

The Mosaic Covenant:

*How to Understand
the Law of Sinai*

A
Ruin and Redemption.com
Teaching Series

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The Mosaic Covenant

How to understand the Law of Sinai

I. An Introduction to the Four Views of Sinai

One of the biggest areas of debate in the study of Covenant Theology revolves around the question of how we are to understand the Mosaic Covenant. In fact, there's not only great debate relating to the Mosaic Covenant, there's also a good amount of confusion. At least one early Reformed theologian, Edmund Calamy, in attempting to categorize the various positions on the Mosaic Covenant, seems to have himself actually misunderstood some of the views represented.¹ This shows “that even a member of the Westminster Assembly could hear and read his contemporaries on the topic of the covenants, with particular reference to Sinai, and not necessarily provide an altogether accurate or clear taxonomy of their respective positions.”² It's no wonder that Anthony Burgess, another member of the Westminster Assembly, made the observation that he did “not find in any point of Divinity, learned men so confused and perplexed” as on the relationship between the Mosaic Covenant and the Covenant of Grace!³

The song goes, “How do you solve a problem like Maria?” Well, we could write another musical, “How do you solve a problem like Moses?” How are we to understand the Mosaic Covenant? Is this covenant that God makes with Israel under Moses part of the Covenant of Grace? Or is it more like another Covenant of Works? Or is it both? Or neither? How are we to understand the Mosaic Covenant?

Generally, we could say that there are four major views of the Mosaic Covenant.⁴ Francis Roberts

¹ Noted in Beeke, *A Puritan Theology*. See Edmund Calamy: *Two Solemn Covenants Made Between God and Man*.

² Quoted from Beeke, *A Puritan Theology*. So it shouldn't surprise us that there continues to be a great amount of confusion. If members of the Westminster Assembly found themselves baffled in categorizing the specific views of the Mosaic Covenant as they interacted with *primary* sources, how much more baffled are we bound to be now as we interact with *secondary* sources, many of whom in turn misunderstand the primary sources they are seeking to represent.

³ Quote is from Beeke. The full quote from Burgess has a bit more color to it: “I do not find in any point of divinity, learned men so confused and perplexed (being like Abraham's ram, hung in a bush of briars and brambles by the head) as here.” (*A Vindication of the Moral Law*, p229). He wasn't alone; other theologians had very similar things to say. Jonathan Edwards says, “There is perhaps no part of divinity attended with so much intricacy, and wherein orthodox divines do so much differ as stating the precise agreement and difference between the two dispensations of Moses and Christ.” (*Works*, VI, p160). John Ball says, “here at first we meet with great difficulty, how, and whether at all the Covenant of Grace, was manifested by Moses.” (*A Treatise of the Covenant of Grace*, p95). John Owen says, “this is a subject wrapped up in much obscurity, and attended with many difficulties.” (*Hebrews*, p60). Francis Roberts, in commencing the subject, begins with, “This particular is involved in much difficulty. . . One compares it to the land of Canaan. . . there are many giants, many great objections in the way. And as Abraham's ram was entangled in the thicket by the head; so very many and learned writers are much entangled and perplexed in their notions and expressions about the nature of this Sinai Covenant, wherein they not only dissent oft-times from one another, but sometimes from themselves so far, that it is hard to discover their sense and meaning.” (p738).

⁴ We say generally because most (perhaps all) of these views in turn also represent several distinct various sub-views (which we have also tried to describe to some degree). *Some have condensed the different opinions on the Mosaic Covenant into just two categories*: those who see the Mosaic Covenant as being part of the Covenant of Grace and those who see it as something totally separate. This basically entails singling out the Dichotomist View as the one view that sees a fundamental unity, and lumping all the other views together. But this creates confusion and isn't precise enough to do justice to the various views represented. *On the other extreme, others have expanded the differing views of the Mosaic Covenant (in the Reformed camp) into as many as 14 distinct categories* (Brenton Ferry's thesis). Though this is helpful for highlighting the amount of underlying diversity of opinion about Sinai (though I've found personally that I need to take his findings with a grain of salt), I think most of the differences Ferry finds can naturally be classified as sub-views under one of the four main views we have listed here. We arrived at four views primarily because: *first*, the differing views on the Mosaic Covenant have often historically been classified into these four views; and *secondly*, each of these views seems to me distinct enough to merit an entirely separate category. We must acknowledge at the outset that it is not an easy thing to classify the Puritans' views of Sinai! In my personal study of the writings of the Puritans, I have found Patrick Ramsey's words to be extremely helpful: “The difficulty in classifying the various Puritans according to these four categories is that 'many of them held several of the different views in varying combinations.' [quoting Ernest Kevan, *The Grace of Law*, p113]. As a result, some divines seemed confused

summarizes them in this way: 1) “that the Law on Mount Sinai was given as a Covenant of Works, not of Grace; 2) That it was a mixed Covenant, partly of Works, partly of Grace; 3) That it was not purely and properly either a covenant of nature or of grace, but a covenant subservient to the Covenant of Grace, and preparing thereunto; [and,] 4) That it was a Covenant of Grace for substance, though propounded in an unusual way of terror and servile bondage, suitable to that people, time, and state of the Church under age.”⁵ To chart these descriptions out a bit, we could think of these four views in the following way:

SUMMARY OF THE TRADITIONAL INTERPRETATIONS OF THE MOSAIC COVENANT

POSITION	DESCRIPTION OF VIEW	TAXONOMY	SUMMARY	EXAMPLE
Republication View	The Mosaic Covenant is a renewal (or republication) of the Covenant of Works	A Covenant of Works	Sinai is <i>contrary to</i> the Covenant of Grace	Water as it is contrary to oil ⁶
Mixed View	The Mosaic Covenant is a mix of both the Covenant of Works and Covenant of Grace	It was Both/And	Sinai is <i>partly made of</i> the Covenant of Grace	One shirt woven with two fabrics ⁷
Subservient View	The Mosaic Covenant is neither part of nor opposed to but serves the Covenant of Grace	It was Neither/Nor	Sinai is <i>different than</i> the Covenant of Grace	The role of a wife to her husband ⁸
Majority View	The Mosaic Covenant is simply another manifestation of the Covenant of Grace	A Covenant of Grace	Sinai is <i>part of</i> the Covenant of Grace	An instrument in a symphony ⁹

Let's take some time to look with a little more depth at these views one by one:¹⁰

1. The FIRST View: The Mosaic Covenant was given as a COVENANT OF WORKS

A) Summary of View: According to this view, the Mosaic Covenant was a dispensation of law—not grace. The covenant with Abraham was indeed a covenant of grace, but when Israel came to Sinai, they entered into a very different kind of covenant. Under the gospel of Abraham, the way to life was *simple faith in God's promise*; but now under Moses at Sinai, the way to life is *absolute obedience to God's law*. These two systems are irreconcilable. And since perfect obedience is the requirement of the Law, the Mosaic Covenant must be understood as a renewal (or republication) of the Covenant of Works. Most of those who hold this view affirm that no man was ever saved in any way other than by grace alone through faith alone in Christ. Indeed, the whole purpose of renewing the Covenant of Works was to drive men to Christ. But since this covenant was entirely conditional on Israel's obedience, it is to be understood as a renewal of the original Covenant of Works, and thus stands directly opposed to the Covenant of Grace.¹¹

and contradictory. Other divines use the same terminology of the various classifications but in different senses [IE, the word *subservient*]. Moreover, many theologians within the same general category differ on the various details of the Mosaic Covenant [see discussion of the Mixed view]. Nonetheless, if we are careful to make the necessary distinctions, these four classifications are both necessary and useful. After all, the Puritans themselves employed them.” (*In Defense of Moses*, p7).

⁵ Anthony Burgess employs the same four-fold classification in his *Vindiciae Legis*. He writes, “In expressing this Covenant there is difference among the Learned: some make the Law a Covenant of works, and upon that ground that it is abrogated; others call it a subservient covenant to the covenant of grace, and make it only occasionally, as it were, introduced, to put more luster and splendor upon grace; others call it a mixed covenant of works and grace; but that is hardly to be understood as possible, much less as true. I therefore think that opinion true. . .that the Law given by Moses was a Covenant of grace.” (p213; quoted from Kevan, *The Grace of Law*). See also John Ball in *A Treatise of the Covenant of Grace*, esp. pp92-102.

⁶ IE, as water is contrary to oil, being a completely different substance, so too Sinai was contrary to the Covenant of Grace.

⁷ IE, as with one shirt woven with two fabrics, Sinai was like one shirt made up of both the Covenant of Works and Grace.

⁸ IE, as a wife is different than her husband yet also serves him, Sinai was different than but served the Covenant of Grace.

⁹ IE, as any instrument adds to the symphony, Sinai was just another instrument in the symphony of the Covenant of Grace.

¹⁰ Joel Beeke (following Mark Jones, *Drawn into Controversy*), cites John Owen, who helpfully reminds us that though there were indeed different views about Sinai, the Reformed orthodox agreed on at least the following: 1) “from the giving of the first promise none was ever justified or saved but by the new covenant, and Jesus Christ”; 2) “the Old Testament contains the doctrine of salvation in and through the person and work of Christ”; 3) the old covenant ‘separated from its figurative relation unto the covenant of grace’ could not save”; and 4) “all of the institutions in the old covenant typified Christ.” (ch.17).

¹¹ William Pemble describes the view this way: “By the covenant of works, we understand what we call in one word, ‘the law,’ namely, that means of bringing man to salvation, which is by perfect obedience unto the will of God. Hereof there are also two several administrations: the first is with Adam before his fall. . .The second administration of this covenant was the renewing thereof with the Israelites at Mount Sinai; where, after the light of nature began to grow darker, and corruption had in time worn out the characters of religion and virtue first graven in man’s heart, God revived the law by a compendious and full declaration of all duties required of man towards God or his neighbor, expressed in the decalogue; according to the tenor of which law God entered into covenant with the Israelites, promising to be their God in bestowing upon them all blessings of

Those who hold to this view argue that this interpretation is confirmed by all the things Paul says about the Law that stand against the essence of the gospel. They point to how Paul says that while, “the righteous man shall live [IE, be justified] by faith,” the Law operates on the principle, “He who practices them shall live [IE, be justified] by them.” (Galatians 3:12). And again in Romans 10:5, “Moses writes that the man who practices the righteousness which is based on law shall live [IE, be justified] by that righteousness.” Those who adhere to this view ask what else could Paul possibly be saying, but that the Law is a completely different system than the gospel? Whereas the gospel operates on the principle of: *Believe and live*; the Law operates on the principle of: *Obey/Work/Do and live*. Proponents of this view remind us that Paul even describes the Law as a letter that “kills,” (2 Corinthians 3:6), and as “a ministry of death,” (2 Corinthians 3:7). They conclude that the Mosaic Law could not have been part of the Covenant of Grace, but that it must have been given as a renewal of the original Covenant of Works.¹²

B) Synopsis of View: Each of the first three views we are going to examine have this in common: they do not take the Mosaic Covenant to be part of the Covenant of Grace. So, the Scriptures alluded to that seem to represent the Law in a negative way, or in a way that opposes the gospel, these same Scriptures are used in various ways to defend each of the first three views we'll be looking at.¹³ For that reason, we'll wait until later to look at these Scriptures in detail. But for now, we can say the following about this view:

life and happiness, upon condition that they would be his people, obeying all things that he had commanded; which condition they accepted of, promising an absolute obedience, Ex.19:8, 'All things which the Lord hath said we will do;' and also submitting themselves to all punishment in case they disobeyed, saying, 'Amen' to the curse of the law, 'Cursed be every one that confirmeth not all the words of the law. . .'" (From *The Marrow*, pp59-60). After quoting from Pemble, Fisher goes on to describe John Preston, a Mr. Polonus, and a Mr. Walker as adherents of this view. Ernest Kevan tentatively adds Vavasor Powell, Henry Burton (pp114-15) and Richard Sibbes (p127) as those who may have also held this view. Though this view was initially held by a few of the Puritans, it essentially came to characterize the views of Lutherans and Dispensationalists. Anthony Burgess notes of the *Lutheran view*: “It is true, the Lutheran Divines, they do expressly oppose the Calvinists herein, maintaining the Covenant given by *Moses*, to be a Covenant of works, and so directly contrary to the Covenant of grace. Indeed, they acknowledge that the Fathers were justified by Christ, and had the same way of salvation with us; only they make that Covenant of *Moses* to be a superadded thing to the Promise, holding forth a condition of perfect righteousness unto the Jews, that they might be convinced of their own folly in their self-righteousness. But, I think, it is already cleared, that *Moses* his Covenant, was a Covenant of grace.” (Burgess, *Vindiciae Legis*, 251). Owen, though agreeing that most Reformed divines understood the old and new covenants to be varying administrations of one Covenant of Grace, still himself sided with the contrasting view of the Lutherans that affirms “not a twofold administration of the same covenant, but that two covenants substantially distinct.” (cf. Beeke, ch17). Bavinck writes: “In Lutheranism the word 'testament' denotes the legalistic covenant established with Israel on Mount Sinai; and in this sense it essentially differs from, is opposed to, and is abolished by the New Testament.” (V3, p209). Richard Muller notes: “This difference between the Lutherans and the Reformed arises out of the dialectical relationship of law and gospel in Lutheranism as opposed to the simple distinction of law and gospel within the one *foedus gratiae* [covenant of grace] held among the Reformed.” (cf. Beeke). Berkhoff likewise notes of the *Dispensational view*: “present day dispensationalists. . .insist on [Sinai] that it was a different covenant, not only in form but in essence. Scofield speaks of it as a legal covenant, a 'conditional Mosaic covenant of works,' under which the point of testing was legal obedience as the condition of salvation.” (*Systematic Theology*). Ligon Duncan similarly notes: “for Dispensationalists, the Mosaic Covenant is basically a repetition of the Covenant of Works.” And again, “Classical Dispensationalism puts forth a dichotomy between the Abrahamic Covenant and the Mosaic Covenant. For them the Abrahamic Covenant is a covenant of Grace, but the Mosaic Covenant is a conditional Covenant of Works. . . Dispensationalists view Israel accepting the Mosaic Covenant as a major mistake; they should have said, we don't want law, we want grace.” See also Fairbairn, *Revelation of Law*, pp158-159.

¹² Edward Fisher (*The Marrow of Modern Divinity*) in some places seems to hold this view; namely, that the Mosaic Covenant was a renewal of the original Covenant of Works: “*Evan*: [The 10 Commandments] were delivered to [Israel] as the covenant of works” (p53; cf. 53-65). But if we read him carefully, we discover that he is actually a proponent of the *Mixed View* (dealt with below). His assertion is *not* that *the Mosaic Covenant* was given as a covenant of works—but rather that *the Decalogue*, or 10 Commandments, were given as a covenant of works. Fisher later clearly differentiates his position from the Republication View, writing that after the giving of the Decalogue, “when the Lord had, by means of the covenant of works made with Adam, humbled them, and made them sigh for Christ the promised Seed, *he renewed the promise with them, yea, and the covenant of grace made with Abraham.*” (pp67ff). In other words, according to Fisher, the 10 Commandments were given as a covenant of works, but after the Israelites were laid low for their sin as exposed by the Decalogue; beginning with the book of the covenant (Exodus 20:22-23:33) and the ceremonial laws, God renews with them the Covenant of Grace. This is confirmed by what Fisher says later in *The Marrow*: “the old covenant, in respect of the outward form and manner of sealing, was temporary and changeable; and therefore the types ceased, and only the substance remains firm. . .And their covenant did at first and chiefly promise earthly blessings, and in and under these it did signify and promise all spiritual blessings and salvation; but our covenant promises Christ and his blessings in the first place, and after them earthly blessings. These, and some other circumstantial differences in regard to administration, there were betwixt their way of salvation, or covenant of grace, and ours; which moved the author to the Hebrews, Hebrews 8:8, to call theirs old, and ours new; but, in regard to substance, they were all one and the very same. . .in these covenants Jesus Christ is the subject matter of both, salvation the fruit of both, and faith the condition of both; therefore, I say, though they be called two, yet they are but one. . .” (pp71-72).

¹³ Scriptures such as quoted above: Romans 10:5; Galatians 3:10-12; 4:21-27; and 2 Corinthians 3:6-7.

1) *First of all, biblically speaking, the Covenant of Works isn't something that can be repeated:* This is something that we talked about a little earlier in the lesson (we also dealt with this in more detail back in Lesson 2).¹⁴ Once Adam violated the Covenant of Works, it was shattered in such a way that there's no putting it back together again.¹⁵ So again, the Covenant of Works isn't something that can be repeated.¹⁶

And even if it was, it would be a very strange thing for God to do: “how absurd is it to imagine, that at the fall of Adam God should lay aside the Covenant of Works, and set up the Covenant of Faith [IE, of Grace] from Adam, till Moses; and at Sinai should again lay aside the Covenant of Faith, and erect the Covenant of Works from Moses, till Christ; and last of all at Christ's coming lay aside once more the Covenant of Works, and take up again the Covenant of Faith, till the end of the world?”¹⁷ It's *confusing*. And it's *backwards*; it regresses from the plan of redemption God has been carrying out since Genesis 3.

2) *Secondly, this view can't account for the elements of grace in the Mosaic Covenant.* There's no grace in the Covenant of Works. There's no atonement; there's no forgiveness. Perfect obedience is required; and there's no tender mercies to appeal to if and when you disobey. But that's not what it was like in the Mosaic Covenant. There *was* grace at Sinai. Just one example is in Leviticus 4:35, where we read of the outcome of the sin offering: “Thus the priest shall make *atonement* for him in regard to his sin which he has committed, and he will be *forgiven*.” What do we see? There was atonement and forgiveness of sins at Sinai. And there are passages like this throughout the Mosaic Covenant. Why do we see grace in the Mosaic Covenant? We would say it's because the Mosaic Covenant is part of the Covenant of Grace.

3) *Further, this view can't make sense of several other passages of Scripture in the New Testament.* Later we'll deal more extensively with the passages quoted above that seem to make the Law contrary to the gospel. But there are other passages that proponents of this view are hard-pressed to interpret according to their paradigm of Sinai. For instance, how do they explain what Jesus meant when He told the Jews, “if you believed Moses, you would believe Me, for he wrote about Me” (John 5:46)? Or how would they interpret what Paul says in 1 Corinthians 10:1-5, that Israel under Moses “all ate the same spiritual food, and all drank the same spiritual drink, for they were drinking from a spiritual rock which followed them; and the rock was Christ”? Or how can they explain Hebrews 4, where we're told twice that new covenant believers have the same good news [IE, gospel] preached to us that Israel did under Moses (vv2,6)?¹⁸

WHAT THE NEW TESTAMENT SAYS ABOUT THE MINISTRY OF MOSES AT SINAI

THE EXPERIENCE UNDER MOSES' MINISTRY	1 Corinthians 10:1-5	CHRIST and the GOSPEL
THE CONTENT OF MOSES' WRITINGS	John 5:46	CHRIST and the GOSPEL
THE ESSENCE OF MOSES' PREACHING	Hebrews 4:2,6	CHRIST and the GOSPEL

2. The SECOND View: The Mosaic Covenant was given as a MIXED COVENANT

A) *Summary of View:* This view seeks to do justice to the fact that there seems to be both law and grace in the Mosaic Covenant. The proponents of this view try to reconcile the strict requirements of the Mosaic Covenant with God's gracious dealings towards His people in the Mosaic Covenant by saying that the Mosaic Covenant was actually a mixture of both the Covenant of Works and the Covenant of Grace.

¹⁴ Lesson 2; III.5.

¹⁵ One reason for this is that when Adam violated the Covenant of Works, all of his posterity (including the Israelites under Moses) violated it in and through him. So, all Israel under Moses were already violators of the Covenant of Works. Roberts further explains: “For in the nature and tenor of it, it requires perfect and perpetual personal obedience; which cannot be after obedience is once interrupted by the least failure. Now in Adam's fall all his mere posterity in and with him brake the Covenant of Works; and therefore are forever rendered incapable of any Covenant of Works more.” (p744).

¹⁶ Francis Roberts puts in this way: “After the Covenant of Works was broken by Adam's fall, it cannot be proved that God did at any time after set on foot a covenant of works in the Church of God.” (Roberts, p739). And again: “As virginity once lost, can never be recovered; so the Covenant of works once violated, can never be repaired.” (Francis Roberts, p57).

¹⁷ Roberts, p744.

¹⁸ Jack Collins insightfully comments on Hebrews 4:2: “The author of Hebrews did not doubt whether the OT people had received the gospel; he says in [Hebrews] 4:2 that it came to us just as it did to them. (How different from what we have to say! We usually have to clarify that it came to them just as it did to us!)” (cf. *Recurring Biblical-Theological Issues in OT studies*).

1) *There are actually at least three sub-positions of the Mixed View. The first distinguishes the Covenant of Works from the Covenant of Grace in the Mosaic Covenant by the type of Law that was given. According to this position, the Moral Law (beginning in Exodus 20) contained the Covenant of Works; whereas the Ceremonial Law (beginning in Exodus 24),¹⁹ contained the Covenant of Grace.²⁰ Edward Fisher seems to advocate this view in his book, *The Marrow of Modern Divinity*. He writes: “the moral law being delivered unto them with great terror, and under most dreadful penalties, they did find in themselves an impossibility of keeping it; and so were driven to seek help of a Mediator, even Jesus Christ, of whom Moses was to them a typical mediator; so that the moral law did drive them to the ceremonial law, which was their gospel, and their Christ in a figure; for that the ceremonies did prefigure Christ, direct unto him, and require faith in him, is a thing acknowledged and confessed by all men.”²¹*

¹⁹ Some holding to this view see the Covenant of Grace as beginning earlier, with Exodus 20:22. See following note.

²⁰ Vos (though not adhering to it) describes the Mixed View in this way: “[The Ten Commandments] are regarded as a form of a new covenant of works that God established with Israel. God did not establish it with the intent that by it Israel could earn life, for through sin that had become completely impossible. The aim was to allow them to attempt it in their own strength. In Egypt, they had lost the awareness of their impotence. This awareness had to be revived, and the new covenant of works served that end. ‘They were puffed up as it were with an absurd confidence in themselves and said, ‘All that the Lord has said we will do.’’ God then gives them the law. But when they saw the terrifying display of the smoking and burning mountain, of the dark cloud and the lightening, they soon perceived that they could not live by this covenant of works and therefore asked for Moses to be their mediator. In connection with the consciousness of guilt awakened in this way, God renewed with Israel the Abrahamic covenant of grace, as recorded in Exodus 24, to which the Levitical laws also belonged. ‘The Book of the Covenant’ [Exodus 20:22-23:33] was thus the summary of the covenant of grace, not the Decalogue engraved on stone tablets. In the ceremonial laws that were added later, the gospel element was resident.” (Vos, *Reformed Dogmatics*, V2, pp133-34). Thus, in this view, whereas the Moral Law is given as a covenant of works, the Book of the Covenant (Exodus 20:22-23:33) as well as the subsequent Ceremonial Laws outlined in Exodus 24ff are to be understood as the renewing of the Covenant of Grace. It thus seems that proponents of this view may either see the Covenant of Grace as beginning with the book of the law (Exodus 20:22) or with Exodus 24:1. For though Fisher himself (whom Vos may be quoting in his description, on p64 of *The Marrow*), at one point speaks of the Covenant of Grace beginning in Exodus 24 (see below), he also affirms in another place that it was precisely after the giving of the Law in Exodus 20 that the Lord renewed with them the Covenant of Grace: “Thus you see, when the Lord had, by means of the covenant of works made with Adam, humbled them, and made them sigh for Christ the promised Seed, he renewed the promise with them, yea, and the covenant of grace made with Abraham.” (p67). Interestingly, this is the opposite view of Cocceius and his followers, who subscribed to a three-fold understanding of the Covenant of Grace (1. *Before the law*: Adam to Moses; 2. *Under the law*: Moses to Christ; and 3. *After the law*: Christ), and viewed the Moral Law as gracious and the Ceremonial Law as what was burdensome: “Cocceius taught that the Decalogue was a summary of the covenant of grace, made especially applicable to Israel. However, after the establishment of this gracious covenant upon the ten words, when Israel became unfaithful and fell into worship of the golden calf and broke the covenant, then as punishment the legal covenant of ceremonial institutions was established, that is, the covenant of grace as a much more rigorous and harsher administration. The servitude of the law first appears after the worship of the golden calf. And the element of servitude is found in the ceremonial law; that of grace, on the other hand, in the law of the Ten Commandments. . . [Fisher’s view] is thus an opposite view from Cocceius and his school.” (Vos, *Reformed Dogmatics*).

²¹ Quote from *The Marrow*, p73. This is Fisher’s view and Vos’ description of the Mixed View (V2, pp133-34). Fisher writes: “the moral law did teach and show them what they should do, and so what they did not; and this made them go to the ceremonial law; and by that they were taught that Christ had done it for them; the which they believing, were made righteous by faith in him.” (pp73-75). The quotes *in and of themselves* are rich, beautiful and true; we would only disagree with where Fisher takes his conclusions. Fisher in fact does go on to declare that the old covenant at Sinai and the new covenant were indeed “in regard to substance. . . all one and the very same. . . [for] in these covenants Jesus Christ is the subject matter of both, salvation the fruit of both, and faith the condition of both.” (pp71-72). This immediately makes us think of Fisher as indeed a *Dichotomist*, viewing the Mosaic Covenant as in substance nothing different than the Covenant of Grace. But when Fisher declares that “in regard to substance, they were all one and the very same” (p71), it seems he is not speaking of the Mosaic Covenant as a whole (including also the Decalogue), but only of “their way of salvation, or covenant of grace, and ours;” that is, the portion of the mixed dispensation of the Mosaic Covenant that revealed the Covenant of Grace—not, it seems, the entire dispensation as a whole. This is so because it’s quite clear reading pp53-65 of *The Marrow* that Fisher views the Decalogue to be given as a renewal of the Covenant of Works: “*Ant*: But whether were the ten commandments, as they were delivered to them on Mount Sinai, the covenant of works, or no? *Evangelist*: They were delivered to them as the covenant of works.” (p53). And again: “And in Deut. 4:13, Moses, in express terms, calls it a covenant, saying, ‘And he declared unto you his covenant, which he commanded you to perform, even the ten commandments, and he wrote them upon tables of stone.’ Now, this was not the covenant of grace. . .” (p58). Further, when it is asked of Evangelist whether any godly and modern writers agree with him on this point, Fisher cites Mr. Pemble and Mr. Walker, both of whom, as we have referenced under the Republication View, clearly see Sinai as a Covenant of Works. Fisher quotes Walker as saying: “the first part of the covenant, which God made with Israel at Horeb, was nothing else but a renewing of the old covenant of works.” (p60). It was only then, after God had renewed the Covenant of Works with Israel through the Decalogue, and had humbled them, that the Lord “renewed the promises with them, yea, and the covenant of grace made with Abraham.” (p67). When it is asked, “I pray, sir, how doth it appear that the Lord renewed that covenant with them?” Evangelist answers: “It plainly appears in this, that the Lord gave them by Moses the Leviticus laws, and ordained the tabernacle, the ark, and the mercy-seat, which were all

UNDERSTANDING MIXED VIEW “A” (TYPE OF LAW)

SCRIPTURE	TYPE OF LAW	WHAT IT WAS
Exodus 20:1-17	The <i>Moral Law</i>	The Covenant of Works
Exodus 20:22 and following	The <i>Ceremonial Law</i>	The Covenant of Grace

2) *Other proponents of the Mixed View* have taught that the Covenant of Works and the Covenant of Grace are distinguished in the Mosaic Covenant by *the two separate occasions* on which the Law is given.²² *The first giving of the Law*, beginning in Exodus 20, and including both the Moral and Ceremonial laws, was given as a Covenant of Works, in that it came with thunder and lightening and threatenings, and required strict obedience. But even as Moses receives this Law on the mountain, the people break it (Exodus 32). When Moses saw what they had done, and shattered the two tables of the Law, it signified the breach of that Covenant. But *the second giving of the Law*, recorded in Exodus 34, is very different: this time the Law is given in the context of promises of pardon; no more terror or thunderings: “Now the Mediator Moses must prepare the tables, and bring them up to God, who would write therein the same words which were in the former. . . Now the Lord proclaims all his goodness before Moses, Exodus 34 for the support and encouragement of penitent sinners. Now Moses coming down, his face shined so gloriously, that he put a veil upon it to hide the curse of the law from the people . . . Thus [this time] the law was a Covenant of Grace, or subordinate to the Covenant of Grace.”²³

UNDERSTANDING MIXED VIEW “B” (GIVINGS OF THE LAW)

CATEGORY	SCRIPTURE	WHAT IT INCLUDED	WHAT IT WAS
<i>The 1st Giving</i> of the Law	Exodus 20ff	Both the Moral and Ceremonial Laws	The Covenant of Works
<i>The 2nd Giving</i> of the Law	Exodus 34ff		The Covenant of Grace

3) *Still others who have held to a Mixed View explain things differently* than the first two sub-positions articulated above. Instead of seeing the distinction between the Covenants of Works and Grace in the two separate *types* of the Law (Moral versus Ceremonial), or the two separate *givings* of the Law (Exodus 20 versus Exodus 34), they see the distinction as relating to the two separate *functions of the Law*.²⁴ In other words, they claim that the Covenant of Works and Covenant of Grace ran side by side in the

types of Christ. . .” (p67). This is also how Fairbairn understands Fisher (see *Revelation*, p156). Thus, it seems Fisher viewed the Mosaic Covenant as *mixed*—the Moral Law given as a Covenant of Works, the Ceremonial as the Covenant of Grace.

²² This is the understanding of John Ball and Francis Roberts of the Mixed View (though not the view they adhere to). It’s also how the OPC Report on Republication understands the Mixed View (5.II.B), as they also quote from both Roberts and Ball. Thomas Boston clearly propounds the next sub-position of the Mixed View (the distinction being mainly not in the giving of the Law but in *the function of the Law*), but does also seem to commend this sub-position to some degree in *The Marrow*, pp56-57. For more on this view, see Roberts, pp745-48; who follows Ball, *A Treatise of the Covenant*, pp96-102.

²³ Roberts, p746. That Moses’ veil served to hide the *true intent* (not the curse) of the Law is more likely (see the *Synopsis*).

²⁴ Such as Thomas Boston, who eagerly endorsed Fisher’s book, yet himself distinguishes his view as somewhat separate from Fisher’s in his footnotes in *The Marrow*, saying: “The transaction at Sinai or Horeb (for they are but one mountain) was a mixed dispensation; there was the promise or covenant of grace, and also the law; *the one a covenant to be believed, the other a covenant to be done*, and thus the apostle states the difference betwixt these two, Gal. 3:12. . .” (pp58-59). “[From the preface to the Decalogue] it is evident to me, that the covenant of grace was delivered to the Israelites on Mount Sinai. . . But that the covenant of works was also, for special ends, repeated and delivered to the Israelites on Mount Sinai, I cannot refuse. . . Wherefore I conceive the two covenants to have been both delivered on Mount Sinai to the Israelites. *First, the covenant of grace* made with Abraham, contained in the preface, repeated and promulgate there unto Israel, *to be believed* and embraced by faith, that they might be saved; to which were annexed the ten commandments, given by the Mediator Christ, the head of the covenant, *as a rule of life* to his covenant people. *Secondly, the covenant of works* made with Adam, contained in the same ten commands, delivered with thunderings and lightnings, the measure of which was afterwards cleared by Moses, describing the righteousness of the law and sanction thereof, repeated and promulgate to the Israelites there, *as the original perfect rule of righteousness, to be obeyed*; and yet were they no more bound hereby to seek righteousness by the law than the young man was by our Savior’s saying to him, Matt.19:17-18, ‘If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments – Thou shalt do no murder,’ etc. The latter was a repetition of the former. . . Thus there is no confounding of the two covenants of grace and works; but the latter was added to the former as subservient unto it, to turn their eyes toward the promise, or covenant of grace. . . Hence it appears that the covenant of grace was, both in itself, and in God’s intention, the principal part of the Sinai transaction; nevertheless, the covenant of works was the most conspicuous part of it, and lay most open to the view of the people. . . According to this account of the Sinai transaction, the ten commands there delivered, must come under a twofold notion or consideration; namely, as the law of Christ, and as the law of works. . .” (Notes on *The Marrow*, pp55-56).

Mosaic Covenant, much like a rail-road track. The difference didn't have to do with *what kind of Law was commanded*, or with *when the Law was delivered*—but rather with *how the Law functioned*. For *believers*, the Law functioned as a Covenant of Grace: it was given as the Law of Christ, to instruct God's redeemed people. In short, it said: *obey because you now live* (obey *from* life). But for *unbelievers*, the Law functioned as a Covenant of Works: it was given as a law of works, to convict those yet unrepentant of their sin and to drive them to Christ.²⁵ In short, it said: *obey in order to live* (obey *for* life).

UNDERSTANDING MIXED VIEW “C” (FUNCTION OF THE LAW)

FOR WHOM	CATEGORY	WHAT IT INCLUDED	WHAT IT WAS
<i>Believers</i>	Both the 1 st and the 2 nd Givings of the Law	Both the Moral and the Ceremonial Laws	The Covenant of Grace
<i>Unbelievers</i>			The Covenant of Works

B) Synopsis of View: There's a lot that's *commendable* about this view.²⁶ Those who hold this view are believers who are honestly grappling with what the Scriptures teach about Moses and the Law: how is it that Paul can tell the Corinthians that the Law is a ministry of condemnation and death that kills (2 Corinthians 3) on the one hand, and yet write to the same church, teaching that all those who were in the wilderness with Moses “ate the same spiritual food; and drank the same spiritual drink, for they were drinking from a spiritual rock which followed them; and the rock was Christ” (1 Corinthians 10:3-4)? How is it that Scripture tells us in Galatians 3 that “the Law is not of faith” because it operates on a principle contrary to the gospel; namely, *the one who obeys will live*; and yet we read in Hebrews that those with Moses in the wilderness had *the gospel* preached to them?⁹ This isn't an easy thing to figure out. So, it's commendable that those holding this view are grappling with Scripture in an honest way.²⁷

And again, our purpose here is not to give an exhaustive critique. We'll interact with more of the particulars later under View 4. But for now, we could respond to this view by noting the following:

1) *First, Scripture always uses the singular tense to refer to the covenant that God made at Mount Sinai.* When Scripture speaks of the covenant God made with Israel at Sinai, it always refers to it as *covenant* (not *covenants*); it's always in the singular tense, not the plural: “The Lord our God made a covenant with us at Horeb.” (Deuteronomy 5:2).²⁸ So, the Mosaic Covenant can't be two separate covenants.

2) *Secondly, the two-fold time-table (articulated in the first two sub-views) doesn't quite work.* *First of all*, it's not true to say that there was no grace until Exodus 34 (with the second giving of the Law), because: a) the people were sprinkled with blood in Exodus 24, a type of Christ's sacrifice; and b) the Ceremonial Laws of Exodus 24-31 all foreshadowed gospel mercies that would be fulfilled in Christ. These were all given *before* Moses came down from the mountain and shattered the two tablets.²⁹ *Secondly*, it's not true

²⁵ Boston doesn't explicitly say that the Covenant of Grace aspect was *for believers* and the Covenant of Works aspect was *for unbelievers*, but this is implied. He does say that the Covenant of Grace was indeed given “as a rule of life *to his covenant people*” (p56), which one can only assume means believers. And he says in the same place that the Covenant of Works was given “to the Israelites there,” likening the function of this aspect of the Law to Christ's dealings with the rich young ruler, explaining, “yet were they no more bound hereby to seek righteousness by the law than [that young man],” whom we deem yet unbelieving, for which reason our Savior sought to first show him his sin to bring him to repentance. Boston also states on the next page that God “repeated, or gave a new edition of the law, and that, as a Covenant of Works, for their humbling and conviction; *and so do his ministers preach the law to unconverted sinners still*, that they who 'desire to be under the law may hear what the law says,' Galatians 4:21.” (p57). And John Ball, in describing the Mixed View, says that those who hold this view assert that: “the first [Covenant of Works] is propounded *to all mankind*, this [Covenant of Grace] *to the Church*.” (p96).

²⁶ Though we have, in accordance with the great majority of early taxonomies, separated the Mixed View from the Majority view, it is quite noteworthy that John Ball—so influential in formulating what the Westminster standards articulate about the relation of the old covenant to the new—actually classifies the Mixed View side by side with (or perhaps under) the Majority View, declaring both views to be acceptable ways of understanding Sinai as being “one in substance and kind, to differ only in degrees” from the Covenant of Grace (pp95-96ff). So, according to Ball, the divines who see the Mosaic Covenant as being one in substance with the Covenant of Grace, solve the evident differences between the old and new covenants *in two distinct ways*: the first way he propounds is the Majority view—but the second is the Mixed view (Version B; see Ball, pp95-96ff).

²⁷ Indeed, to not grapple with this biblical tension is to not give due weight to everything the Scriptures teach about the Law.

²⁸ See also Exodus 19:5; 24:7-8; Leviticus 26:9, 15; 25, 44, 45; Deuteronomy 4:13, 23; 5:2-3; 17:2; 29:1, 21, 25; 31:16, 20; Jeremiah 11:3-5; 31:31-32; Hebrews 8:9. See Roberts, p746. Vos also notes this in his *Reformed Dogmatics*.

