpful to remember.

We also can revel in all the Old Testament passages that describe the nature, character and attributes of God (Psalm 145, for example) because He never changes (Hebrews 13:8). Our doctrine of God is built on His revelation of Himself throughout both Testaments. The Old Testament is valuable for many reasons other than being a partial law code for the believer.

God also continues to use the Commandments as an instrument of conviction to drive sinners to seek a Savior, as we have stated.

We also affirm that both Jesus and the Apostles quoted from the Old

Testament for various reasons. Some of the quotes were to show specific fulfillment of prophecies and other of the quotes were to bring timeless morals into the New Covenant. These morals then stand on their own as a vital part of the New Testament.

WHY NOT STONE FALSE PROPHETS?

Another way we can use the Old Testament legitimately is for definition and example. For instance, Jesus and Peter both spoke of false prophets. We can use Deuteronomy 13 and 18 for an expanded definition and example of a false prophet. Certainly Jesus and Peter would not mean anything different than that. God has not changed the dictionary and false prophets continue to be what they were in ancient times.

However, we no longer stone false prophets as the law commands, but we can and should excommunicate them for divisiveness, lying and unbecoming behavior (Matthew 18:17, Romans 16:17-18).

Additionally, the definition does not change when New Testament writers speak of heresy. We can illustrate, define and amplify heresy from all over the Old Testament. It does not follow that after doing so that we necessarily have to go back under its law structure.

The Old Covenant is our needed foundation but we now live in the house (New Covenant) and not the basement, as important as it is. If we use the basement or go back into the basement because of storage or for other reasons, we still do not live there and we understand why visits to the basement are sometimes appropriate.

Thomas McComiskey summarizes well the relationship of the Old and New Covenants:

"The new covenant discriminates among the aspects of the divine will set forth in the Old Testament and authoritatively asserts that the promise-oath is still in force. It indicates the aspects of the Mosaic covenant that were not intended for its specific era

and shows which aspects have continuing force. In the light of this valid covenantal function, one cannot affirm an authority for the New Testament that supersedes the authority of the Old. The Old Testament speaks to us today with an undiminished force. Even in those areas where the husk has been removed to reveal the true spiritual kernel, the typological and apologetic value of the types and shadows lends a function to the Old Testament that attests to its continuing power and application."²¹

McComisky goes on to show that our only hope for a correct drawing from the Old Testament is the specific statements in the New:

"The New Testament limits and redefines elements in the old covenant that do not apply in the same way today. But the Old Testament possesses a similar function in relation to the New Testament. It too defines and limits. It defines the nature of faith. Paul's concept of justification by faith was carefully confined to what the Old Testament revealed. The nature of God is compatible with that concept in the Old Testament, even in his judgmental activity. The Old Testament sets forth the historical ground from which spring such New Testament concepts as the spiritual priesthood and the land."²²

OLD BECOMES NEW

The safest and least arbitrary and subjective way to deal with the Old Covenant is to understand clearly what is quoted from the Old in the New and why, and accept any timeless principles reinforced in the New Covenant from the Old. We must see these transfers as part of the New Covenant *alone* and resist the temptation to start arbitrarily imposing Old Testament laws on believers or to take single Old Testament quotes made by Jesus and the Apostles and think we have to pile

them and others on believers. The New Testament writers (occasional, selective and understandable) use of the Old Testament is not a license for us to subjectively impose our ideas about laying other Old Testament rules on the Church.

Seeing it this way (inspired writers making Spirit-led choices of Old Testament timeless principles and making them part of the New) gets us out of the dilemma posed by Westerholm²³ of seeing Paul as an inconstant antinomian. Some accuse Paul of being contradictory, inconsistent, confused, and in error by so often emphatically rejecting the law and at other times upholding small portions here and there. The confusion is cleared up by an understanding of Spirit-inspired, Spirit-led selectivity by the writers of the New Testament.

