

Affirmative

David Landon

Proposition: The divine moral law has been the same in every age.

The importance of the subject of this debate is great. To properly distinguish between law and gospel, wrote Luther, "contains the sum of all Christian doctrine." It goes almost without saying that an unbiblical view of the law of God will lead to an unbiblical view of the gospel. Differences in this debate are twofold: first, is the moral law the same in all ages? Secondly, does this moral law continue to be binding on all men? The Reformed tradition answers both questions in the affirmative.

While the word law may, in its largest sense, refer to the entire Old Testament writings (John 12:34) yet when speaking of the moral law we agree with the Westminster Larger Catechism that "The moral law is summarily comprehended in the ten commandments" (Q.98). In addition to the moral law God also gave the "people of Israel, as a church under age" ceremonial laws (WCF, 19, sec.3). With the coming of Christ, this "law of commandments contained in ordinances" has been "abolished," Eph. 2:15. Through Moses, God also gave the nation of Israel "sundry judicial laws" (WCF, 19, see A). These laws, the confession reads, "expired together with the State of that people.. .not obliging any other now, further that the general equity thereof may require" (sec A). The moral law, however, contained in the ten commandments, "is the declaration of the will of God to mankind, directing and binding every one to personal, perfect, and perpetual conformity and obedience thereunto" (Q.93).

As such, it must be a law that spans the ages. The moral law was first given to Adam in the garden before the fall, was renewed with the people of God in the form of a national covenant on Sinai, and was confirmed by Christ on the mount.

This law was given to Adam. The threatening and promise attached to this law gave it the form of a covenant of works. There was added to this law a positive command concerning the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Were it necessary, it could easily be demonstrated that Adam transgressed every one of the ten commandments when he ate the forbidden fruit, from the first command which he broke by making the Devil his god through to the tenth which he, by' coveting the forbidden fruit, transgressed. That God commanded Adam to abstain from all the sins spoken against in the ten commandments further appears from the fact not the people of God only, but all the nations, from the time of Adam to Moses, were judged on the basis of this law before it was delivered in written form on Sinai. The judgments against Cain, Pharaoh, the Sodomites, Abimelech, and the Canaanites are some of the many examples that might be cited. This clearly shows that all men were under the same moral law as delivered by God at Sinai, "For... sin is not imputed where there is no law; nevertheless, death reigned from Adam to Moses," Romans 5:13,14. All men "by nature" had the law of God "written on their hearts," as the apostle testifies in Romans 2:14,15. All men therefore, both Jew and gentile, are under sin (Romans 3:9) which could not be the case were they not under law.

This moral (or natural) law was again, through Moses, given to mankind in written form on Sinai. These ten words were written by the finger of God, and were placed in the ark of the covenant to signify their perpetuity. This law, strictly speaking, was not given on Sinai as a covenant of works; for there was only one such covenant, which having been made with Adam, and broken by him, can no longer give life. It was the great mistake of the Jews, and, indeed, of most men, to suppose that the Mosaic law was given as a covenant of works, for the purpose of giving life if men would but keep it. And yet the law was delivered on Sinai in the form of the covenant of works in order, as Herman Witsius points out, "to convince them [the Israelites] of their sin and misery, to drive them out of themselves, to show them the necessity of a satisfaction, and to compel them to Christ." The ten commandments, according to Witsius, may be considered in a twofold manner, 1st as a law of righteousness, given to show us our duty both to God and man, this being the same under both covenants, and 2dly as an instrument of the covenant showing the condition of obtaining eternal life, this

condition also being the same under both covenants but, as Witsius writes, with this difference, "that under the covenant of works, this condition is required to be performed by man himself; under the covenant of grace it is proposed, as already performed, or to be performed by a mediator."