²⁹ In Exodus 32:19. Further, in addressing the Mixed View that distinguishes the Covenant of Works from the Covenant of Grace by the two separate occasions in which the Law was given (Exodus 20 versus Exodus 34), we might also point out that

to say that there was no grace until Exodus 24 (with the giving of the Ceremonial Laws), because the Ceremonial Laws actually began before Exodus 24.³⁰ *Third*, even if it's claimed that the Covenant of Grace began right after the Israelites pled for mercy in Exodus 20:18, it doesn't work to say that the 10 Commandments were given as a Covenant of Works, because: a) in the preface to the 10 Commandments, God both tells Israel that He is "the Lord *their* God," (20:2); and recounts how He had redeemed them from Egypt, a picture of our redemption in Christ; and b) even within the 10 Commandments themselves, gospel mercies are promised: the 2nd commandment tells us that God is a God who shows "lovingkindness to thousands" (20:6);³¹ and in Ephesians 6:2, Paul refers back to the promise of the 5th commandment (20:12) as a promise for Christians; that is, a *gospel* promise.³²

3) *Lastly*, it might eliminate a lot of confusion to point out that declaring the requirements of God's Law isn't the same thing as bringing people under a Covenant of Works. Fisher (of Mixed View A) and Boston (of Mixed View C) both quote Jesus' interaction with the rich young ruler to defend their

it's not true that Moses' veil served to hide the curse of the Law. This is how some have understood Moses' veil who take the Covenant of Grace as beginning in Exodus 34. But if we study Paul's words in 2 Corinthians 3, we find that the purpose of Moses' veil was actually *not* to hide the *curse* of the Law. The purpose of his veil was either, 1) to hide *the true intent* of the Law on the one hand, or, 2) to hide *the transient nature* of the Law on the other (v13). The **FIRST** way to interpret this verse takes "what was fading away" as Moses' ministry of Law and "the end" of what was fading away as Christ, who is the true end of the Law (Romans 10:4); making the verse read that *Moses' veil served to hide the true intent or scope of his ministry*, namely, Christ, the end of the Law. So, in this case, Paul says nothing about "veiling the *curse* of the Law from them, which would have been a mercy; but of veiling the *end and scope* of the Law from them, which was a great judgment upon them." (Roberts, p748). Burgess says: "the carnal Israelites did not behold Christ in the ministry of Moses. . . as the veil upon Moses covered the glory of his face, so the veil of blindness and stupidity, upon the heart of the Jews does hinder them from the glory of the Law, which was Christ." (*Vindication of the Law*, pp268-69). Pink explains, "Israel was unable to discern the deep significance of the ministry of Moses, the purpose of God behind it, that which all the types and shadows pointed forward to. The 'end' of 2 Corinthians 3:13: is parallel with Romans 10:4. 'For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.'" The **SECOND** way to interpret this verse is to likewise take "what was fading away" as Moses' ministry of Law but "the end" of what was fading away as the transient nature of that ministry; making the verse read that *Moses' veil served to hide the transitory nature of his ministry*. In this case, "the Jews misunderstood the nature of their own economy, regarding as ultimate and permanent what was in fact preparatory and temporary." (Hodge, *2 Corinthians*). In other words, they failed to understand that the old covenant was fading away in order to make room for the new; that in the fullness of time, the husk of the old covenant would be peeled away in order to extract the true kernel; Christ. Either way, Moses veiling his face was not a good thing for Israel. Either it hid from them *the true scope of the old covenant*, which was Christ and the new covenant (Romans 10:4); or, it hid from them *the transitory nature of the old covenant*, which would make way for Christ and the new covenant. So in either interpretation, Moses' veil served to hide from Israel gospel realities: the veil did not hide from Israel *the curse of the Law*; but rather it hid from them *the mystery of Christ*; functioning, it seems, in a very similar way as did Christ's parables, "so that while seeing, they may see and not perceive, and while hearing, they may hear and not understand, otherwise they might return and be forgiven." (Mark 4:12). For more on Moses' veil, see Ball's extended reasoning, pp98-100.

³⁰ Some of the first commands that God gives after the 10 Commands have to do with constructing a proper altar to offer sacrifices of atonement (Exodus 20:24-26; cf. Exodus 23:14-18). *We could also add a few other reasons* here for not seeing the Covenant of Grace as beginning in Exodus 24: *First*, just as we see grace *before* Exodus 24; we also see the legal strictness that many would attribute to a Covenant of Works principle *after* Exodus 24: Moses seems to deal just as strictly with Israel in smashing the two tablets as He does in first giving them the 10 Commandments. Yet, in this view, Moses smashing the two tablets of the Law (in Exodus 32:19) would actually fit into the time-table of the Covenant of Grace, which had begun back in Exodus 24. *Further*, according to the proponents of this view, the whole reason that God gave Israel the Law as a Covenant of Works the first time was that they were so puffed up with pride, thinking they could keep the Law. He gave them the Law therefore to break and humble them of their pride, and only after they were humbled did He renew the Covenant of Grace with them. But if the Covenant of Grace is renewed in Exodus 24, this theory doesn't fit at all, because the people do not only respond in Exodus 19:8 by telling God that they will indeed do all that He commanded them by keeping His Law (and so to humble them, God gives them the Law in Exodus 20); but they also respond in exactly the same way (actually, twice; vv3,7) in Exodus 24. So if the whole point of God giving them the Law as a Covenant of Works in Exodus 20 was to humble them for their arrogant response in Exodus 19, how can we say that God then renewed the Covenant of Grace in Exodus 24 with a now broken and humbled people, when in that very chapter the people respond to God in exactly the same way they did before?

³¹ Lovingkindness is not something that God lavishes out in the Covenant of Works; otherwise work is no longer work.

³² Further, the two-fold timetable for the first two sub-views doesn't quite work, because just as there is grace from the very beginning of the Mosaic Covenant, there is also the strictest demand for works until the very end. Remember, both of the first two positions of the Mixed View ultimately make the claim that there was at first a Covenant of Works given to Israel (whether it was limited to the Moral Law of the Decalogue, or up until the second giving of the Law), but after Israel was humbled for their sin, the rest of the Mosaic Covenant falls into the category of a Covenant of Grace. But when Paul quotes verses from the Law to show that the system of the Law (do and live) was a completely contrary system to that of the gospel (believe and live), the verses he quoted were from the end of Leviticus and Deuteronomy. In other words, the strongest Scriptural proof for taking the Law as, at least in part, given as a Covenant of Works, are not grounded in Scriptural quotations from the Moral Law (Mixed View A), nor in any Scripture references coming before Exodus 34 (Mixed View B), but rather from places in Scripture that would have been viewed by proponents of both Mixed Views A and B as being part of the Covenant of Grace.

positions.³³ The man asks what he must do to inherit eternal life, and Jesus responds by quoting from the 10 Commandments. The reason Jesus did this was to expose to this man just how much of a law-breaker he really was, in order to drive him to seek salvation by grace alone. This is, indeed, one of the chief purposes of the Law, to expose our sin—to show us just how sinful we really are. So far, so good. But when Jesus used the Law this way, He wasn't putting anyone under the Covenant of Works. Jesus was exposing the sin of this man, yes; but that's not the same thing as saying that Jesus was putting this man temporarily under the/a Covenant of Works in order to bring him into the Covenant of Grace. Faithful pastors will preach on the 10 Commandments. But when they do so they're not putting their congregations temporarily under the Covenant of Works. They're merely expounding God's Law.³⁴

FINAL SUMMARY OF THE 3 SUB-POSITIONS OF THE MIXED VIEW

VIEWS	HOW DISTINGUISHED	THE COVENANT OF WORKS	THE COVENANT OF GRACE
MIXED VIEW A	The <i>Type</i> of Law	The Moral Law	The Ceremonial Law
MIXED VIEW B	The <i>Giving</i> of the Law	The 1 st Giving of the Law	The 2 nd Giving of the Law
MIXED VIEW C	The <i>Function</i> of the Law	Functioned in this way for unbelievers	Functioned in this way for believers

3. The THIRD View: The Mosaic Covenant was given as a SUBSERVIENT COVENANT

A) Summary of View: Another way of viewing God's dealings with Israel under Moses is by seeing them through the lens of what has been called a *subservient* covenant. According to this view, the Mosaic Covenant is neither a renewal of the Covenant of Works *nor* a manifestation of the Covenant of Grace. It is argued that when we compare the Mosaic Covenant with both the Covenant of Works and the Covenant of Grace, we find that it is something that seems to be distinct from both of them. The Mosaic Covenant has similarities with both the Covenant of Works and the Covenant of Grace, but there are also, it is said, irreconcilable differences.³⁵ The covenant under Moses at Sinai seems to be something

Later we'll deal with these Scriptures at length and how we might understand them; but this is surely a noteworthy observation.

³³ Boston in *The Marrow* (p56); Fisher likewise in *The Marrow* describes God's dealings with Israel at Sinai in this way: "Therefore it was needful that the Lord should deal with them after such a manner to drive them out of themselves, and from all confidence in the works of the law; that so, by faith in Christ, they might obtain righteousness and life. And just so did our Savior also deal with that young expounder of the law, Matthew 19:16, who it seems, was sick of the same disease" (pp64-65). We might add that it wasn't only proponents of the Mixed View that cited the Lord's dealings with the rich young ruler as the pattern and purpose of the Law. Bolton, a proponent of the Subservient view cites the same passage in order to explain his view of the Law's function (p107). And proponents of the Majority View cite the same text as well (cf. Strong, pp28-29).

³⁴ Thomas Blake's words are especially helpful in light of Boston's position: "What this [Mosaic] covenant is to any, that it is to all, whether it be of works or of grace; *what it is itself in the tender and terms of it, that is the denomination* [IE, nature] *of it*. This is plain. Mens faith or unbelief, mens obedience or transgression, cannot diversify the nature of that which God does tender; and what God spoke to the people, he spoke to all the people, the same to all, that he spoke to any (Exodus 19:25 with 20:18), *and therefore that is a mistake in some that say, that the Law is doubtless a pure Covenant of Works to some men, but not to all; [that] it is a Covenant of Works occasionally and accidentally. . .[For] The Covenant of Grace and the Covenant of Works are two distinct and opposite species. . .Therefore as an ox can by no occasion or accident, be a horse, or a horse a sheep, or a sheep a lion, or a lion a man, so a Covenant of Grace, can by no occasion or accident be a Covenant of Works; one and the same thing intended for one end, may occasionally and accidentally have another event* [IE, effect]. . .*but no occasion or accident can change the nature of any thing, into that which is of a kind opposite to it, and different from it*" (Blake, p213). We must remember though, that Boston was an earlier pioneer and didn't have the luxury of reading carefully constructed taxonomies of Sinai and selecting the one he liked the best—he was a lone soldier on the front lines, doing his best to sort through these issues as best he could. Besides—and this is of note—semantics alone may indeed account for much of the reason we've put him in with the Mixed View rather than the Majority View. This is all the more true of Fisher, who wrote *The Marrow* in 1645, just as many other writings started appearing on the covenants. Especially for Fisher, it could well have been that his terminology simply wasn't as nuanced yet. I love Boston and Fisher and read them both with absolute pleasure.

³⁵ *This view holds that the Mosaic Covenant differs from the Covenant of Works in the following ways:* a) the covenant of nature [IE, works] was made with all men, the subservient covenant with the Israelites alone; b) the covenant of nature brings us to Christ, not directly but indirectly. . .But God ordained the subservient for no other end than that man, being convinced of his weakness and impotency, might fly to Christ; c) the covenant of nature was to be eternal, but this subservient covenant was but temporary; d) the covenant of nature was engraved in the heart, but the other was written on tables of stone; e) the covenant of nature was made with Adam in Paradise, but the subservient covenant at Mount Sinai; f) the covenant of nature had no mediator; the subservient covenant had Moses for a mediator; g) the covenant of nature obliged only to obedience due by the law of nature; the other bound also to ceremonies; h) the one covenant was made with man created and perfect, the other with a part of mankind sinful and fallen (see Bolton, pp95-96; Roberts, p749; Ball, pp93-94). *Further, this view holds that the Mosaic Covenant differs from the Covenant of Grace in the following ways:* a) in this covenant, God merely reproves sin and approves righteousness, but the in the Covenant of Grace, He pardons sin and renews man in righteousness; b) this

that doesn't quite belong either to the Covenant of Works *or* the Covenant of Grace, and, in the words of Samuel Bolton, "If it be neither a covenant of works, nor a covenant of grace, then must it of necessity be a third kind of covenant. . . Hence it is called a subservient covenant."³⁶ It's something distinct from both of them; a third covenant, that is both *subservient to* and *preparatory for* the Covenant of Grace.³⁷

This view is also called the *Trichotomist* view because its proponents have a *three-fold understanding* of God's covenant dealings. According to John Cameron, who is credited with first articulating this view, "there is one covenant of nature [IE, works], one of grace, and one subservient to the covenant of grace (which in Scripture is called the 'old covenant'). . ."³⁸ This contrasts the *Dichotomist* view, which sees God's covenant dealings as simply two-fold: 1) the Covenant of Works and 2) the Covenant of Grace.

According to this view, the *requirement* of the covenant under Moses was essentially the same as that of the Covenant of Works; namely, *Do this and live*: "God required obedience from the Israelites. . . Blessings in the possession of Canaan were promised to obedience, and curses and miseries to those who broke the covenant. . ."³⁹ So then, what God required of Israel under Moses was *not* a gospel obedience (the obedience of faith), but *rather* a perfect legal obedience (as with the Covenant of Works). This is significant. In the Covenant of Grace, God requires faith apart from works, but in this covenant God was requiring *works apart from faith*: "Sincere, gospel obedience was not acceptable in this covenant."⁴⁰

However, this view has a unique understanding of the *promises and threatenings* that God declared to Israel in case of obedience or disobedience. Adherents of the Subservient View argue that the blessings and curses proclaimed at Sinai had nothing to do with the eternal state—they actually referred solely to temporal blessings and curses that Israel would incur in the land of Canaan: "it was temporary, and had respect to Canaan and God's blessing there, if and as Israel obeyed. It had no relation to heaven. . ."⁴¹ In other words, God related to His people under Moses differently in spiritual matters than He did in temporal ones. While God dealt with His people Israel according to grace when it came to their eternal salvation, He dealt with them according to their works when it came to their temporal life in the land of promise. Spiritual blessings or curses were based on God's grace, but temporal blessings or curses in Canaan were based on Israel's obedience. Though keeping the Law could never be the basis of Israel's inheriting eternal blessing, it was in fact the sole basis of their maintaining temporal blessing.⁴²

covenant says "Do this and live" but the Covenant of Grace "Believe and live"; c) this covenant was added after God had established the Covenant of Grace; d) this covenant merely restrains from sin, but the Covenant of Grace inclines the sinner; e) this covenant brings sinners to Christ indirectly, but the Covenant of Grace does so directly; f) this covenant is a symbol of the Jewish church, the Covenant of Grace of the universal Church; g) this covenant's mediator was Moses, the mediator of the Covenant of Grace is Christ; h) this covenant contained the spirit of bondage, the Covenant of Grace the spirit of adoption; i) this covenant was a means to an end, the Covenant of Grace was the end itself; j) this covenant terrified the conscience, the Covenant of Grace comforts it; k) this covenant addressed to sleeping sinners; the Covenant of Grace to awakened sinners; l) this covenant merely shows the way to worship, the Covenant of Grace ushers in worship; m) this covenant contained decrees against us, the Covenant of Grace an easy yoke; n) this covenant was given from Mt. Sinai, the Covenant of Grace from Mt. Zion; o) This covenant excluded Gentiles, the Covenant of Grace includes them; p) This covenant looks to life in Canaan, the Covenant of Grace to life in eternal glory (see Bolton, p97; cf. Roberts, pp749-50 and Ball, pp94-95 who do not hold to view).

³⁶ *The True Bounds of Christian Freedom*, p99. Samuel Bolton was a main proponent of the Subservient View.

³⁷ As we noted earlier, this is in some ways the opposite of the Mixed Covenant View. According to that view, the Mosaic Covenant comprised both the Covenant of Works and the Covenant of Grace (it was *both/and*). Here it is *neither/nor*.

³⁸ Quote from Beeke, *Puritan Theology*. Roberts follows this understanding in his description of this view, dividing it between 1) a covenant of nature [works] with man in innocency; 2) a covenant of grace with man lapsed; and 3) a subservient covenant which is called in Scripture the Old Covenant (p748). This is a separate view than the view of Cocceius, which is also at times referred to as Trichotomist. Vos calls Cocceius' view a trichotomy, describing his 3-fold view in this way: 1) From Adam to Moses: *before the law*; 2) from Moses to Christ: *under the law*; and 3) after Christ: *after the law* (V2, pp132-33). Witsius refers to the same view, also calling it a trichotomy: "*First: Under the Promise* and before the law, which they contend to have been a promise of mere grace and liberty, without any yoke, or burden of an accusing law; *Secondly: Under the law*, where they will have the Old Testament begin; *Thirdly: Under the gospel*, where the New begins." (V1, p317). The difference is that the Subservient view has a 3-fold understanding of *God's covenant dealings in general*, whereas Cocceius' view has a 3-fold understanding of *the Covenant of Grace in particular*. They are thus both trichotomist (3-fold), but in different respects.

³⁹ Samuel Bolton, *True Bounds*, p95.

⁴⁰ Patrick Ramsey, p9. He goes on: "Israel was to obey for the blessings and 'not trust and obey. . ." He quotes Samuel Annesley who says: "their legal covenant neither admitted of faith in the Redeemer, nor repentance of sin. . . But to speak of the legal promises as legal, so they are of temporal good things; and they were made to works, not to faith." (p9, cf. pp4,10). As Bolton says: "the old covenant runs, 'Do this and live'. . . the new, 'Believe, and thou shalt be saved.'" (*True Bounds*, p97).

⁴¹ *True Bounds*, p99, cf. also p95.

⁴² For more, see Ramsey, *In Defense of Moses*, pp3, 6-10. A question arises here: "If retaining temporal blessings in Canaan

UNDERSTANDING THE SUBSERVIENT COVENANT

COVENANT	WHAT WAS REQUIRED	WHAT WAS PROMISED
THE COVENANT OF GRACE	Faith alone apart from works	Eternal and temporal blessings
THE SUBSERVIENT COVENANT	Works alone apart from faith	Only temporal blessings in Canaan

According to this view, the reason the subservient covenant was given to Israel was to make them long for the gospel freedom that would be ushered in with the New Covenant. Because such strict obedience was required of Israel, and because no strength was provided under the Law to meet those requirements, this covenant functioned to expose their sin and their inability to keep God's Law. And indeed, this was its very purpose. As one put it: "God made this Covenant with the people Israel at Mount Sinai, to prepare them unto the faith, and to inflame them with desire of the promise and evangelical covenant (which otherwise had languished in their minds) and to restrain them from sin as with a bridle, till the time that he should send the Spirit of adoption into [their] hearts, and should govern them by the Law of liberty."⁴³

was contingent on perfect obedience, and Israel in truth began breaking this covenant from the day of its conception, then why was it that they were not immediately cast out of the land?" According to Ramsey, this question was answered by proponents of the Subservient view in two ways: 1) Bolton answered in this way: "When [Israel] had broken [the Subservient Covenant], they were not to think the case hopeless, but had liberty of appeal from the law to the Gospel, from God's justice offended to God's mercy pardoning and covering their sin, as we find the people frequently doing when they implored mercy and pardon for His Name's sake: 'For thy name's sake forgive, and for thy name's sake cover our transgressions'; under which expressions Christ was darkly foreshadowed" (*True Bounds*, p98). 2) John Owen wrote that "God reserved the right not to pour out the full measure of the curses upon Israel until His great end was accomplished." (Ramsey, p9; cf. Owen from his *Works*, 22:84).

⁴³ Quote from Roberts, p748; see also Ball, p93; both are describing Bolton, *The True Bounds of Christian Freedom*, p95. It seems necessary here to add a brief *Addendum* about the views of Meredith Kline and his followers: **I. THE KLINIAN VIEW.** A modern hybrid of the Subservient view is the view set forth by Meredith Kline, articulated also by Michael Horton, Mark Karlberg, and others. We'll classify it as the "Klinian" view here. It is a bit tricky to classify since it doesn't fit exactly into any of the classical four positions on the Mosaic Covenant. It is often simply referred to as "Republication," but it does not in fact align much with traditional Republication, most notably since many of its proponents claim that the Mosaic Covenant was indeed also part of the Covenant of Grace, which traditional Republication never affirmed. It could also be confused with the Mixed view, since most proponents affirm that the Mosaic Covenant was, in a real sense, part of the Covenant of Grace, but "in some sense" also a renewal of the Covenant of Works. But Patrick Ramsey in his article, *In Defense of Moses*, argues convincingly that Kline's view coincides most closely with the traditional Subservient view, articulated by John Cameron and Samuel Bolton. In particular, he points out that the traditional Subservient View agrees with the present views of Kline and Karlberg in at least six ways: "1) The way of eternal salvation has been the same throughout the history of redemption, that is, by means of the Covenant of Grace. 2) The blessings and curses of the Mosaic Covenant refer to temporal blessings in the land of Canaan. 3) The Mosaic Covenant is distinct from the Abrahamic and New Covenants. 4) The Mosaic Covenant is distinct from the Covenant of Works and Covenant of Grace. 5) The condition of the Mosaic Covenant is works apart from faith in Christ. 6) The Mosaic Covenant was designed to lead people to Christ by exposing their sin." Most notably, for Kline, the Mosaic Covenant is divided into two distinct spheres, just as it is in the Subservient view: *eternal blessing* was obtained only by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone, but *temporal blessing* in the land was retained by merited legal obedience. Thus, Kline's view closely parallels the Subservient view in its understanding of both: 1) *the NATURE of the Mosaic Covenant* (that it's gracious as it relates to eternal blessings but meritorious as it relates to temporal blessings); and 2) *the REQUIREMENTS of the Mosaic Covenant* (faith for the eternal but works for the temporal). Kline also follows the idea in the Subservient view that the obedience which God required of His people to retain the temporal blessings was a legal obedience (as opposed to gospel obedience: IE, to obey rather than to trust and obey). Though very similar, the Klinian view does also part with the traditional Subservient view in two notable ways: 1) in the Klinian view, *imperfect* legal obedience is acceptable to merit temporal blessings in the land, whereas in the traditional Subservient view *perfect* obedience was necessary; and 2) for Kline, one major reason why God dealt with Israel according to a system of merit was in order to fore-picture the merit Christ would earn on behalf of His people. **II. THE SCRIPTURAL SUPPORT FOR KLINIAN VIEW.** Ramsey summarizes the biblical support given for the Klinian view in the following way: "1) Leviticus 18:5 (see also Ezek. 20:11; Luke 10:28; Rom. 10:5; Gal. 3:12) teaches that the blessings of God are obtained on the basis of obedience (IE, the works-inheritance principle). 2) The Babylonian exile is evidence that Israel was under a works-inheritance principle. 3) 2 Corinthians 3 can only be explained by the works-inheritance principle. 4) Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 26-28 set forth the blessings and curses of the Mosaic Covenant, which indicate that Israel was under a works-inheritance principle." (cf. p6). **III. THE HISTORY BEHIND KLINIAN VIEW.** The recent publication entitled *Merit and Moses* has given us a very helpful background to the formulation of the Klinian view. In many ways it was a reaction to the views of Norman Shepherd, who has come to be aligned with the Federal Vision movement. Shepherd took over after John Murray and taught at WTS Philadelphia from 1963-1982. Controversy arose over Shepherd's teaching, and he was dismissed as a result in 1982. In short, Shepherd: 1) rejected the "works" principle of the Covenant of Works, thus denying the essential distinction between the Covenant of Works and the Covenant of Grace as outlined in the Westminster standards; leading to his next distinctive, that he 2) embraced *covenant faithfulness* as the condition God required in every covenant (both the Covenant of Works and Grace), blending the obedience required in the Covenant of Works with the faith required in the Covenant of Grace into a single condition (which, incidentally, was probably a result of confusing the requirement of the covenant head with the requirement of the covenant members), leading to the doctrine that fallen covenant-keeping was the

B) Synopsis of View: As we begin a synopsis, let's remember that there have been godly men who have held to this view for commendable reasons.⁴⁴ That isn't to say we believe it's right (or even compatible with the Westminster standards).⁴⁵ But it is to say that we don't have the right to demonize a particular view or those who held to it simply because we don't agree with it.⁴⁶ Remember, there were many good men within the Reformed tradition who differed in their views on the Mosaic Covenant. Having said that, we respectfully disagree with those who hold to a Subservient covenant for the following reasons:

1) *First, the idea of the Subservient covenant doesn't fit with Scripture.* It obscures the biblical simplicity of God's dealings with man: that the Lord first entered into a *Covenant of Works* with *man perfect*; but when Adam failed, He entered into *the Covenant of Grace* with *man lapsed*, under which, in turn, each stage in the Covenant of Grace (including Sinai) builds upon the former in perfect unity.⁴⁷ It's also baffling why a covenant besides these two is so necessary. To insist there was a need for a Subservient covenant makes it seem as if there is something inherently defective in the Covenant of Grace.

2) *Secondly, the condition of the Subservient covenant doesn't fit with Scripture.* Several passages of Scripture make it very clear that the obedience God required of Israel was gospel (not legal) obedience. As just one example among many, Moses exhorts the people in Deuteronomy 10:16: "So circumcise your heart, and stiffen your neck no longer." This is *gospel* (not legal) obedience. Further, it can't be true that God gave separate requirements for Israel based on whether the blessings promised were eternal (IE, by faith) or temporal (IE, by merit), because there are passages in the Law that promise *both* eternal *and* temporal blessings and require *the same thing* for obtaining them both.⁴⁸ Besides, these two

way to inherit eternal life; which in turn, led to his third distinctive, that he 3) denied the imputation of the active obedience of Christ, a doctrine so foundational to the Reformed understanding of justification. Kline overlapped with Shepherd at WTS, and it was in fierce reaction to Shepherd's views, and in earnest desire to preserve the distinctives Shepherd had rejected, that Kline began to formulate a particular view of Scripture that not only preserved a works-merit principle of the Covenant of Works, but further solidified that principle by seeing it reaffirmed and renewed once again at Sinai in the Mosaic Covenant.

⁴⁴ Remember: Samuel Bolton, Jeremiah Burroughs, Thomas Goodwin, and John Owen all held to this view in some degree.

⁴⁵ The question boils down to: *Is the covenant at Sinai simply another administration of the Covenant of Grace?* The Westminster standards answer this question in the affirmative: "There are not therefore two covenants of grace, differing in substance, but one and the same, under various dispensations." (WCF 7:6). But proponents of the Subservient view often answer in the negative, speaking of the covenant at Sinai as something being "different in substance" from the Covenant of Grace. Owen says it was "a distinct covenant, and not a mere administration of the covenant of grace." (Works, 22:17; cited from Ramsey, p11). It's also noteworthy what John Ball had to say. B.B. Warfield wrote of Ball that "no one was probably more highly esteemed as a judicious divine by the fathers of the [Westminster] Assembly" (cf. Ramsey, p12). With that in mind, it's significant what Ball writes of the Subservient view: "by this explication it appears, the Divines of this opinion [IE, the Subservient view], *make the old Covenant differ from the new in substance, and kind, and not in degree of manifestation*, as also did the former [IE, the Republication view]. [Whereas] Most Divines hold the old and new Covenant to be one in substance and kind, to differ only in degrees" (Ball, p95). Even the adherents of the Subservient view themselves made it clear that they don't see Sinai as being one in substance with the Covenant of Grace. Samuel Bolton clearly contrasts his view with the view that sees Sinai as "the same covenant in respect of its nature and design under which we stand under the Gospel. . . [which] differed not in substance from the covenant of grace, but in degree. . . [so that] the new and old covenants. . . are both of them really covenants of grace, only differing in their administrations." (*True Bounds*, pp99-100). For this reason the OPC Report states: "It seems clear that proponents of the subservient covenant view did not view themselves as advocating a version of View 4 outlined below (i.e., that the Mosaic covenant is in substance a covenant of grace with a unique administration). . . Assembly member Samuel Bolton distinguishes the subservient covenant view from the idea that the Mosaic covenant was in substance a covenant of grace. . . Bolton saw the idea that the Mosaic covenant was in substance a covenant of grace (which he elsewhere identifies as the majority view) as categorically and taxonomically distinct from his own." (see Chapter 5, II, C).

⁴⁶ Though there were disagreements among the Puritans about the nature of the Mosaic Covenant, the early proponents of these views held respect for one another. In speaking of differing views—views they would go on to critique—the early Puritans often began by referring to them as other views held by "orthodox divines" (Boston) or "the learned" (Burgess). Today some of us are far too quick to brand as heretical views that were actually associated with the early Reformed tradition.

⁴⁷ Roberts puts it this way: "But this opinion setting forth, first the Covenant of Nature with perfect man, then the Covenant of Grace with lapsed man, then the Covenant Subservient as a Covenant of Works, and last of all the Covenant of Grace again in these latter days; obscures the Lord's dispensations which are clear, and disorders them that are orderly, as if the Lord did do, and undo, went backward and forward, in his federal administrations." (*The Mystery and Marrow of Modern Divinity*, p751).

⁴⁸ See for example Deuteronomy 30:15-20, where both "life" (the eternal) and "prosperity" (the temporal) as well as death (the eternal) and adversity (the temporal) are set before Israel. Notice that there are not separate requirements given to obtain eternal blessings on the one hand (IE, by faith) or temporal blessings on the other (IE, by merit). Rather, God gives Israel the same command; namely, to love Him and walk in His ways and keep His commandments; which would in turn result in *both* eternal blessing ("that you may live...") *and* temporal blessing ("...and multiply, and that the Lord your God may bless you in the land where you are entering to possess," v16). Deuteronomy 7:12-16 is even clearer, where Israel's listening and doing

principles of grace received (on the one hand) and merit achieved (on the other) are so opposed to one another that Jesus' words seem likewise fitting here: A house divided against itself cannot stand.⁴⁹

3) *Thirdly, the evidence for the Subservient covenant doesn't fit with Scripture.* Some of the classical proofs put forward by Samuel Bolton and others for the Subservient view simply don't hold up to close biblical scrutiny. For example: 1) It's said that God in this Subservient Covenant only *reproves* sin and *approves* righteousness, whereas in the Covenant of Grace He actually *pardons* sin and *renews* man in righteousness. But when we examine Scripture, we find that this simply isn't true. We see God explicitly pardoning sins throughout His dealings with Israel under Moses, both through the provision of the sacrifices, as well as in the declaration of Exodus 34:6-7, that He “forgives iniquity, transgression and sin. . .” Again: 2) It's said that the covenant at Sinai only terrified the conscience while the Covenant of Grace comforts it; but Scripture teaches us that there is both comfort at Sinai as well as terror in the Covenant of Grace. On the one hand, Deuteronomy is full of gospel comforts like 7:6: “For you are a holy people to the Lord your God; the Lord your God has chosen you to be a people for His own possession”, and on the other hand, the teaching of the New Testament (including that of Christ himself) is filled with sober warnings of failing to enter the kingdom of God (Hebrews 6:4-8; 10:26-31; 12:25).⁵⁰

4. The FOURTH View: The Mosaic Covenant was given as part of the COVENANT OF GRACE

Summary of View: The final way of understanding God's dealings with Israel under Moses is that it was simply another manifestation of the Covenant of Grace. This is the way that the majority of the Puritans understood the Mosaic Covenant,⁵¹ and the view articulated in the Westminster Confession of Faith.⁵²

what the Lord says results in both 1) the Lord keeping with them His lovingkindness which He swore to their fathers, *as well as* 2) all manner of physical and temporal blessings. So then, at times Scripture binds together *both* the eternal *and* temporal blessings and annexes to them *the very same requirement* (rather than separating them and annexing opposing requirements).

⁴⁹ Scripture at times beckons us to think of our heavenly father by comparing the best of earthly fathers. To have an earthly father who in the same sentence tells his son he loves him no matter what, and yet threatens to throw him out of his house (removing all temporal care) for the slightest mistake, seems not a fitting picture of our heavenly father's care for His children.

⁵⁰ A few more: C) *The covenant at Sinai excluded Gentiles while the Covenant of Grace includes them:* But it's not true to say that the covenant at Sinai excluded Gentiles, for among other passages, Numbers 15:14-16 makes it undeniably clear that believing Gentiles were no less included in the covenant: “There is to be one law and one ordinance for you and for the alien who sojourns with you.” (cf. 15:29; Exodus 12:48-49). D) *This covenant looks to life in Canaan, the Covenant of Grace in eternal glory:* But how can it be explained or proven that Canaan pointed to eternal glory in the Abrahamic Covenant, but only to earthly and temporal things in the Mosaic Covenant? There is great inconsistency here. For more, see Roberts, pp752-53. For more on refuting the view as a whole, see especially Turretin, who deals with this in depth in his *Institutes*, V2, pp262-267. Most notably we could also add to these the same objection we raised in the second critique of the Republication View.

⁵¹ See Ball, p95; Kevan, p117; Beeke, ch.17.

⁵² The *Republican View* is clearly not in accord with the Westminster Confession, in that the Confession sees the Mosaic Covenant as an administration of the Covenant of Grace (cf. WCF 7.5 below). See the second footnote under Synopsis of the *Subservient View* for why we concluded that this view is not compatible with the Confession. It is debatable whether or not the Mixed View is in line with the Westminster Standards. Ball seemed to think so (see first footnote under synopsis of the Mixed View); more accurately, he seems to classify it as an acceptable sub-view under the Majority View. Ramsey argues in his article, *In Defense of Moses* (pp27-31) that a) Fisher's Mixed renewal view could perhaps comply with the standards, along with b) the view that the the Covenant of Works, though not renewed, was indeed restated at Sinai; and c) the view that the Law as abstracted or strictly taken does indeed in and of itself considered contain the content of the Covenant of Works. We should note that these latter two views I have placed as sub-views under the heading of View 4 (to be addressed in detail later). The OPC Report on Republication found that View 4 is the only view that is aligned with the Westminster Standards: “there are two forms of republication, substantial and administrative. Views 1-3 fall into the designation of substantial, since they place the republication of the Adamic covenant works in the substance of the Mosaic covenant in some fashion (e.g., in terms of its principle or constitutive condition). Whereas, View 4 is seen as administrative. . .” (Chapter 5, I). The Report goes on: “We have seen how views 1-3 outlined above all articulate a form of 'republication.' In spite of their differences, they all have common cause in placing this 'republication' of the Adamic covenant within the substance of the Mosaic covenant. That is why this report refers to them as versions of 'substantial' republication. With views 1 and 3 [same numbering as ours here], this republication composed the sole essence of the covenant. In view 2, it was but part of the essence. View 4 can speak of the Mosaic covenant containing some form of a republication of the covenant of works. For this reason, this report refers to it as holding to an 'administrative' or 'accidental' republication of the covenant of works in the Mosaic covenant. . .” And again: “In broadest terms, there are really only two basic options in formulating a doctrine of 'republication.' The republication of the covenant of works is either part of the substance of the Mosaic covenant (as is the case with Views 1-3, in varying degrees), or it is simply part of the administration of that covenant (as is the case with some variants of View 4).” (Chapter 5, III). And finally: “The fourth view maintains that the Sinaitic covenant is in substance a covenant of grace. As noted above, this is the position affirmed in our standards.” (OPC Report, Chapter 6, IV). We'll deal more with “administrative republication” later.

According to this view, there are only two covenants revealed in Scripture:⁵³ the Covenant of Works and the Covenant of Grace; and the Mosaic Covenant is simply one of the Old Testament manifestations of the Covenant of Grace. Those who adhere to this view recognize that there are differences between the Old Testament manifestations of the Covenant of Grace (the *old covenant*)⁵⁴ and the inauguration of the *new covenant* in Christ—and that these differences are perhaps most pronounced at Sinai⁵⁵—but they are nonetheless to be considered differences in *administration* rather than differences in *substance*.⁵⁶ In other words, the difference between Sinai and Calvary isn't one of *essence*—but simply of *external form*; the two are not different in regard to *what they are* (matter) but rather in *how they are set forth* (manner).⁵⁷ In short, the Mosaic Covenant is simply another manifestation of the Covenant of Grace.

II. Evidence that the Mosaic Covenant is part of the Covenant of Grace

1. This view has the greatest biblical support.⁵⁸ First, Scripture tells us that the ESSENCE of the Mosaic Covenant is the same as the Covenant of Grace: Moses tells Israel in Deuteronomy 7:12, “Then it shall come about, because you listen to these judgments and keep and do them, that *the Lord your God will keep with you His covenant and His lovingkindness which He swore to your forefathers.*” Notice that Moses is *not* saying: If you listen to these judgments, then the Lord will keep with you the covenant He is making today *with you*. Rather, Moses is saying: If you listen to these judgments, the Lord will keep with you the covenant He had made *with the patriarchs*. *God isn't* saying: If you embrace the terms of the Mosaic Covenant, I will give you the blessings of the Mosaic Covenant. Rather, He's saying: If you embrace the terms of the *Mosaic* Covenant, I will give you the blessings of the *Abrahamic* Covenant. This is because the covenant that God was renewing with Israel at Sinai was the same covenant He had made with Abraham. The Mosaic Covenant was simply a continuation of the Abrahamic Covenant. This is all the more explicit in Deuteronomy 29:10-13, where Moses tells Israel, “You stand today. . .that you may enter into the covenant with the Lord your God. . .in order that He may establish you today as His people and that He may be your God, just as He spoke to you *and as He swore to your fathers, to*

⁵³ Three, to be exact; if you count the Covenant of Redemption, which is the foundation of the Covenant of Grace.