John Reisinger, when speaking of the Ten Commandments, wisely observes:

"Nine of the ten are repeated in the New Testament Scriptures and are therefore just as binding on a Christian as they were on an Israelite. The Ten Commandments, *as given at Mt. Sinai*, are not the rule of life for a Christian today simply because they are not a *high enough standard*. The Ten Commandments, *as interpreted and applied by Christ*, are a very important part of the Christian's rule of life. However, our new Lawgiver has given new and higher laws in addition to interpreting the Ten Commandments in terms of the kingdom of grace."²⁴

GIVEN THE "WANT TO"

There are many positive and negative precepts all over the pages of the New Testament. Paul calls his teachings, "the commandments of the Lord" (1 Corinthians 14:37). With precepts and principles, filled and motivated with empowerment and grace, the Christian is not lawless and not slavishly legalistic. Grace and the indwelling Spirit give us the "want to" and the New Testament gives us

the "how to!" We now have the means and the directions.

Well-known Bible expositor and pastor-teacher of Grace Community Church, John MacArthur, reminds us:

"...our obedience to God must not be a conformity to rules and regulations out of fear or legalistic pride. It is instead a conformity to righteousness out of gratitude and a deep love for Christ. Our desire to be worthy children is a result of understanding and appreciating all He has done for us."²⁵

Acts 2:42 clearly states that the early Church followed not Old Testament rules but "the Apostles' doctrine." The New Testament and the Book of Acts in particular, express that some practices were only temporary, such as communal living, which existed for a time because of local problems. Worshiping in the Temple continued for a period of time. Temple attendance and other law practices in Acts were temporary until the temple and temple rituals were finally obliterated in A.D. 70. (See Hebrews 8:13, where we are told that the Old Testament system with its temple and priesthood is old, literally obsolete, and is ready to vanish.)

We must see parts of the Gospels and the Book of Acts as a transition period between dispensations of law and grace. We can think of two circles overlapping. Of necessity the right and left edges of both circles mingle and share things. If a red circle overlapped edges with a white circle, the center pink portion represents the necessary transition and brief mingling of the Old and New Covenants.

Alva McClain says that understanding the transitional nature of the Book of Acts helps us unravel some of the complexities of that period:

"The period covered by the Book of Acts, therefore, while a genuine segment of the present Church age, has nevertheless a character which differs markedly from the area of time following the destruction of Jerusalem."²⁶

Fenton Hort describes the temporary, transitional overlap of Acts and the problems of not seeing that distinction:

“The whole course of Church History is full of beliefs, practices, institutions, and the like, which rest on misconceptions of the true nature of the Gospel dispensation, and are in effect a falling back after the coming of Christ to a state of things which His coming was intended to supersede, a return, as St. Paul would have said, to the weak and beggarly elements. ... Of this character is the eclectic appropriation of Levitical laws for the regulation of the customs of Christians, and eventually for the positive legislation of churches. ... ideal Christianity is what is called Christianity without Judaism. ... It ascribes perpetuity to the Jewish Law, with more or less modification; thus confounding the conditions providentially imposed for a time on the people of God when it was only a single nation, the people inhabiting Palestine, — confounding these Providential conditions with God’s government of His people after its national limits were broken down and it had become universal. Judaistic Christianity, in this the true sense of the term, might with at least equal propriety be called Christian Judaism. ... Till the voice of God was heard in quite other accents, a Palestinian Church could not but be more or less a Judaic Church. This *temporary* duality within Christendom is constantly overlooked or misunderstood: but, if we think a little of the circumstances of the case, we must see that it was inevitable.”²⁷

Paul warns in Colossians 2:16-23 about going back into Old Testament rules and regulations and the bondage of law-keeping that has nothing to do with God’s New Covenant in Christ. So many try to push the right circle back over the left circle and totally superimpose it or mostly so. To do so is to: 1) miss the historical

transition of some of the Gospels and Acts, 2) underestimate the sufficiency of the New Covenant on its own, and 3) garble law and grace.

John Reisinger in his book, *But I Say Unto You, ...*, explains it this way:

“This whole subject is as clear as crystal the moment we see that Christ established a New Covenant that replaces the Old Covenant, and that the New Covenant brings with it new and higher laws of conduct that are based entirely on grace. These new laws are just as objective as any law under the Old Covenant. These objective commands can demand a kind of behavior that Moses could never demand simply because these new laws are based on the truth and power of grace.”²⁸

In Romans 6:14, Paul states that *as believers* we are “no longer under law but under grace.” This clearly teaches that law, as either a saving principle or a sanctifying principle, is not our reference point. Some wrongly misinterpret this and have us believe that it says “you are not under the law for salvation but are under the law for sanctification.” This is to misuse Scripture and ignore the context. Paul is addressing *Christians* and the topic is their continuing growth right up to glorification in Chapter 8.