Jesus, as the mediator of the new covenant, perfectly performed the condition of the covenant on the behalf of all the people of God. Having done so, He now writes His law on the hearts of His people (Jeremiah 31:33). That this law is the same moral law as contained in the ten commandments appears from His sermon on the mount (Matt. 5- 7) in which sermon He reaffirmed and upheld the Mosaic standards. Jesus tells His hearers, "Think not that I have come to destroy the law, or the prophets; I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill," Matt. 5:17. Jesus, being the king over the church of both testaments, it follows that the people of God, though living under different dispensations, are yet one church (Eph.2:14; Romans 11:17) and are therefore under one law. It is for this reason that James calls the commandments the "royal law," James 2:8. There are no new precepts given in the New Testament, whether by Jesus in Matt. 5- 7, or by the apostles (such as Paul in Romans 13:9) that either adds to, or abrogates, any of the decalogue.

It remains that I briefly address the question how, or in what sense, we say that all men continue to be under the law of God, for it is evident that that statement appears to clash with Paul's declarations that we (believers) are "dead to the law" and "delivered from the law" (Romans 7:4,6). The solution is found in the confession, "Although true believers be not under law, as a covenant of works, to be thereby justified, or condemned; yet it is of great use to them, as well as to others... as a rule of life," (19:6). It is not then so much a distinction in law, as that we are delivered from one law (the moral) and are now under another (the law of Christ). Rather we distinguish between two covenants: that of works and the other of grace. There is a difference then, between the ten commandments given in the form of a covenant of works that must be perfectly obeyed under pain of death, and those same ten words given to the people of God, by the hand of a mediator, to be to them a rule of life. We have been delivered from the curse of the law, not from the law itself. All men are under one of these two covenants; to be under the law as a covenant is to be under the curse, to be under the law as it is a rule of life is to be under grace. Paul makes the same distinction in 1 Corinthians 9. In verse 20 he speaks of the Jews who willingly had placed themselves under the law as a covenant, to obtain life thereby; in that sense Paul writes "not being myself under the law." In the very next verse Paul refers to those who are "without law." To those Paul says that he also is "as without law" (not under the law as a covenant, to be thereby justified or condemned) yet in parentheses he writes "being not without law to God, but under the law to Christ" (emphasis added). There is only one law that in Paul's day would have merited the definite article, and that was the Old Testament moral law as given to him by Christ, the mediator of the new covenant.

The Reformed understanding of the law of God is the only one that both honors the law, and the lawgiver; it alone "establish[es] the law," Romans 3:31.

Questions: Where is the law of Christ collected? What law has Christ given that is not already in the ten commandments? Is obedience to the law of Christ necessary for salvation?

Works Cited

Witsius, Herman, **The Economy Of The Covenants Between God And Man**

Negative

Keith Sharp

Answers to Questions:

(1) the New Testament (Hebrews 9:13-17)

(2) some examples: confession of faith in Christ (1 John 4:15), baptism (Acts 2:38), and the Lord's Supper (1 Corinthians 11:23-26)

(3) yes (Matthew 7:21-27; Hebrews 5:8-10; James 2:8-26)

The law which is distinguished from the gospel is the law of Moses, the Old Testament (Galatians 3:8-17). We are saved by the gospel (Romans 1:16-17) and by "the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus" (Romans 8:2). Either the gospel of Christ and the law of the Spirit are the same, or there are two ways to salvation (cf. John 14:6).

The Ten Commandments were the heart of God's law with Israel and of His covenant with Israel (Deuteronomy 4:44; 5:1-22). The fourth commandment is "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy" (Exodus 20:8; cf. Deuteronomy 5:12). God made known the Sabbath when He gave the Law on Mt. Sinai (Nehemiah 9:13-14). The Sabbath was to Israel a memorial of their deliverance from Egyptian bondage (Deuteronomy 5:12-15; Ezekiel 20:10,12) and has no more meaning to Gentiles than the fourth of July does to Canadians.

The Sabbath was the seventh day of the week (Exodus 20:9-11; Deuteronomy 5:13-14), and no New Testament passage changes it to the first day of the week. Rather, the Sabbath has been abolished (Colossians 2:13-17).