⁵⁴ As Kevan writes: “The adjective 'old' refers to that part of the Covenant of Grace that belonged to the times of the history of Israel (including its Abrahamic and Mosaic forms), and 'new' indicates that part which was promised in Jeremiah and which came to realization in the times of the Gospel. . .The Old Covenant is called old, not in opposition to the Covenant of Grace as made in Genesis, but in opposition to the Covenant of Grace as it is in the Gospel. They are called 'old' and 'new', not because they differed in substance, but on account of their different ways of administration. The Church of Israel and the Church of Christ are both under the same Covenant of Grace in substance. They are distinguished as being first under a legal, then under an evangelical administration. The Old Covenant speaks of Christ to come; the New Covenant of Christ already come.” (pp120-21). *On the Old Covenant*: As with Kevan, we are predominately using the phrase “old covenant” to refer to all the Old Testament manifestations of the Covenant of Grace. This understanding is biblically warranted, since, as we saw in the first Lesson, our English word “Testament” actually comes from the Hebrew word for “Covenant”, so that we can refer to the entire Old Testament Scriptures as “The Old Covenant” as much as we can “The Old Testament.” It's a helpful way to briefly refer to all the Old Testament manifestations of the Covenant of Grace, and it's often been used in this way (as Kevan above). However, we should note that in Hebrews 8, this phrase, “old covenant” is used specifically for the Mosaic Covenant, where it's contrasted with the new covenant. But though it's the Mosaic Covenant in particular that is here contrasted with the new covenant, still, it is the Mosaic Covenant being set forth as the epitome and fulfillment of all the other Old Testament manifestations of the Covenant of Grace. For the same reason, the Mosaic Covenant is also described in that same passage in Hebrews as the “first” covenant (8:7,13; 9:1). Roberts explains: “It's evident, that [Hebrews 8:8] calls that Sinai Covenant the First Covenant, and the New Covenant, the Second. But how can we understand this; seeing the Sinai Covenant was not the First Covenant; God's covenants with Adam, Noah and Abram going before it; nor is the New Covenant the Second after the Sinai Covenant; God's [covenant] with David. . .coming between them? . . .These were tendered to the greatest number of people: The Old Covenant to the whole national church of Israel, the New Covenant to the whole Ecumenical or General church gathered out of all nations in the world Jewish and Gentile. Whereas the covenants with Adam, Noah, Abram, David, were directed but to their particular persons, families and their seed. . .So that. . .these two Covenants may be called the First; and the Second Covenant; because they are the First and Second most illustrious Covenants; although in regard of time, and order of discovery, the old covenant was not precisely the First; nor this New, the Second.” (*Mystery and Marrow*, p1263).

⁵⁵ As Kevan notes: “Because of its rigorous form, the Mosaic Covenant was recognized as occupying a distinctive place of its own”, for, “Although the Mosaic Covenant is not different in species or kind from the Covenant of Grace, it is nevertheless 'distinct.’” (pp122,128). This distinctiveness was perhaps due to its *requirement*, which we'll deal with later in more detail.

⁵⁶ WCF 7:5. “This covenant was differently administered in the time of the law, and in the time of the gospel: under the law it was administered by promises, prophecies, sacrifices, circumcision, the paschal lamb, and other types and ordinances delivered to the people of the Jews, all foreshadowing Christ to come. . .” (cf. Roberts, p753,769; Bridge, p48; Vos, V2 #43, etc).

⁵⁷ We'll explain and unpack these differences more in detail later.

⁵⁸ Most of the following evidences were gleaned from the writings of Puritans such as John Ball (pp102-143); Francis Roberts (pp757-764); Anthony Burgess (pp234-237); and Thomas Blake (pp202-219). Cf. also Colquhoun, *Law and Gospel*, pp54-62.

*Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.*⁵⁹ In other words, what God is doing here at Sinai for Israel under Moses is the very thing He had promised to do in His covenant with Abraham. What God would do *for Israel* in His covenant *with them* was the very same thing that He had promised to do *for the patriarchs* in His covenant *with them*. So then, if the Abrahamic Covenant belongs to the Covenant of Grace, and the Mosaic Covenant is the same in essence, it follows that it must belong to the Covenant of Grace as well.⁶⁰

2. Scripture tells us that the PRIVILEGES of the Mosaic Covenant are the same as the Covenant of Grace. The passage from Deuteronomy 29 quoted above doesn't just teach us about the essence of the Mosaic Covenant, but also about the privileges contained in the Mosaic Covenant. We read again: "You stand today. . .that you may enter into the covenant with the Lord your God. . .*in order that He may establish you today as His people and that He may be your God. . .*" This is God's promise to Israel at Sinai: "I will. . .be your God, and you shall be My people" (Leviticus 26:12). We've shown earlier that this is the very heartbeat of God's promise to His people in the Covenant of Grace.⁶¹ God further tells Israel in Exodus 19:5-6 that if they will listen to His voice and keep His covenant, "then you shall be My own possession among all the peoples. . .and you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation." These are also the same privileges given in the Covenant of Grace, for we read of the very same gospel privileges in 1 Peter 2:9-10, where Peter quotes this same verse, applying it to Gentile believers and telling them: "But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession. . ." Further, God freely bestows the land of Canaan to His people Israel as an inheritance, which He had previously sworn on oath to give to the patriarchs and their descendants. This was also a gospel privilege, since the land of Canaan was a picture of the eternal inheritance God has sworn to freely give to His people in Christ.⁶² So then, all the privileges given at Sinai were truly *gospel* privileges.⁶³

3. The CONTEXT of the Mosaic Covenant is the same as the Covenant of Grace: The Lord begins the Ten Commandments by reminding Israel *why* it was that they were to obey the Law they were about to receive: "I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery." (Exodus 20:2).⁶⁴ In Israel's slavery in Egypt they were confronted with their desperate *need* for redemption; but in their deliverance we behold God's gracious *provision* of redemption. They had been enslaved, but now they were set free through the power of God (Exodus 9:16; Psalm 106:8), having been marked with the blood of the Passover lamb (Exodus 12:22). The Law, then, is only given to Israel in the context of redemption. Israel is not to obey God's Law in order to be set free from their slavery in Egypt—but because they had been set free; they are not to obey God's voice *in order to be redeemed*—but as those who *already had been redeemed*. We see the same pattern throughout the Law. Leviticus 11:45 says, "For I am the Lord who brought you up from the land of Egypt to be your God; thus you

⁵⁹ See also Luke 1:54-55, where Mary declares the same truth: "He has given help to Israel His servant, in remembrance of His mercy, as He spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and his descendants forever."

⁶⁰ "This speaks clearly and fully to the point, that by this covenant He would be their God, and they should be His people, as He had sworn to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, that is, according to the tenor of His covenant with Abraham, etc. So that this confirms God's former covenant with Abraham, and the same covenant interest betwixt God and Abraham with his seed, and in the same way, as he had sworn to Abraham, etc; therefore these covenants were one and the same for substance." (Roberts, p758). Of Deuteronomy 7:12, Roberts says, "Their keeping of this Sinai-Covenant, has the promise of God's keeping to them, and performing to them his covenant and mercy sworn to their fathers; therefore this Sinai-Covenant, and that covenant made with their fathers, held forth. . .unto them the same mercy, and are, for substance, the same kind of covenant." (p757).

⁶¹ See also Deuteronomy 29:12-13. As Roberts puts it: "How can the Lord be a covenant-God to sinners; or sinners be a covenant-people to God, but only in Christ by faith? . . .Therefore this evangelical covenant relation betwixt God and Israel. . . proves this covenant to be a covenant of faith." (p759). Ball says, "faith in the promised Messiah. . .is implied in the promise, 'I will be thy God', and commanded in the precept built upon it, 'Thou shalt have me to be thy God.' For God is not the God of Israel, but in and through the Mediator, neither can Israel take God to be their God, but by faith in the Messiah." (p134).

⁶² As Calvin says, "the Lord of old willed that his people direct and elevate their minds to the heavenly heritage; yet, to nourish them better in this hope, he displayed it for them to see and, so to speak, taste, under earthly benefits. But now that the gospel has more plainly and clearly revealed the grace of the future life, the Lord leads our minds to meditate upon it directly, laying aside the lower mode of training that he used with the Israelites. . .[others] teach that the Israelites deemed the possession of the Land of Canaan their highest and ultimate blessedness, and that after the revelation of Christ it typified for us the heavenly inheritance. We contend, on the contrary, that, in the earthly possession they enjoyed, they looked, as in a mirror, upon the future inheritance they believed to have been prepared for them in heaven." (*Institutes*, 2.11.1).

⁶³ "these pure gospel-blessings in Christ do necessarily infer a pure gospel-covenant at Sinai promising them" (Roberts p758).

⁶⁴ As John Ball says, "When God then says to Israel, I am your God, which brought you out of the land of Egypt; does he not propound himself as their King, Judge, Savior, and Redeemer: Spiritual Redeemer from the bondage of sin and Satan, whereof that temporal deliverance was a type [?] . . .The reason from all this is plain, that Covenant wherein the Lord promises, or proclaims himself to be the God of Israel, is the Covenant of Grace, which God made with Israel." (p105).

shall be holy, for I am holy.” Deuteronomy constantly invokes God's redeeming of Israel from Egypt as the grounds and reason for their obedience.⁶⁵ Over and over again we read in the Law Scriptures such as Deuteronomy 27:9-10, where Moses says to Israel: “This day you have become a people for the Lord your God. You shall therefore obey the Lord your God, and do His commandments. . .” God doesn't give Israel the Law in order that they *might become* His people; He gives them the Law as those who *had become* His people. Isn't this exactly how God calls us to obedience in the Covenant of Grace?⁶⁶ Just like Israel, we were enslaved to our sin (John 8:34); but Christ, our Passover lamb was sacrificed; and through faith in Him we are now set free by the power of God (Romans 1:16). Having been set free, God gives us His Law to obey. But like Israel, we do so, *not in order to be redeemed*, but rather because *we've already been redeemed*. So then, Israel was to obey for the same reason we do now in the gospel.

4. The REQUIREMENT of the Mosaic Covenant is the same as the Covenant of Grace: When Jesus was asked what was the greatest commandment, He replied that the whole Law could be condensed into this: “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.” Our Savior chose to quote Deuteronomy 6:5, but the Law is full of Scriptures like these. We read in Deuteronomy 10:12, “Now, Israel, what does the Lord your God require from you, but to fear the Lord your God, to walk in all His ways and love Him, and to serve the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul. . .?” Deuteronomy 11:18 says, “You shall therefore impress these words of mine on your heart and on your soul.” What we see is that the obedience God required of Israel reached far beyond externals to the very depth of their being. The Law was never fulfilled by merely keeping a set of rules; it always goes beyond actions to the deepest longings of our hearts. God was not just commanding Israel to obey Him in a perfect but mechanical, robotic way. He was commanding them to *love* Him, to belong wholly to Him, to know and cherish and walk with Him, to cling to Him; to follow Him and serve Him *with all their hearts*. When Jesus expounded the Law in the gospels, He wasn't teaching anything new; He was merely showing what the Law had required all along. This is why Paul says in Romans 7:14 that “the Law is *spiritual*”; it requires far more than just external obedience; it extends to our thoughts, motives, and the deepest longings of our hearts.⁶⁷ So then, what God required of Israel under Moses is what He requires of us still in the Covenant of Grace. This is perhaps most clear in Deuteronomy 10:16, where God commands His people to *circumcise their hearts*. This shows us that all the obedience God requires in the Law is a *gospel* obedience. God isn't just commanding Israel to obey Him, but to obey Him in a *gospel way*. He's not commanding a robotic, *legal* obedience; He's commanding a true and living *evangelical* obedience. Not just to obey Him, but to obey Him with hearts that have been circumcised by the gospel. What God required at Sinai was *gospel* obedience.⁶⁸

⁶⁵ Deuteronomy 1:30; 4:30, 34, 37; 5:6, 15; 6:12, 21-23; 7:8, 18; 8:14; 10:19; 13:5, 10; 15:15; 16:1, 12; 20:1; 24:18, 22; 26:8.

⁶⁶ Theologians call these the “indicatives” (*what is true*) and “imperatives” (*what to do*) of Scripture. The imperatives are always grounded in the indicatives. A few New Testament examples of this are the doctrines of Romans 1-11 (indicatives) grounding the exhortations of Romans 12-15; or the indicatives of Ephesians 1-3 grounding the exhortations of Ephesians 4-6.

⁶⁷ Luther puts it beautifully: “But God judges according to what is at the bottom of the heart, and for this reason, His law makes its demands on the inmost heart and cannot be satisfied with works, but rather punishes works that are done otherwise than from the bottom of the heart, as hypocrisy and lies. Hence all men are called liars, in Psalm 116, for the reason that no one keeps or can keep God's law from the bottom of the heart, for everyone finds in himself displeasure in what is good and pleasure in what is bad. If, then, there is no willing pleasure in the good, then the inmost heart is not set on the law of God, then there is surely sin, and God's wrath is deserved, even though outwardly there seem to be many good works and an honorable life...For even though you keep the law outwardly, with works, from fear of punishment or love of reward, nevertheless, you do all this without willingness and pleasure, and without love for the law, but rather with unwillingness, under compulsion; and you would rather do otherwise, if the law were not there. The conclusion is that at the bottom of your heart you hate the law. To fulfill the law, however, is to do its works with pleasure and love, and to live a godly and good life of one's own accord, without the compulsion of the law.” (from Luther's commentary on *Galatians*). Colquhoun says: “The laws then, which Jehovah prescribed to the Israelites. . .required internal, as well as external, obedience; the obedience of the heart, as well as of the life; they directed and bound every Israelite, in the inward man, as much as in the outward. The sum of the duty required in the moral law, is love: ‘Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, with all thine heart, with all thy soul, and with all thy might’. . .” (p74). And again: “The Law is also spiritual. The Lawgiver is a spirit, the God of the spirits of all flesh; and he beholds all the inclinations and affections of the soul, as well as all the deeds of the body. His Law therefore is spiritual (Romans 7:14), requiring internal, as well as external obedience. It reaches the understanding, will, and affections, with all the other faculties of the soul, as well as all the gestures, words, and actions of the body. It extends, not only to external appearances, words, and works, but to the dispositions, thoughts, principles, motives, and designs of the heart; and requires the spiritual performance, both of internal and external obedience (Hebrews 4:12; Matthew 22:37-39).” (p88). And finally: “every Divine precept requires spiritual obedience, the service of the whole heart, as well as of the whole life.” (p244).

⁶⁸ Bavinck puts it this way: “The entire law, which the covenant of grace at Mount Sinai took into its service, is intended to

5. The PROVISION of the Mosaic Covenant is the same as the Covenant of Grace: God required Israel to love Him with all their being, but in doing this, He actually required the impossible. Adam's fall has made it impossible for man to love God. Jesus tells us in John 3:19 that all of us are born with hearts that love the darkness rather than the Light. To say that all of us fall short of loving God with all our heart and soul is a massive understatement. As fallen sinners, we're naturally both *enslaved* to our sin (John 8:34) and *in love* with our sin (John 8:44). We're not only slaves, but *willing* slaves. We're neither *able* nor *willing* to love God. But as we've learned, God provides all that He asks in the Covenant of Grace. God would provide for all the miserable imperfections of His people *through the blood of atonement*. Christ was fore-pictured and proclaimed in the sacrifices of Leviticus. The believing Israelite would bring an animal to the tabernacle "to make atonement on his behalf" (Leviticus 1:4). The man would lay his hand on the head of the animal, picturing the truth that his sin was being imputed to the animal on his behalf; then he would slay the animal to symbolize the truth that God's wrath must be satisfied—and yet that it might be borne by a substitute. So then, there was *forgiveness* in the Mosaic Covenant (Exodus 34:6-7).⁶⁹ Transgression was atoned for; sins were forgiven. There was grace under Moses because Moses was part of the Covenant of Grace. Of course, the blood of goats and bulls can never take away sins. But they pointed to the One who would. God would one day send to His people the Lamb of God, who would live a life of perfect obedience and submission to the Father and then take upon himself on the cross the punishment that every one of us deserves for our sin.⁷⁰ Further, we read in Deuteronomy 30:6, "Moreover the Lord your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your descendants, to love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, so that you may live." God wouldn't just atone for the sins of His people; He would also take away their hearts of stone and give them circumcised hearts; radically new hearts. So that the Lord would not only provide forgiveness for His people, but also make them *willing* and *able* to love the Lord—not perfectly—but no less truly. So then, the way that God provided for His people at Sinai is no different than how He still does today.

6. The CONTENT of the Mosaic Covenant is the same as the Covenant of Grace: Simply put, the Mosaic Covenant points us to Jesus and the gospel over and over again. Through pictures, promises, and prophecies, we see His fingerprints on every page of His covenant at Sinai. This is why the Savior plainly told the Jews, "if you believed Moses, you would believe Me, for he wrote about Me." (John 5:46). That's an amazing statement. Here, Jesus himself is giving us His own interpretation of the Mosaic Covenant. And what we learn is that, at the end of the day, *the Law of Moses is ultimately about Christ*. What did Moses write about? He wrote about Christ. In the same way, the author of Hebrews tells us that all those who were listening to Moses had the "good news" preached to them—the same good news that is preached to us (4:2,6). In other words, *it was the gospel that was preached to Israel under Moses*. So then, Moses' ministry was actually an evangelical ministry—a gospel ministry. How so? We might give just a few examples here: 1) *Moses* himself points to the greater Prophet like him who was yet to come, of whom God said: "I will put My words in his mouth, and he shall speak to them all that I command him. . . whoever will not listen to My words which he shall speak in My name, I Myself will require it of him." (Deuteronomy 18:15-19).⁷¹ 2) *The Passover and sacrifices of atonement* point to Jesus, "the Lamb

prompt Israel as a people to 'walk' in the way of the covenant. It is but an explication of the one statement to Abraham: 'Walk before me, and be blameless' [Gen. 17:1], and therefore no more a cancelation of the covenant of grace and the foundation of a covenant of works than this word spoken to Abraham." (*Reformed Dogmatics*, V3, p222). Ball sums up much of what we've seen, saying: "the covenant that God made with Abraham was the Covenant of Grace, as it is acknowledged; but the covenant made with Abraham is for substance the same with the covenant made with Israel upon Mount Sinai: the promise is the same, and the things required the same. For in that [covenant] God promised that he would be God all-sufficient to Abraham, to bless him with all necessary blessings for this life, and the life to come. In this he promises freely and of his own mere grace and favor to be their God, and make them a kingdom of priests and a holy nation unto himself. In that he requires of Abraham, that he walk with or before him in integrity; in this he covenants, that they should obey his voice, and keep his commandments. And what is it to walk with God or before God, but to walk in his Law?" (pp108-09). Kevan notes: "The Covenant at Sinai is but the working out of the Covenant with Abraham, both in its promises and its requirements." (p123).

⁶⁹ See also Leviticus 1-6; Deuteronomy 4:30-31; 30:1-5; etc. As Ball notes: "The legal covenant or Covenant of Works cannot be renewed after it is once broken, seeing it admits not repentance of sin past, but exacts perfect and perpetual obedience. But this covenant made with the Israelites might be renewed after transgression, [and] did admit repentance. . . And if the Covenant after transgression may be renewed, it is of grace." (Ball, p107). And again, "The frequent and earnest exhortations of the prophets made to backsliding and rebellious Israel, that she should acknowledge her wickedness, and return unto the Lord, is a full commentary of that which God required of them in this covenant." (Ball, p133).

⁷⁰ Actually, even more: not only would our sin be imputed to Christ, but His righteousness would be imputed to us.

⁷¹ Moses is set forth as a type of Christ in many ways: 1) *In his commission*: Just as Moses was commissioned by God with the

of God who takes away the sin of the world!” (John 1:29), as we've seen. 3) *The Tabernacle* points us to Jesus, who became flesh “and tabernacled among us” (John 1:14).⁷² 4) *The Priesthood* points to Jesus, our greater high priest who offered himself once for all and ever lives to intercede for us (Hebrews 7:23-28). 5) *The Manna* points to Jesus, the true bread that has come down out of heaven to give life to the world (John 6:30-33, 49-51). 6) *The bronze serpent* points us to Christ, who was lifted up just as the serpent in the wilderness, that “whoever believes will in Him have eternal life.” (John 3:14-15). 7) *The Rock* that Moses struck in the wilderness points to Jesus, for Paul tells us that Israel was “drinking from a spiritual rock which followed them; and the rock was Christ” (1Cor.10:1-4).⁷³ And whatever else we might find in the Law, Scripture sets forth as shadows of the good things to come (Hebrews 10:1); all serving to point us to Christ and his gospel.⁷⁴ Christ and His redemption are either pictured or promised on every page of the Law of Moses. The Scriptures themselves testify that ultimately, the ministry of Moses at Sinai was *all about Christ*. And surely it is no different for us now in the Covenant of Grace.

7. Lastly, the MEANS of benefiting from the Mosaic Covenant is the same as the Covenant of Grace. Everything in the Law pointed to Christ. We see Jesus everywhere. But just like us, Israel was called upon to embrace this message of life in Christ from the heart, *by faith*. Israel had to respond in faith. This is most evident from one particular passage of Scripture. In Romans 10:5-9, Paul says the following:

⁵For Moses writes that the man who practices the righteousness which is based on law shall live by that righteousness. ⁶But the righteousness based on faith speaks as follows: 'Do not say in your heart, "who will ascend into heaven?" (that is, to bring Christ down), ⁷or "Who will descend into the abyss?" (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead).' ⁸But what does it say? 'The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart' — that is, the word of faith which we are preaching, ⁹that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. . .

Here Paul seems to contrast two ways of life, two ways of righteousness; the righteousness that is based on Law and the righteousness that is based on faith. Later we'll deal in detail with the nature of the contrast, but for now I want us to just notice one thing: the Scripture that Paul here quotes in order to describe the righteousness that is based on faith *actually comes from a passage in the Law*. Let's say it again. Paul is quoting Deuteronomy 30:11-14, a passage in the Law, to describe the righteousness that is based on faith. Isn't that amazing?[?] *Paul here quotes from the Law to teach us about the righteousness that is by*

task of delivering God's people and bringing them back with him to the place from which God had sent him, so too Christ was commissioned by the Father to deliver God's people and bring them back with Him to glory (Ex.3:12). 2) *In his coming*: Moses reflects Christ's incarnation in his refusal to stay comfortable in the king's palace; for the sake of his brothers he gave up the royal robes and the king's house. 3) *In his birth*: Just as the Savior, Moses was preserved from slaughter (Ex.1:15-22 with Matt.2:13-16) at the time of his birth; he was born into a poor family yet was the heir of a king; he was born into poverty but had access to unlimited wealth; born the child of a slave but he himself was free from the slavery of his brothers. 4) *In his wilderness preparation*: Just as God was preparing Moses in the wilderness 40 years for the great work of delivering God's people, so it was for 40 days of testing for Jesus in the wilderness. 5) *In his offices*: Christ is said to be our prophet, priest, and king; and though Moses is never called a king, he is called a prince (Ex.2:14; Ezek.34:24); and a priest (Ps.99:6), for he served as the mediator between God and the people; but perhaps most of all a shepherd-prophet, for in speaking the very words of God, he typified the greater Prophet yet to come (Deut.18:18; Jn.10:11). 6) *In his supernatural signs and wonders*: For Moses' rod could be turned into a snake and his hand made leprous, and it was for the express purpose that the people might believe that God had sent him (Ex.4:5); so it was with Christ, for His signs and wonders testified about him, that the Father had sent him (Jn.5:36). 7) *In his being rejected*: At first, the Israelites rejected his leadership, just as Christ was rejected by his own kinsmen during the course of his earthly ministry (Acts 7:25). 8) *Lastly, in his sacrificial love for sinners*: For God's people broke His Law before He was even finished giving it to Moses, and incurred God's wrath for their sin; but Moses pleaded for forgiveness on their behalf, even if it meant his own name being blotted out from the book of life. Moses offers up his own life in exchange for theirs, which is exactly what Jesus did—giving up paradise for our sake and taking all hell upon himself.

⁷² a) *The Table of Showbread*: “I am the bread of life;” b) *The Golden Lamp-stand*: “I am the Light of the world;” c) *The Veil of Christ's flesh* was torn for us (Heb.10:20); d) *The Mercy Seat* points us to justification through Christ's blood; e) *The Laver for Washing* points us to the washing of regeneration by the Spirit (Tit.3:5). Or, in the words of Francis Roberts, “Christ was the true *ark*, having the covenant and Law of God fully in his heart and bowels; Christ was the true *mercy-seat*, covering the curse of the Law; Christ was the true *sacrifice*, purging away sin, and making atonement by his own blood; Christ was the true *table of show-bread*, whereon all his Israel are daily presented as acceptable before the Lord. Christ was the true *veil*, by which, rent, we have open entrance made into the Holy of Holies, heaven itself. . .” (Roberts, *Marrow*, p767).

⁷³ This makes the story in Exodus 17 take on new meaning: God's people disobeyed. But instead of striking them, God told Moses to get his staff and strike *the rock* (17:6); a foreshadowing of the atonement. Christ was punished in our place.

⁷⁴ Roberts puts it this way: “The ceremonies [IE, ceremonial laws] are Christ veiled; Christ wrapped in swaddling clothes; Christ, the son of righteousness, shining through a cloud; Christ was implicitly revealed in them all.” And again he says: “Jesus Christ was the very principal scope and soul of the Law, or Sinai Covenant, in all the doctrines, commands, and promises thereof. . .so that in this whole Sinai Covenant Jesus Christ was primarily intended.” (Roberts, p765).

*faith.*⁷⁵ And the reason is simple: the Law required faith.⁷⁶ *Just as the Law pointed to Christ in so many ways—it also required Israel to put their faith and hope in that Messiah it was so often prefiguring.*⁷⁷

Likewise, Scripture helps us understand that the reason most of the first generation of Israel under Moses never made it into the promised land was not because of a lack of *works*—but because of a lack of *faith*. The author of Hebrews had told us that the word which was preached to Israel under Moses in the wilderness was the same “good news” that is preached to us—that is, the gospel (4:2,6). Nevertheless, he goes on, “the word they heard did not profit them, *because it was not united by faith* in those who heard” (4:2; cf. 3:19). In other words, the very place that Israel went wrong was that *they failed to believe* in the same gospel that's preached to us. And this isn't something we only learn about in the book of Hebrews; the same truth is recorded in the Old Testament Scriptures themselves. For, when Moses recounts why Israel was made to wander 40 years in the wilderness, he declares to them the reason was: “*you did not trust* the Lord your God. . .” (Deuteronomy 1:32). This is also echoed in the Psalms. Reflecting on why God entered into judgment with Israel under Moses in the wilderness, the psalmist declares: “Therefore the Lord heard and was full of wrath; and a fire was kindled against Jacob and anger also mounted against Israel, *because they did not believe in God and did not trust in His salvation,*” (78:21-22), and again, because they “*did not believe in His wonderful works* (v32). So then, the reason that many under Moses missed out on the blessing was not because of a lack of legal obedience—but rather *a lack of faith.*⁷⁸

So then, the question that we would put to any who would hold to a different view of Sinai is this: If the *essence* of the Mosaic Covenant is the same as the Covenant of Grace, and if the *privileges* of the Mosaic Covenant are the same as the Covenant of Grace, and if the *context*, and the *requirement*, and the *provision*, and the *content*, and the *means of entering into the blessing* in the Mosaic Covenant are all the same as the Covenant of Grace—then how can it be said that the covenant God made at Sinai with Israel was anything other than simply one of the manifestations of the Covenant of Grace?⁷⁹

⁷⁵ Calvin says of this passage in Deuteronomy 30, “the apostle, our sure interpreter, removes our every doubt when he declares that Moses here spoke of the teaching of the gospel [Romans 10:8]. . . It is perfectly clear then that by these words Moses meant the covenant of mercy that he had promulgated along with the requirements of the law.” (*Institutes*, 2.5.12). Roberts speaks of the significance of Romans 10, saying, “Paul himself derives and proves the righteousness of faith from this Sinai-Covenant; as contained therein, and revealed thereby. . . From where did this description [in Romans 10:6-11] of the righteousness of faith come from; but from Moses describing the Law or Sinai-Covenant? And Paul excellently expounds the words of Moses, as peculiarly intending to set forth the righteousness of faith. We cannot wish a better commentator.” (p767). Samuel Rutherford likewise notes here: “This covenant has the promise of a circumcised heart, Deuteronomy 30:6, and of the word of faith that is near in the mouth, and of the righteousness of faith clearly differenced from the righteousness of the Law by doing. For so Paul, Romans 10:5,6,7, etc, expounds Moses, Deuteronomy 30:11,12,13,14.” (Rutherford, p61). And Turretin, noting the passage quoted in Romans 10:6-8, asks, “Now how could Paul have said this unless he had recognized that covenant, by virtue of which such promises were given, to be not so much legal as evangelical?” (*Institutes*, V2, p266).

⁷⁶ Noting Romans 3:21-22, Roberts states simply: “The Law itself testifies that the righteousness of God (viz, which God has ordained, revealed, and will accept), is without [IĒ, apart from] the Law; that is, by faith without the deeds of the Law.” (p787).

⁷⁷ Roberts says, “Faith in Jesus Christ and justification by faith in him, must be necessarily implied in the same covenant. For these, Christ and saving faith; Christ and justification by faith; have inseparable connection and dependance one upon the other; as the act and object, as the cause and effect. Where Christ is revealed for life and justification, there faith in him is implicitly required; and where Christ is received by faith, there justification by faith must infallibly ensue.” (pp765-66). Ball puts it this way: “the Law requires faith as well as love and obedience, and does build these upon it as a foundation. It prescribes faith in the first place, and throughout, namely that we acknowledge God the Law-giver, to be the Lord our God, the only true God, and testifies that faith unto him, by an universal and uniform obedience to that whole Law and every title thereof. . . Certainly, 'whatsoever is not of faith is sin', even all works, though good in show, and for substance seeming agreeable to the rule of the Law, if they issue not from faith, they are vain and hypocritical, if they be not quickened and enlivened by faith, they are but the carcass of a good work. . . Therefore the Lord in Covenant commanding the observation of his Law, exacts faith also, without which the Law cannot be obeyed in an acceptable manner. For when the Law is spiritual, and commands true worship and invocation, how can it be observed without faith?” (pp105-106). And again, “the Law requires faith as well as love and obedience, and does build these upon it as a foundation. . . that love which the Law requires, either towards God or towards man, must flow from a pure heart, and faith it is that purifies the heart.” (Ball, p109). And finally, “The condition of this covenant [at Sinai]. . . is faith in the promised Messiah, which is implied in the promise, 'I will be thy God', and commanded in the precept built upon it, 'thou shalt have me to be thy God.' For God is not the God of Israel, but in and through the Mediator, neither can Israel take God to be their God, but by faith in the Messiah.” (Ball, p134).

⁷⁸ This is also given as the reason for the exile of Israel, which was outlined in the Mosaic Covenant. We read in 2 Kings 17:14: “However, they did not listen, but stiffened their neck like their fathers, *who did not believe in the Lord their God.*”

⁷⁹ We might also note: *H) The BESTOWER of the Mosaic Covenant is the same as the Covenant of Grace:* For Acts 7:38 tells us that it was actually the angel of the Lord who spoke to Moses on Mount Sinai, the same angel that appears throughout the Old Testament, and is understood by most to be the pre-incarnate Christ (see Gen.22:12,15ff; Exod.3:2-6; Jud.2:1-3; 13:15-22); so that the One who gave the Law at Sinai was none other than Christ himself. This was a commonly held view by

It's hard to deny the fact that the Mosaic Covenant belongs to the Covenant of Grace. But there are also important objections that we need to deal with. There are certain Scriptures that seem to contradict the things we've been affirming. *Some passages of Scripture seem to speak quite negatively about the Mosaic Covenant, making Sinai appear to be something entirely different than the Covenant of Grace.* We read for instance in John 1:17: "For the Law was given through Moses; grace and truth were realized through Jesus Christ." And in 2 Corinthians 3, Paul refers to the Law as a letter that kills, a ministry of death, and a ministry of condemnation; where in contrast, the Spirit gives life and is a ministry of righteousness. And in Galatians 3:23, Paul writes that "before faith came, we were kept in custody under the law, being shut up to the faith which was later to be revealed." If Sinai truly belongs to the Covenant of Grace, how do you explain what Scripture says about the NATURE of the Mosaic Covenant? *Further, Scripture seems to tell us that what God requires under Moses is something very different than what He requires of us now in the gospel.* Paul says in Romans 10:5: "For Moses writes that the man who practices the righteousness which is based on law shall live by that righteousness. But the righteousness based on faith speaks as follows. . ." And again, in Galatians 3:11-12, Paul says: "Now that no one is justified by the Law before God is evident, for, 'The righteous man shall live by faith.' However, the Law is not of faith; on the contrary, 'He who practices them shall live by them.'" If Sinai truly belongs to the Covenant of Grace, how do you explain what Scripture says about the REQUIREMENT of the Mosaic Covenant? *There are also certain Scriptures that seem to teach that the Law is now null and void for us as Christians.* For instance, Paul says in Romans 6:14, "For sin shall not be master over you, for you are not under law but under grace." And he writes again a chapter later in Romans 7:4 that we "were made to die to the Law through the body of Christ" and that "we have been released from the Law, having died to that by which we were bound" (v6). Paul also testifies of himself in Galatians 2:19: "For through the Law I died to the Law, so that I might live to God." If Sinai truly belongs to the Covenant of Grace, how do you explain what Scripture says about the AUTHORITY of the Mosaic Covenant as it relates to us now as believers?

These are important questions that require thoughtful explanation. In fact, they're so important that we are going to devote the rest of our time to answering these questions in detail: So: *First*, if Sinai truly belongs to the Covenant of Grace, how do you explain what Scripture says about the *nature* of the Mosaic Covenant? *Secondly*, if Sinai truly belongs to the Covenant of Grace, how do you explain what Scripture says about the *requirement* of the Mosaic Covenant? *Lastly*, if Sinai truly belongs to the Covenant of Grace, how do you explain what Scripture says about the *authority* of the Mosaic Covenant?

III. Dealing with Objections, Part 1: The *Nature* of the Mosaic Covenant

So then, the first objection has to do with *the nature of the Mosaic Covenant*. If Sinai is part of the Covenant of Grace, how do you explain the ways that certain Scriptures seem to speak negatively about

the Puritans and others (cf. John Colquhoun, *A Treatise of the Law and Gospel*, p52). *I) The FOUNDATION of the Mosaic Covenant is the same as the Covenant of Grace:* For the ratification ceremony recorded in Exodus 24:3-8, and Moses sprinkling the people with the blood of the covenant, did also show forth Christ, whose blood is the only foundation of hope we have in the new covenant. Ainsworth says, "Thus the first covenant was not dedicated without blood, and the patterns of heavenly things were purified by the blood of these sacrifices; signifying that Christ by his death should sanctify himself for his people, and them unto himself, by the blood of a better covenant, John 17:19; Heb.9:13,14; 1Pet.1:2." Fisher also says that by Moses' sprinkling of blood, "they were taught that by virtue of blood, this covenant betwixt God and them was confirmed, and that Christ, by his blood shed, should satisfy for their sins; for, indeed, the Covenant of Grace was, before the coming of Christ, sealed by his blood in types and figures." (p68). And Burgess, "the visible seal to ratify this covenant which you heard, was by sacrifices, and sprinkling the people with blood: And this did signify Christ. . ." (p236). *J) The SACRAMENTS of the Mosaic Covenant are the same as the Covenant of Grace:* As Blake says, "the Jews had Christ in their sacraments (1 Cor.10:4; 5:7), and we have no more in ours. . .The initiating sacrament of the Jews. . .was that painful *circumcision* in the flesh, yet, those that would be the Lord's did, and must submit unto it. . .he that was not circumcised in the flesh, might not eat of the Passover (Exod.12:48). A full text against all that plead for unbaptized persons admission to the Lord's table, God will not suffer that disorder, that the leading sacrament should come after. The initiating sacrament with Christians is that of baptism, no sooner was a man brought into covenant, but he was straight baptized; as soon as he made profession, he had this sealing engaging sign. . .The following sacrament in the old covenant was that of the *Passover*, a lamb without blemish to be eaten in the place and way that God prescribed. That in the New Testament, is the Supper of the Lord, in ordinary, common, useful, and necessary elements, bread and wine, which are of a strengthening and cheering nature. . ." (pp209-210). And Roberts says, "this Sinai-Covenant, being confirmed and ratified by these seals and tokens of the Covenant of Faith it must needs be a Covenant of Faith in Christ; for it were most improper and absurd to add the seals of the Covenant of Faith, to a Covenant of Works, a Mixed Covenant, a Subservient Covenant, or to any other sort of Covenant but the Covenant of Faith." (p764).

the Mosaic Covenant, contrasting it, and even seeming to oppose it to the grace of the gospel? This is an important question. What we're going to see is that many of these Scriptures can be understood in light of what the older writers referred to as *differences in administration* between the old and new covenants: That is, there are indeed differences between the way the Covenant of Grace was revealed in the Old Testament and the way it is revealed in the New Testament. Further, these differences seem to be most pronounced at Sinai. Still, these are not differences that have to do with *the essence* or *core content* of the covenant (its substance), but rather differences that relate to *the outward form* or *application of the covenant* (its administration). In speaking of the Covenant of Grace, the Westminster Confession states: "This covenant was differently administered in the time of the law, and in the time of the gospel: under the law it was administered by promises, prophecies, sacrifices, circumcision, the paschal lamb, and other types and ordinances delivered to the people of the Jews, all fore-signifying Christ to come. . ."80 So then, the old covenant no less belongs to the Covenant of Grace, but it was "administered" differently than the new. What exactly does this mean? The following are all examples of differences in administration:81

1. **EMPHASIS:** One of the contrasts of "administration" between the old and new covenants has to do with what seems to take center-stage. In the old covenant, the *earthly and temporal* are set forth most visibly, while it's the *heavenly and eternal* that are front and center in the new covenant. This can create confusion as we think about the old covenant. But what we have to realize is this: *Gospel truths* were no less present in the old covenant—it's just that those truths were set forth in and through *earthly pictures*. That is, the old covenant set forth *earthly* benefits *in order to* teach us about *eternal* ones. For instance, the land of Canaan, the physical inheritance that God had promised to Israel—though itself earthly and temporal—was always meant to signify something much more: our eternal inheritance in Christ.⁸² Just as a kernel of rice is wrapped with an outer husk, so too, gospel truths were wrapped with an earthly husk in the old covenant.⁸³ Grasping this truth can help us understand some of the contrasts in Scripture between the old and new covenants. For instance, Paul says in Galatians 4:1-4, "Now I say, as long as the heir is a child, he does not differ at all from a slave although he is owner of everything, but he is under guardians and managers until the date set by the father. So also we, while we were children, were held in bondage under the elemental things of the world."⁸⁴ Paul is speaking about the Old Testament church, comparing them to children. And here, he is likening the ceremonies, pictures, and types of the old covenant to guardians and managers: God was teaching His Old Testament people gospel truth—but He was doing it using things that were tangible and physical—much like we do with our children in Sunday school. As one writer explained: "the Lord dealt with [Israel] as with children in their infancy and under age, leading them on by the help of earthly things, to heavenly and spiritual, because they were but young and tender. . .their covenant did first and chiefly promise earthly blessings, and in and under these it did signify and promise all spiritual blessings and salvation. . .These, and some other circumstantial differences in regard to administration, there were betwixt their way of salvation, or covenant of grace, and ours. . . but in regard to substance, they were all one and the very same. . .in these covenants Jesus Christ is the subject matter of both, salvation the fruit of both, and faith the condition of both."⁸⁵

⁸⁰ WCF 7:5.