BY OR IN? THAT IS THE QUESTION

Then in Romans 8:4 we are taught that the righteous requirements of the law are “fulfilled *in* us.” All the righteous requirements of the law are not fulfilled *by* us but fulfilled *in* (Greek: *en*) us by Jesus. Christ has fulfilled the law (Matthew 5:17) for, and fulfills it in, every believer. There are no more of its demands required of us. The Greek word “fulfill” is *pleroo* and means “to complete fully.” Christ completed fully every righteous requirement of the Old Covenant and gives that victory and standing to His children.

Paul could not be talking of believers having to fulfill the law or the law

being fulfilled *by* us or it would negate all that he taught. The twin truth is that we could never fulfill the law short of being perfect.

Twentieth-century Swedish scholar, Anders Nygren, beautifully unwraps the implications of Romans 8:4:

“Thus the deepest purpose of the law has been fulfilled. Against sin the law rises up in condemnation. But as to the life which is lived under ‘the righteousness of God,’ Paul says, ‘Against such there is no law’ (Gal. 5:23). When we are ‘in Christ,’ the law’s positive purpose, its *dikaïoma* [righteousness], is fulfilled in us, not by our keeping of the law, but through Christ, and by the fact that we ‘are in Him.’ Here we see the consequences of what Paul said in chapter 7, that Christ does not merely give us power to fulfill the demands of righteousness, but that He is Himself our righteousness. He is ‘the righteousness from God’ which, by faith, becomes our righteousness. They who are ‘in Christ’ are by that very fact righteous, and not by a keeping of the law made possible by that fact. Their righteousness consists in the fact, pure and simple, that they no longer live of themselves but ‘are in Christ.’ *Therein, and not through any keeping of the law is the dikaïoma of the law fulfilled.*”²⁹

The Old Testament reaches its intended goal in Christ and that fullness and fulfillment is given to believers by virtue of Christ in them.

Scottish scholar F.F. Bruce, in his *The Epistle of Paul To The Romans*, comments on Romans 8 and the “new heart” given to believers in the New Covenant:

“Christian holiness is not a matter of painstaking conformity to the individual precepts of an external law-code; it is rather a question of the Holy Spirit’s producing His fruit in the life, reproducing those graces which were seen in perfection in the life of Christ.”³⁰

MOVING INTO A BRAND NEW HOUSE

In Ephesians 2:20-21, Paul teaches that we have a new foundation in the Apostles and Prophets. In Ephesians 3:1-2, he tells us:

“For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles — if indeed you have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which was given me for you.”

The word “dispensation” helps us to understand so much in regard to life under grace. The Greek word, *oikonomia*, literally means management of a household, house rule or house law. We are now Christ’s household, not the household of Moses (Hebrews 3:4-5). Christ’s household is governed by grace. Christ’s house is to be run and ruled lovingly and willingly according to His rules and His house order. The Jews ran their house in one way; Jesus rules His in another.

People grow up under the rules of their parents and were subject to them. The house rules then were their parents’ rules. People grow up, marry and establish their own homes with their own house rules. They probably learned from their parents’ rules and bring influences from the past but are no longer directly ruled and governed by those things. Their children become subject to their house rules, not the rules of their parents’ childhood.

DRAWING THE LINE

Lewis Sperry Chafer, author and founder of Dallas Theological Seminary, expresses his views on the present grace economy:

“Among these revelations is the rule of conduct regarding the daily life of those who are saved by grace in this dispensation which occupies the time between the cross and the second coming of Christ. This gracious rule of life is complete in itself and stands alone in the Scriptures, dissociated from any other and uncomplicated. It is the teachings of grace.”³¹

Having established grace as a sufficient and superior system, Chafer goes on:

“The pernicious practice of attempting to merge the two legal systems with the teachings of grace results in a forceless law and a defeated grace. The student’s problem is not one of striking an average between law and grace, but rather that of separating these systems to the end that each may retain its intended effectiveness.”³²