We must not judge each other in regard to keeping days (Romans 14:5-6,13). Therefore, the law which Christ abolished includes the Ten Commandments.

The Scriptures make no distinction between ceremonial and moral law. We can't pick which parts of the law we will keep. If we bind part of the law, we must keep it all (Galatians 5:1-3). To do so is to be severed from Christ and to fall from grace (Galatians 5:4).

The divine law concerning marriage, divorce, and remarriage is moral rather than ceremonial. "You shall not commit adultery" (Exodus 20:14; Deuteronomy 5:18), to which marriage-divorce-remarriage pertains, is the seventh of the Ten Commandments. Moses allowed a Jewish man to divorce his wife for "some uncleanness" (Deuteronomy 24:1). Jesus differentiated between divorce for "uncleanness" and divorce for "fornication" and allows divorce only for fornication (Matthew 19:7-9). Moses allowed the woman who was put away for uncleanness to remarry (Deuteronomy 24:2), but Jesus forbids any one who has been put away to remarry (Matthew 5:31-32; Luke 16:18). Moses forbade the woman who had been divorced from a man and subsequently married to another to return to her original mate (Deuteronomy 24:1-4), but the New Testament allows her to return to her original mate (unless he divorced her for the cause of fornication and remarried) (1 Corinthians 7:10-11). Moses made no provision for a wife to divorce her husband (Deuteronomy 24:1-4), whereas the law of Christ applies to husband and wife equally (Mark 10:11-12). Moral law under Moses and under Christ are not the same.

How did Gentiles "by nature" keep God's law (Romans 2:14) yet were "by nature children of wrath" (Ephesians 2:3)? "Nature" taught the Corinthians it was a shame for a man to have long hair (1 Corinthians 11:14), but it surely didn't teach the Jews so (Numbers 6:2,5; Judges 13:1-7; 16:17). In each of these passages, "nature" denotes "*a mode of feeling and acting which by long habit has become nature*" (Thayer. 660). Children are not born with either an evil nature or a knowledge of the divine moral law.

The purpose of the Law of Moses was to teach Israel how to be holy as God is holy (Leviticus 19:1-2). Since God's essential nature and will are unchanging and unchangeable (Malachi 3:6; James 1:17), there are principles behind these laws which will help us understand God and how to please Him. But, since God's law is adapted to man's needs (Mark 2:27; 1 John 5:3), the specific laws have changed from the Old to the New Testament. Thus, because Israel was not prepared for the return to God's original intent for marriage (Matthew 19:8), Moses permitted polygamy (e.g., Exodus 21:7-11), but the New Testament teaches that marriage is between one man and one woman (Matthew 19:4-5; 1 Corinthians 7:2).

Yes, the covenant given at Mt. Sinai, including the Ten Commandments, was a law of works (Galatians 3:2,5,10,17). It would have maintained life for any who kept it sinlessly (Deuteronomy 30:15-16; Galatians 3:12), which none save Christ did (Romans 3:23; Hebrews 4:15).

The Master declared:

Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill. For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled (Matthew 5:17-18).

If the spokesman for a striking union declared, "Till heaven and earth passes away, we won't go back to work until our demands are met," what would happen if the company met their demands? The law fulfilled its purpose of bringing Israel to Christ and was taken away (Galatians 3:19-25).

No passage teaches that Jesus kept the law for others. Christ fulfills the purpose of the law for righteousness (Romans 10:4), not by the imputation of His perfect life (a Calvinistic myth) but by His blood sacrifice (Romans 3:21-26).

The New Covenant is written on our hearts (Jeremiah 31:33; Hebrews 8:10) by teaching (John 6:44-45). Israelite children were born into covenant relationship with God, for the covenant the Lord made with Israel was for their posterity (Deuteronomy 29:10-15). But, under the New Covenant, no one in covenant relationship with God has to be taught to know God, for we must know Him before we can come to Him (John 6:44-45).