⁸¹ For a summary of some of the differences in administration, see: Calvin's Institutes, 2.9.1-2; 2.11.1-13; Burgess, pp251-57; Bridge, pp49-50; Blake, pp205-210; Witsius, V2, pp362-78; Bavinck, V3, pp223-24; Hodge, V2, pp376-77.

⁸² Other examples here would include the ceremonial laws; including the temple furnishings, sacrifices, and ritual cleansings.

⁸³ "The Old Testament...and the New, are sometimes compared and considered by sacred writers, as the thing including and included, the husk and the grain. The gospel before Christ's time, was in the Law as the corn new set in the ear." (Ball, p117).

⁸⁴ Calvin uses this text as the most clear example of this first difference: "Although Paul applies this comparison chiefly to the ceremonies, nothing prevents us from applying it most appropriately here as well. Therefore the same inheritance was appointed for them and for us, but they were not yet old enough to be able to enter upon it and manage it. The same church existed among them, but as yet in its childhood. Therefore, keeping them under this tutelage, the Lord gave, not spiritual promises unadorned and open, but ones foreshadowed, in a measure, by earthly promises." (*Institutes*, 2:11:2).

⁸⁵ Fisher in *The Marrow*, pp69,71. As we noted, Calvin taught that spiritual blessings in the old covenant were represented by the temporal. He explains it thus: "Now this is the first difference: the Lord of old willed that his people direct and elevate their minds to the heavenly heritage; yet, to nourish them better in this hope, he displayed it for them to see and, so to speak, taste, under earthly benefits." (*Institutes*, 2.11.1). Calvin also later retorted: "But away with this insane and dangerous opinion—that the Lord promised the Jews, or that they sought for themselves, nothing but a full belly, delights of the flesh, flourishing wealth, outward power, fruitlessness of offspring, and whatever the natural man prizes! Christ the Lord promises to his followers today no other 'Kingdom of Heaven' than that in which they may 'sit at table with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob' (Matt. 8:11)." (*Institutes*, 2.11.23). Ball says: "The good things promised in this Covenant [IE, the old covenant] are temporal or spiritual; but the temporal as types of spiritual." (p130). Witsius puts it: "The difference of the economies [between the Old

2. **CLARITY:** Because gospel truth in the old covenant was wrapped in the outer husk of the earthly and temporal, it was more hidden from view. In the old covenant, God spoke gospel realities to His people, but He did so *indirectly*, through pictures and types; whereas now in the new covenant He speaks to us *directly*, face to face. There is a measure of clarity in the new covenant that old covenant believers didn't get to experience.⁸⁶ Perhaps this is why the author of Hebrews uses the imagery of *shadows* (rather than pictures or types) to describe the ministry of the old covenant (8:5; 10:1); there was an element of murkiness involved.⁸⁷ The new covenant is at times contrasted with the old because, with the coming of Christ, the things that were formerly dark or obscure have now become crystal clear. Calvin likens it to the light of dawn compared to noonday.⁸⁸ And another writer put it this way: "The revelation of faith before and under the Law was so small, imperfect, dim and obscure, in comparison of the clear, full and glorious manifestation of faith afterwards under the New Testament, that till then it seemed as [if] it were not. . .revealed at all."⁸⁹ This is what Paul is speaking of when he says in Ephesians 3:5 that the mystery of Christ ". . .in other generations was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed to His holy apostles and prophets in the Spirit. . ."⁹⁰ The mystery that Paul is referring to is a certain aspect of gospel truth—that the Gentiles are also fellow inheritors of the promises to Abraham. And Paul is saying that this aspect of gospel truth, though present in the old covenant, had nevertheless been much less clear. But now it has been revealed to the apostles as clear as day.⁹¹ As Bridge puts it: "though the covenant of grace was made with the Jews that were saved, yet it was given more darkly and obscurely; there was a veil upon Moses. . .But now we all with open face behold as in a glass the glory of the Lord," says the apostle, as speaking of the difference between the one and the other (2 Corinthians 3:18)."⁹²

and New Testaments] consists in this, that the same inheritance is held forth different ways: in the New Testament clearly and without any veil; in the Old wrapped up in many types and earthly pledges. . ." (*Economy*, V2, p318). In the new covenant, "the fruit was ripe and broke through the husk. . .Nothing of the Old Testament is lost in the New, but everything is fulfilled, matured, has reached its full growth, and now, out of the temporary husk, produces the eternal core." (Bavinck, V3, p224).

⁸⁶ As Calvin writes: "But now that the gospel has more plainly and clearly revealed the grace of the future life, the Lord leads our minds to meditate upon it directly, laying aside the lower mode of training that he used with the Israelites." (*Institutes*, 2.11.1). Blake says: "The Jew was in the same covenant in his time, as Christians are in gospel times. There is not a promise in the new covenant, whether it be for privileges conferred upon us, or graces wrought in us, but by the help of that light, we may find in the old covenant, the same held out. . .The better-ness is in the greater ease being freed from that bondage of the ceremonial yoke, and in their more distinct clearness." (p208). Roberts distinguishes: "The *Sinai-covenant* or Old Testament, and the *Sion-covenant* or New Testament, are for substance one and the same; though they differ never so much in the circumstance or manner of administration. . .In that, Christ was set forth darkly. . .In this, Christ is set forth clearly. . ." (p786).

⁸⁷ As Blake puts it: "In the Old covenant, all was held out to the people under types, figures, shadows; all about the tabernacle and temple, persons, utensils [?], sacrifices, did lead to Christ; all of these, darkly holding him forth. They had a shadow of good things to come, and not the image of the things themselves (Hebrews 10:1); a little of reality in a great bulk of ceremony. In the New Testament, the truth of it is clearly, and manifestly (without figure or type) held forth unto us." (p207).

⁸⁸ Calvin understands Galatians 3:23 to be speaking of a difference in *Clarity*. Here's the quote used above in its fuller context: "Faith was not yet *revealed*, not because the fathers wanted [IE, lacked] light, but because they had less light than we have. The ceremonies might be said to shadow out an absent Christ, but to us he is represented as actually present, and thus while they had the mirror, we have the substance. Whatever might be the amount of darkness under the law, the fathers were not ignorant of the road in which they ought to walk. Though the dawn is not equal to the splendor of noon, yet, as it is sufficient to direct a journey, travelers do not wait till the sun is fully risen. Their portion of light resembled the dawn, which was enough to preserve them from all error, and guide them to everlasting blessedness." (*Galatians*).

⁸⁹ Francis Roberts, p768.

⁹⁰ This is also how Calvin explains Galatians 3:23 (above); it's also how Roberts sees Galatians 3:23: "Though the Apostle says, 'Before faith came, we were kept under the Law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed' (Galatians 3:23); as intimating that Faith was not revealed *before*, or *under*, but *after* the Law; yet his words are not to be taken *simply* and *absolutely*, as if Faith was not at all revealed till after the Law, for Faith was revealed before the Law, as is evident in the covenant with Abraham, and with Noah; and under the Law, as I have formerly manifested, and as Paul himself plainly testifies; but they must be understood only comparatively and respectively, that till after the Law faith was not revealed so fully and clearly." (p768). Calvin also explains Luke 16:16 as a difference of *Clarity*: "Not that the holy patriarchs were without the preaching that contains the hope of salvation and of eternal life, but that they only glimpsed from afar and in shadowy outline what we see today in full daylight." (*Institutes*, 2.7.16). And again of Luke 16:16: "What did the Law and the Prophets teach to the men of their own time? They gave a foretaste of that wisdom which was one day to be clearly disclosed, and pointed to it twinkling off. But when Christ could be pointed out with the finger, the Kingdom of God was opened." (2.11.5; cf. 2.11.10).

⁹¹ As Hodge explains: "That the Gentiles were to partake of the blessings of the Messiah's reign. . .is not only frequently predicted by the ancient prophets, but Paul himself repeatedly and at length quotes their declarations on this point to prove that what he taught was in accordance with the Old Testament; see Romans 9:25-33. The emphasis must, therefore, be laid on the word *as*. This doctrine was not formerly revealed *as*, ie, not so fully or so clearly as under the gospel." (*Ephesians*).

⁹² Bridge, *Christ and the Covenant*, p49. This is how Hodge understands 2 Corinthians 3:12-13: "*And not as Moses*, that is, we do not do what Moses did. Paul had just said that he used great plainness of speech, that he practiced no concealment or reserve. Of course he means that Moses did the reverse. He did use concealment and practice reserve. This is no

3. CONSUMMATION: Your children can tell you there's all the difference in the world between looking at *the sign* of the ice-cream shop and actually going in and devouring two scoops of mint chocolate-chip. So too, when I was first getting to know my wife, it was a long-distance relationship. And though it was great talking over the phone and looking at her picture, there was a massive difference between that and finally seeing her face to face. Well, that's what it was like with the ushering in of the new covenant. When Christ came into the world, all the signs and pictures of the old covenant finally became a reality. Jesus had come. The *signs* gave way to the *substance*. Christ took on flesh and dwelt among us. In the old covenant the Covenant of Grace was *fore-pictured*, but in the new it was actually *fulfilled*. What was *promised* in the old was finally and actually *performed* in the new. Scripture often contrasts the old and new covenants in this way.⁹³ The author of Hebrews tells us that under the old covenant, “both gifts and sacrifices are offered which cannot make the worshiper perfect in conscience, since they relate only to food and drink and various washings, regulations for the body imposed until a time of reformation.” (9:9). And again, he says, “the Law, since it has only a shadow of the good things to come and not the very form of things, can never, by the same sacrifices which they offer continually year by year, make perfect those who draw near.” (10:1).⁹⁴ The author's point isn't to bash the sacrifices of the Old Testament (after all, it was God himself who commanded them). His point is rather to show us that those sacrifices, in and of themselves, could do nothing—*considered apart from Christ whom they signified*. The sacrifices were only *the shadow*—Christ himself is *the substance* to which all the Old Testament shadows had for so long been pointing. Think of it this way: If you are a man dying of thirst in a scorching desert, *the shadow* of a gushing river—in and of itself—won't do you any good. It's *the actual gushing river* you need. So too, the Old Testament sacrifices—in and of themselves, considered apart from Christ—could do nothing to take away sins. But they were meant to point us to the One who would. As Calvin put it: “in the absence of the reality, [the old covenant] showed but an image and shadow in place of the substance; the New Testament reveals the very substance of truth as present.”⁹⁵

impeachment of the character of Moses. Paul is not speaking of his personal character, but of the nature of his office. The truth concerning man's redemption was not 'in other ages made known unto the sons of men as it is now revealed unto the holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit,' Ephesians 3:5. It was not consistent with the nature of the ministry of Moses to use the *parraesia*, the openness, in communicating the doctrines of redemption, which it is the glory of the Christian ministry to be permitted to employ. He was sent to speak in parables and in types, to set forth truth in the form of significant rites and ceremonies. He put a veil over the glory, not to hide it entirely from view, but to obscure its brightness. The people saw the light, but only occasionally and imperfectly. Paul had already spoken of the brightness of Moses's face as a symbol of his ministry, and therefore he represents him as veiling himself, to express the idea that he communicated the truth obscurely. Paul was sent to let the truth shine forth clearly; he did not put a veil over it as Moses did, and was commanded to do.”

⁹³ Ball writes, “The Old [Testament] doth involve the doctrine of the grace of the Messiah under the shadows of types and rites; the New doth contain the fulfilling of the types and figures. Moses is the typical Mediator of the Old Testament; Christ is the true Mediator of the New. The Old is sealed by the blood of sacrifices; the New is ratified by the blood of the Mediator and death of the Testator. The Old by oblations did not pacify the wrath of God, nor purge the conscience; the New contains the true propitiation in the blood of Christ. . .” (p96); and again: “the first covenant. . . must bring forth a second, in which is fulfilled that which in the first is prefigured.” (p119). Roberts notes: “This unusual way of the Sinai-covenant's administration, was notwithstanding. . . accommodate to that time and people. . . the Ceremonial Law, wherein as in their A,B,C of Christianity they might learn to spell out C-h-r-i-s-t, and sinners' salvation by him; till they should come to ripeness of age in the fullness of time, when Christ himself was actually revealed. They could not ascend to Christ's spirituality; God condescends to their carnality.” (p755,757). Bridge says: “*Then* Christ was in the hand of Moses, *now* Moses is in the hand of Christ.” (p50).

⁹⁴ Again, the Scripture references are from Calvin; who sees much that's written in the book of Hebrews as understood in this light. He says: “a fuller discussion of it is to be found in the letter to the Hebrews than anywhere else.” (*Institutes*, 2:11:4).

⁹⁵ Calvin's full quote is: “The second difference between the Old and New Testaments consists in figures: that, in the absence of the reality, it showed but an image and shadow in place of the substance; the New Testament reveals the very substance of truth as present. . . the Old Testament of the Lord was that covenant wrapped up in the shadowy and ineffectual observance of ceremonies and delivered to the Jews; it was temporary because it remained, as it were, in suspense until it might rest upon a firm and substantial confirmation.” (*Institutes*, 2.11.4). This is largely how Ball understands John 1:17: “the Law prefiguring Christ, and redemption in him, and teaching and commanding what ought to be done, but neither giving grace to do it, nor containing the substance of the thing prefigured, was given by Moses; but grace to do what was commanded came from Christ, in whom also the substance of what was prefigured by the ceremonies, is fulfilled.” (Ball, 119). So also Roberts: “*Moses gave the Law; but Jesus Christ brings grace and truth*. That is. . . Christ brings. . . the true substance and accomplishment of the legal types and shadows now under the New Testament. For truth is here opposed, not to lies and falsehood, but to types and shadows.” (p770). And Colquhoun likewise says of John 1:17: “Considered as a rule of duty in the covenant of grace, and in the hand of Moses the typical mediator, [the Law] was a ministration of *shadows*, as opposed to *truth*. . . It is *truth*, as opposed. . . to *shadows*. . . While Jesus Christ has brought to his Church, the clearest discoveries of redeeming grace, he himself is the substance of all the Jewish types, and the accomplishment of all their predictions and promises.” (p81).

4. **ABROGATION:** Another way we can understand the contrasts in Scripture between the old and new covenants is through the principle of *abrogation*. Now, it's important to understand that when we speak here of abrogation, we're not saying that the Law as a whole is now abrogated for believers in Christ (we'll deal with this in more depth later). Rather, we're speaking of particular aspects of the Mosaic Law. Traditionally, the Mosaic Law has been divided up into three sub-categories: the Moral, the Ceremonial, and the Civil (or Judicial) Law.⁹⁶ *The Moral Law* is summarized in the 10 Commandments; it is the eternal expression of God's will for mankind, and thus *perpetually binding* for all men. But the *Ceremonial and Civil Laws* were never meant to be perpetually binding. The *Ceremonial Laws* had to do with Israel's worship; the *Civil Laws* had to do with Israel's civil State. And these were added as appendixes to the Moral Law.⁹⁷ They were given to a particular people (the Jews) for a particular time (before the coming of Christ), and thus served a *temporary* purpose.⁹⁸ In the words of the Confession (19:3): "Besides this law, commonly called moral, God was pleased to give to the people of Israel, as a church under age, *ceremonial laws*, containing several typical ordinances, partly of worship, prefiguring Christ, His graces, actions, sufferings, and benefits; and partly, holding forth diverse instructions of moral duties. All which ceremonial laws are now abrogated, under the New Testament." And again (19:4): "To them also, as a body politic, He gave sundry *judicial laws*, which expired together with the State of that people; not obliging under any now, further than the general equity thereof may require." This is why Jesus declared all foods to be clean in the new covenant. And it's what Paul was speaking of when he wrote in Colossians 2:16-17, "Therefore no one is to act as your judge in regard to food or drink or in respect to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath day—things which are a mere shadow of what is to come; but the substance belongs to Christ."⁹⁹ If you've ever watched the launching of a space shuttle, you might

⁹⁶ Calvin writes: "*The moral law*. . . is contained under two heads, one of which simply commands us to worship God with pure faith and piety; the other, to embrace men with sincere affection. Accordingly, it is the true and eternal rule of righteousness, prescribed for men of all nations and times, who wish to confirm their lives to God's will. For it is his eternal and unchangeable will that he himself indeed be worshiped by us all, and that we love one another. *The ceremonial law* was the tutelage of the Jews, with which it seemed good to the Lord to train this people, as it were, in their childhood, until the fullness of time should come (Galatians 4:3-4; cf. 3:23-24), in order that he might fully manifest his wisdom to the nations, and show the truth of those things which then were foreshadowed in figures. *The judicial law*, given to them for civil government, imparted certain formulas of equity and justice, by which they might live together blamelessly and peaceably." (see 4.20.15).

⁹⁷ *The Ceremonial Laws* had to do with Israel's worship; they dealt with things such as the tabernacle and its furnishings, the priesthood, the sacrifices, purifications, and the feasts. They were added as an appendix to *the first table of the Law*—which dealt with the relationship between man and his God. *The Judicial Laws* had to do with Israel's civil state; they dealt with the things that related to judicial sentences and proceedings in the court of law. They were thus added as an appendix to *the second table of the Law*—which dealt with the relationship between man and his neighbor. Roberts notes: "The Ceremonial Laws may all be referred to the first table; the Judicial Laws to the second table of the Moral Law, as explications thereof to that people of Israel." (p659). And again: "The Ceremonial and Judicial Laws are nothing else but special appendixes to the Moral Law. . . special ordinances peculiarly concerning the Jewish Church and Commonwealth. The Ceremonial Laws are the exercises of the first table, determining the worship of God prescribed in the first table by external circumstances. The Judicial Laws are the exercises of the second table, determining in like sort righteousness towards men prescribed in the second table by outward circumstances. . . For, the Ceremonial Laws vanished at Christ's death, having received their accomplishment in him; and the Judicials expired at the dissolution of the Jewish Commonwealth." (pp662-663). Colquhoun writes: "He gave the moral law to them, as the primary rule of the obedience, which he required in this covenant (Deut. 4:13). He gave them also, the ceremonial and judicial laws, as appendages to it. . . The ceremonial institutions, which, in the sacred history, are frequently called *Statutes*, were, for the most part, reducible to precepts of the first table; and the judicial laws, which, in the same history, are often styled *Judgments*, were mostly reducible to precepts of the second table." (p73). Roberts is in agreement, adding that *the Moral Law* was often called "commandments", "laws" or "testimonies" (pp661-62).

⁹⁸ This is even reflected in one way Roberts categorizes them: "God's Law given to Moses and Israel on Mount Sinai, is. . . most usually divided into three sorts; [namely], *Moral, Ceremonial, and Judicial*. Or, if we rather affect a dichotomy, into two sorts; [namely], 1) *Perpetual*, of obligatory force and power forever, as the Moral Law, contained in Ten Commandments. 2) *Temporary*, of obligatory power and force only for a certain time, and then determinable; and this concerning, a) the worship and service of God, as the Ceremonial Law; b) the Civil State and Polity of the Jews, as the Judicial Law. Both of which were to determine and expire after the death of Christ; Christ being the substance or body of those shadows, the accomplishment of those ceremonies; and the Commonwealth of the Jews not long after Christ's death being utterly dissolved." (Roberts, p661).

⁹⁹ Together with the principle noted earlier of *Emphasis*, the principle of *Abrogation* is also part of what Paul was speaking of in Galatians 4:1-11. The Old Testament Church was under the guardians and managers of the ceremonial laws (vv2-3), but now that Christ, the substance, has come (v4), there's no need to continue to observe the Old Testament shadows whose sole purpose was to point to Him (vv9-10). This passage in Galatians 4 is one of the main proof texts for the portion of WCF 20:1 which reads that, "But, under the New Testament, the liberty of Christians is further enlarged, in their freedom from the yoke of the ceremonial law, to which the Jewish church was subjected. . ." Citing Galatians 4:1-4, Ball likewise writes: "The Jews were children and heirs, but tutored and kept under with many ceremonial ordinances and observations as appendices to the Law, expedient for that time and state." (p141). Galatians 3:25 also in part refers to the "tutelage" of the ceremonial laws that have now been abrogated. We'll talk more about this in the next section (*Freedom*), but here we could briefly note that 3:25 looks back to both v22 and v23: we are free both from *the Law's condemnation* (v22) as well as *the Law's ceremonies* (v23).

have noticed that after a certain time, part of the shuttle disconnects and falls back to the earth. The piece that disconnects is the external fuel tank; it provides the fuel needed to get to space; but after it serves its purpose, it's no longer needed and disconnects from the shuttle. The Ceremonial and Civil Laws of Israel were like that external fuel tank. They served a temporary purpose, but now that Christ has come, they're no longer needed. Now that we have the kernel, we can do away with the husk.¹⁰⁰

5. **FREEDOM:** Because the Ceremonial Laws have been abrogated and the Judicial Laws have expired, New Testament believers now in turn have a greater measure of freedom. It's this distinction that Paul seems to be referring to in Galatians 3:23, where he says, "But before faith came, we were kept in custody under the law, being shut up to the faith which was later to be revealed." Most traditional commentators understand the phrase, *before faith came*, as referring not to the *message of faith* (IE, before the way of salvation was revealed), nor to the *reception of faith* (IE, before we put our trust in Christ), but rather to Christ, the *object of faith* (IE, before Jesus took on flesh and inaugurated the new covenant).¹⁰¹ And Paul is saying, before Christ came into the world, God's Old Testament people "were kept in custody under the law, being shut up to the faith which was later to be revealed." Well, it sure doesn't sound very good, and it's a definite contrast, but this verse is not here putting the old covenant against the new. In the context of the passage, Paul has been describing how the Moral Law condemns us all for our sin (v22). We are guilty sinners, and the Moral Law is hunting us down to execute judgment against us. It's in this light that Paul begins to talk about the Ceremonial Law. For the Old Testament people of God, being under the Ceremonial Law was like being "in custody"—it was burdensome, to be sure—but it was a *gracious* custody. How so? As Calvin beautifully puts it: "They were besieged on every hand by the curse, *but this siege was counteracted by an imprisonment which protected them from the curse*; so that the imprisonment by the law is here proved to have been highly generous in its character."¹⁰² Think

¹⁰⁰ I love how Burgess puts it: "The Law, in that Mosaic administration, was to endure but till Christ the fullness came; and then, as the scaffolds are pulled down when the house is built, so were all those external ordinances to be abolished, when Christ himself came. A candle is superfluous when the sun appears. A school-master is not necessary to those that have obtained perfect knowledge. Milk is not comely for those who live on solid meat. The chaff preserves the corn, but when the corn is gathered, the chaff is thrown away. And when the fruit comes, the flower falls to the ground. . ." (Burgess, p256). Calvin explains it this way: "For because the Old bore the image of things absent, it had to die and vanish with time. The gospel, because it reveals the very substance, stands fast forever" (*Institutes* 2:11:8). Burgess says: "The second excellency [of the ministry of the gospel above that of the Law] is in regard of continuance and duration. The ministry of Moses was to be made void and abolished; which is to be understood of that Jewish pedagogy, not of every part of it; for the Moral, as given by Moses, does still oblige us Christians, as has been already proven; but the ministry of the gospel is to abide always. . ." (p268). Fisher writes, "the old covenant, in respect of the outward form and manner of sealing, was temporary and changeable; and therefore the types ceased, and only the substance remains firm. . ." (p71). But Calvin also reminds us: "The ceremonies. . . have been abrogated not in effect but only in use. Christ by his coming has terminated them, but has not deprived them of anything of their sanctity; rather, he has approved and honored it. . . Let it be regarded as a fact that, although the rites of the law have ceased to be observed, by their termination one may better recognize how useful they were before the coming of Christ, who in abrogating their use has by his death sealed their force and effect." (*Institutes*, 2.7.16).

¹⁰¹ Not *the message of faith*, because that message was revealed far before the Law was declared, beginning with the promise of Genesis 3:15; not *the reception of faith*, because the verse isn't speaking of us coming to faith, but rather of faith coming to us. As Calvin says: "Faith was not yet *revealed*, not because the fathers wanted light, but because they had less light than we have. The ceremonies might be said to shadow out an absent Christ, but to us he is represented as actually present, and thus while they had the mirror, we have the substance." (*Galatians*). Perkins says of Galatians 3:23: "Paul in the 19th verse had said, that *the law was for transgressions, till the seed come, to which the promise was made*. And here [in Galatians 3:23] he makes a more large declaration of his own meaning. . . *Faith* [signifies] the gospel, or, the doctrine of remission of sins and life everlasting by Christ, *exhibited in the flesh*." (p198). In other words, the "faith" that "came" in 3:23 refers back to the "seed" yet to "come" in 3:19. John Gill says: "*But before faith came*. . . This is to be understood, not of the grace of faith, which was under the former dispensation, as now; the Old Testament saints had the same Spirit of faith, and the same grace of faith, as for its nature, object, and use, as New Testament saints have; Adam, Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham [etc] believed in Christ, and were justified by faith in his righteousness, as we are. . . it is best to interpret it of Christ, the object of faith, who was to come, and is come in the flesh, to fulfill the law; and, by so doing, has put an end to it; and to redeem his people from under it, and to save them with an everlasting salvation. . ." Luther says of Galatians 3:23, "We know that Paul has reference to the time of Christ's coming. It was then that faith and the object of faith were fully revealed. But we may apply the historical fact to our inner life. When Christ came He abolished the Law and brought liberty and life to light. This He continues to do. . ."

¹⁰² From Calvin, *Galatians*, on his note for 3:23. How does the entire passage of 3:19-25 fit together? I take the "Therefore" of v24 as referring back not only to verse 23, but also to the whole passage of vv19-23. So how did the Law thus become our tutor (IE, the tutor of the OT people of God and with us as secondarily application)? In two ways primarily: 1) It condemned us for our sin (what Paul said in vv19-22); and 2) it bound us to the ceremonies (what we just saw from v23). Put simply, the condemnation of the Moral Law as outlined in v22 (IE, the Law *strictly* taken—Do this and live, do it not and die) served to drive them to the Ceremonial Law as outlined in v23 (IE, the Law *largely* taken—including the promises and pictures of the gospel), which was their gospel as it fore-pictured Christ. As we quoted Edward Fisher saying earlier: "*the moral law* did teach

about all those families in Germany during the reign of Hitler who risked their lives to hide Jewish people in their homes. Now, for those Jewish people hiding behind bookcases and in secret rooms, life for them was very much like an imprisonment. They were restricted and confined; it was unpleasant and burdensome—but *it was this very imprisonment that actually served to protect them*. Well, the Ceremonial Laws were just like this for God's people. They were burdensome, and yet also merciful, because it was those very laws that taught them of Christ, so that those pictures and sacrifices were the very means by which they were saved. After all, as one pointed out, “by the Law they were, *not shut up from the faith, but shut up unto the faith, that after should be revealed.*”¹⁰³ The Ceremonies served to protect God's people until the coming of Christ. But in the new covenant we are set free from the bondage connected with them. Those Jews in hiding must have been grateful beyond words for those secret rooms; but after all, it was just a temporary arrangement. Once the country was liberated, they no longer needed to keep living “in custody.”¹⁰⁴ And so it is for us as new covenant believers in Jesus.¹⁰⁵

6. EFFECT: You may be familiar with the theologian Jonathan Edwards and the Great Awakening that became associated, in part, with his ministry. It was at the height of the Great Awakening, in July 1741, that Edwards preached a sermon called, *Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God*. God spoke to the listeners of this particular sermon in such a powerful way that Edwards was interrupted several times by people audibly moaning, and crying out, “What shall I do to be saved?” But not everyone knows that this was actually the second time Edwards preached this sermon. He preached *the same sermon* to his own congregation earlier, and as far as we know, there wasn't nearly the same effect. Sometimes God is pleased to work more powerfully than at other times. And this is another way that Scripture seems to contrast the old and new covenants. In Jeremiah 31:33, the Lord tells His people about the new covenant He would make with them, contrasting it with the covenant He had made with them at Sinai, saying: “But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days,' declares the Lord, 'I will put My law within them and on their heart I will write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.’” This is truly an amazing promise; but it also leaves us wondering: Didn't God do the same thing in the Old Testament? Did God only begin to write His Law in the hearts of His people in the new covenant? Wasn't it David who wrote, “Your word I have treasured in my heart, that I may not sin against you” (Psalm 119:11)?¹⁰⁶ How then are we to understand the prophecy in Jeremiah? I think in this way: God *did* write His Law on the hearts of His old covenant people. There were indeed many in the Old Testament, such as David, who embraced God's covenant through faith. God took His

and show them what they should do, and so what they did not; and this made them go to *the ceremonial law*; and by that they were taught that Christ had done it for them; the which they believing, were made righteous by faith in him.” Then for v25: it is in these two ways that we are no longer under the Law. We are still under the authority of the Moral Law as believers. But we are no longer under the Law 1) as it condemns us for our sin—cf. v22 (this aspect was also true for OT believers); nor are we under under the Law 2) as it binds us to the ceremonies—cf. v23 (this aspect is true only for us as new covenant believers).

¹⁰³ Here's the full quote from Francis Roberts: “the Law. . . is not against the promises, or Covenant of faith. It is *diverse*, but not *adverse*; subordinate, not contradictory to the New Testament. . . by the Law they were, *not shut up from the faith, but shut up unto the faith, that after should be revealed.*” (pp744-45). It's an important distinction. If Paul had said that the Law shut us up *from* the faith, it would be opposed to the new covenant. But the Law actually shut us up *unto* the faith that was later to be revealed. Galatians 3:23 isn't saying that the Law kept us *from* Christ, but rather that the (Ceremonial) Law kept us *for* Christ. The verse is saying that the Ceremonial Laws were actually God's way of protecting His Old Testament people.

¹⁰⁴ Another example here could be Noah's ark. I'm sure it wasn't a pleasant place to live for an entire year—it would have been restrictive, like being shut up in a prison—and yet it was the very means of Noah and his family being saved and entering into the new heavens and the new earth. So too, after the flood was over, there was no need to continue living in the ark.

¹⁰⁵ Together with *Emphasis* and *Abrogation*, we also see this truth in Galatians 4:1-11. *Calvin*: “The Old held consciences bound by the yoke of bondage; the New by its spirit of liberality emancipates them into freedom. . . Further, we shall deny that [even the patriarchs] were so endowed with the spirit of freedom and assurance as not in some degree to experience the fear and bondage arising from the law. For, however much they enjoyed the privilege that they had received through the grace of the gospel, they were still subject to the same bonds and burdens of the ceremonial observances as the common people. They were compelled to observe those ceremonies punctiliously, symbols of a tutelage resembling bondage (cf. Gal. 4:2-3); and the written bonds (cf. Col. 2:14). . .” (2:11:9). *Hodge*: “when contrasted with the new or Christian economy, as a different mode of revealing the same covenant, it is spoken of as a state of tutelage and bondage, far different from the freedom and filial spirit of the dispensation under which we now live.” (V2, p376). The Westminster Confession says: “under the New Testament, the liberty of Christians is further enlarged, in their freedom from the yoke of the ceremonial law, to which the Jewish Church was subjected” (20:1). Shaw comments on WCF 20:1 saying: “Christians are now freed from the yoke of the ceremonial law. The Jewish Church was kept 'in bondage under the elements of the world' (Gal. 4:3); but that burdensome yoke is not imposed on the Christian Church (Acts 15:10). The ancient ceremonies were abrogated, in point of obligation, by the death of Christ; and though, for a time, the use of them was indifferent, yet, upon the full promulgation of the gospel, and the destruction of the temple of Jerusalem, the observance of them became unlawful; and the Apostle Paul exhorted Christians to 'stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ had made them free, and not be entangled again with the yoke of bondage.' (Gal. 5:1).”

Word and applied it effectually to their hearts. But, sadly, there were also countless others who remained unchanged. Moses told his whole congregation in the wilderness: “Yet to this day the Lord has not given you a heart to know, nor eyes to see, nor ears to hear.” (Deuteronomy 29:4).¹⁰⁷ And Isaiah cried out, “For though your people, O Israel, may be like the sand of the sea, only a remnant within them will return. . .” (10:22).¹⁰⁸ So then, though many in the old covenant embraced the message of the gospel, many more remained unchanged. Though there were periods of revival and decline in Israel, it seems on the whole that few embraced Christ. But it would be different in the new covenant. This is the point of Jeremiah's contrast. God would write His Law on the hearts of His people on a much greater scale. So that if we think of the multitude of those whom God is now effectually drawing to himself in the new covenant Church, we have to say that those who embraced the covenant in ancient Israel were few by comparison. Just as with Edwards' sermon, the *content* was the same in the Old Testament; the old covenant was no less about the gospel (Hebrews 4:2,6). But the *effect* would be different in the new covenant, because God now applies His Word powerfully to the hearts of His people, by His Spirit, in a much greater proportion.¹⁰⁹ As one writer put it: “as one star differs from another in glory, thus did the Church of the Jews, from that of Christians. They had drops, but we have the fountain. . .”¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁶ See also Psalm 37:31, where David, writing in the old covenant, says of the righteous that the Law of God is in his heart.

¹⁰⁷ And Deuteronomy 32:5 declares, “They are not His children, because of their defect; but are a perverse and crooked generation.” Witsius: “In that one nation of Israel, very few were partakers of saving grace. . .and therefore Moses said to the whole people, with a reference to the generality of them, Deut. 29:4, Jehovah hath not given you a heart to perceive, and eyes to see, and ears to hear; for they who were favored with that grace, compared with the rest, were inconsiderable” (V2, p372).

¹⁰⁸ Isaiah is full of this kind of language; see Isaiah 1:4; 5:2; 65:2, etc. So is Jeremiah: 6:13; 7:25-26; 8:10; 9:26; 22:21; etc.

¹⁰⁹ Writing on Jeremiah 31:33, Calvin grapples with the question: “*Was the grace of regeneration wanting to the Fathers under the Law?*” But this is quite preposterous. What, then, is meant when God denies here that the Law was written on the heart before the coming of Christ? . . .this grace of God was rare and little known under the Law; but. . . under the Gospel the gifts of the Spirit have been more abundantly poured forth, and. . .God has dealt more bountifully with his Church.” And again: “But it may be asked, whether there was under the Law a sure and certain promise of salvation, whether the fathers had the gift of the Spirit, whether they enjoyed God's paternal favor through the remission of sins? Yes, it is evident that they worshipped God with a sincere heart and a pure conscience, and that they walked in his commandments, and this could not have been the case except they had been inwardly taught by the Spirit; and it is also evident, that whenever they thought of their sins, they were raised up by the assurance of a gratuitous pardon. And yet the Apostle, by referring the prophecy of Jeremiah to the coming of Christ, seems to rob them of these blessings. To this I reply, that he does not expressly deny that God formerly wrote his Law on their hearts and pardoned their sins, but he makes a comparison between the less and the greater. As then the Father has put forth more fully the power of his Spirit under the kingdom of Christ, and has poured forth more abundantly his mercy on mankind, this exuberance renders insignificant the small portion of grace which he had been pleased to bestow on the fathers.” (Hebrews 8:10). He then clarifies: “If it be objected and said, that the faith and obedience of Abraham so excelled, that hardly any such an example can at this day be found in the whole world; my answer is this, that the question here is not about persons, but that reference is made to the economical condition of the Church.” And the Westminster Annotations on Jeremiah 31:33 says: “that spiritual grace is withall here promised, whereby they should be enabled to become God's people, not in title and profession alone, but in truth (John 1:47; Rom. 2:28-29; Gal. 6:15-16).”