Then on the superiority of grace, Chafer says:

“These teachings surpass the standards of the Law of Moses in the measure in which infinity surpasses the finite.”³³

Chafer shows that nine of the Ten Commandments are repeated numerous times in the New Testament. The Sabbath day commandment is not. Whatever God puts into the new house order, simply becomes the new issues of life and service for the Christian. God becomes the final word on what is included or excluded in the new house order. Chafer further shows:

“The Ten Commandments require no life of prayer, no Christian service, no evangelism, no missionary effort, no gospel preaching, no life and walk in the Spirit, no Fatherhood of God, no union with Christ, no fellowship of saints, no hope of salvation, and no hope of heaven. If it is asserted that we have all these because we have both the law and grace, it is replied that the law adds nothing to grace but confusion and contradiction, and that there is the most faithful warning in the Scriptures against this admixture. A few times the teachings of the law are referred to by the writers of the Epistles by way of illustration. Having stated the obligation under grace, they cite the fact that this same principle obtained under the law. There is, however, no basis here for a commingling of these two

governing systems. The law of Moses presents a covenant of works to be wrought in the energy of the flesh; the teachings of grace present a covenant of faith to be wrought in the energy of the Spirit.”³⁴

ALL I NEED

We do not have to apologize for being under the New Covenant alone as a way of life. It is a superior covenant with a superior Priest as Hebrews eloquently states. It has a superior outreach to all the world and functions through a superior motivation and power by indwelling grace. It has superior commands and a superior morality that goes down even to thought life and the intents of the heart. The New Covenant gives much more, not less.

Added to that is the very indwelling of the third person of the Trinity, the Holy Spirit, and the love of God shed abroad in our hearts. Why go back to less? Why go back to Hagar and bondage? Why go back to a shadow when we have the substance?

I would not kneel down and try to embrace a shadow when I had the loved one who was behind the shadow right in front of me (Colossians 2:16-17). With the examples, prophecies and types of the Old Covenant and the commands, principles and empowerment of the New Covenant, we have all we will ever need. Goodbye Hagar.

Acclaimed Greek scholar and former professor at Moody Bible Institute, Kenneth Wuest, elevates grace as the believer’s way of life:

“But grace is never lenient. It is far stricter than law ever could be. It is a far greater deterrent of evil than law ever was. A half dozen motorcycle policemen with their motors tuned up, are a far greater deterrent to speeding, than any number of placards along the road indicating the speed limit. The Holy Spirit, indwelling the believer, takes notice of the slightest sin and convicts him of it, whereas the law could act only generally and then only

when the conscience of the individual cooperated with it. Grace not only forgives, but teaches (Titus 2:11-14).³⁵

Wuest concludes:

“Just because the believer now is scot free from the law, does not mean that he can sin with impunity. There is a new propelling and compelling deterrent to sin, divine love, produced in the believer’s being which causes him to hate sin and obey the Word of God (Gal. 5:13, John 14:21-24).”³⁶

Endnotes:

1. Dave Breese, *Know The Marks of Cults*. Wheaton, Ill.: Victor Books, 1975, pg. 14.
2. Stephen Westerholm, *Israel’s Law and The Church’s Faith: Paul and His Recent Interpreters*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1988, pg. 2.
3. Thomas McComisky, *The Covenants of Promise*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 1985, pg. 108, italic in original.
4. *Ibid.*, pg. 109.
5. Theonomy or reconstructionism is the belief system whose objective is to reestablish society according to the strict and explicit guidelines set forth in the Old Testament law. For more information on Christian Reconstructionism see, Bruce Barron, *Heaven on Earth?* Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan Publishing House, 1992.

Also H. Wayne House and Thomas Ice, *Dominion Theology: Blessing or Curse?*. Portland, Ore.: Multnomah Press, 1988.