¹¹⁰ The full quote is: “The second particular difference is in respect of the measure of grace. Hence the Scripture speaks, as if they had under the Old Testament none at all, merely because there was not such a plentiful effusion of his Spirit upon them; not but that if we consider some particular persons, they might have such degrees of grace, that few under the Gospel can be compared unto them, as Abraham and David; but this was not according to the ordinary dispensation of his graces then. So that as one star differs from another in glory, thus did the Church of the Jews, from that of Christians. They had drops, but we have the fountain; they had glimmerings, but we have the sun itself.” (Burgess, p254). Thomas Brooks: “There is more abundance of the Spirit of grace, of light, of knowledge, of holiness, poured out generally upon the people of God now, than there was in those times. Though then some few eminent saints had much of the Spirit, and much of grace and holiness, both in their hearts and lives; but now the generality of the saints have more of the Spirit, and more grace and holiness, than the generality of the saints had in those times.” (V5, p287). Calvin: “We are not to surmise from this difference between letter and spirit that the Lord had fruitlessly bestowed his law upon the Jews, and that none of them turned to him. But it was put forward by way of comparison to commend the grace abounding, wherewith the same Lawgiver. . .honored the preaching of the gospel. For suppose we reckon the multitude of those whom he gathers into the communion of his church from all peoples, men regenerated by his Spirit through the preaching of the gospel. Then we will say that in ancient Israel there were very few—almost none—who embraced the Lord's covenant with their whole hearts and minds. Yet, reckoned by themselves without comparison, there were many.” (*Institutes*, 2.11.8). Roberts: “Under the *Old Covenant* the Spirit of God was given but so sparingly, so restrictively, to an handful of people the Jews, and in such small measure, and producing so few and small effects; that it is said, not to be given; *for the Holy Ghost was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified*. But under the *New Covenant* the Spirit was shed forth abundantly, in great variety of graces and gifts, both upon Jews and Gentiles, beginning at *Pentecost* to be poured forth upon the Apostles, and afterwards falling upon private believers.” (p1256). Again: “The *Ellicacy* of former administrations, was very weak and small, in comparison of this New Covenant administration which is great and powerful. Under those the Holy Spirit was but as it were sparingly sprinkled upon them; their knowledge and love of God was dark, feeble childlike; their hearts were very stony hard and inflexible, as God intimated to them in writing his Laws upon stones, etc. But under this, the Holy Spirit is plentifully poured forth as in streams and rivers upon them; and into them; their knowledge and love of God is clear, strong, ripe, man-like: their hearts very fleshy and flexible to God and his will,

7. COMPARISON: The last difference in administration between the old and new covenants is in many ways a summary of all that has gone before. We've seen that in the new covenant, we have the *gospel kernel* removed from its outward, earthly husk. The *gospel clarity* we now enjoy in the new covenant is like high-noon compared with the light of dawn by which the old covenant saints walked. Instead of merely the shadow of gushing water in a desert, we have *Christ, the fountain himself*. We enjoy a greater measure of *gospel freedom*, having been released from the burdens of the Ceremonial Laws. And now in the new covenant, *God writes His Law* on the hearts of His people in a much greater proportion than ever before. In light of these things, though the old covenant was full of gospel glory, it's almost as if it had no glory at all when we compare it to the new covenant. Well, this was exactly what Paul was saying in 2 Corinthians 3:7-11: "But if the ministry of death. . .came with glory. . .how will the ministry of the

etc. Hence, the Old Testament ministration is called *the ministration of the letter, that condemns and kills*, viz, an ineffectual ministration, showing the letter of the duty and death in case of non-performance, but affording no ability for that duty; but the New Testament ministration is called *the ministration of the Spirit that quickneth*, and is a *ministration of righteousness*, viz, an effectual and powerful ministration, that affords sufficiency of ability for the duty which it requires. Hence, the Spirit is said *not to be given, till Christ was glorified*: not as if it had not been given at all; but because it was bestowed so sparingly and slenderly, in comparison to what is now, that it might seem not to be given at all. [Also,] the *Extent* of former Covenant administrations, was but to particular families, as of Adam, Noah, Abraham, David; or to some particular tribes, as to the captives of Judah and Benjamin, or to a select nation, as to the Jews at Mount Sinai: Alas, how few, what a small handful were all these to the rest of the world! And yet of this small number, how few were there that had any saving inscription of Gods Laws upon their hearts at all? And we say, *minimum in magne nihil*, a small thing in that which is great is as nothing; a drop is as nothing in the sea, a grain of sand is as nothing in the earth: so the writing of God's Laws in the hearts of so few, is as nothing in the world. But the extent of this New Covenant administration is universal, *to all nations in the whole world*; and consequently Gods writing of his Laws in mens hearts is proportionably extended to all Gods people in all those nations: to many thousands and ten thousands more than under all former Covenant expressures." (pp1383-86). *Why was the old covenant less efficacious?* Roberts says: "Under the *Old Testament*, as the foederates knowledge of God was less clear and less perfect, so it was less efficacious. The power and efficacy thereof was proportionable. They rested much in a literal and notional knowledge; few of them had a spiritualized knowledge; consequently the efficacy of their knowledge upon them was either none at all, or very slender. Literals and mere notionals have no efficacy; weak spirituals have but weak efficacy upon the hearts and lives. But under the *New Covenant* the foederates knowledge of God, etc, is much more powerful, strong, and efficacious. The Apostle signifies this excellently, saying, 'But we all with open face, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.'" (p1408). *MORE THOROUGH EXPOSITION OF JEREMIAH 31:31-34*: I wanted to add a bit more detail here. Many understand the words "new covenant" in Jeremiah 31:31 as encompassing all of the differences in administration that we've been speaking of between the old and new covenants (IE, emphasis, clarity, consummation, abrogation, freedom), as well as that of efficacy, but while all of these may be mentioned, still it seems Jeremiah is mainly speaking of the difference in efficacy between old and new covenants. He's not contrasting the old and new covenants *in general*, but especially *one aspect of them in particular*: in the old covenant, God's people broke his covenant, because, it is inferred, God's Law was written externally on stone but not in their hearts; whereas in the new covenant, God's Law would be written internally in their hearts, and thus they would be covenant keepers rather than covenant breakers. IE, in the old covenant God's people turned away because they didn't have God's Law in their hearts; but in the new they would never turn away because they truly would have His Law in their hearts. For full understanding, we need to clarify a few things from the passage: 1) *The essence or substance of the two covenants is exactly the same*: Notice that the word "Law" is actually used of the new covenant, not the old. Jeremiah isn't saying that the Law was what was written in the old covenant, but the gospel would be written in the new. Nor does Jeremiah say a *new Law* would be given, but rather that a *new covenant* would be made, in which the same Law would be written in a different place. The difference isn't *what* was written but rather *where* it was written. So it's not that the Mosaic Covenant was about the Law, whereas the new covenant will be about the gospel. The Mosaic Covenant was no less about the gospel. So when we read that Israel broke this covenant, we're not to think that Jeremiah means that Sinai was a legal dispensation and the people broke the Law (as all of us do). After all, if that's what Jeremiah is saying, how do we make any sense of the contrast? If we also in the new covenant break God's Law by not keeping it perfectly, what sense can we make of Jeremiah's contrast, where the new will be so different from the old? No, when Jeremiah speaks of Israel breaking the covenant, he's not talking about breaking the Law, he's actually talking about breaking the covenant itself—which was a Covenant of Grace. In other words, he means they failed to embrace the covenant from the heart, by faith. And this is what would be different in the new covenant: God's new covenant people would embrace the covenant from the heart. 2) *The members of the two covenants are spoken of in general*: When God says that "they" broke the old covenant (v32), he's not speaking of every single individual, as we've seen, but rather about Israel in general, on the whole. Again, there were indeed many who embraced God's covenant from the heart under the old covenant, but taken on the whole, the people turned away. Well, the same principle applies to the objects of the new covenant. When God says that in the new covenant He will put His Law within "them", He's not talking about every single individual, but of the people on the whole. If it is objected that verse 34 tells us that God is indeed speaking of every individual, in that it says "they will *all* know Me", we would simply refer back to verses 29-30, which clarify that not every single individual is meant, but again the population on the whole, for even in the new covenant there will be some who yet eat the sour grapes and die for their own iniquity. This is confirmed by that expression in verse 34, "from the least of them to the greatest of them", for Jeremiah uses the same phrase twice before this passage (6:13; 8:10) in speaking of how Israel in his day had turned away from the Lord; but surely no one takes him to be speaking of every single individual; the prophet is

Spirit fail to be even more with glory? For if the ministry of condemnation has glory, much more does the ministry of righteousness abound in glory. For indeed what had glory, in this case has no glory because of the glory that surpasses it. For if that which fades away was with glory, much more that which remains is in glory.” A little later we’ll deal with this passage in much more detail. But for now, just notice that Paul is affirming that the ministry of Moses had glory; he’s just saying that the glory of the new covenant is so much more by comparison. Francis Roberts puts it beautifully: “This *New Covenant* outshines the *Old*, as far as the sun outshines the moon. Yea as the moon derives and borrows all her clear light from the sun. . . so the *Old Covenant*. . . derived and borrowed as it were all her clearest light from Christ, and the mysteries of the *New Covenant*. There was a gloriousness in the *Old Covenant*: but a far greater glory in the *New*.”¹¹¹ The painting of a lavish feast is fine and good, but it can never compare with the banquet itself (especially if you’re hungry). Looking at a picture of my wife is wonderful, but it can never compare to being with her face to face. This is Paul’s whole point in 2 Corinthians 3. It’s also what the author of Hebrews was speaking of when he calls the new covenant “a better covenant” (7:22; 8:6). The new covenant is infinitely better than the old because we now have Christ minus the husk, we have Christ without any obscurity, we have Christ himself instead of the shadows, we have Christ without the burdens of the Ceremonial Laws, and we have Christ applying His Word effectually to our hearts through the Holy Spirit. It is truly an amazing privilege to be a Christian in the new covenant church.¹¹²

SUMMARY: We’ve been trying to answer the question: If the Mosaic Covenant is really part of the Covenant of Grace, why is it that certain Scriptures seem to speak so negatively about Sinai? And we’ve seen that many of these Scriptures speak this way because they are comparing and contrasting the ministry of the old covenant with that of the new. So then, this is what we have to understand: In all these Scriptures, the contrast *isn’t* between the old covenant and the Covenant of Grace; the contrast is *rather* between the old covenant administration of the Covenant of Grace and the new covenant administration of the Covenant of Grace. Paul isn’t telling us that the Mosaic Covenant doesn’t belong to the *Covenant of Grace*. He’s simply telling us that the Mosaic Covenant doesn’t belong to the *new covenant*.¹¹³

rather characterizing the vast majority of the people. Jeremiah is not saying there were *no* individuals who knew God in the old covenant, nor is he saying that *every* individual would know God in the new covenant, but rather that on the whole, God’s people turned away from Him in the old, but that they would know and walk with Him in the new. 3) *The reason for this contrast between old and new covenants is that God would cause His Word to take effect upon His people in a much greater proportion in the new covenant*, as we’ve shown above. This isn’t to say that there were periods in the old covenant when the Spirit was so powerfully at work that it seemed as if that time belonged to the new covenant; or in turn, that there will be periods in the new covenant when the workings of the Spirit seem so small and insignificant that it will resemble more the times of the old covenant. But the comparison is a general one; Jeremiah is speaking of the two dispensations on the whole when he tells us that *the old covenant* was characterized by the writing of God’s Word externally on stone (even though He also wrote that same Word in the hearts of His people), and that *the new covenant* would be characterized by the writing of God’s Word internally in the hearts of His people (even though it is no less still written externally on the pages of our Bibles). The old covenant included God’s Law written internally on hearts; and the new covenant includes God’s Law written externally on paper, but the difference is that the old would be *marked and characterized by* the external writing, whereas the new would be *marked and characterized by* the internal writing. And the reason is that God would take His Word and apply it effectually to the hearts of His people unto salvation in such a greater proportion in the new covenant than in the old.

¹¹¹ Roberts, *Mystery and Marrow*, p1714; cf. pp1410, 1689. Hodge says, “It was of the same kind, though less in degree, as the glory of the gospel. The one dispensation was indeed glorious, but the other was more so.” (2 *Corinthians*; p78).

¹¹² Roberts likewise understands the new covenant to be “better” in many of the same ways we have been describing: “Now this New Covenant is called a Better Covenant and Testament in opposition to the Old Covenant and Testament. And this, not in essence and substance; but in accidents and circumstances, viz: 1) *Because, it is established upon better promises*. The promises of the Old Covenant were a) more carnal and earthly; b) more obscure, in Christ to come afterwards; c) more restrained, to one nation of the Jews. . . But the promises of this New Covenant are a) more spiritual and heavenly; b) more clear and conspicuous in Christ come already; c) more extensive and universal, to all nations. 2) *Because, it is not an earthly, servile, slavish, terrible dispensation. . . but a heavenly, free, filial and comfortable dispensation. . . 3) Because, it was dedicated with better sacrifice and blood, than the Old Covenant*. Not with the typical sacrifices and blood of slain beasts; but with the true sacrifice and blood of Jesus Christ. . . 4) *Because, it is administered by a better priesthood, even the perfect, everlasting, unchangeable Melchizedekian priesthood of Jesus Christ himself. . . 5) Because, upon all the grounds why it’s called, A New Covenant, it may also deservedly be counted a better covenant.*” (pp1264-65). Later, he adds: “The New Covenants promises are better promises, than those of the Old Covenant, and consequently much more than those of the fore-going covenants, in many regards; as: 1) *Better in regard of perspicuity and clearness. . . 2) Better in regard of spirituality. . . 3) Better in regard of divine efficacy and sufficiency. . . 4) Better in regard of extent. . . 5) Better in regard of duration. . .*” (pp1674-75). See also Witsius, V2, pp362ff. We could summarize by saying: “The same redemption, sanctification, justification, adoption and glorification, even the same complete salvation by Christ, was revealed in both covenants; though in different manners and degrees. . . The New Testament promises are better than those of the Old; not in *kind*, but in *degree*.” (Roberts, p784).

¹¹³ Roberts draws out this distinction beautifully in the course of his discussion of Jeremiah 31:33. He says, “The Sinai-Covenant, made with Israel when God brought them out of the land of Egypt, is said to be unlike, or not according to the New

SUMMARY OF THE DIFFERENCES IN ADMINISTRATION BETWEEN THE OLD AND NEW COVENANTS:

	IN THE OLD COVENANT	IN THE NEW COVENANT
EMPHASIS	The gospel was packaged in a temporal husk	The gospel is set forth without the temporal husk
CLARITY	The gospel was revealed but indirectly and darkly	The gospel is set forth with full noon-day clarity
CONSUMMATION	Redemption was promised, pictured, signified	Redemption is performed by Christ the substance
ABROGATION	The Ceremonial Laws applied to OT church	The Ceremonial Laws abrogated for NT church
FREEDOM	God's people were held in custody and burdened	God's people are set free from that bondage
EFFECT	God's Word produced little effect on most hearts	God's Word has a much greater effect on hearts
COMPARISON	Thus, the old covenant was full of gospel glory	But the glory of the new covenant is much greater

IV. Dealing with Objections, Part 2: The *Requirement* of the Mosaic Covenant

We've been showing that the Mosaic Covenant wasn't a Covenant of Works, a Mixed Covenant, or a Subservient Covenant, but rather that it's simply another manifestation of the Covenant of Grace. We mentioned that there are three main objections to this view. The first had to do with *the nature of the covenant at Sinai*; this is the objection we just finished dealing with. The second objection has to do with *the requirement of the covenant at Sinai*; what it is that the Law demands. Paul says in Romans 10:5: "For Moses writes that the man who practices the righteousness which is based on law shall live by that righteousness. But the righteousness based on faith speaks as follows. . ." This same principle is echoed in Galatians 3:10-12, where Paul writes: "For as many as are of the works of the Law are under a curse; for it is written, 'Cursed is everyone who does not abide by all things written in the book of the Law, to perform them.' Now that no one is justified by the Law before God is evident, for, 'The righteous man shall live by faith.' However, the Law is not of faith; on the contrary, 'He who practices them shall live by them.'" Paul is telling us in these passages that the Law operates on a completely different system than that of faith. The Covenant of Grace requires faith, but the Law requires perfect, personal, and perpetual obedience. The Covenant of Grace says: "*Believe in Christ* and you shall live", but the Law says: "*Keep the commands* and you shall live." This creates a problem: If the Covenant of Grace operates on the principle of faith, but the Law is *not* of faith, how is it that the Mosaic Covenant can be part of the Covenant of Grace? If the Law and faith are two mutually exclusive systems, how can we say that Sinai is an administration of Grace? If what God requires in the Law is something completely different than what He requires in the gospel, how can we say that the Mosaic Covenant belongs to the Covenant of Grace?

1. **GENERAL PASSAGES FROM THE LAW:** Paul cites two passages here: In Romans 10:5, he cites Leviticus 18:5; and in Galatians 3:11-12, he cites both Deuteronomy 27:26 and Leviticus 18:5. But the Law is full of these kinds of Scriptures: In Exodus 19:5, the Lord tells His people: "Now then, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be My own possession among all the peoples. . ." Deuteronomy 4:1 says, "Now, O Israel, listen to the statutes and the judgments which I am teaching you to perform, so that you may live. . ." ¹¹⁴ Deuteronomy 5:33 says, "You shall walk in all the way which the Lord your God has commanded you, that you may live and that it may be well with you. . ." Deuteronomy 6:25 tells us, "It will be righteousness for us if we are careful to observe all this

Covenant; but it is not said either by the prophet or apostle to be unlike to the Covenant of Faith [IE, Grace]. And the dissimilitude or difference here intimated betwixt the Sinai-Covenant and the New Covenant, is not in substance or kind, for in both the Lord says, 'I will be their God and they shall be My people;' but only in manner of administration and degree. God promising in His New Covenant a greater, fuller, and clearer measure of grace upon His people, than under the Sinai Covenant. . . They are both Covenants of Faith, but the New Covenant every way more excellent, complete and perfect." (Roberts, pp769-70). There are other differences in administration that we didn't explicitly mention here. For example, another difference is that the old covenant was primarily limited to the Jews, whereas the new covenant is meant to spread to every tribe and tongue and nation. Also, the graces of the Spirit are more generally poured out on believers now in the new covenant than in the old. Further, the old covenant was always meant to be temporary, but the new covenant is permanent.

¹¹⁴ John Ball rightly notes that *live* in these passages refers primarily to *eternal* life: "Eternal life is promised in the Covenant [IE, at Sinai]. . . Not only long life and good days, in the land of Canaan, but eternal life is assured by the promise to them that keep Covenant, as eternal death and destruction is comprehended under the curse denounced against them that break the Covenant. . . eternal life is comprehended under the terms of life and blessing, as eternal death under the terms of death and the curse. Eternal life in heaven, eternal death in hell, the Law notes, though it does not expressly name them." (p132).

commandment before the Lord our God, just as He commanded us.” Deuteronomy 7:12 says, “Then it shall come about, because you listen to these judgments and keep and do them, that the Lord your God will keep with you His covenant and His lovingkindness which He swore to your forefathers.” Again, Deuteronomy 8:1 tells us, “All the commandments that I am commanding you today you shall be careful to do, that you may live and multiply, and go in and possess the land. . .” Moses says in Deuteronomy 11:26-27: “See, I am setting before you today a blessing and a curse: the blessing, if you listen to the commandments of the Lord your God, which I am commanding you today; and the curse, if you do not listen to the commandments of the Lord your God, but turn aside from the way which I am commanding you today, by following other gods which you have not known.” And Deuteronomy 28 tells us: “The Lord will establish you as a holy people to Himself, as He swore to you, if you keep the commandments of the Lord your God and walk in His ways. . . But it shall come about, if you do not obey the Lord your God, to observe to do all His commandments and His statutes with which I charge you today, that all these curses will come upon you and overtake you” (vv9,15). We could list many other passages as well, but we can begin with these. What do these Scriptures mean? How are we to understand such passages?

2. **GOSPEL OBEDIENCE IN THE LAW:** The first thing we can say is that many of these kinds of passages¹¹⁵ have traditionally been understood as being actually *evangelical* in nature (rather than legal). Obedience is required—but in many of these passages, it may indeed be *gospel obedience*—rather than legal obedience, that God is commanding. That is, God is requiring of Israel to prove through their obedience to the Lord that they have actually embraced His covenant from the heart by faith. This is especially clear in passages such as Deuteronomy 7:9, “Know therefore that the Lord your God, He is God, the faithful God, who keeps His covenant and His lovingkindness to a thousandth generation *with those who love Him and keep His commandments.*” The passage tells us, in effect, that God blesses those who keep His commandments; but Calvin clarifies that “this indicates *what kind of servants they are* who have undertaken his covenant in good faith rather than expresses *the reason why the Lord benefits them.*”¹¹⁶ In other words, this passage isn't describing the *cause* of entering into God's blessing, but rather the *characteristics* of those who have entered into it. It's not saying our obedience is the *means* of salvation—it's saying our obedience is the *mark* of salvation. This passage isn't describing *how* to gain God's favor, but rather *who* it is that has gained it. We can understand many similar passages in the Law in the same way.¹¹⁷ And not only passages in the Law, but many other passages of Scripture. This is how

¹¹⁵ Many of them—not all (some, such as Leviticus 18:5 and Deuteronomy 27:26, are exceptions). We'll get to these soon.

¹¹⁶ *Institutes*, 3.17.6. Calvin goes on to say: “Whenever, therefore, we hear that he does good to those who keep his law, let us remember that the children of God are there designated by the duty that ought in them to be perpetual.” And, “But again, let us keep in mind that the fulfillment of the Lord's mercy does not depend upon believers' works but that he fulfills the promise of salvation for those who respond to his call with upright life, because in those who are directed to the good by his Spirit he recognizes the only genuine insignia of his children.” (3.17.6). That Calvin sees this principle as applying to multiple similar passages is clear not only from his sermons on Deuteronomy, but also because he affirms in the same section (3.17.6) that among the promises of the law sprinkled throughout the books of Moses, “in them many evangelical promises also occur. . .” John Gill also understands Deuteronomy 7:9 in this way. He says, “See (Exodus 20:6) which are not the causes or conditions of his covenant and mercy, nor of his keeping them, but descriptive of the persons that enjoy the benefit thereof.”

¹¹⁷ As Ball notes: “In Scripture they are pronounced blessed, who keep the Commandments, and observe the Statutes and Judgements of the Lord; but withal their blessedness is said to consist in this, that God imputes not sin unto them, that their sins be forgiven, and transgressions covered. The true worshippers of God then are happy, not for their works, but because God is pleased to accept them in Christ, and to pardon their offenses. This is the true sense of those promises made to or spoken of them that walk in the perfect way, and do no iniquity. . . life and salvation [are] promised to them that observe and keep the Statutes, Judgements and Ordinances of the Lord, not for the dignity of the work, but through the mere grace and mercy of God pardoning transgressions and sins. . .” (p110). And again: “True it is the promises run upon this condition: 'If you obey My voice and do My Commandments.' But conditions are of two sorts, antecedent or consequent. *Antecedent*, when the condition is the cause of the thing promised or given. . . *Consequent*, when the condition is annexed to the promise as a qualification in the subject. . . And in this latter sense, obedience to the Commandment was a condition of the promise; *not as a cause why the thing promised was vouchsafed, but a qualification in the subject capable, or a consequence* of such great mercy freely conferred.” (Ball, p133). Speaking of Exodus 19:5, Roberts says: “*Generally*, that since entire constant obedience is not required in this Sinai Covenant in a *Legal*, but in an *Evangelical* sense; not as an exact condition of the Covenant of Works, but as an upright condition of the Covenant of Faith. . . And, being a Covenant of Faith, it could not formally require the condition of the Covenant of Works, as such. As the Covenant was Evangelical, so the conditioned obedience was Evangelical also. . . *Particularly*, sincere, entire and constant obedience was required in this Sinai Covenant. 1) Not as an *Antecedent Condition* of the Covenant, moving God to enter into Covenant with Israel, or meriting in any sense any such thing from God; but as a *Consequent Condition* of the Covenant, required by the Covenant from all that accept God's Covenant. 2) Not as performable *Legally* by a mans own mere natural ability, as it was in the Covenant of Works made with all, in the First Adam; but *Evangelically*, by supernatural ability from Christ, who gives both to will and to do; which ability also this Covenant promises. . . 3) Not as *opposite to true faith and grace*; as in the Covenant of Works, doing and works,

we can understand the Beatitudes: When Jesus pronounces blessing on the poor in spirit, the gentle, and the pure in heart, He's not telling us *how* to enter into God's blessing, but *who* it is that has entered into it; He's not describing *the means* of obtaining God's favor, but *the characteristics* of those who have obtained it. This is also how we can understand what Jesus meant when He said in John 5:29 that "those who did the good deeds [will arise] to a resurrection of life"; or when He told the crowds in Luke 11:28, "blessed are those who hear the word of God and observe it." Why are they blessed? Not because they can earn God's blessing by doing what He says—but rather because in doing what God says they show themselves to be the recipients of God's blessing by faith. This is what David was saying when he wrote in Psalm 103:17-18, "But the lovingkindness of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting on those who fear Him, and His righteousness to children's children, *to those who keep His covenant and remember His precepts to do them.*" David isn't saying that our obedience is the *basis* of our good standing with God, he's saying that it's the *proof*; he's not *limiting* the amount of God's grace, but simply *qualifying* who are the ones that have obtained it.¹¹⁸ This is also how we can understand passages in the New Testament epistles, such as Romans 8:13, where Paul writes: "for if you are living according to the flesh, you must die; but if by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live." Here too, Paul isn't describing *how* to enter into life, but *who* are those that will enter into it; he's not speaking of the *means* of obtaining eternal life, but rather the *marks* of all those who will one day inherit it.¹¹⁹

were opposed to faith and grace, Adam was to have life by working in and from himself, not by believing in a Mediator; but *as consequent from, and subservient to grace and faith.* True obedience is a consequent fruit or effect of faith, and faith is a fruit of divine grace. 4) Not as a *joint cause with faith in justification.* . . . but as a *proper fruit and effect of true justifying faith.* . . . Faith justifies our persons before God, applying Christ's righteousness to that end; obedience sincere entire and constant justifies our faith before God, ourselves and men, God requiring true obedience from faith ourselves and others discerning and discovering truth of faith by true obedience." (pp874-75). And of passages such as Deuteronomy 4:1; 5:33; 6:24-25 and 30:16, Blake says: "We may so interpret those Scriptures (and the Jews, as it appears for a great part, did so interpret them) that they hold out a Covenant of Works, *when* grace was not at all acknowledged to assist in doing, nor Christ known at all to satisfy for failing, and to expiate for transgression. . . . [But] They may yet be so interpreted as taking grace in the work for change of the heart, and putting it into a posture for obedience, according to that even in Moses: 'I will circumcise thy heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, that thou mayest live,' (Deuteronomy 30:6), and so these duties are only gospel qualifications of truth and sincerity of obedience. In this sense (which they may well bear, *and I take to be their native sense*) here is no more than what we find in the gospel, from Christ and the Apostles: 'They that have done good, shall rise unto the resurrection of life' (John 5:28-29); [and], 'To them that by patient continuing in well-doing, seek for glory and immortality, eternal life' (Romans 2:5)." (p216). He concludes, "A righteousness, which is the condition of the Covenant of Works; out of our own inherent strength and abilities, in an exact perfection, is denied; a righteousness, not of us, but through grace wrought in us, in sincerity, which the Covenant of Grace calls for, is asserted and required." (Blake, p218).

¹¹⁸ John Gill on Psalm 103:17-18: "not that the fear of God is the cause of mercy or grace; but, on the contrary, grace and mercy are the cause of the fear of God; which is a blessing of the covenant of grace, and one of the first things which appear in conversion; but this properly describes the persons who openly and manifestly share in the grace or mercy of God. . . ."

¹¹⁹ Perkins says of *Romans 8:13*: "The promises of the gospel are not made to the work, but to the worker; and to the worker not for his work, but for Christ's sake, according to his work. As for example, promise of life is made not to the work of mortification, but to him that mortifies his flesh, and that not for his mortification, but because he is in Christ, and his mortification is the token or evidence thereof." (*Galatians*, p171). And of *Galatians 6:6-7*, Perkins says: "the Papists reason thus: works are seeds; but seeds are the proper cause of the fruit; therefore good works are the proper cause of eternal life, and not faith only. . . . [But] the Apostle [here] shows only who they are that shall inherit eternal life; *and the order how life is attained*; but not the cause wherefore it is given. . . . We are just by faith, but we are known to be just by our works. . . . Now a tree is not known what it is by his sap, but by his fruit; neither are men known to be just by their faith, but by their works. Indeed a tree is therefore good, because his sap is good; but it is known to be good by his fruit. So, a man is just, because of his faith, but he is known to be just by his good works; therefore seeing that the last judgement must proceed according to evidence that is upon record. . . . all must be judged by their works, which are evident and apparent to the view of all men, and not by their faith, which is not exposed to the sight of any. And hence it is that the Scripture says, we shall be judged *according to our works*, but it is nowhere said, *for our good works.* . . . good works are *the way*, but not *the cause* [of life]. . . . In the evangelical covenant, the promise is not made to the work, but to the worker; and to the worker, not for the merit of his work, but for the merit of Christ. . . ." (*Galatians*, pp499-501). The Scriptures we've been referring to describe 1) *the HEIRS OF LIFE*, but a similar yet distinct way to understand these kinds of passages evangelically is as describing 2) *the PATH OF LIFE*. Paul tells us in 1 Timothy 4:8 that, "godliness is profitable for all things, since it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come." Here Paul is saying that *the outcome* of a life of godliness is eternal life. Godliness *results* in eternal life. A life of godliness isn't the basis or means of our salvation, but it is the narrow road by which we must walk in order to obtain it. It's the same truth Christ spoke of when He said: "For the gate is small and *the way is narrow* that leads to life, and there are few who find it." (Matthew 7:14). It's the narrow way that leads to eternal life; there's no other way to get there. We aren't saved by our godliness, but in a very real sense, we can't be saved without it. The narrow path is the only path that that results in eternal life: "It is not the foundation by which believers stand firm before God that is described but the means whereby our most merciful Father introduces them into his fellowship, and protects and strengthens them therein." (Calvin, *Institutes*, 3.17.6). It may be that passages such as Deuteronomy 5:33 and 8:1 are best interpreted in this way. Still yet, other passages seem to describe 3) *the MEANS OF LIFE* in an evangelical sense; that is, some passages in the Law seem to actually command faith. In

3. **PERFECT OBEDIENCE IN THE LAW:** But though this principle helps us to interpret many passages in the Law, it still can't explain all of them. Paul makes it very clear in his references to Leviticus 18:5 and Deuteronomy 27:26 (in Romans 10:5-6 and Galatians 3:10-12) that, at the very least, *these two passages* are talking about something very different.¹²⁰ In Romans 10:5 and Galatians 3:12, Paul tells us that Leviticus 18:5 sets forth a righteousness that is based on the Law, wherein the condition for eternal life is nothing short of *perfect, personal, and perpetual obedience* to God's commands:¹²¹ "He who practices them shall live [IE, be justified] by them."¹²² This is a righteousness that is obtained by *doing* rather than *believing*. And not only does the Law offer us the *blessing* of God on the condition of perfect obedience, it also *curses* anyone and everyone who would fall short of it, for in Galatians 3:10 Paul quotes from Deuteronomy 27:26, "Cursed is everyone who does not abide by all things written in the book of the Law, to perform them." The Covenant of Grace tells us: *Believe in order to live*; but here the Law is telling us: *Obey in order to live*. And again, *believing* and *doing* are two mutually exclusive systems. So, if the Law is not of faith, how can the Mosaic Covenant be part of the Covenant of Grace?¹²³

Exodus 19:5 the Lord tells His people, "Now then, if you will indeed *obey My voice* and keep My covenant, then you shall be My own possession among all the peoples. . ." In the literal Hebrew, it says "if you will *listen to My voice*." A similar passage is Deuteronomy 4:1: "Now, O Israel, *listen* to the statutes and the judgments which I am teaching you to perform, so that you may live. . ." Literally, "listen. . .that you may live." Here, life is contingent on *listening*, and this listening seems to be gospel listening—the listening of faith. Compare Isaiah 55:3 ("Listen, that you may live"); Galatians 3:2,6 ("the hearing of faith"); and Hebrews 3:15 and 4:7 (where Israel fails to listen to God's voice, which is associated with the message of good news preached to them; cf. Psalm 95:7). This listening seems to be synonymous with faith in Deuteronomy; indeed, these passages seem to be commanding *faith*. Colquhoun draws this out from Deuteronomy 5:27, noting: "they do not say, as they did, before the publication of the law at Sinai, 'All that the Lord hath spoken, we will do;' but, 'We will *hear* and do.' For speaking in this strain, the Lord commended them thus: 'They have well said all that they have spoken'. . .They said well, in that they made hearing or believing, the principle of acceptable obedience." (pp65-66). Even when obedience is mentioned together with listening (cf. 7:12), we may regard it as commanding that true faith that produces obedience as its fruit (cf. Matthew 7:24).

¹²⁰ It may even be the majority of these passages quoted above are commanding perfect obedience. It's not an easy thing to discern. One example of just how difficult it can be to classify certain passages is Calvin, who in his *Institutes* classifies Deuteronomy 7:12-13 (along with "a thousand other passages of the same type") as commanding *perfect obedience* as the cause of life (see 3.17.1), and yet in his sermons on Deuteronomy, speaks of the same passage as rather describing *evangelical obedience* as the proof of eternal life. Though there were exceptions (see Ball and Blake above), most of the Puritans were hesitant to classify particular passages, preferring to rather cite Leviticus 18:5 and Deuteronomy 27:26 as very sure examples.

¹²¹ This is the language of the Westminster Larger Catechism, #93.

¹²² We know that in this passage, "live" is speaking of justification (as opposed to "walk according to," which would indeed be redundant) because of the context. Paul says this in Galatians 3:12; and in the verse just prior, he quotes Habakkuk 2:4 telling us that "The righteous man shall live [IE, again: be justified] by faith." And we know that "live" in verse 11 is speaking of justification because Paul makes that very clear: "Now that no one is *justified* by the Law before God is evident, for, 'The righteous man shall *live* by faith.'" IE: We know no one is justified by the Law because Scripture says we are justified by faith.

¹²³ Bolton lists no less than 6 separate possible interpretations of Leviticus 18:5 (*True Bounds*, pp104-06). Ball tried to exposit Leviticus 18:5 in the same way as the other places in the Law that require an evangelical obedience. He says: "These words, 'Do this and live,' must not be interpreted, as if they did promise life upon a condition of perfect obedience, and for works done in such exactness as is required; but they must be expounded evangelically, describing *the subject* capable of life eternal, not *the cause* why life and salvation is conferred. . .[these] passages are to be understood of sincere and upright walking, and show *who* are justified, and *to whom* the promises of life pertain, but not *why* they are justified" (pp136-37). But Roberts is right to humbly correct him. Quoting Ball here, Roberts says: "But this interpretation (though in itself very pious) comes not home to satisfy and remove the force of the objection; and therefore I cannot acquiesce in it. For, it may be easily replied: That, *Do this and live*, has something more in it, than those other passages of Scripture alleged by him. They may be interpreted Evangelically, but this phrase in the passages objected can hardly be so interpreted. *Partly*, because *Doing*, in those Scriptures is directly opposed to *Believing*, as to the point of justification and life (Lev. 18:5 with Rom. 10:5; Gal. 3:12). Here the Apostle purposely compares the righteousness of works and the righteousness of faith together (says Calvin) that he may the better show the repugnancy of them one to another. *Partly*, because the curse is denounced upon the least failing (Deuteronomy 27:26; Galatians 3:10). But failings in Evangelical obedience are *covered*, not *cursed*. . ." (p773). We should also note that though Ball seems to deny that the Law sets forth eternal life upon condition of perfect obedience, at least in Leviticus 18:5; still, in other places, he equally affirms that it does just that: "*The Law in itself considered exacted perfection of works as the cause of life*; but when that was impossible to man by reason of the infirmity of his flesh, it pleased the Lord to make known to his people by the ministry of Moses, that the Law was given, not to detain men in confidence of their own works, but to lead them unto Christ." (pp113-114). Again: "For though the Law of righteousness promise a reward to the keepers thereof; yet after it has shut up all men under sin, it does substitute another righteousness in Christ, which is received by faith" (p114). And again: "the Law. . .exact perfect obedience of man in his own person" (p114). Later, Ball clarifies, saying: "Perfect obedience is *commanded*, that if a man will trust in his works to be justified thereby, he must either bring that which is every way complete, or be cast in judgment. Sincere obedience, though imperfect is *approved*, that the imperfection of their best works being covered, and their transgressions graciously pardoned, they might be accepted by faith in Christ, who is the end of the Law, as righteous unto eternal life. . . *The Law requires perfect and exact obedience*. . .and he that trusts in his works, if he continues not in everything that is written in the book of the Law to do them, he is accursed. But to them that be

4. A TWO-FOLD UNDERSTANDING OF THE LAW: One of the most valuable things I've learned personally as I've studied through the Mosaic Covenant is how the older writers resolved this question. There is a single overwhelming answer that both the Reformers and Puritans give that resolves what must surely be the biggest knot in understanding the covenant at Sinai. What they tell us is that the Law may (and should) be considered from *two different perspectives*: either largely or strictly taken. *Largely taken*, the Law refers to the whole doctrine delivered at Sinai, including not only the commands and precepts—but also the promises of Christ and gospel mercy, which are sprinkled throughout the books of the Law. *Strictly taken*, though, the Law is merely an abstracted rule of righteousness, setting forth life upon no terms but perfect obedience, and threatening death to all who would come short of it. This is how we can make sense of all the conflicting passages we read in the New Testament about the Law. How can it be that, on the one hand, Scripture tells us that Israel had the same *good news* preached to them under Moses that we do today (Hebrews 4:2,6; IE, the gospel); but that on the other hand, Scripture also tells us that Moses' ministry was a “ministry of death” and “condemnation” that actually “kills” (2 Corinthians 3:6-9)? How can we reconcile the fact that one Scripture tells us the ministry of Moses was a *gospel ministry*, and yet another Scripture tells us that Moses' ministry *brought death and condemnation*? By understanding that the New Testament writers themselves sometimes spoke of the Law as viewing it in its *larger* sense; but sometimes they spoke of it as viewing it in its *stricter*, abstracted sense. In other words, the reason that we read two very different kinds of things about the Law in the New Testament is that the very ones who wrote those New Testament Scriptures viewed the Law from two different perspectives.¹²⁴

in Covenant, the Law was given with such moderation, that *sincere obedience was accepted* of them. . .” (p135). Some today seem to want to deny that the Law truly demands perfect, personal, and perpetual obedience as the condition for life and curses all who come short of it. But this denial not only opposes the Westminster Confession (Chapter 19); it also opposes the clear teaching of Scripture itself. The OPC Report on Republication helps to bring needed clarity as they address one view they see as erroneous: “the view that we have referred to as the ‘misinterpretation’ theory has sometimes been articulated in such a way as to deny the requirement of perfect obedience in the moral law. In other words, Paul’s references to the law’s requirement for perfect obedience exist only in the minds of the Judaizers, and are not in some way expressed in the content of the Decalogue itself. This presentation of the misinterpretation theory sees the law’s requirement of perfect obedience existing only subjectively in the minds of the Jews, rather than objectively in the law itself. . . *Surely these are errors to be avoided*. A better way to articulate the misinterpretation position is to recognize that while the law itself always requires perfect obedience, it can also have several functions and uses in this regard. . . this [more correct] articulation of the misinterpretation position distinguishes between the law in itself and the use or function of the law. While it affirms that the Judaizers abused the law in its use, *it recognizes that the law itself always requires perfect obedience.*” (OPC Report, Ch.6, IV).

¹²⁴ Roberts notes: “Now here it is diligently to be observed, that the word ‘Law’, as used for God’s Law given to Moses for Israel on Mount Sinai, is taken, 1) More largely; 2) More strictly; and 3) Most strictly: 1) *More largely and generally*, for the whole dispensation of all sorts of commandments: Moral, Ceremonial, and Judicial; given and promulgated on Mount Sinai. . . 2) *More strictly*, and specially for the Moral Law, or Ten Commandments, taken complexively with the preface prefixed, and the promises interwoven therein, as God spoke them on Mount Sinai out of the midst of the fire to Israel, and afterwards wrote them, and gave them to Moses. . . 3) *Most strictly*, and restrainedly; the word [Law] is taken for The Law abstracted from Moses’ administration of it, and precisely considered as an abstracted rule of righteousness, holding forth life merely upon terms of perfect and perpetual personal obedience and denouncing death and the curse upon every one, and that without mercy, in case of the least contrary failing.” (pp659-60). And again: “the Law may be considered, more *largely*, as comprehending the whole doctrine and administration of the Sinai-covenant, as delivered by Moses on Mount Sinai; [but also] more *restrictively*, as it is an abstracted rule of righteousness consisting in precepts, threats and promises; holding forth life upon a condition absolutely impossible to lapsed men; viz, perfect and perpetual personal obedience to the Law; but denouncing the curse and death upon the least contrary failing.” (Roberts, p773). Burgess writes: “The Law. . . may be considered *more largely*, as that whole doctrine delivered on Mount Sinai, with the preface and promises adjoined, and all things that may be reduced to it; or *more strictly*, as it is an abstracted rule of righteousness, holding forth life upon no terms, but perfect obedience. Now take it in the former sense, it was a Covenant of Grace; take it in the latter sense, as abstracted from Moses’ administration of it, and so it was not of grace, but works. This distinction will overthrow all the objections against the negative.” (p233). Blake says: “Though *the whole Law* that Moses delivered from God on Mount Sinai to the people. . . do contain a Covenant of Grace, yet the Law is taken sometime[s] *in that strict sense*, as containing a Covenant of Works, and holding forth life upon condition of perfect obedience. So the Apostle, [in] Romans 10:5-6 puts an opposition between the righteousness of the Law, and the righteousness of faith; so also Galatians 3:18. If righteousness be by the Law, it is no more of promise, so that there is a necessity of distinguishing between the Law *abstracted from* the promise. . . and the Law *including* this promise. . . so that the works of the Law, considered in *the bare mandatory part* of it, can save none. . . yet *the righteousness witnessed by the Law and the Prophets*, even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ (Romans 3:21-22). . . brings salvation (Romans 3:21-22). . . So that the Law *abstracted from Christ*. . . was a ministry of condemnation (2 Corinthians 3:9). . . *but including Christ*, it was perfect, and saves the soul (Psalm 19:7).” (pp218-219). And Kevan affirms all this when he says: “The Puritans. . . [distinguished] between the Law, in the narrow sense of the Divine requirements of man, and the Law in the wider sense of the whole Mosaic order of things. *More strictly* and properly the Law signifies the Covenant of works, which is also called the Law of works, Rom. 3:27. . . *more largely* Torah the Law signifies the whole doctrine of the Old Testament’ . . . Put briefly, the Law can be considered as it is an ‘abstracted rule of righteousness’, or

A) *A Few Examples:* This is exactly the tool we need to help us understand passages like Romans 10:5-6 and Galatians 3:10-12. In Romans 10:5-6, Paul tells us: “For Moses writes that the man who practices the righteousness which is based on law shall live by that righteousness.” Then in verse 6, he contrasts the righteousness that comes through the Law with the righteousness that comes by faith. But as we noted earlier, when Paul begins speaking of the righteousness that comes by faith, in verse 6, in order to describe it, he actually quotes a passage *from the Law*: “But the righteousness based on faith speaks as follows: ‘Do not say in your heart, “Who will ascend into heaven?’” (that is, to bring Christ down), or “Who will descend into the abyss?’” (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead).’ But what does it say? ‘The word is near You, in your mouth and in your heart’—that is, the word of faith which we are preaching, that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. . .” The passage Paul is quoting from here is Deuteronomy 30:11-14. Again: Paul is quoting here a passage from *the Law* in order to describe the righteousness that is *by faith*. And all this after he had just told us in verse 5 that the righteousness of the Law is something completely different than the righteousness of faith! How can we make any sense out of what Paul is saying here? By understanding that Paul is considering the Law from two different angles: If we take the Law *strictly*—as abstracted from all the promises of Christ and His redemption—then the Law indeed commands perfect obedience as the condition of life and condemns and curses all who fall short. This is Paul’s meaning in verse 5. But if we take the Law as a whole, including the promises of Christ and His redemption that are scattered throughout the Law, we see that God, in the Law, is requiring faith in the Messiah who is often revealed in the Law in its *larger sense*. And this is Paul’s meaning in verse 6.¹²⁵

A similar passage is Romans 3:21-22, where Paul writes: “But now apart from the Law the righteousness of God has been manifested, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, even the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe. . .” Speaking of Christ, Paul tells us here that the righteousness of God for salvation is *apart from the Law* (v21a) and yet *witnessed by the Law* (v21b). How to make sense of this? It seems Paul is contradicting himself. Is faith in Christ something *separate from* the Law (21a), or is it something actually *taught in* the Law (21b)? Here again, Paul is considering the Law in both its larger sense (including Christ) as well as its stricter sense (as abstracted from Him). The passage makes perfect sense if we read it this way: “But now apart from the Law [*strictly taken*] the righteousness of God has been manifested, being witnessed by the Law [*largely taken*]. . .even the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ. . .” In other words, the righteousness of faith is apart from the Law strictly taken, but it is also revealed in the Law largely taken. I love how Francis Roberts puts it: “The Law itself testifies, that the righteousness of God is without [IE, apart from] the Law. . .”¹²⁶

as comprehending ‘the whole Doctrine and Administration of the Sinai-Covenant.’” (p110; quoting Roberts pp773-74).

¹²⁵ As Calvin says of Romans 10:5: “But we ought to understand the reason why Paul harmonizes the law with faith, and yet sets the righteousness of one in opposition to that of the other: The law has a twofold meaning; *it sometimes includes the whole of what has been taught by Moses*, and sometimes that part only which was peculiar to his ministration, which consisted of precepts, rewards, and punishments. . .But as evangelic [IE, evangelistic] promises are only found scattered in the writings of Moses, and these also somewhat obscure, and as the precepts and rewards, allotted to the observers of the law, frequently occur, it rightly appertained to Moses as his own and peculiar office, to teach what is the real righteousness of works, and then to show what remuneration awaits the observance of it, and what punishment awaits those who come short of it. For this reason Moses is by John compared with Christ, when it is said, ‘That the law was given by Moses, but that grace and truth came by Christ.’ (John 1:17). And whenever the word law is thus *strictly taken*, Moses is by implication opposed to Christ; and then we must consider what the law contains, as separate from the gospel. Hence what is said here of the righteousness of the law, must be applied, not to the whole office of Moses, but to that part which was in a manner peculiarly committed to him. . . [But in verse 6] He then means not the law only, but generally the whole of God’s truth, which includes in it the gospel.”

¹²⁶ Roberts’ full quote is: “The Law itself testifies, that the righteousness of God (viz, which God has ordained, revealed, and will accept), is without the Law; that is, by faith without the deeds of the Law.” (p787). In the quote, he refers to the Law as *largely taken* in the first usage of the word, and *strictly taken* in the second usage. Again, Roberts says: “In both the former [larger] and latter [strict] sense, the word ‘Law’ seems to be used in that passage, [Romans 3:21-22]: ‘But now apart from the Law [IE, strictly taken] the righteousness of God has been manifested, being witnessed by the Law [IE, largely taken] and the Prophets, even the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe’. . .[Thus] the Law *largely taken*, holds forth life on condition of believing in Christ, and in this notion it was given in the Sinai-covenant, which therefore is a Covenant of Faith [IE, Grace]; [but] the Law *strictly taken* requires perfect doing, and in that sense Moses gave it not, nor is it a Covenant of Faith but of works.” (Roberts, pp773-75). Roberts isn’t saying that we’re wrongly imputing the strict sense into our understanding of the Law, but only that in this sense the Law is not of faith but of works. Most commentators understand the second usage of ‘Law’ in Romans 3:21 as referring to the entirety of the first 5 books of Moses, as the phrase “Law and Prophets” often takes on this meaning (cf. Matthew 22:40). But this in no way nullifies the point we’re making here, since even that broader definition of the Law *always also includes* the dispensation at Sinai (indeed, Sinai makes up the

In Romans 3:21-22 and 10:5-6, Paul is considering the Law from *both* perspectives: in its *strict sense*—as abstracted from Christ and the promises, as well as in its *larger sense*—including Christ and the promises. In other passages, though, Paul refers *only* to the Law as considered in its strict sense. This is what he is describing in Galatians 3:10-12, where he tells us that “the Law is not of faith” (v12). We know that Paul can't mean this in an absolute or unqualified sense, because of what he had told us elsewhere in passages like Romans 3:21-22 and 10:5-6, where, once again, he had proven the righteousness of faith from the Law. Rather, Paul is speaking here of the Law in a particular sense—in its strict sense—as abstracted from the promises of Christ and the gospel, which were also revealed in the Law. And it's in this strict sense, where the Law commands perfect obedience and curses all who would fall short, that Paul is telling us the Law is not of faith. We might put it this way: The way of the gospel is *in the Law* but it's not *of the Law*. It's in the Law (*largely taken*), but not of the Law (*strictly taken*).¹²⁷ This is also what Paul is referring to in 2 Corinthians 3:6-9, where he describes the Law as a ministry of death and condemnation that kills its hearers. Here also, Paul isn't speaking of the Law in a way that is absolute or unqualified, but rather in a

majority of the Pentateuch). Thus Calvin comments on Romans 3:21: “This righteousness then, which God communicates to man, and accepts alone, and owns as righteousness, has been revealed, he says, *without the law*, that is without the aid of the law; and the law is to be understood as meaning works; for it is not proper to refer this to its teaching, which he immediately adduces as bearing witness to the gratuitous righteousness of faith. . . *Being proved (or approved) by the testimony*, etc. He adds this, lest in the conferring of free righteousness the gospel should seem to militate against the law. As then [IE, v21a] he has denied that the righteousness of faith needs the aid of the law, so now [IE, v21b] he asserts that it is confirmed by its testimony. . . you will find in the commandments a demonstration of your iniquity, and from the sacrifices and oblations you may learn that satisfaction and cleansing are to be obtained in Christ alone.” In his Institutes, Calvin also notes: “Paul. . . justly makes contraries of the righteousness of the law and of that of the gospel (Rom. 3:21ff; Gal.3:10ff; etc). But the gospel did not so supplant the entire law as to bring forward a different way of salvation. Rather, it confirmed and satisfied whatever the law had promised, and gave substance to the shadows. . . Hence Paul, calling the gospel 'the power of God unto salvation for every believer' (Rom.1:16p), presently adds: 'The Law and the Prophets bear witness to it' (Rom.3:21). . . From this we infer that, where the whole law is concerned, the gospel differs from it only in clarity of manifestation.” (*Institutes*, 2.9.4). Haldane likewise says of Romans 3:21: “*Being witnessed by the law*. . . [the righteousness of faith] was intimated in the writings of Moses, in every declaration of the forgiveness of sin, and every call to repentance. All the declarations of mercy that are to be found in the law of Moses belong to the Gospel. They are all founded on the Messiah and His righteousness, and are made in consequence of God's purpose to send His Son in the fulness of time into the world, and of the first promise respecting the seed of the woman.” (*Romans*). Murray notes of this passage: “We have here an instructive example of the ease with which the apostle can turn from one denotation of the word 'law' to another. The righteousness that is unreservedly without law in one sense of the word 'law' is, nevertheless, witnessed to and therefore proclaimed by the law in another sense of that term. Law in one sense pronounces the opposite of justification, the law in another sense preaches justification.” (*Romans*, p110).

¹²⁷ Speaking of Galatians, Calvin asserts: “[Paul] was disputing with perverse teachers who pretended that we merit righteousness by the works of the law. Consequently, to refute their error he was sometimes compelled to take the bare law in a narrow sense, even though it was otherwise graced with the covenant of free adoption.” (*Institutes*, 2:7:2). Turretin unpacks Calvin, saying: “The law is said 'to be not of faith' (Galatians 3:12), not as taken broadly and denoting the Mosaic economy, but strictly as taken for the moral law abstractly and apart from the promises of grace. . .” (p267). Roberts likewise notes: “Most strictly, and restrainedly; the word [Law] is taken for the Law abstracted from Moses' administration of it, and precisely considered as an abstracted rule of righteousness. And in this sense the Apostle takes the word [Law] in his dispute about justification by faith, and not by the works of the Law; opposing Law, to Gospel and to Grace; works, to faith; and justification by works, to justification by faith. . . *For as many as are of the works of the Law, are under the curse; for it is written, 'Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the Law to do them.'* But that no man is justified by the Law in the sight of God, it is evident: *for, the just shall live by faith. And the Law is not of faith: but, the man that doth them, shall live in them. Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the Law, being made a curse for us'*. . . In these, and like passages, the word Law is considered in this most restrictive sense, as abstracted and separated from all other additional in Moses' administration of it. And in this strictest sense, the Law is materially and for substance the same with the Covenant of Works written in Adam's heart in innocence. . .” (p660). Again Roberts says: “That, whereas Paul elsewhere says, 'The Law is not of faith', that is, sets not forth the righteousness of faith, Galatians 3:12, to this I answer. . . that this cannot be meant of the Law, absolutely taken (for then, you see, Paul should contradict himself, who proves the righteousness of faith from the Law, as revealed [in Romans 10:6ff]); but it must needs be intended of the Law in some limited and restrictive sense. . . this cannot be meant of the Law, more generally and complexively taken. . . but it may be intended of the Law, more strictly and abstractively taken, for the mere preceptive part of the Law, as declarative of, and in substance one with the Law of nature in Adam's heart, and as abstracted from Moses administration. . .” (pp767-68). And again: “the Law may be considered, more *largely*, as comprehending the whole doctrine and administration of the Sinai-covenant, as delivered by Moses on Mount Sinai; [but also] more *restrictively*, as it is an abstracted rule of righteousness. . . In the latter sense Paul understands the Law in Romans 10:5 and Galatians 3:12 and in this sense, the righteousness of the Law stands in perfect doing: 'the man that does them shall live in them'. . . But this acceptance of the Law abstracts the Law from Moses' dispensation of it, from faith, and from Christ the soul of the Law; and so leaves the Law as a mere ministry of death and condemnation. . . To this effect says one, 'The Law in itself considered, exacted perfection of works as the cause of life; but when that was impossible to man by reason of the infirmity of his flesh, it pleased the Lord to make known to his people by the ministry of Moses, that the Law was given, not to detain men in confidence of their own works but to lead them unto Christ'. . . (Roberts, pp773-74).

particular sense: he's talking about the Law as it's considered strictly taken, removed and abstracted from Christ and the promises of grace that are revealed in the Law in its larger sense. And indeed, in and of itself and removed from Christ, the Law is very rightly described as a ministry of death, since all it can do is justly condemn us for our many sins.¹²⁸ So then, though Paul at times considers the Law from both perspectives, at other times he only speaks of the Law in its strict sense. Consider the following chart:

THE LAW LARGELY TAKEN VERSUS STRICTLY TAKEN

ONE TERM	MUST BE UNDERSTOOD IN 2 WAYS		RIGHTEOUSNESS IS	REQUIRES	EXAMPLES FROM SCRIPTURE
"THE LAW"	Strictly taken	Abstracted from Christ	Demanded by the Law	Works	Rom.3:21; 10:5; Gal.3:10ff; 2Cor.3:6ff
	Largely taken	Including Christ	Witnessed in the Law	Faith	Rom.3:21; 10:6-9; (Jn.5:46; Heb.4:2,6)

B) A Few Clarifications: Towards the beginning of our lesson, we outlined the four major views of the Mosaic Covenant. There we refuted two views that claimed the Covenant of Works was republished at Sinai (Republication and the Mixed View). We concluded that the Mosaic Covenant was not a republication of the Covenant of Works in any way, but was rather simply another manifestation of the Covenant of Grace, and we gave several reasons for why we take it to be so. Well, we're now at the point where we're able to come full circle and clarify one final point about the Mosaic Covenant. And here's what it is: *Though it's true that the Law largely taken belongs to the Covenant of Grace, it's also true that the Law strictly taken is actually the content of the Covenant of Works.*¹²⁹ Let me explain: The Law largely taken belongs to the Covenant of Grace, because it reveals Christ and the gospel and calls us to put our faith in Him. This is why the Mosaic Covenant is a manifestation of the Covenant of Grace,

¹²⁸ John Ball says: "The words of Paul [that the Law is a killing letter and ministration of death and condemnation]. . .are not to be understood absolutely of the Law, but as it was separated from Christ and the gospel. . .the Law animated by Christ is pleasant and delightful, but as it is barely considered in opposition to Christ and to the gospel, as it exacts perfect obedience, but gives no ability or power to perform what is required, it wounds, terrifies, kills and works wrath. Of the Law there is a twofold use and consideration. One as it is a rigid exactor of entire obedience, and hand-writing against us for sin, and thus of itself barely considered, it wounds, but heals not, it revives sin, but mortifies it not. The other, as it points to Christ in whom salvation is to be found, and directs how to walk in all well-pleasing before the Lord; and thus it is an easy yoke. The Law considered without Christ wounds, kills, and revives sin by reason of our corruptions; but the Law considered in Christ, and as it points unto him, kills corruption, and converts the soul." (pp120-121). Vos notes: "The covenant with Israel served in an emphatic manner to recall the strict demands of the covenant of works. . .It is for this reason that in [2 Corinthians 3:7 and 9], Paul calls the ministry of Moses a ministry of condemnation. This simply shows how the demand of the law comes more to the fore in this dispensation of the covenant of grace." (*Reformed Dogmatics*, V2, p130). Bavinck adds: "The law of Moses, accordingly, is not antithetical to grace but subservient to it and was also thus understood and praised in every age by Israel's pious men and women. *But detached from the covenant of grace, it indeed became a letter that kills, a ministry of condemnation.* . .that it might arouse the consciousness of sin, increase the felt need for salvation, and reinforce the expectation of an even richer revelation of God's grace. . .The impossibility of keeping the Sinaitic covenant and of meeting the demands of the law made another and better dispensation of the covenant of grace necessary." (*Volume 3*, p222).

¹²⁹ This is the position of the great majority of the Puritans who subscribed to the Westminster view. Of Galatians 3:10-12, Roberts says: "In these, and like passages, the word Law is considered in this most restrictive sense, as abstracted and separated from all other additional in Moses' administration of it. And in this strictest sense, the Law is materially and for substance the same with the Covenant of Works written in Adam's heart in innocence. . ." (p660). And Turretin writes that broadly taken, the old covenant contained "the doctrine of grace delivered to the ancients, promising salvation and life. . . under the condition of repentance and faith in the Messiah about to come. . .Strictly, however, it denotes the Covenant of Works or the moral law given by Moses—the unbearable burden of legal ceremonies being added, absolutely and apart from the promise of grace." (pp233-234). And again: "The Mosaic Covenant may be viewed in two aspects: either according to the intention and design of God and in order to Christ; or separately and abstracted from him. In the latter way, it is really distinct from the Covenant of Grace because it coincides with the Covenant of Works and in this sense is called the letter that killeth and the ministration of condemnation when its nature is spoken of (2 Corinthians 3:6-7). But it is unwarrantably abstracted here because it must always be considered with the intention of God, which was, not that man might have life from the law or as a sinner might be simply condemned, but that from a sense of his own misery and weakness he might fly for refuge to Christ." (Turretin, p267). And Vos likewise: "Even after the covenant of works is broken, perfect keeping of the law is presented as a hypothetical means for obtaining life. . ." (V2, p41). And again: "The covenant with Israel served in an emphatic manner to recall the strict demands of the covenant of works. To that end, the law of the Ten Commandments was presented so emphatically and engraved deeply in stone. This law. . .truly contained the content of the covenant of works. But—and one should certainly note this—it contains this content as made serviceable for a particular period of the covenant of grace. It therefore says, for example, 'I am the Lord your God'. . .But also, beyond the Decalogue, there is reference to the law as a demand of the covenant of works (e.g., Lev 18:5; Deut 27:26; 2 Cor 3:7,9). It is for this reason that in the last cited passage, Paul calls the ministry of Moses a ministry of condemnation. This simply shows how the demand of the law comes more to the fore in this dispensation of the covenant of grace." (Vos, V2, p130). And Hodge: "[The Mosaic Covenant] contained, as does also the New Testament, a renewed proclamation of the original covenant of works." (*Systematics*, V2).

because the essence of the Mosaic Covenant is the Law as it is given largely, the Law taken on the whole—including the promises of Christ and redemption in Him. But though the Law *largely taken* belongs to the Covenant of Grace, the Law *strictly taken* actually contains the content of the Covenant of Works. This is different than the Mixed View, because though the Mixed View tells us that Sinai contained both the Covenant of Works and the Covenant of Grace, they think of it in a way that is much different. The proponents of the Mixed View assert that at Sinai the Covenant of Works itself was again *republished*; we're saying that at Sinai the content of the Covenant of Works was simply *repeated*. They say that at Sinai the Covenant of Works itself was again *reinstated*; we're merely saying that at Sinai the terms of the Covenant of Works were again *reiterated*. The Mixed View holds that God was actually *renewing* the Covenant of Works with Israel at Sinai; we're just saying He was *reminding* them of its demands.¹³⁰

Still, the question remains: If all this is true, how can it be that the Mosaic Covenant actually belongs to the Covenant of Grace? Jesus tells us that a house divided against itself cannot stand, and it's hard to imagine anything more at opposition than the way of works and the way of faith. If it's true that the Law strictly taken is really the content of the Covenant of Works, how can we say that the Mosaic Covenant belongs to the Covenant of Grace? How can anything that includes the content of the Covenant of Works actually be thought of as belonging to the Covenant of Grace? How can the Covenant of Grace and the Covenant of Works co-exist together at Sinai? The Puritans answered this question by making a distinction between what they called *ingrediency* and *subserviency*; or again, between *coordination* and *subordination*. What they meant was that, at Sinai, the Covenant of Works was not mixed or blended together with the Covenant of Grace (ingrediency), whereby these two very different covenants took on the form of one and the same covenant (coordination). It wasn't as if the Covenant of Grace, which requires *faith alone*, was mixed together with the content of the Covenant of Works, which requires *perfect obedience*, in such a way that they lost all distinction; so that as a result, Sinai now required *both* conditions: faith *and* obedience as the requirements for eternal life. Though the content of the Covenant of Works was declared at Sinai, it was never blended together with the Covenant of Grace, but remained distinct. It was added, not by way of *ingrediency* but rather *subserviency*; not by way of *coordination* but *subordination*. In other words, when God added the content of the Covenant of Works to Sinai, it wasn't like adding chocolate syrup to a glass of milk and stirring it up; it was like adding oil to water: though the content of the Covenant of Works was added to the Covenant of Grace, it remained distinct.¹³¹

¹³⁰ The Puritans were always very careful in how they used their language here. The overwhelming majority of them (who held to the Westminster view) never affirmed that the Covenant of Works itself was actually *republished* or *renewed* at Sinai along with the Covenant of Grace, but clarified that the content of the Covenant of Works was rather there *repeated* or *reiterated*. They are clear in the way they articulate their view that it wasn't that the Covenant of Works was *made* again at Sinai—but rather that there it's terms were again *declared* afresh (see my *Abstracts* for more). John Colquhoun summarizes them when he writes: “the covenant made with the Israelites at Sinai could not be the Covenant of Works. God could not consistently. . .renew or make again that covenant with persons who, by breaking it in the first Adam, had already subjected themselves to the penalty of it. He could, indeed, display it in its terror before condemned sinners, but could not again make it with them. . .The violated Covenant of Works. . .was not, and could not be, made or renewed with the Israelites at Sinai; for it was a broken covenant. . .But though it was not renewed with them, yet it was, on that solemn occasion, repeated and displayed to them. It was not proposed to them in order that they might consent, by their own works, to fulfill the condition of it; but it was displayed before them in subservience to the Covenant of Grace that they might see how impossible it was for them as condemned sinners to perform that perfect obedience which is the immutable condition of life in it. Although the Lord knew well that they were far from being able to yield perfect obedience, yet He saw proper to set forth eternal life to them upon these terms (Leviticus 18:5; Deuteronomy 27:26). . .in order that the people might, by contemplating it, see what kind and degree of righteousness it required as the condition of eternal life; and that by means of it, finding themselves utterly destitute of perfect righteousness, they might be impelled to take hold of the Covenant of Grace in which the perfect righteousness of the second Adam is provided and exhibited for the justification of all who believe.” (Colquhoun, pp.58,63-64).

¹³¹ William Strong uses the language we mentioned above. He says, “God's intention was not to join the Law and the promise together in the matter of justification and life; because they be quite cross and contrary one to another. . .[and] do directly destroy each other; [for] if the inheritance be by the Law, it is no more of promise; and therefore no man can be justified by both. Yet God having revealed the Law after the promise, and seeing he will have them both to be perpetual and lasting, they must stand together, and a way must be found out how they may, and not cross one another, nor destroy or disannul each other; for the Law is not against the promise of God, God forbid we should think so; then if they cannot stand together in a way of *ingrediency*, they may very well in a way of *subserviency*; if not *coordination*, they may in *subordination*; both tending to honor the mercy and grace of God in his Son; the one primarily, and the other secondarily, as an appendix or an addition thereunto. . .Seeing therefore these two must stand together, and the former cannot be disannulled by the latter; hence then it must needs be inferred, that God's intention was in publishing the Law, to do it in subordination unto the gospel, and the second covenant, and that so it is to stand and to be made use of by the Saints.” (Strong, *Two Covenants*, p87).

Think of a bag of beef jerky. What's inside? Well, if you've eaten a lot of beef jerky in your life, you know that there are actually *two things* inside that bag. There are dozens of slices of original, teriyaki, or peppered flavored beef, smoked to perfection. But there is also something else in that bag. Among the slabs of delicious dried meat there is also a strange looking white packet of something called silica gel. You want to keep an eye out for these small white packets in your jerky bag; they always have written on them: "Do not eat" or "Do not consume" because they're not edible, and eating them can be hazardous. So why in the world do they put them in? Well, they put these packets in along with the meat in order to better preserve the taste of the jerky. In and of itself it is inedible and can even be dangerous—but it was never meant to be consumed. Its purpose is to better draw out the taste of the jerky you *are* meant to eat. Or *think of the bay leaves* you add to the delicious curry you're cooking on your stove. Now, the bay leaf is not the same thing as the curry of which it is a part. It's part of the curry but it's included in order to serve the curry as a whole. And when you add the bay leaf to the curry it doesn't dissolve into the curry—it retains its distinctive form as you cook it. So that even though the bay leaf is part of the curry, you can still distinguish it from the rest of the curry. Further, just as with the white packets in the beef jerky, you shouldn't try to eat the bay leaves: though part of the curry, they're not edible and can hurt you. So why do you put them in? Because they contribute to the overall taste and enjoyment of the curry as a whole.

This is exactly how the Law strictly taken functioned in the context of the Mosaic Covenant as it was given as a whole. It's how the content of the Covenant of Works was declared at Sinai on the one hand, and yet how the Mosaic Covenant as a whole belonged to the Covenant of Grace. The Mosaic Covenant as a whole was like that bag of beef jerky or the curry on the stove. The content of the Covenant of Works was indeed included in the Mosaic Covenant—but just like the little white packets in the bag of beef jerky or the bay leaves in the curry—it was never meant to be consumed but rather was added to Sinai by way of *subserviency* and *subordination*—to serve the larger purposes of the Mosaic Covenant as a whole. In other words, at Sinai, the content of the Covenant of Works was *added* to the Covenant of Grace in a way that *submitted* to the Covenant of Grace in order to *serve the purposes* of the Covenant of Grace.¹³²

What did this look like in particular? How was it that the content of the Covenant of Works served to advance the purposes of the Covenant of Grace at Sinai? Simply put: *the Law strictly considered was added in order to drive God's people to Christ as He was revealed in the Law largely considered.* At Sinai, the demand of the *Covenant of Works* was repeated afresh in order to cause God's people to seek refuge alone in the *Covenant of Grace*. The command, "*Do this and live*" was given to Israel so that, considering the absolute perfection demanded in the Law, they would rather flee to Christ, the only hope for sinners, and in Him might, "*Believe and live.*"¹³³ Now, this is where so many of the Jews went wrong.

¹³² As Turretin says: "The specific difference of a covenant cannot make a diversity of condition, expressed by the law and gospel—of the former imperfect obedience; of the latter in faith. It was not required in the same way, nor for the same end. For faith in Christ is demanded primarily and intended chiefly, but perfect obedience (under punishment of death and the curse) only subordinately and relatively to faith and the righteousness of faith. By convincing man of his sin and weakness, it forced him to seek a remedy in Christ by faith (as we have already said)." (p268). And again: "It is one thing to speak of the law in itself (which had the form of a Covenant of Works and was enacted not with the end of making alive, but to convict of transgression, extort the confession of debt and lead to Christ); another concerning the Sinaitic covenant itself, in which the law was enacted. In the former sense, the law is called a handwriting against us and the minister of condemnation (2 Cor. 3:9; Col. 2:14); but in the latter sense, that covenant had the lively oracles (Acts 7:38) and contained the saving promises of the grace of Christ." (Turretin, p269). And Bavinck says, "Concerning the law as law, apart from the promises, to which in the Old Testament the law was made subservient, Paul asserts that it cannot justify, that it increases sin, that it is a ministry of condemnation [2 Cor. 3:9], and precisely in that way prepares the fulfillment of the promise and necessitates another righteousness, that is, the righteousness of God in Christ by faith." (IV:452-53). Bridge puts it beautifully: "It is plain and clear that the Jews that were saved in the time of the Old Testament, were saved by the same covenant that we now are saved by. . . But though those Jews that were saved were saved by the same covenant that we now are saved by, yet notwithstanding the covenant of works was declared and promulgated among the Jews; 'Wherefore then was the law added?' says the apostle. Added then it was. As Sarah and Hagar, made types of the two testaments by the apostle, were at once in Abraham's house; so the old covenant of works, and the new covenant of grace were at once in the Jewish church. But though both these covenants were at once in the Jewish church, the one [was] declared and the other [was] made with them; though Hagar was in the same house, yet it was in subserviency unto Sarah; and though the covenant of works was declared and was there at the same time, yet it was in subserviency unto the covenant of grace; 'It was added, wherefore?' says the apostle, because of transgression, to be a schoolmaster to bring to Christ. It was there in subserviency, and upon a gospel design. . ." (pp48-49).

¹³³ Roberts says: "this Sinai Covenant was in such sort administered, as to press upon them the perfect fulfilling of the Law, as most necessary to life and salvation, denouncing the curse upon the least failing; but withal revealing to them, that this perfect fulfilling of the Law in their own persons being utterly impossible, he was pleased to accept it in Christ their Surety, perfectly fulfilling it on their behalf, and bearing the curse for their offenses, according to the intimation of the many types and

All they saw at Sinai was the command to obey, and obey perfectly; and taking only this command, they sought to establish their own righteousness through the works of the Law. Sadly, they never truly listened to Moses at all; for Moses in the Law wrote of Christ, and had they listened to Moses, they would have been led to seek refuge in Him (John 5:46).¹³⁴ Indeed, they not only *added* many things to the Law, but they also *took away* from the Law Christ, the hope of salvation, revealed in the Law. For though the Law demands perfect obedience, the reason for such a requirement was never for us to actually try to earn life by obeying its precepts perfectly, but rather in being confronted with how far we come short of it, to flee to Christ. The purpose for which God set forth *the Law* at Sinai was always to lead men to *the gospel*.¹³⁵

So then, it's true that the Law as it is strictly taken is very different than the Gospel. And it's truly vital that we never mix them together or confuse them: The Law tells us what is *required* for salvation; the gospel

ceremonies in the Law. By exacting of them perfect obedience, impossible to them, it takes them off their own seek[ing] for righteousness by their own doing; by representing Christ's perfect obedience and sufferings as a remedy, it teaches them to seek for righteousness by Christ's perfect obedience, through faith in him." (pp768). And Burgess writes: "Now when we speak of the Moral Law. . .that may be considered two ways. 1) Either *rigidly*, and in an abstracted consideration from the administration of it, as it does require perfect obedience, and condemning those that have it not. . . 2) Or else the Law may be taken in a more *large* way for the administration of it by Moses, in all the particulars of it; and thus Christ was intended directly, and not by accident; that is, God when He gave the Law to the people of Israel, did intend that the sense of their impossibility to keep it, and infinite danger accruing thereby to them, should make them desire and seek out for Christ; which the Jews generally not understanding, or neglecting, did thereby, like Adam, go to make fig leaves for their covering of their nakedness, their empty, external obedience." (p266). And speaking of the Galatians, Strong writes: "They seeing a covenant made with Abraham, and a promise of free grace and of righteousness, and life without works, an inheritance by promise; and 430 years after a Law given requiring works, and promising life upon perfect obedience thereof, they did not know how to conceive, but that either God did repent of and revoke his former covenant, or else they must be both joined together in the matter of justification and life. Now to answer this the Apostle acquaints them *with the end why God did give the Law*: it was not to set it up as a Covenant alone, that any man should attain righteousness and life thereby. . .neither was it published to make void the Covenant of Grace, but it was added, not by way of opposition but subordination, *that it might be as Hagar to Sarah; a handmaid to further the ends of the gospel, and to advance the grace of it, that it might be as the avenger of blood to the city of refuge*, and make men look for the Law in the Ark, Christ, who is the end of the Law for justification. . .[But] This men being ignorant of, they look upon the Law as a Covenant of Works, and all that they do in obedience thereunto is to gain righteousness and life." (Strong, p29). And Turretin says: "A twofold relation ought always to obtain [IE, be considered]: *the one legal*, more severe, through which by a new promulgation of the law and of the Covenant of Works, with an intolerable yoke of ceremonies, he wished to set forth what men owed and what was to be expected by them on account of duty unperformed. In this respect, the law is called the letter that kills (2 Corinthians 3:6) and the handwriting which was contrary to us (Colossians 2:14), because by it men professed themselves guilty and children of death, the declaration being written by their own blood in circumcision and by the blood of victims. *The other relation was evangelical*, sweeter, inasmuch as 'the law was a schoolmaster unto Christ' (Galatians 3:24) and contained 'the shadow of things to come' (Hebrews 10:1), whose body and express image is in Christ. . .According to that twofold relation, the administration can be viewed either as to the external economy of *legal teaching* or as to the internal truth of the *gospel promise* lying under it. . .eternal life [was set forth] according to the clause, 'Do this and live.' On the part of the people, it was a stipulation of obedience to the whole law or righteousness both perfect (Deuteronomy 27:26; Galatians 3:10) and personal and justification by it (Romans 2:13). But this stipulation in the Israelite covenant was only accidental, since it was added only in order that man by its weakness might be led to reject his own righteousness and to embrace another's, latent [IE, hidden] under the law." (Turretin, p227).

¹³⁴ See footnote above. Ball says: "the condition of obedience, which God requires and man promises, is the chief thing urged in the Law; but free and gracious pardon, wherein consists the happiness of the Saints is therein promised and proclaimed. They under the Old Testament lightly following the letter, mistook the meaning, not looking to the end of that which was to be abolished, whereunto Moses had an eye under the veil. For they perceived not so well the grace intended by the legal Testament, which the perfection of the Moral Law, whereof they could not but fail, should have forced them to seek, and the imperfection of the typical Law, which made nothing perfect, should have led them to find, but they generally rested in the work done, as was commanded by either Law, when as themselves were unable to do the one, and the other was in itself as insufficient to help them." (Ball, p106). And Dabney says: "[The Apostles] were arguing, for the gospel plan, against self-righteous Jews, who had perversely cast away the gospel significance out of the Mosaic institutions to which they clung, and who retained only the condemning features of those institutions; vainly hoping to make a righteousness out of compliance with a law, whose very intent was to remind men that they could make no righteousness for themselves." (Dabney, p458).