6. For more information on this pseudo-Christian sect, see Philip Schaff, *History Of The Christian Church*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1910, Vol. 2, pp. 428-434. Also see, “Here Come the Ebionites,” PFO Newsletter, Vol. 4, No. 4, pp. 2, 7.
7. George Williams, *The Radical Reformation*. Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1962, pg. xxviii, Introduction.
8. Mart DeHaan, *Times Of Discovery*, “Been Thinking About ... Torah.” Grand Rapids, Mich.: Radio Bible Class, February 1998, pp. 1-2.
9. Alva J. McClain, *The Greatness of The Kingdom*. Chicago: Moody Press, 1968, pg. 65.
10. John Reisinger, *Tablets of Stone*. Southbridge, Mass.: Crowne Publications, Inc., 1989, pg. 26.
11. *Ibid.*, pg 27, italic in original.
12. *Ibid.*
13. See further, Schaff, op. cit., Vol. 2, pp. 201-205.
14. J.B. Lightfoot, *The Epistle of St. Paul to the Galatians*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan Publishing House, no date, pg. 17.
15. *Ibid.*, pp. 184, 185.
16. Harry A. Ironside, *Epistle To The Galatians*. Neptune, N.J.: Loizeaux Brothers, Inc., 1970, pg. 174.
17. *Ibid.*, pp. 127, 128.
18. Charles Ryrie, *The Grace of God*. Chicago: Moody Press, 1966, pg. 96.

19. John Strombeck, *Disciplined By Grace — Studies In Christian Conduct*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Kregal Resources, 1991, pp. 10, 11, 13, italic in original.
20. *Ibid.*, pg. 36.
21. McComisky, op. cit., pg. 227.
22. *Ibid.*
23. Westerholm, op. cit., pg. 96.
24. Reisinger, op. cit., pp. 99-100, italic in original.
25. John MacArthur, Jr., *Strength For Today*. Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway Books, 1997, entry for January 2, pg. 2.
26. McClain, op. cit., pg. 430.
27. Fenton Hort, *Judaistic Christianity*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 1894, pp. 1-2, 4, 5, 83, emphasis added.
28. John Reisinger, *But I Say Unto You*. Southbridge, Mass.: Crowne Publications, Inc., 1989, pg. 73.
29. Anders Nygren, *Commentary on Romans*. Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1949, pp. 319-320, emphasis in original.
30. F.F. Bruce, *Tyndale Bible Commentaries—The Epistle Of Paul To The Romans*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1963, Vol. 6, pg. 162.
31. Lewis Sperry Chafer, *Systematic Theology*. Dallas: Dallas Seminary Press, 1948, Vol. 4, pg. 180.
32. *Ibid.*, pg. 185.
33. *Ibid.*, pg. 187.
34. *Ibid.*, pg. 211.
35. Kenneth Wuest, *Wuest’s Word Studies From the Greek New Testament*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1988, Vol. 1, Romans, pg. 109.
36. *Ibid.*

EDITORIALS

(continued from page 2)

become — are a denial of a personal, Holy Father God who will call all men into account for their sins. The human potential movement anesthetizes people to their real need of forgiveness and a Savior.

3) *The decidedly postmodern perspective of our culture and the Church*. Postmodernism posits that there are no fixed truths or real moral values. Everyone’s truth is truth. It is a pragmatic and subjective approach to life. The demise of doctrine in most Christian churches may be the reason so many believers are so undiscerningly buying and reading this series.

Some teaching (like the theology of Jehovah’s Witnesses and Latter-day Saints) is downright destructive to the soul. Other teaching is like junk food with no real nourishment for the soul. The Apostle Paul warns: “Charge some that they teach no other doctrine. ... if there be any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine” (1 Timothy 1:3, 10). The word “sound” (Greek:

hugias) is literally healthy or vibrant in health. There is the good doctrine of Scripture that promotes spiritual health and then there is unscriptural and New Age teaching that makes people spiritually sick. The latter is the unhealthy doctrine warned of by Paul. We are mandated to teach “healthy” doctrine and stay away from poisonous or junk food doctrine.

Paul further directs these sober words to Timothy that say it all: “If any man teach otherwise and consent not to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness; He is proud knowing nothing, but doting about questions and strifes of words, whereof cometh envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings” (1 Timothy 6:3-4).

Christians should avoid the non-nourishing mix found in the “Chicken Soup” series. Moreover, Christian booksellers would do well to forgo the profits made from selling this popular series by discontinuing its sales and then affirming to become more discerning in the material they make available to their customers.

—GRF