¹³⁵ We've noted earlier that some actually seem to deny that the Law contains the requirement of perfect obedience as the cause of eternal life and curses all who fall short (see end of last footnote under #3: *Perfect Obedience in the Law*). I would guess that many who would hold this view do so because they believe the Mosaic Covenant was indeed part of the Covenant of Grace, and they think that to concede that perfect obedience is demanded in the Law is to weaken the argument that Sinai belongs to the Covenant of Grace. I hope we've demonstrated above that this is emphatically *not* the case. The Puritans often speak of the Jews misunderstanding God's Law in the context of speaking of the Law in its strict sense. But when they do so, they are not saying that the Jews were mistaken to take the Law in its *strict sense*—but rather that they were mistaken in failing to also take the Law in its *larger sense*. The Jews' mistake was not *adding* to the Law (the strict sense), but rather in *taking away* from it (cutting Christ out of the Law's larger sense). Their mistake didn't have to do with the Law's *demands*—but rather with the Law's *design*; not with *what* the Law required, but *why* it required what it did. Their mistake was never wrongly

tells us how God has *provided* it for us. The Law issues *commands*; the gospel makes *promises*. The Law *breaks* guilty sinners; the gospel *heals* them. The Law declares *what we must do*; the gospel declares what God in Christ *has done*. The Law *condemns* sinners; the gospel justifies them. The Law brings *conviction*; the gospel brings *comfort*. The Law *demands* righteousness; the gospel *provides* it. The Law *shows* us our sin-disease; the gospel *cures* it. The Law gives *the knowledge of sin*; the gospel gives *the knowledge of the Savior*. So that, apart from Christ and the gospel, the Law is merely a letter that kills.¹³⁶

But though the Law has a different function than the Gospel, they still always have the same goal: to bring sinners to Christ. And so, though they are very different, “the Law. . .is not opposite, but subordinate to the gospel.”¹³⁷ *Think of farming*: You plow and you sow. But plowing itself never bears fruit. It's the sowing that bears fruit. So why plow? Because plowing prepares the way for the sowing. In and of itself,

imposing upon the Law the demand of perfect obedience—but rather misunderstanding why the Law demanded what it did.

¹³⁶ See Romans 3:19-20; 5:20; 7:7; 2 Corinthians 3:5-7; Galatians 3:19, 21-22; and John 1:17. On 2 Corinthians 3:5-7, Calvin says: “The law was *engraven on stones*, and hence it was a literal doctrine. This defect of the law required to be corrected by the gospel. . .From this, too, it follows, that the law was the *ministry of condemnation* and of *death*; for when men are instructed as to their duty, and hear it declared, that all who do not render satisfaction to the justice of God are cursed, (Deuteronomy 27:26), they are convicted, as under sentence of sin and death. From the law, therefore, they derive nothing but a condemnation of this nature, because God there demands what is due to him, and at the same time confers no power to perform it. The gospel, on the other hand, by which men are regenerated, and are reconciled to God, through the free remission of their sins, is the ministry of righteousness, and, consequently, of life also. . .the office of the law is to show us the disease, in such a way as to show us, at the same time, no hope of cure: the office of the gospel is, to bring a remedy to those that were past hope. For as the law leaves man to himself, it condemns him, of necessity, to death; while the gospel, bringing him to Christ, opens the gate of life.” (2 Corinthians 3:6-7). And again, Calvin says: “The law is like a mirror. In it we contemplate our weakness, then the iniquity arising from this, and finally the curse coming from both—just as a mirror shows us the spots on our face. For when the capacity to follow righteousness fails him, man must be mired in sins. After the sin forthwith comes the curse. Accordingly, the greater the transgression of which the law holds us guilty, the graver the judgment to which it makes us answerable. The apostle's statement is relevant here: 'Through the law comes knowledge of sin' (Rom. 3:20). . .Related to this are these statements: 'Law slipped in, to increase the trespass' (Rom. 5:20), and thus it is 'the dispensation of death' (2 Cor. 3:7) that 'brings wrath' (Rom. 4:15), and slays. . .It remains, then, to the law to arm God's wrath for the sinner's downfall, for of itself the law can only accuse, condemn, and destroy. . .But when we say that, we neither dishonor the law, nor detract at all from its excellence. . .[As Augustine] writes. . .The usefulness of the law lies in convicting man of his infirmity and moving him to call upon the remedy of grace which is in Christ.' . .Again: 'The law was given for this purpose: to make you, being great, little; to show that you do not have in yourself the strength to attain righteousness, and for you, thus helpless, unworthy, and destitute, to flee to grace.'” (Institutes, 2.7.7-9). Hodge says: “the law as written was something external and objective. It was addressed to the eye, to the ear, to the understanding. It was not an inward principle or power. It held up the rule of duty to which men were to be conformed, but it could not impart the disposition or ability to obey. It was, as it were, a mere writing or book. On the other hand, the gospel is spiritual, as distinguished from what was external and ritual. It is the power of God, Romans 1:6; the organ through which the Spirit works in giving life to the soul. These words therefore express concisely the characteristic difference between the law and the gospel. The one was external, the other spiritual; the one was an outward precept, the other an inward power. In the one case the law was written on stone, in the other on the heart. The one therefore was *letter*, the other *spirit*. . .It was the design and effect of the law to kill. . .In all these forms it was designed to bring men to the knowledge of sin and helplessness; to produce a sense of guilt and misery, and a longing for redemption, and thus be a schoolmaster to bring men to Christ (Galatians 3:24).” (2 Corinthians 3:6-7). Bavinck says, “While, on the one hand, the Reformers held on to the unity of the covenant of grace in its two dispensations against the Anabaptists, on the other hand, they also perceived the sharp contrast between law and gospel. . .the terms 'law' and 'gospel'. . .in their actual significance they definitely describe two essentially different revelations of divine will. . .[In Scripture] law and gospel are contrasted as demand and gift, as command and promise, as sin and grace, as sickness and healing, as death and life. Although they agree in that both have God as author, both speak of one and the same perfect righteousness, and both are addressed to human beings to bring them to eternal life, they nevertheless differ in that the law proceeds from God's holiness, the gospel from God's grace; the law is known from nature, the gospel only from special revelation; the law demands perfect righteousness, but the gospel grants it; the law leads people to eternal life by works, and the gospel produces good works from the riches of the eternal life granted in faith; the law presently condemns people, and the gospel acquits them; the law addresses itself to all people, and the gospel only to those who live within its hearing. . .” (IV:453). And Colquhoun writes: “The law regards us as creatures, originally formed with sufficient ability to yield perfect obedience to it; and accordingly it requires us to retain, and to exert that ability, in performing perfectly all the duties, which we owe to God, ourselves, and our neighbors; whereas, the gospel considers us as sinners, condemned to death. . .totally destitute of strength. . .and it declares to us, what God, as a God of infinite grace and mercy, has done, and what he offers and promises still to be, and to do, for us. . .The law shows us 'what manner of persons we ought to be'. . .but it does not inform us, by what means we may become such; whereas the gospel teaches us, how we may be made such; namely, by union, and communion with Christ in his righteousness. . . The law condemns [sinners]. . .the gospel justifies the sinner who believes in Jesus. In the former, he curses, as on mount Ebal; in the latter, he blesses, as on mount Gerizim. . .While the law, in the hand of the Holy Spirit, serves to convince the sinner of his sin, and of his want of righteousness; the gospel presents him with a perfect righteousness, for his justification before God. The law, wounds and terrifies the guilty sinner; the gospel heals and comforts the guilty sinner who believes in Jesus. The one shows him, that his debt is infinitely great, and that he has nothing to clear it; the other

plowing actually destroys. But is plowing against sowing? No way. Why? Because though they have different functions, plowing and sowing both work together for the same goal; namely, to bring fruit from the earth. And it's the same with the Law and the gospel. Though the Law is very *different* than the Gospel, still, they are not *contrary* to one another (Galatians 3:21). In and of itself, the Law is indeed a ministry of death. But God's design in it is to lead us to the life that He has freely provided in Christ.

C) One Final Thought: There's one more reason that God gave us the Law in its strict sense at Sinai. Perfect obedience was commanded under Moses, not only to expose our own wretchedness under the Covenant of Works, but also to demonstrate the requirements Christ himself must fulfill for us under the Covenant of Grace. The older writers recognized that these two conditions—these two wholly opposing conditions—*faith* and *obedience*, were both given in the Law *because they were equally necessary for our salvation*, but in this way: *faith* is commanded in the Law (in its large sense) because it is *required of us* in the Covenant of Grace; *perfect obedience* is commanded in the Law (in its strict sense) because it is *required of Christ* in the Covenant of Grace. *Evangelical faith* and *perfect obedience* are both required at Sinai because both are equally necessary for our justification—but again, in this way: it's *Christ's perfect obedience* (not ours) that will justify us; but this perfect obedience can only be imputed to us *by faith*.

Turretin gives a beautiful summary of these things in his Institutes. He says: “Again, these two conditions are proposed because they are necessary to the salvation of the sinner: *perfect obedience in Christ* to fulfill the righteousness of the law. . .without which the justice of God did not permit life to be given to us; *faith however in us* that the perfect obedience and satisfaction of Christ might be applied to us and become ours by imputation. *Thus what was demanded of us in the Covenant of Works is fulfilled by Christ in the Covenant of Grace.* Nor is it absurd that in this way justification takes place by works and by faith—by *the works of Christ* and by *our faith*. And thus in sweet harmony the law and the gospel meet together in this covenant. The law is not administered without the gospel, nor the gospel without the law. So that it is as it were a legal-gospel and an evangelical-law; a gospel full of obedience and a law full of faith. So the gospel does not destroy the law, but establishes it (Romans 3:31) by giving us Christ, who perfectly fulfilled it. And the law is not against the gospel, since it refers and leads us to it as its end.”¹³⁸

Francis Roberts also has condensed down many of the things we've been discussing into a beautifully rich section in his writings. It's a bit lengthy, but it's so valuable that I'd like to end by quoting him at length. He says: “I add therefore, for the unfolding of this mystery more clearly. . .these few considerations touching the Law or Sinai Covenant, and the condition of life and happiness therein revealed, [namely]:

1) “That the Sinai Covenant was purposely so dispensed as to tender life and happiness upon two opposite and contrary conditions; *viz*, works and faith; perfect doing, and believing; *a) Upon perfect doing* all in the Law: Romans 10:5; Galatians 3:12 with Leviticus 18:5; the curse being denounced against the least failing, Galatians 3:10 with Deuteronomy 27:26. *b) Upon believing in Jesus Christ* the Messiah promised, Romans 3:21,22 and 10:6-12; compared with Deuteronomy 30:11-14. . .To deny this, which is so clear, will but tend to weaken Paul's authority, [and] to darken many Scriptures. . .

2) “That, in this Sinai Covenant these opposite conditions, of perfect doing under pain of curse and death, and of believing in Christ, are very differently required and revealed: *a) Believing in Christ* is revealed very sparingly and obscurely; *b) perfect doing* very frequently and plainly. . .Whence (as Calvin notes) though the whole ministration of the Sinai Covenant belongs to Moses' office; yet that function most properly. . .seems to be ascribed to him, which consisted in teaching what the true righteousness of works was, and what rewards or punishments attend upon the observers or breakers of the Law. . .

3) “That, though these two conditions of perfect doing, and believing, be thus differently revealed and required in the Sinai Covenant; yet *believing in Christ* unto life and righteousness was therein chiefly and

informs him, that, by the obedience and death of Jesus, his Divine Surety, it is paid to the utmost farthing. . .by the law, is the knowledge of sin; by the gospel, is the knowledge of a Savior. . .The law shows the sinner his disease; the gospel presents him with healing balm. . .The former presents grounds of fear; the latter, a foundation of hope. . .” (pp162-70).

¹³⁷ Ball, p113. This is what Calvin was pointing out when he said of Galatians 3:21-22, “The law would be opposed to the promises, if it had the power of justifying; for there would be two opposite methods of justifying a man, two separate roads towards the attainment of righteousness. But Paul refuses to the law such a power; so that the contradiction is removed. . .”

¹³⁸ Turretin, *Institutes of Elenctic Theology*, p268.

ultimately intended, and *perfect doing* only urged upon Israel's subordination. . .and tendency to believing and the righteousness of faith, [for]. . .*The Scripture*, peculiarly the Law, *hath hereby concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ may be given to them that believe. . .*

4) “That, the condition of *perfect doing* under pain of curse and death, convincing the sinner of his sin and misery, leaves him hopeless *in himself*, not to trust in his own works. . .but the condition of *believing* gives him hope, *without himself*, in Jesus Christ, to trust to him alone for justification. . .

5) “That the Sinai Covenant tendered life and happiness upon these two opposite conditions of perfect doing under penalty of curse and death; and of believing in Christ; because both these conditions were necessarily required to the sinners' [eternal] happiness: [whether] in the sinner, or the sinners' Surety: *a) Perfect doing of all God's Law upon pain of death was required to the sinners' happiness:* because God's Covenant of Works, at first made with Adam and with all his posterity in him, but broken by them, cannot be eluded or evaded. They must do it, or die; otherwise God himself should not be just and true. Do it, in their own persons, they could not, because the flesh was weak; therefore they lie under the curse and death. This covenant hereupon. . .reveals the sinners' Surety Jesus Christ, who alone could satisfactorily bear this curse upon himself, and perform the duty of the Law to the uttermost, for the sinners' redemption and righteousness. *b) Believing in Christ is also necessary to the sinners' happiness:* because without faith his Surety's perfect doing and enduring cannot become his by imputation. . .

6) “That, *perfect doing* on pain of death, and *believing* in Jesus Christ are so required and conditioned in this Sinai Covenant, as to let all men see, that the penalty and duty of the Covenant of Works, have their plenary accomplishment in the Covenant of Faith [Grace] through Jesus Christ alone. . .Herein they are directed unto Jesus Christ by faith, for life and righteousness. Thus according to the tenor of the Sinai Covenant, the Covenant of Works has its perfect accomplishment in Christ—by *doing and enduring*, all which becomes ours—by *believing*. Thus the Covenant of Works is digested into, incorporated with, and wholly swallowed up by the Covenant of Faith. *Thus perfect doing is attained by believing. . .*

7) “That, the condition of perfect doing being thus attained by believing, with greatest ease unties the knots of many difficulties, and unveils the secret of many mysteries [and especially]. . .*How sinners are at once justified by perfect doing, and by believing. By perfect doing*, in Christ's person, to whom the Law drives them, by exacting impossibilities of them. *By believing*, in their own persons; whereunto the law allures them, by representing Christ as the scope and end of the Law to them. Thus it's no paradox for sinners to be justified, in the sight of God, both by works, and faith; *by Christ's works, by their own faith. . .*In themselves, through the weakness of the flesh, they can do nothing, as the Law requires. . .and yet in Christ, the perfect Performer of the Law, embraced by faith, they can do all things perfectly; Christ's perfect obedience being imputed to them by faith. This Sinai Covenant therefore, requires *perfect doing* from the sinner under pain of curse, that it may drive him from himself who can do nothing; and requires *believing in Christ*, that it may draw the sinner unto Christ, who has done all things that so the righteousness of the Law may be fulfilled in him. . .Hereby God will have us know, that neither God nor man shall lose by substituting the Covenant of Faith instead of the Covenant of Works, but rather both shall gain; God shall gain a better observance of His Law in the second Adam, than He had in the first; and man shall gain a better righteousness in Christ by faith, than ever they had in themselves before the fall. Thus the gospel does not overthrow, but establish the Law, by setting forth Christ the most perfect Performer of the Law.”¹³⁹ We've charted out Roberts' main thoughts in the chart given below:

FRANCIS ROBERTS' VIEW OF THE DUAL REQUIREMENTS OF THE LAW

WHAT THE LAW DEMANDS	MANNER IN WHICH EACH IS REVEALED	INTENDED FOCUS	GOD'S PURPOSE FOR US IN EACH COMMAND	ULTIMATE REASON BOTH ARE GIVEN	WHAT WE ARE MEANT TO LEARN IN THIS
<i>Do and live</i>	Often & clearly	Secondary	To drive sinners to Jesus	We need both Jesus' doing & our believing	We obtain perfect doing in Christ by faith in Him
<i>Believe and live</i>	Seldom & obscurely	Primary	To save sinners in Jesus		

¹³⁹ Roberts, *Mystery and Marrow*, pp775-78. Note: Reference to Calvin (point #2) refers to his commentary, *Romans*, 10:5.

5. A CLOSING SUMMARY: We've been dealing with objections to the view that the Mosaic Covenant rightly belongs to the Covenant of Grace. The second objection had to do with the requirement of the Law at Sinai: How is it that the Mosaic Covenant, which demands perfect obedience as the condition of eternal life, is part of the Covenant of Grace, which requires faith apart from works? What we've shown is that the Law demands both *perfect obedience* and *faith*, but for very different reasons. We take the Mosaic Covenant to be part of the Covenant of Grace because, as a whole (largely taken), Moses not only points us to Christ, but also requires faith in this Messiah to whom he is pointing us (Romans 10:6). The requirement of perfect obedience as the condition of eternal life is indeed also given in the Law, yet it was never given as an alternate way of salvation—but rather in order to serve the purposes of the Covenant of Grace. The *strict requirement* of the Law confronts us with just how far short we fall of God's perfect standard, and was always meant to drive us to Christ for life, who is revealed in the Law *more largely*. Just like with silica gel in the packet of beef jerky, or the bay leaf in the pot of curry, the strict requirement of the Law was never meant to mix and blend together with the way of faith also revealed at Sinai, neither was it meant to oppose or contradict it, but rather its purpose was to compliment and serve the ends of the gospel. How so? The command “Do and live” was always meant to point us and drive us to Christ, that in Him we would “Believe and live.” The purpose for which God set forth *the Law* at Sinai was always to lead us to *the gospel*. Indeed, though it's even true to say that both *evangelical faith* and *perfect obedience* are demanded by the Law because they're both necessary for our salvation, still, the perfect obedience that alone saves us is *Christ's obedience*, which is then imputed to us through *faith in Him*.

V. Dealing with Objections, Part 3: The *Authority* of the Mosaic Covenant

The Marrow of Modern Divinity is considered to be one of the most important books ever written on the law and the gospel. Penned by Edward Fisher, a Scottish layman in the mid-1600's, it's written as a conversation between four main characters who each represent different kinds of people: *Nomista* is a legalist, *Antinomista* is an antinomian, *Neophytus* is a new Christian, and *Evangelist* is a minister of the gospel. The book begins with the new Christian, the legalist, and the antinomian, all coming to the minister for help relating to a particular question. And the question is this: Are believers under the Law, or not? Are believers bound to keep the Law, or are they no longer under its authority? As you might guess, the legalist claimed that believers were bound to keep the Law, the antinomian claimed that believers were free from having to keep the Law, and the young Christian was troubled and confused.

Now, we talked earlier about the three categories of the Mosaic Law: the Moral, Ceremonial, and Civil; and we showed there that the *Ceremonial* and *Civil Laws* were given to a particular people (the Jews) for a particular time (until the coming of Christ), and thus served only a temporary purpose. We concluded that new covenant Christians are no longer under the Ceremonial and Civil Laws in the same way that God's people were in the old covenant. But the question that was being asked in *The Marrow* didn't have to do with the Ceremonial or Civil Laws—it had to do with *the Moral Law*. Has the Moral Law been abrogated for Christians along with the Ceremonial and Civil laws? Are new covenant believers under any of the Law, or have we been released from all of it? Are Christians under the Ten Commandments?

Most of us would shutter to hear someone say that the Ten Commandments were just for Old Testament believers and we don't need to keep them anymore. Not only did Jesus himself tell us *plainly*: “Do not think that I came to abolish the Law” (Matthew 5:17), but His entire ministry is characterized by opening up the true meaning of the Law and then calling His disciples to radical obedience in doing what it says. For instance, in Matthew 5-7, Christ didn't do away with the *6th and 7th Commandments* (to not murder or commit adultery) by telling His followers that if they believed in Him they no longer needed to keep these commands. He rather expounded what these commands truly meant and then called His disciples to live and walk accordingly. In another place, Jesus criticizes the scribes and Pharisees for creating man-made rules that in effect nullified the *5th Commandment*, “Honor your father and your mother.” He tells them: “Neglecting the commandment of God, you hold to the tradition of men.” (Mark 7:8). Jesus' problem with the scribes and Pharisees, in other words, wasn't that they were too zealous for the Law, but that they didn't actually follow what the Law said at all. And in Matthew 23:23, Jesus says: “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe mint and dill and cummin, and have neglected the weightier provisions of the law: justice and mercy and faithfulness; but these are the things you should have done without neglecting the others.” Again, Jesus isn't condemning them because they made the

Law *too central*—but because they had *neglected the most central teachings* of the Law. And when Jesus is asked what commandment is the foremost of all, He not only quotes two passages *from* the Law, but in doing so gives a wonderful summary *of* the Law, when He answers that we are to love the Lord our God with all our heart, mind, soul and strength (a summary of Commandments 1-4), and our neighbor as ourself (a summary of Commandments 5-10). And so, when Jesus tells His disciples in Matthew 5:17, “Do not think that I came to abolish the Law”, it must be that He tells them this because He knew that some of them would begin to think that He came to do exactly that—but they would be wrong.¹⁴⁰

But if all this is true, what do we make of other passages that seem to tell us we're no longer under the Law? Paul says in Romans 6:14, “For sin shall not be master over you, for you are not under law but under grace.” He writes a little later in Romans 7:4 that we “were made to die to the Law through the body of Christ” and that “we have been released from the Law, having died to that by which we were bound” (v6). And Paul testifies of himself in Galatians 2:19 when he writes: “For through the Law I died to the Law, so that I might live to God.” Again, it would resolve a lot of difficulty to just say that Paul is speaking here of the *Ceremonial* and *Civil Laws* of the Mosaic Covenant, and that believers in the new covenant are no longer under those laws in the same way that Old Testament believers were. But it's clear from the context of these passages that Paul is here speaking of something more; he's talking about the Law in a much more general sense. In these Scriptures, Paul isn't speaking about the Ceremonial or Civil Laws but *the Moral Law*. What do we make of this? What does Paul mean when he tells us that believers are no longer under the Law? Are Christians no longer bound to keep the Law after all?

1. **CLARIFYING THE MEANING:** In *The Marrow of Modern Divinity*, the way in which the minister begins to answer the question is by asking a question of his own. When Nomista, Antinomista, and Neophytus come to ask him whether or not believers were bound to keep the Law, the minister responds by asking: “What law do you mean?”¹⁴¹ Being baffled by his question, the minister began to explain how the same Moral Law—the Ten Commandments—is actually used in Scripture *in three different ways*. The minister then went on to distinguish between what he called *the Law of Works* and *the Law of Christ*, and later returned to refer to a third category called *the Law of Nature*.¹⁴² Another writer summarized these three categories when he wrote: “The law of God. . .is to be considered in a threefold point of view: first, *as written on the heart of man in his creation*; secondly, *as given under the form of a covenant of works to him*; and lastly, *as a rule of life, in the hand of Christ the Mediator, to all true believers*.”¹⁴³

2. **SURVEYING THE SCRIPTURE:** It might be helpful to give an illustration here, even if it seems simplistic. We might think of the Moral Law—the will of God for man as revealed especially in the Ten Commandments—as the chemical compound H₂O. This compound, H₂O, is the chemical formula for

¹⁴⁰ Calvin makes this observation in his *Institutes*: “[The Lord] would not have refuted the notion that he would abolish the law (Matthew 5:17) if this opinion had not been prevalent among the Jews. But since without some pretext the idea could not have arisen by chance, it may be supposed to have arisen from a false interpretation of his teaching, just as almost all errors have commonly taken their occasion from truth.” (2.7.14). This error of saying that the Law on the whole has been abrogated for Christians (not just the Ceremonial or Civil aspects) is called Antinomianism. Calvin describes it in this way: “Certain ignorant persons, not understanding this distinction, rashly cast out the whole of Moses, and bid farewell to the two Tables of the Law. . .Banish this wicked thought from our minds!” (*Institutes*, 2.7.13). And again: “many persons, wishing to express such liberation from that curse [of the Law], say that for believers the law—I am still speaking of the moral law—has been abrogated.” (2.7.14). As an example of this teaching, Kevan cites John Eaton, who makes the statement: “The Law. . .terrifies the conscience. . .therefore let us not suffer the Law in any case to bear rule in our conscience. . .let the godly learn therefore, that the Law and Christ are two contrary things. . .when Christ is present, the Law may in no case rule, but must depart out of the conscience.” (quoted in Kevan, p147). Tobias Crisp was likewise said to hold that “a believer has no more to do with the Law of Moses than an Englishman has with the ‘Laws of Turkey.’” (Kevan, p147). And Robert Towne contended that “if believers are not under the Law in its *damatory* aspect, they cannot be under it in the *mandatory*.” (Kevan, p148).

¹⁴¹ *The Marrow*, p22.

¹⁴² Boston in his footnotes afterwards alludes much to *the Law of Nature* (cf. p26, etc); Fisher alludes to it a little later, calling it by its other name, the “law of creation” (pp30-31). Fisher in *The Marrow* has the minister initially describe three laws which he calls “the law of works, the law of faith, and the law of Christ” (p22). Going on to describe them, Boston notes: “*The law of works* is the law to be done that one may be saved; *the law of faith* is the law to be believed, that one may be saved; *the law of Christ* is the law of the Savior, binding his saved people to all the duties of obedience, Gal. 3:12; Acts 16:31.” (p23). This is also a wonderful way of thinking about it. For our purposes though, only the “law of works” and the “law of Christ” relate to our discussion regarding the authority of the Moral Law. And since both Fisher and Boston speak later in *The Marrow* (see pp26,31,108-109) of the Law of Nature, recognizing it to be rightly included as a third aspect of the Moral Law as well as the Law of Works and the Law of Christ, we've tried our best to shorten and summarize what's most important for our discussion.

¹⁴³ Colquhoun, p7.

water. But it's also the chemical formula for *ice* and *vapor*. That's because the exact same chemical formula, H₂O, can actually take on three different forms: in its *solid* form, H₂O is ice; but in its *liquid* form, H₂O is water; and in its *gas* form, H₂O is vapor. It's the same chemical formula, but it can take on three different forms. Someone might ask: Can you walk on H₂O? But to answer the question, you have to ask: What *form* of H₂O are you speaking of? Because you can't walk on it in its water or vapor forms—but you can when it's ice. Well, we can think of the Moral Law in a similar way. Just like with H₂O, the Moral Law—though always itself unchanging—is actually revealed in Scripture in three different forms: As 1) *the Law of Nature*, 2) *the Law of Works*, and 3) *the Law of Christ*. And so, in order to answer the question: “Are believers under the Law?”, the first thing we have to do is ask, “What law do you mean?”

A) *The Law of Nature*: In the context of speaking about the Law, Paul makes this statement in his letter to the Romans: “For when Gentiles who do not have the Law do instinctively the things of the Law, these, not having the Law, are a law to themselves, *in that they show the work of the Law written in their hearts. . .*” (2:14-15). Scripture here teaches that the same Law that God wrote on tablets at Sinai has also been written, in a certain measure, on the hearts of every man. And we can trace it all the way back to creation.¹⁴⁴ As the Westminster Confession states: “After God had made all other creatures, He created man, male and female, with reasonable and immortal souls, endued with knowledge, righteousness, and true holiness, after His own image, *having the law of God written in their hearts. . .*”¹⁴⁵ In other words, Adam was created with the Moral Law—essentially, the Ten Commandments—written on his heart. And this form of the Moral Law, which God wrote on the heart of man at creation, is normally called *the Law of Nature*.¹⁴⁶ In turn, man was called upon to keep this Law—to love the Lord his God with all his heart, mind, soul, and strength—from *the very beginning*. But the point of most significance here, is that when the Moral Law was first given to Adam at creation, there were no threats of death for disobedience, nor promises of life for obedience. The *content* of the Moral Law was the same. But it was originally given

¹⁴⁴ Haldane notes on Romans 2:15: “This is an allusion to the law written by the finger of God upon tables of stone, and afterwards recorded in the Scriptures. The great principles of this law were communicated to man in his creation, and much of it remains with him in his fallen state.” (p91). And Murray also says of Romans 2:15: “The Law referred to is definite and can be none other than the law of God specified in the preceding verses as the law which the Gentiles in view did not have, the law the Jews did have and under which they were, the law by which men will be condemned in the day of judgment. It is not therefore a different law that confronts the Gentiles who are without the law but the same law brought to bear upon them by a different method of revelation.” (p74). Roberts says that the Moral Law proclaimed at Sinai is “conform and answerable to the Law of Nature written in Adam's heart at his creation.” (p663). And again: “for Sum and Substance the Moral Law and the Law of Nature are the same” (Roberts, p686). Fisher likewise affirms: “the Ten Commandments [were] the substance of the law of nature engraved in the heart of man in innocency. . .” (p176). And Boston says: “the Ten Commandments were. . .in their perfection engraved on the heart of man, in his creation” (in his notes in *The Marrow*, p177). Kevan likewise notes: “It was commonly held among the Puritans that the Law enshrined in the Mosaic Covenant was identical with the Law of Nature. . . John Flavel takes it as generally understood that 'the very matter of the Law of Nature' is found in the Ten Commandments, and Richard Baxter likewise teaches that the Mosaic Law contains the 'preceptive and directive part of the Law of Nature.’” (pp117-18). *If this is so, why was there any need to declare this same Law again at Sinai?* “The answer to this is found in the Puritan belief that the Law of Nature was so 'expunged' that the special revelation of the Moral Law became necessary in order to renew fallen man in the knowledge of it. Men of all points of view concurred in this opinion.” (Kevan, p118). As Roberts also explains: “The fall of Adam and of all mankind in him did miserably deface and obliterate the Law of Nature. . . Sin disrobed man of God's image, dimmed the light, and defaced the Law of Nature so extremely in him, that very few and small sparks thereof remained. . . God therefore published his Moral Law, which for Sum and Substance is the same with the Law of Nature, that the expunged Law of Nature might be perfectly restored. . .” (p714). See also Calvin, 2.8.1-2. We might also give the same answer to the question: *If this is so, why then does the Moral Law of the Ten Commandments seem to require more than we inherently know by nature?* Do we know by nature we ought to keep the Sabbath? And does not Paul tell us he would not have known coveting (the 10th Commandment) was a sin if he had not read in the Law, “You shall not covet” (Romans 7:7)? It seems that the answer here is the same: What the Fall had defaced, Sinai again has renewed.

¹⁴⁵ WCF 4.2. Burgess distinguishes this from regeneration in this way: “There is. . . a two-fold writing in the hearts of men; *the first*, of knowledge and judgement, whereby they apprehend what is good and bad; *the second* is in the will and affections, by giving a propensity and delight, with some measure of strength, to do this upon good grounds. This later is spoken of by the Prophet in the Covenant of Grace, and the former is to be understood here [IE, of the Law of Nature].” (Burgess, p60).

¹⁴⁶ It's referred to by other names as well, which Colquhoun explains beautifully: “The law, as written on the heart of the first man, is often styled *the law of creation*; because it was the will of the sovereign Creator, revealed to the reasonable creature; by impressing or engraving it, on his mind and heart. To this law, so inlaid in the mind and heart in creation, as to the natural instinct, and moral rectitude, of the rational creature, every person, as a reasonable creature, is indispensably bound. It obliges to perfect and perpetual obedience. . . The same law, is also denominated *the law of nature*; because it was founded in the holy and righteous nature of God, and was interwoven with the nature of the first man. . . It is sometimes called *the moral law*; and it is so called, because it was a revelation of the will of God as his moral Governor, to the first man, and was the standard and rule of all the man's moral qualities and actions. . . and because, it is summarily comprehended in the Ten Commandments, which are usually styled the moral law. The ten commandments, are the sum and substance of it.” (Colquhoun, pp9-11).

entirely free of eternal reward or punishment. It was not: “Do *and live*”; nor: “Do *or die*”; but simply, “Do.” Simply: “Obey Me; serve Me; love Me, Adam, with all your heart, mind, soul and strength.”¹⁴⁷

B) The Law of Works: That all changed in Genesis 2:16-17. It's in these verses that the Lord forbids Adam from eating of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, and telling him, “for in the day that you eat from it you will surely die.” Now, there are several things that are absolutely vital for us to understand about these words to Adam. The *first thing* we need to see is that the command which the Lord gives Adam here in Genesis 2:16-17 is something both subsequent to and distinct from creation. Again, as the Westminster Confession states: “After God had made all other creatures, He created man. . .having the law of God written in their hearts. . .Beside this law written in their hearts, they received a command, not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.”¹⁴⁸ At creation, God had endowed Adam with the Law of Nature. Later, as something separate and distinct, the Lord also gave him this specific command.

The *next thing* that's important for us to understand about Genesis 2:16-17 is that this was so much more than simply a *command*. It was a *covenant*. Prior to this, God had *created* Adam—but here, with these words, the Lord enters into a *covenant* with him. This is what the Westminster Confession is speaking of when, referring to Genesis 2:16-17, it states: “God gave to Adam a law, *as a covenant of works*, by which He bound him and all his posterity, to personal, entire, exact, and perpetual obedience, promised life upon the fulfilling, and threatened death upon the breach of it, and endued him with power and ability to keep it.”¹⁴⁹ To summarize then: God had, in the very beginning, at creation, engraved the Moral Law on Adam's heart. Later, here in Genesis 2:16-17, the Lord entered into the Covenant of Works with Adam.

Now, the *last thing* that we need to see helps us to connect it all together: The content of the Covenant of Works, which God gave to Adam in Genesis 2:16-17, *was* the Moral Law. Or to put it another way, in Genesis 2:16-17, the Moral Law *took on the form of* the Covenant of Works.¹⁵⁰ Consider the words of the Westminster Confession once more: “*God gave to Adam a law, as a covenant of works*, by which He bound him and all his posterity, to personal, entire, exact, and perpetual obedience, promised life upon the fulfilling, and threatened death upon the breach of it, and endued him with power and ability to keep it. *This law, after his fall, continued to be a perfect rule of righteousness; and, as such, was delivered by God upon Mount Sinai, in ten commandments, and written in two tables. . .*” The Confession is telling us that the very Law that God gave to Adam as a Covenant of Works is the same Law that was written on

¹⁴⁷ As Colquhoun notes: “The law of God is to be taken, either *materially*, as merely directing and obliging the rational creature to perfect obedience; or *formally*, as having received the form of a covenant of works. Now it is the law, not *formally*, but *materially* considered, that was inscribed on the heart of man in his creation. Man, therefore, as the creature of God, would have been obliged to perform perfect obedience to the law, in this view of it, though a covenant of works had never been made with him. This law, and sufficient power to obey it, were included in the image of God, according to which he created man.” (pp7-8). Explaining the reason for this, Colquhoun later writes: “The obligation of the natural law upon mankind. . .as resulting from the nature of God, and from the relations between God and man, is such, that even God himself cannot dispense with it. It cannot cease to bind, so long as God continues to be God, and man to be man. . .Since the authority of that law is Divine, the obligation flowing from it, is eternal and immutable. It must continue forever, without the smallest diminution; and that, upon all men, whether saints or sinners; at all times from the moment of man's creation: before the covenant of works, under the covenant of works, under the covenant of grace, and even through all eternity.” (p11).

¹⁴⁸ WCF 4.2.

¹⁴⁹ WCF 19.1.

¹⁵⁰ As Boston explains in his notes in *The Marrow*, “The law of the ten commandments, being the natural law, was written on Adam's heart on his creation; while as yet it was neither the *law of works*, nor the *law of Christ*, in the sense wherein these terms are used in Scripture, and by our author. But after man was created, and put into the garden, this natural law, having made man liable to fall away from God, a threatening of eternal death in case of disobedience, had also a promise of eternal life annexed to it in case of obedience; in virtue of which he, having done his work, might thereupon plead and demand the reward of eternal life. Thus it became the law of works, whereof the ten commandments were, and are still the matter.” (p26). And again, “the promise of life, and threatening of death, superadded to the law of the Creator, made it a covenant of works to our first parents. . .*the law of nature was turned into a covenant* by the addition of a promise of life and threatening of death. Of the same mind is Burgess and the London ministers. . .” (p350). Shaw says of WCF 19:1 in his commentary on the Westminster Confession, “The law, as thus inscribed on the heart of the first man, is often styled the law of creation, because it was the will of the sovereign Creator, revealed to the reasonable creature, by impressing it upon his mind and heart at his creation. It is also called the moral law, because it was a revelation of the will of God, as his moral governor, and was the standard and rule of man's moral actions. Adam was originally placed under this law in its *natural form*, as merely directing and obliging him to perfect obedience. He was brought under it in a *covenant form*, when an express threatening of death, and a gracious promise of life, was annexed to it. . .The law, as invested with a covenant form, is called, by the Apostle Paul, ‘The law of works’ (Rom.3:27); that is, the law as a covenant of works. In this form, the law is to be viewed as not only prescribing duty, but as promising life as the reward of obedience, and denouncing death as the punishment of transgression.”

two tablets at Mount Sinai. In other words, it was actually the Ten Commandments, the Moral Law, that was being given to Adam as the Covenant of Works in Genesis 2:16-17. How could this be? Because all the commandments were rolled together into one in that single command.¹⁵¹ Earlier, the Confession had told us that the Moral Law was originally written on man's heart at creation. Here it's telling us that this same Moral Law—which was originally given at creation—took on the form of the Covenant of Works in Genesis 2:16-17. At the beginning, the Moral Law was given to Adam as the *Law of Nature*. But that same Moral Law, originally given to Adam at creation, here in Genesis 2:16-17 took on the form of the *Covenant of Works*. At Genesis 2:16-17, the command to “Do” took on the form of, “Do and live.”¹⁵²

So then, in Genesis 2:16-17, *the Moral Law took on covenant form*. And the *Law of Nature* became the *Law of Works*. Adam was still called to love the Lord his God with all his heart, mind, soul and strength; that didn't change (for this love would be proven in and through his obedience to that single command). The difference was that beginning with Genesis 2:16-17, there was now a promise of eternal life added to the command should Adam obey, as well as a threatening of eternal death should he disobey. With this annexing of life and death to the command, the *Law of Nature* was turned into the *Law of Works*.

¹⁵¹ In *The Marrow*, Fisher explains this in a way that's both clear and helpful: “*Nomista*: But sir. . . it seems to me, you hold that the Law of the Ten Commandments was the matter of the Covenant of Works, which God made with all mankind in Adam before his fall. *Evangelist*: That is a truth agreed upon by all authors and interpreters that I know. . . *Nomista*: But sir, how could the law of the Ten Commandments be the matter of this Covenant of Works, when they were not written, as you know, till the time of Moses? *Evangelist*: Though they were not written in tables of stone until the time of Moses, yet were they written in the tables of man's heart in the time of Adam. . . And indeed, in that one commandment [IE, Genesis 2:16-17] the whole worship of God did consist. . . so that, as a learned writer says, Adam heard as much (of the law) in the garden, as Israel did at Sinai; but only in fewer words, and without thunder. . . *Nomista*: Did he break all the Ten Commandments, say you? Sir, I beseech you show me wherein. *Evangelist*: 1) He chose himself another God when he followed the devil. 2) He idolized and deified his own belly; as the apostle's phrase is, 'He made his belly his God.' 3) He took the name of God in vain, when he believed him not. 4) He kept not the rest and estate wherein God had set him. 5) He dishonored his Father who was in heaven; and therefore his days were not prolonged in that land which the Lord his God had given him. 6) He massacred himself and all his posterity. 7) From Eve he was a virgin, but in eyes and mind he committed spiritual fornication. 8) He stole, like Achan, that which God had set aside not to be meddled with; and this his stealth is that which troubles all Israel—the whole world. 9) He bare witness against God, when he believed the witness of the devil before Him. 10) He coveted an evil covetousness, like Amnon, which cost him his life, and all his progeny.” (*The Marrow*, pp28, 30-31, 35-36).

¹⁵² Colquhoun helps to summarize: “The law of creation, or of the Ten Commandments, was, in the form of a covenant of works, given to the first Adam, after he had been put into the garden of Eden; and it was given him, as the first parent, and the federal representative, of all his posterity by ordinary generation. An express threatening of death, and a gracious promise of life, annexed to the law of creation, made it to Adam, a covenant of works. . . As formed into a covenant of works, it is called by the apostle Paul, 'the law of works' (Romans 3:27), that is, the law as a covenant of works. It requires works or perfect obedience, on pain of death, spiritual, temporal, and eternal; and it promises to the man who performs perfect and personal obedience, life, spiritual, temporal, and eternal. The law of creation, requires man to perform perfect obedience, and says 'Do', but the law as a covenant of works, requires him to 'Do and live'; to do, as the condition of life; to do, in order to acquire by his obedience, a title to life eternal. The command, to perform perfect obedience merely, is not the covenant of works; for man was, and is, immutably and eternally bound to yield perfect obedience to the law of creation, though a covenant of works had never been made with him; but the form of the command, in the covenant of works, is, perfect obedience as *the condition of life*. The law in this form, comprised, not only all the commandments peculiar to it as the law of nature; but also a positive precept, which depended entirely on the will of God [Genesis 2:16-17]. This positive precept [Genesis 2:16-17] was, in effect, a summary of all the commands of the natural or moral law; obedience to it, included obedience to them all, and disobedience to it, was a transgression of them all at once. The covenant of works, accordingly, could not have been broken otherwise, than by transgressing that positive precept. . . The natural law, given in the form of a covenant of works, to Adam and all his natural descendants, required them to believe whatever the Lord should reveal or promise, and to do whatever he should command. All Divine precepts, therefore, are virtually and really comprehended in it.” (pp15-17). And again: “Seeing the natural law was promulgated to Adam, who though a holy, was yet a mutable creature, liable to fall away from God; not only was a promise of eternal life, in case of obedience, but a threatening of eternal death, in case of disobedience, superadded to it. Thus, it was turned into a covenant or law of works, of which, the law of the Ten Commandments was, and is still, the matter. Accordingly, in its covenant form, it not only says to every man who is under it, 'Do and live,' but, 'Do or die'. . . This law of works has a twofold power; a power to justify persons, if they yield perfect obedience, and a power to condemn them, if in the smallest instance they disobey. . . It is evident, then, that the promise of life in case of obedience, and the denunciation of death in the event of disobedience, annexed to the law of creation, made it to Adam, a covenant of works. . .” (pp26-28). Roberts also connects the Law of Nature with the Law of Works in a profound way when he writes: “According to the general Sum and Substance of the Moral Law, it seems to be the same with the Law of Nature written in Adam's heart in innocency. For. . . The same Law for Substance which the first Adam broke, to the ruin of all his natural posterity; did Christ the last Adam perfectly keep and fulfill, enduring the curse and penalty thereof, to the recovery of his elected supernatural posterity. Otherwise the remedy had not been full, proper, and pertinent to the malady. But the first Adam broke the Law of Nature, in violating that positive Law about the forbidden fruit; and Christ the last Adam kept the charge, and endured the curse of the Moral Law, death. Therefore the Moral Law, and the Law of Nature were the same, for Sum and Substance.” (pp686-87).

Now, we should note here that the Moral Law is often presented in Scripture in this form.¹⁵³ Whenever the Moral Law is set forth as promising life in case of obedience, or on the contrary, threatening death for disobedience, it is being presented in its covenant form—as the Law of Works. And the Law in this form, as the Law of Works, is also identical to what we referred to earlier as the Law “strictly taken.”¹⁵⁴ It's this form of the Law that is spoken of in Scriptures such as Galatians 3:10-12 and Romans 10:5-6, “Cursed is everyone who does not abide by all things written in the book of the Law, to perform them” (Galatians 3:10), and, “He who practices them shall live [IE, be justified] by them.” (Galatians 3:12; Romans 10:5).

C) The Law of Christ: The last way in which the Moral Law is given in Scripture is in the form of what has been called the Law of Christ. Now, we need to begin here by remembering what we saw earlier in our study: far from abolishing the Moral Law, Christ rather opened up to His disciples its true meaning, and called them to radical obedience in living out what it said. So again, Jesus never abolished the Moral Law for New Testament believers. In fact, the Moral Law is put forth as God's will for His new covenant people—not only in *the gospels*—but throughout Scripture. The Lord had prophesied through *Jeremiah* about the days of the new covenant church, saying: “I will put My law within them and on their heart I will write it. . .” (31:33). Here, the Lord is neither saying that He would give His people a new Law, nor that He would abolish the old one, but rather that He would take that same Law He had written on stone tablets—the Moral Law—and write it on the hearts of His people.¹⁵⁵ And if we turn to the *New Testament epistles*, we can find exhortations addressed to God's new covenant people that bring us back to each of the Ten Commandments.¹⁵⁶ All this is summarized, once again, by the Westminster Confession when it states: “The moral law doth forever bind all, as well justified persons as others, to the obedience thereof; and that, not only in regard of the matter contained in it, but also in respect of the authority of God the Creator, who gave it. Neither doth Christ, in the Gospel, any way dissolve, but much strengthen this obligation.”¹⁵⁷ So then, the Moral Law continues to be the rule of life for God's new covenant people.

But though the same Moral Law is expressed in the Law of Christ that is expressed in the Law of Works, still, there is a vital difference between the two: the content of the Law of Christ is still the Moral Law, *but now in Christ, it's no longer given to God's people in its covenant form.* In the fullness of time, God sent His Son into the world, as the *second Adam*. In becoming a curse for us, *Christ redeemed us from the curse* pronounced in the Law of Works; and in obeying the Law perfectly for us, *He merited the blessing* promised in the Law of Works. And as a result, all who believe in Jesus, “are, through his obedience and satisfaction imputed to them, freed from eternal death, and become heirs of everlasting life; *so that the law of works being fully satisfied, expires as to them, as it would have done. . .in the case of Adam's*

¹⁵³ As Colquhoun says, “the moral law, in the revelation which is given of it in Scripture, is almost constantly set forth to us, in its covenant form, as proposed to the first Adam.” (p31). We see it in this form both in the Old and New Testaments.

¹⁵⁴ See the second Objection: How do you explain what Scripture says about the *Requirement* of the Mosaic Covenant?

¹⁵⁵ “The Law which God promises here to write in their hearts [Jeremiah 31:33], is God's Moral Law formerly written upon tables of stone. . .So that Jesus Christ, and the Moral Law are not (as some weakly imagine), inconsistent, incompatible and irreconcilable; but most consistent, suitable and sweetly agreeable one to another. . .Had God intended by His New Covenant to have abolished His Moral Law, He would not have new written it, but utterly have expunged it. But in that God undertakes to write His Laws again, and to write them more durably and indelibly than they were written before, not in the long-lasting tables of stone, but in the everlasting tables of mind and heart; hereby He eminently confirms and establishes the Moral Law, as that which shall never be reversed or repealed till the end of this world. . .” (Roberts, pp1392-93).

¹⁵⁶ For example: 1 John 2:15 says, “Do not love the world nor the things in the world”, which hearkens back to the *1st Commandment*, “You shall have no other gods before Me.” And 1 John 5:21 says, “Little children, guard yourselves from idols”, recalling the *2nd Commandment*, “You shall not make for yourself an idol. . .” When James tells us: “prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves” (1:22), he's calling us back to the *3rd Commandment*, “You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain. . .” When the author of Hebrews exhorts us to not forsake assembling together (10:25), he's hearkening back to the *4th Commandment*, “Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy.” In Ephesians 6:1-2, Paul writes: “Children, obey your parents in the Lord”, bringing us back to the *5th Commandment*, “Honor your father and your mother. . .” 1 John 3:15 says, “Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer; and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him”; hearkening back to the *6th Commandment*. The author of Hebrews tells us that, “the marriage bed is to be undefiled; for fornicators and adulterers God will judge”, bringing us back to the *7th Commandment*. Paul says in Ephesians 4:28, “He who steals must steal no longer”, binding us to the *8th Commandment*. Paul says in Colossians 3:9, “Do not lie to one another, since you laid aside the old self with its evil practices”, recalling the *9th Commandment*. And in 1 Peter 2:1-2, we're exhorted to put away envy, hearkening back to the *10th Commandment*. (See *The Marrow*, pp179-80). These are just a few examples, but they show well how the New Testament epistles uphold the Moral Law for new covenant believers.

¹⁵⁷ WCF 19.5.

*having stood the time of his trial. . .*¹⁵⁸ In other words, because of the work of Christ the *second Adam*, believers now “are in the very same state. . .in which they [would] have been, had the *first Adam* fulfilled for himself and his posterity, the condition of life in the covenant of works.”¹⁵⁹ Precious truths indeed.

The Law of Works, then, being fulfilled by Christ, expires to us. This doesn't mean that believers are no longer bound to the Moral Law; but it *does* mean that believers are no longer bound to the Moral Law *in its covenant form*—as the Law of Works. God's Law is, “from the moment the law of works expires as to believers, issued forth to them. . .in the channel of the covenant of grace. . .”¹⁶⁰ What this means is that the Moral Law no longer comes to us from an *exacting* God as to those *outside Christ*—but rather from an *appeased* God who has been reconciled to us *in Christ*.¹⁶¹ Under the Law of Christ, believers are still bound to keep the Moral Law—only now, not as a *law of works*, but rather as a *rule of life*.¹⁶² We are still commanded to “Do”, to love the Lord our God with all our heart, mind, soul, and strength. But the command is no longer, “*Do and live*”, but rather, “*Live and do*.” There's no more threatening of eternal death for disobedience or promise of life for obedience, for in Christ, we've already passed out of death and into life. We're still called to keep God's Law, only not in order to obtain life and salvation, but as those who have already obtained it in Christ. So, we still obey; but we obey *from* life rather than *for* life.

¹⁵⁸ Boston's notes in Fisher's, *The Marrow*, p26.

¹⁵⁹ Colquhoun's entire passage is well worth quoting at length: “since Christ the second Adam performed perfectly all that, according to the covenant of works, was to have been done by man himself, to entitle him to life, and that, seeing all that he did and suffered, is imputed to sinners who believe, believers therefore are justified in the sight of God. *They are in the very same state, with respect to righteousness entitling them to life, in which they should have been, had the first Adam fulfilled for himself and his posterity, the condition of life in the covenant of works.* Accordingly we read that, 'the just by faith,' are entitled to the same life, to which, man, by his fulfillment of that condition, would have been entitled (Hab.2:4; Rom.10:5). If Adam had continued to yield perfect obedience, until the time appointed for his trial had elapsed, he as the representative of his descendants, would have entered upon a state of confirmation in holiness and happiness, or in the begun possession of eternal life; and the covenant of works, as a contract fulfilled on his part, would henceforth have continued to be an everlasting security to him, for his own, and his posterity's enjoyment of the eternal life promised him for himself and them. But, in his state of confirmation, the law as a *covenant*, could not have continued to be the rule of his obedience; because to subject him still to the law in its federal form, as the rule of his duty, would have been, to reduce him again to a state of trial, and to require him to work over again, for that life to which he was already entitled, by his having performed the condition of the covenant. At the same time, as man could, in no state whatever, be released from his obligation to obey his Creator, he must have had a rule of obedience. And, as the law as a covenant could not, for the reason now mentioned, have been a rule to him; it follows that, in his state of confirmation, the law of *nature*, divested of its covenant form, or of its promise of life and threatening of death, would have been the immutable rule of his obedience, both in time and in eternity. As the first Adam, then, upon his having fulfilled the condition of the covenant of works, for himself and his posterity, would have been released from the obligation of the law in that form; so they, to whom, the righteousness of the second Adam, is imputed for the justification of life, are delivered from the law in its federal form, and, at the same time, they continue under it as the law of Christ, and as divested of that form.” (Colquhoun, pp218-219; cf. Boston's notes in *The Marrow*, pp108-09, which are nearly identical).

¹⁶⁰ Boston's notes in *The Marrow*, p26. Fisher notes: “The law of Christ, in regard of substance and matter, is all one with the law of works, or covenant of works. Which matter is scattered through the whole Bible, and summed up in the decalogue, or Ten Commandments, commonly called the Moral Law. . .And therefore was it given of God to be a true and eternal rule of righteousness, for all men, of all nations, and at all times. So that evangelical grace directs a man to no other obedience than that whereof the law of the Ten Commandments is to be the rule.” (p172). Thus Fisher shows that the substance of the two is the same. But as Boston helps to clarify: “By the *law of works* is meant the law of the ten commandments, as the covenant of works. . .By the *law of Christ*, is meant the same law of the ten commandments, as a rule of life, in the hand of a Mediator, to believers already justified. . .The *law of works*, and the *law of Christ*, are in substance but one law, even the law of the ten commandments—the moral law. . .but vested with different forms. . .The distinction between the *law of works* and the *law of Christ*. . .is the same in effect with that of the law, as a covenant of works, and as a rule of life to believers. . .What this distinction amounts to is, that thereby a difference is constituted betwixt the ten commandments as coming from an absolute God out of Christ unto sinners, and the same ten commandments as coming from God in Christ unto them.” (pp22-25).

¹⁶¹ As Colquhoun explains it: “Considered as the law of Christ's justified, sanctified, and peculiar people, it is not the law of an absolute God, or of God *out of* Christ, but the law of God *in* Christ.” (p36). More on this also in the footnote below.

¹⁶² Burgess says: “The Law may be considered as it is a Covenant, or as it is an absolute Rule, requiring conformity unto it. Now it may be truly granted, that the Law is abolished in the former notion, though not in the later. . .” (p213). Colquhoun also: “No sooner does the law as a *covenant*, urge men to Christ, for deliverance from the dominion of it in that form; than Christ leads them back to the law as a *rule*, for the regulation of their heart and conduct; in order that they may express their gratitude to him, for his *perfect* obedience to it as a *covenant*, in their stead, by their *sincere* obedience to it as a *rule*.” (pp146-47). And again: “The command of the law as a rule, is materially the same, as that of the law as a covenant. . .And as the command is materially the same, so the authority which enjoins obedience, is originally the same, and yet vastly distinct; for the commandment of the law as a covenant, is, the command of God *out of* Christ; but the command of the law as a rule, is, the precept of God *in* Christ. . .” (p268). Kevan also notes this distinction: “The inquiry into the subject of the abrogation of the Law calls, first, for the separation of the two ideas of commandment and covenant. . .There can be commandment without covenant, and there can be covenant without commandment. . .they are not only distinguishable, but separable.” (p148).

In a sense, it's as if believers in Jesus return to that state of Adam in the garden under the Law of Nature, *before* it had taken on the form of the Law of Works. The difference is that under the Law of Christ, we have even greater reason to keep God's commands: whereas Adam's motive for obedience was to serve the God who had *created* him; the believer makes it his aim to serve the God who has *redeemed* him.¹⁶³

A SUMMARY OF THE MORAL LAW IN ITS DIFFERENT FORMS IN SCRIPTURE

TYPE OF LAW	WHEN IT WAS GIVEN	HOW IT WAS GIVEN	WHAT IT SAYS	TO WHOM IT IS ADDRESSED
<i>The Law of Nature</i>	At Creation	As the Moral Law only	Obey	Adam at creation
<i>The Law of Works</i>	At Genesis 2:16-17	As a Covenant of Works	Obey <i>for</i> life	All those outside of Christ
<i>The Law of Christ</i>	Throughout Scripture	As a Rule of Life	Obey <i>from</i> life	All those who are in Christ

3. RESOLVING THE QUESTION: We began this section by asking whether or not believers are still under the Law. After surveying the *three distinct ways* that Scripture speaks of the Moral Law, we're finally ready to give an answer. And we can do so by returning again to our beloved book, *The Marrow of Modern Divinity*, for our response is the same as the one that the minister gave to his friends Nomista Antinomista. When they came to him asking whether or not believers were under the Law, he had asked them in return: "What law do you mean?" In effect he was asking them: "under the Law *in what sense?*" Well, *Nomista* claimed that believers *were* under the Law, but that the Law they were under was *the Law of Works*. *Antinomista*, on the other hand, claimed that believers were *by no means under the Law*, but the Law from which they had been set free was *the Law of Christ*. As it turned out, the minister indeed had to correct *both of them*.¹⁶⁴ He explained and showed them from Scripture three truths: 1) Believers are most certainly *not under the Law of Works as a covenant*. *Nomista* had said that they were, and he was wrong. But also: 2) Believers most certainly *are under the Law of Christ as a rule*. *Antinomista* had claimed that they were not, and he was also wrong. The truth is: 3) *Though believers have been set free from the Law of Works as a covenant, still they continue to be bound to the Law of Christ as a rule*.¹⁶⁵

And this is exactly what Scripture is telling us in those passages we quoted at the beginning of this section. When Paul writes to believers in *Romans 6:14*, telling them, "you are not under law but under grace", this is exactly what he's speaking of. Paul isn't saying that the believers in Rome don't need to keep God's

¹⁶³ This breadth of motive for obedience does seem to be one of the greatest differences between the Law of Nature and the Law of Christ. Adam was to obey the Lord in the context of creation; we are to obey the Lord in the context of redemption. There may be a hint of this in the diversity of expression used in the motive provided for the 4th Commandment. In Exodus 20, the command to keep the Sabbath is grounded in *creation*; but in Deuteronomy 5, it is grounded in *redemption*. And though these things are spoken only of the command to keep the Sabbath in particular, still perhaps this serves to represent this very truth. In the garden, Adam was to keep the Moral Law because God had *created* him; but now, under the Law of Christ, we have all the more reason to obey: we keep the Moral Law because God has *redeemed* us. Colquhoun compares the two when he says: "as the same law is called, the *law of nature*, because in his creation, it was inlaid in the nature of the first man; so it may be styled, the *law of renewed nature*, because, in the hand of Christ, and as standing under the covenant of grace, it is interwoven with the new nature of all, who are 'created again in him to good works.'" (p36). *To Summarize and quote others regarding the truths in this section*: Boston says: "under this covenant [the covenant of grace] there is much to do; a law to be performed and obeyed, though not *for* life and salvation, but *from* life and salvation received. . ." (*Marrow*, p117). And Fisher: "But yet. . .though. . .the law of Christ, in regard of substance and matter, be all one with the law of works, yet their forms do differ. . .both these laws agree in saying, 'Do this.' But here is the difference; the one saith, 'Do this and live;' and the other saith, 'Live, and do this;' the one saith, 'Do this *for* life;' the other saith, 'Do this *from* life'. . .The one is to be delivered by God as he is Creator out of Christ, only to such as are out of Christ; the other is to be delivered by God, as he is a Redeemer in Christ, only to such as are in Christ." (pp172-74). And Colquhoun: "The law as a rule of life to believers. . .is very different from the law as a covenant of works. The precept of the law as a covenant, is, 'Do and live;' but the command of the law as a rule, is, 'Live and do;' the law of works says, 'Do, or thou shalt be condemned to die;' but the law, in the hand of Christ, says, 'Thou art delivered from condemnation, therefore do;' the command of the former, is, 'Do perfectly, that thou mayest have a right to eternal life;' but that of the latter is, 'Thou already hast the begun possession of eternal life, as well as the promise of the complete possession of it, therefore do in such a manner, as to advance daily toward perfection;' by that, a man is commanded to do, in his own strength; but by this, he is required to do, in the strength that is in Christ Jesus." (pp38-39).

¹⁶⁴ The minister tells them: "the law of the Ten Commandments, or Moral Law may be either said to be the matter of *the law of works*, or the matter of *the law of Christ*; and therefore I pray you to tell me, in whether of these senses you conceive it ought to be a rule of life to a believer?" (p24). After they give their replies, the minister says to *Nomista*: "The truth is, *Nomista*, the law of the Ten Commandments, as it is the matter of the law of works, ought not to be a rule of life to a believer. But in thus saying, you have affirmed that it ought; and therefore therein you have erred from the truth." (p25). And to *Antinomista*, he says: "But the truth is, the law of the Ten Commandments, as it is the matter of the law of Christ, ought to be a rule of life to a believer; and therefore you having affirmed the contrary, have therein also erred from the truth." (p26).

commandments any more. He's not talking about the Moral Law in general, but the Moral Law as it is expressed in the form of the Law of Works.¹⁶⁶ And it's the same thing in *Romans 7:4-6*, where Paul tells us that we “were made to die to the Law through the body of Christ” (v4), and again, that “we have been released from the Law, having died to that by which we were bound” (v6). Paul isn't saying that believers have died to the authority of the Law and are now released from any obligation to keep it. He's speaking of the Law in a specific sense—as the Law of Works. He draws a parallel with marriage, telling us that the Law of Works was our first husband, to whom we were bound by covenant. This Law promised life if we obeyed its precepts perfectly, and pronounced damnation on us for the least failing. But now, because of what Christ has done for us as the second Adam, we have been released from this Law. Just as when one spouse dies, the other is released from the marriage covenant—so too, through Christ—we have also been released from the Law in its covenant form, as the Law of Works. It can no longer make any claim on us.¹⁶⁷ It's the same truth in *Galatians 2:19*, where Paul writes: “For through the Law I died to the Law, so

¹⁶⁵ As Fisher later says in *The Marrow*: “Now, as it is the *law of works*, it may be truly said, that a believer is not under the law, but is delivered from it, according to that of the apostle, *Romans 6:14*, ‘Ye are not under the law, but under grace;’ and *Romans 7:6*, ‘But now we are delivered from the law.’ And if believers be not under the law, but are delivered from the law, as it is a law of works, then, though they sin, yet do they not transgress the law of works; for *where no law is, there is no transgression*,’ *Romans 4:15*. . . But if you consider the law, as it is the *law of Christ*, then. . . it may be truly said, that a believer is under the law, and not delivered from it; according to that of the apostle, *1 Corinthians 9:21*, ‘Being now without law to God, but under the law to Christ,’ and according to that of the same apostle, *Romans 3:31*, ‘Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid! Yea, (by faith) we establish the law.’ (pp218-20). And Colquhoun explains: “There are two errors, respecting the deliverance of believers from the law, which are equally contrary to the Oracles of truth. The one, is that of the *Legalist*, who maintains that, believers are still under the moral law as a covenant of works; the other, is that of the *Antinomian*, who affirms that, believers are not under it even as a rule of life. These errors are as contrary to the Scriptures of truth, as they are to each other; and they are equally subversive of that evangelical holiness, which is a principal part of eternal life, and which is so requisite, that without it, no man shall see the Lord. The plain doctrine of Scripture, is this; that, while true believers are dead to, or delivered from, the law, as a law or covenant of works, they are under it, and account it their high privilege, to be under the infinite obligation of it, as a rule of life. Indeed, to be freed from the law in its federal form, is nothing more than, to be delivered from the covenant of works, and from an inclination to cleave to that covenant; and our affirming, according to the Scriptures, that believers are delivered from the law as a covenant of works, necessarily implies that, they are under the law, in some other respect. Accordingly, the apostle Paul informs us that, they ‘are not without law to God, but under the law to Christ’ (*1 Corinthians 9:21*); that is, they are under the law of the ten commandments, as the law of Christ, or as the law in the hand of Christ the Mediator. No man can live to God, in point of sanctification, till after he become dead to the law as a covenant, in justification; neither can he otherwise live to God, than by holy conformity of heart and of life, to the law as a rule of duty. The death of legal hope in him, is necessary to a life of evangelical obedience.” (pp224-225). And again he says: “The obligation to ‘Do’, or to obey the law, is eternally binding on all believers; but, from the obligation to ‘Do and live’, to do, in order to procure a title to eternal life, they are delivered. They are under immutable and eternal obligations, to yield perfect obedience to the law of the ten commandments, as a rule of life; but they are delivered from the obligation, and in a great measure from the desire, to yield, in their own persons, perfect obedience to it as a covenant of life. Eternal life is, by the perfect obedience of their adorable Surety, already merited for them; and therefore, though they are under every obligation to obey *from* life, they are under no obligation to obey *for* life.” (Colquhoun, pp229-230).

¹⁶⁶ Haldane says of *Romans 6:14*: “A great variety of interpretations are given of this declaration. But the meaning cannot be a matter of doubt to those who are well instructed in the nature of salvation by grace. It is quite obvious that the law which believers are here said not to be under, is the moral law, as a covenant of works, and not the legal dispensation—to distinguish it from which may be the reason why the article is here omitted [in the Greek]. To affirm that the law here is the legal dispensation, is to say that all who lived under the law of Moses were under the dominion of sin. In the sense in which law is here understood, the Old Testament saints were not under it. They had the Gospel in figure. They trusted in the promised Savior, and sought not to justify themselves by their obedience to the law. . . Believers are not under the law as a covenant, because they have endured its curse and obeyed its precept in the person of their great Head, by whom the righteousness of the law has been fulfilled in them (*Rom.8:4*). But every man, till he is united to Christ, is under the law, which condemns him. When united to Him, the believer is no longer under the law either to be condemned or to be justified. . . Believers are not under the covenant of works, but under the covenant of grace, by which they enjoy all the blessings of that gracious covenant in which all that is required of them is promised to them. The great principle of evangelical obedience is taught in this passage. Holiness is not the result of the law, but of the liberty wherewith Christ has made His people free.” Colquhoun says: “It is the peculiar privilege of them, who are in a state of union with Christ, and of justification in him, to be wholly delivered from the covenant of works. They ‘are not under the law, but under grace’ [*Rom. 6:14*].” (p222). Again: “believers ‘are not under the law but under grace’ [*Rom. 6:14*] and therefore, the law in its federal form, can say nothing to them.” (p281).

¹⁶⁷ Haldane says of *Romans 7:4*: “Dead to the law means freedom from the power of the law, as having endured its curse and satisfied its demands. It has ceased to have a claim on the obedience of believers in order to life, although it still remains their rule of duty. All men are by nature placed under the law, as the covenant of works made with the first man, who, as the Apostle had been teaching in the fifth chapter, was the federal or covenant head of all his posterity; and it is only when they are united to Christ that they are freed from this covenant. . . The language, accordingly, of the law, as the covenant of works, is, ‘Do and live;’ or, ‘if thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments;’ and ‘Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things that are written in the book of the law to do them.’ It thus requires perfect obedience as the condition of life, and pronounces a curse on the smallest failure. This law is here represented as being man's original or first husband. But it is now

that I might live to God.” Again, Paul isn't saying that he's not obligated to keep God's Law anymore as a Christian. It's not the Moral Law itself that he's died to—but the Moral Law in the form of a covenant; the Law of Works.¹⁶⁸ And notice the connection: It was his dying to the Law of Works that enabled him to begin living to God. It was dying to the Law *as a covenant* that set him free to truly live to it *as a rule*.¹⁶⁹

It's clear from these Scriptures that, as believers in Christ, we have died to the Law in its covenant form, as it is the Law of Works. But as we've seen from other Scriptures, the Moral Law is still to be our rule for life as Christian pilgrims passing through this world. These two truths are expressed beautifully in comparing together two Scriptures in particular. We've already looked at Romans 6:14, where Paul tells us that we “*are not under law. . .*” Now, if we turn to 1 Corinthians 9:21, we find Paul describing his evangelistic ministry to the Gentiles in this way: “to those who are without law, [I became] as without law,

a broken law, and therefore all men are by nature under its curse. Its curse must be executed on every one of the human race, either personally on all who remain under it, or in Christ, who was made under the law, and who, according also to the fifth chapter of this Epistle, is the covenant head or representative of all believers who are united to Him and born of God. For them He has born its curse, under which He died, and fulfilled all its demands, and they are consequently dead to it, that is, no longer under it as a covenant.” And Colquhoun: “By the law, in these passages, our Apostle evidently means, not so much the ceremonial, as the moral law, under the form of a covenant of works. . . This, then, is the law which he had in view, when he affirmed to those believers, that they were become dead to, or were delivered from, the law, and that the law in which they had been held, was dead to them. But lest they should imagine, that it was the law of creation, and the law as a rule of life, to which they were dead; he compared the law of which he was speaking, to the law of a husband (Romans 7:2-3), which is a covenant or contract between him and his spouse, and which establishes her relation to him, as long as they both live. By this comparison, he plainly hinted to them, that it was the moral law, not as a rule of life, but as a covenant of works *only*, to which they were dead. The believers at Rome, then, were dead to the law in its covenant form, or were delivered from it, and it was dead to them; so that, it could no longer hold them, in subjection to its precept of perfect obedience as the condition of life, nor to its sentence of condemnation for sin. . . so it is the privilege of all true Christians, in every place, and in every age, that they are dead to the law as a covenant of works, and that the law in *that form*, is dead to them. . . The righteousness of the second Adam, by which he fully answered, in their stead, all the requirements of it as a covenant, is graciously imputed to them; and therefore, in that form, it has nothing more to demand from them. Its demands of perfect obedience as the condition of eternal life, and of complete satisfaction for sin, have, by their Divine Surety, been fully answered for them. His surety-righteousness, received by faith, and imputed by God to them, is their righteousness for 'the justification of life;' their complete answer to all the demands of the law, as a covenant of works. The consequence is, that though the law in that form, is not, with regard to them, abrogated; yet it is fulfilled and satisfied; and, being fully satisfied by them in their Surety and Representative, it will not, in cannot, oblige them in their own persons, to answer the same demands a second time.” (p214-17). And again: “Here [in Romans 7:6,] the Apostle affirms that, believers are delivered from the law, not indeed as a rule of duty, but only as a covenant of works” (Colquhoun, p252). As Walter Cradock put it: “I am dead to the law, as it is a Covenant of Works, the law has no more to do with me then the Laws of men have to do with a man that is in debt when he is dead, when he is dead he is free from it. . . The meaning is not as though the substance and matter of law were not eternal. . . but the law as it is. . . a Covenant of Works. . . is perfectly fulfilled by Christ, and we are dead to it.” (quoted in Kevan, p159).

¹⁶⁸ As Kevan notes: “The understanding of the relation of the believer to the Law is closely bound up with the interpretation of such phrases as 'dead to the law' (Rom. 7:4; Gal. 2:19), and 'not under the law' (Rom. 6:14-15). The general view among the Puritans was that these expressions were almost synonymous, and that they meant that the believer was free from the Law as a Covenant of Works.” (Kevan, p159). *What does Paul mean by saying that it was through the Law that he died to the Law?* Perkins says of this clause: “I take the true meaning of the words to be this: 'By the law of Moses, I am dead to the law of Moses' . . . Though the law be not a *cause* of this death to the law, and so to sin, yet it is an *occasion* thereof. For it accuses, and terrifies, and condemns us, and therefore it occasions or urges us to flee unto Christ, who is the cause that we die unto the law. As the needle goes before, and draws in the thread, which sows the cloth; so the law goes before, and makes a way that grace may follow after, and take place in the heart.” (p120). And Colquhoun explains it in the same way: “The means, then, of becoming dead to the law as a covenant, is the law itself. This, at first view, may seem a very strange, and unlikely, means of attaining such a purpose; but, upon due attention to the subject, it will be found that, no means are, in the hand of the Holy Spirit, so well adapted to divorce a sinner from the law in its federal form, as the law itself. The law indeed is not the *cause*, but it is the *occasion*, of a man's becoming dead to it as a covenant; for it accuses, condemns, and terrifies, the awakened sinner; and so, it urges him to flee speedily for refuge to Jesus Christ who is the real cause of one's becoming dead to the law. . . To be dead then to the law, through the law, is, by means of the strictness and rigor of the law, or, of a work of legal conviction and humiliation, to be driven to Christ for justification by faith, 'without the works of the law.' ” (pp240-41).

¹⁶⁹ As Colquhoun notes: “According to these words of the inspired Apostle, a believer's living unto God, is the native consequence and fruit, of his being dead to the law as a covenant of works. As long as a man continues alive to the law, he is dead to God; but when he becomes dead to the law in point of justification, he begins to live unto God in respect of sanctification. The death of his legal hope, is, in order to his life of evangelical obedience. . . His living unto God, then, is the necessary fruit, the sure consequence, of his having become dead to the law in its covenant form.” (p254). We see the same truth in Romans 7:4-6. On that Scripture, Colquhoun likewise notes: “Now the main design, of their deliverance from their first husband, and of their conjugal relation to Christ, is, as our Apostle expresses it, 'that they may bring forth fruit unto God.' It is not, that they may be left at liberty, to live as they please 'without law to God;' but that, by union and communion with Christ, their Head of spiritual influences, they may bring forth 'fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God.' As children begotten and born in marriage, are legitimate, and all before marriage, are illegitimate; so

though not being without the law of God but under the law of Christ. . .” Between these two verses, Paul expresses three truths about the relationship of the believer to the Law. They are the same three truths we noted above: 1) *Believers are not “under [the] Law”* (Romans 6:14); that is, they are not under the Law as it is the Law of Works. This corrects the error of legalism. At the same time: 2) *Believers are also not “without the Law of God”* (1 Corinthians 9:21a); that is, they are still under the binding authority of God's Law in a very real and important sense. This corrects the error of Antinomianism. In what sense are they still under the Law? 3) *Believers are “under the Law of Christ”* (1 Corinthians 9:21b). Not under the Law of Works, nor free to live however they please, but under the Law of Christ.¹⁷⁰

COMPARING ROMANS 6:14 WITH 1 CORINTHIANS 9:21

THE SCRIPTURES	THE TRUTHS		THE LATIN	THE GREEK
ROMANS 6:14	Believers are <i>not</i>	<i>Under</i> the Law (legalism)	<i>Sub lege</i>	<i>'upo nomon</i>
1 CORINTHIANS 9:21a	<i>Nor</i> are they	<i>Without</i> Law (antinomianism)	<i>Sine lege</i>	<i>anomos</i>
1 CORINTHIANS 9:21b	But they are <i>rather</i>	<i>Within</i> or in Law (orthodoxy)	<i>In lege</i>	<i>ennomos</i>

Returning one last time to the Westminster Confession, we have a beautiful summary of everything we've been affirming in this clause: “Although true believers be not under the law, *as a covenant of works*, to be thereby justified, or condemned; yet is it of great use to them, as well as to others; in that, *as a rule of life* informing them of the will of God, and their duty, it directs and binds them to walk accordingly; discovering also the sinful pollutions of their nature, hearts, and lives; so as, examining themselves thereby, they may come to further conviction of, humiliation for, and hatred against sin, together with a clearer sight of the need they have of Christ, and the perfection of His obedience.”¹⁷¹ This statement not only confirms what we've been learning about the relationship of believers to the Law, but it also gives us extremely practical counsel for how to read such passages in Scripture. When the precepts of Scripture call us to obey the Lord with all our hearts, the first thing we remember is that this commandment comes to us not in the form of the Law of Works, but as the Law of Christ. We seek to obey the command, but we do it *from* life rather than *for* life, knowing that Christ, through His sufferings and perfect obedience, has redeemed us from the curses of the Law and merited for us its blessings. This, in turn, gives us the freedom to be completely honest before the Lord about the ways we've failed to live up to His command as a rule of life; and brings us to renewed praise and thanksgiving for Jesus' finished work on our behalf.

I'm so thankful for all the things that the Lord has taught me personally through this study. My prayer is that He would use it in powerful ways to continue strengthening His people and extending His kingdom throughout the world and among all the nations. I hope you have been encouraged. Our God is a holy God, as He has revealed in His Law. But His heart also bursts with mercies towards His people. For He did not simply give us a Law from heaven; but when that Law was shattered, He gave us His Son. And He did it all for this singular purpose: “to grant us that we, being rescued from the hand of our enemies, might serve Him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before Him all our days.” (Luke 1:74-75).

those works only, which are the fruits of union with Christ, and which are performed in faith, and to the glory of God, are genuine fruits of righteousness; whereas, all that are done before union with Christ, are spurious.” (Colquhoun, pp251-52).

¹⁷⁰ Kevan draws out the nuances of the original Greek as well as the rich heritage of reformed thought when he writes: “The Puritan view of the relation of believers to the Law of God is well expressed by Thomas Taylor, who argues that the regenerate are never *sine lege*, nor are they *sub lege* in respect of justification, but they are nevertheless *in lege*, that is, within the compass of the Law for instruction, for subjection, and in so far as it is written within their hearts. Anthony Burgess, too, compares the expressions, 'of the law', 'without the law', 'under the law' and 'in the law', and affirms that in 1 Corinthians 9:21 the apostle 'calleth himself excellently, *ennomos to Kristus* [within the Law]'; and when Francis Roberts grapples with this expression of the apostle, he writes, 'No Christian believer is said to be *'upo nomon*, under the Law, nor is he *anomos*, without Law to God; but he is *ennomos*, in the Law, or within the Law to Christ.' [cf. p729]. The same interpretation is given also by Thomas Manton in his commentary on James. . . There is no doubt that the Puritans rightly grasped Paul's meaning here.” (p185).

¹⁷¹ WCF 19.6.