The Sermon on the Mount was not a reaffirmation and upholding of Mosaic standards. It raised the bar to a higher standard. It was a series of "Pentecost pointers," stating ahead of time the principles of the kingdom of heaven (Matthew 5:20). For example, the divine moral law for marriage is radically different under the New Testament than it was under the Old (Matthew 5:31-32; 19:3-9; Exodus 21:7-10; Deuteronomy 24:1-4).

Jesus was not King under the Old Testament system. He was crowned King when He ascended back on high (Daniel 7:13-14), and His kingdom was established on earth on the first Pentecost after His resurrection from the dead (Mark 9:1; Acts 1:6-8; 2:1-4). God formerly spoke in various ways, but now He has "spoken to us by His Son" (Hebrews 1:1-2). Israel was "baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea" (1 Corinthians 10:2). We must be "baptized into Christ Jesus" (Romans 6:3-4; Galatians 3:26-27). They were to listen to Moses (Numbers 12:1-8), whereas we are to hear Christ (Deuteronomy 18:15,18-19; Matthew 17:1-5; Acts 3:18-26). Christ made Jew and Gentile one by abolishing the cause of the enmity, "the law of commandments contained in ordinances" (Ephesians 2:14-15). For the Gentiles to be grafted in (Romans 11:17), the Jews had to be broken off (verses 19-20), which necessitated the removal of the Old Covenant, containing the Ten Commandments (Ephesians 2:14-18).

We are indeed under "the royal law" (James 2:8), but this is "the perfect law of liberty" (James 1:25), whereas the law given through Moses at Mt. Sinai was "a yoke of bondage" (Galatians 5:1-4; cf. 3:16-17).

Yes, the "Decalogue" has been abolished. Whereas nine of the Ten Commandments are found in the New Testament, only in some cases strengthened (Matthew 5:21-48), the Sabbath was specifically annulled.

In Romans 7:1-6 Paul uses the illustration of death freeing the wife from the law of one husband to be married to another husband. By the Presbyterian explanation, the wife is still guided by the law of the dead husband. How, then, is she married to another? The Jews were freed from the Mosaic law, including the Ten Commandments, to be married to Christ and governed by Him.

Deliverance from "the curse of the law" (Galatians 3:13) was through abrogation of the law (Galatians 3:23-25).

The Scriptures never mention a "covenant of works" given to Adam, but the Mosaic law, including the Ten Commandments, was indeed a law of works (Romans 2:12-25; 3:19-27), and, having led the Jews to Christ, it fulfilled its purpose and was abrogated as law (Galatians 3:19-25). This truth establishes the law (Romans 3:31).

1 Corinthians 7:19-23 teaches that Paul observed the innocent customs of the people among whom he labored, whether Jew ("under law") or Gentile ("without law"). He no more followed Old Testament moral law as a guide to life than he did Gentile customs.

"The Law," with the definite article, is the law Christ abolished by His death on the cross (Ephesians 2:14-15).

Calvinists invariably imagine their position to be unique in honoring God. Calvinism fails to honor Christ as the only lawgiver we are to hear today or the law of God as being essential to our salvation. Calvinism is uniquely wrong.

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Response

David N Landon

"Oh, how love I thy law," Psalms 119:97. The Holy Spirit gave the Church this Psalm to instruct the believer regarding the blessedness of the law. This theme carries over into the New Testament. The law is holy, just, and good, Romans 7:12. The following points are given in response to Keith's negative:

1. The Sabbath was a creation ordinance (Exodus 20:11) as well as a memorial of deliverance from bondage. Creation, I suppose, pertains to Canadians as well as to Israelites. The Sabbath has been changed in the New Testament to the first day, Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 16:2. There were religious feasts of the Jews which, by analogy, were called sabbaths. These have nothing to do with the weekly Sabbath which has its foundation in the law of creation.
2. While there is perhaps no explicit verse that distinguishes between moral and ceremonial law there is yet, on the face of Scripture, obvious difference between those "ten words" written in stone (Deut. 10:4) which signified their perpetuity, and that body of positive laws concerning sacrifices, and distinctions between clean and unclean, that were given only upon supposition of the moral law having been broken.
3. There is no substantial difference between Moses and Jesus on marriage and divorce. The terms "uncleanness" (Moses) and "fornication" (Jesus) refer to basically the same thing. (See R.J. Rushdoony, The Institutes of Biblical Law, pgs. 401-415.)
4. The Gentiles did not keep the law of God, but performed only some "things contained in the law." Nor was the law written on their hearts as it is in the case of believers, which expression signifies delight in the law. "The *work* of the law" was written on their hearts, indicating that any obedience they rendered to the law came either from motives of terror, or a stricken conscience.
5. Keith insists that the Ten Commandments were a law of works able to give life to any who kept it, which none did. Yet in the preceding paragraph Keith states that God's law is adapted to man's needs, and that specific laws can change. This God, who relaxes His law to accommodate sinful men, is not the God of the Bible whose law, being a reflection of His holy nature, is immutable.
6. Jesus was King of the Old Testament church; not by coronation, and formal inauguration, yet by Divine appointment (Ps. 2,) and in His pre-incarnate state, He ruled over His church. There is only one church of Christ through both Testaments (Romans 11:16,17) and the person and offices of Christ have been the same in both Testaments (for Jesus is the same "yesterday, today, and forever," Heb. 13:8,). His kingly office is more clearly revealed under the New Covenant.
7. The next several paragraphs in Keith's negative contain a mishmash of contradictory remarks and theological sentiments. Keith says the law given at Sinai was a yoke of bondage. The Decalogue, he remarks, has been abolished. The "Presbyterian explanation" fails, writes Keith, because it still has the wife married to her dead husband (contradicting Paul's argument in Romans 7). Yet, astoundingly, in the very same context, Keith writes that nine of the Ten Commandments are reintroduced into the New Testament. The wife, it seems, is still married to 9/10ths of her dead husband, who now is not only dead, but is an amputee as well. Moreover, these nine laws, which Keith had said were a yoke of bondage, he also says have been in some cases strengthened, and the bar raised to a higher standard. Let him who is able reconcile these statements; for my part, I am content to abide in the historical, and orthodox understanding of the law.

Conclusion
The author of Psalm 119 would never have said that the moral law was a yoke of bondage. He would have agreed that the additional rules of the Scribes and Pharisees made it so. Paul would not have said, as Keith did, that the Jews had to be broken off the olive tree, but only the unbelieving Jews. (All the difference in the world.) Paul would not have written, as Keith did, that we are delivered from the curse of the law through the abrogation of the law. Rather, he would have said that we are delivered from the curse of the law by Christ

suffering the curse of the law in our stead. According to Paul's gospel, whatever was demanded of us in the Covenant of Works, was fulfilled by Christ in the Covenant of Grace.

What was promised in the New Covenant was not a new law, but a new heart. When Jeremiah wrote of the New Covenant he did not contemplate a completely new and different law, but the same law of God that the church of his day had ("I will put *my law* in their inward parts," Jer. 31:33). Only now this law would be internalized. With the coming of the Holy Spirit in His fullness there would be a new motive of obedience, even love; "If you love me, you will keep my commandments."

Calvinism is unique in honoring God (and in honoring His law). It honors the law by confessing that it is holy, just, good, and immutable. It honors God by confessing that He has not relaxed the demands of law, or introduced an easier law to accommodate sinners. It honors Christ by confessing that He has suffered the penalty of the law on our behalf. Calvinism is unique in its plan of salvation, "live, and you will keep the law."

Perhaps the most profound thing that can be said about Keith's position is that it is *not unique*. His gospel's plan of salvation is identical with any number of other gospels. It is this,... "keep the law, and you will live." The focus is on man's striving. Calvinism alone honors both the law and the law giver.

Affirmative

Keith Sharp

It is my privilege to again debate my Presbyterian friend David N. Landon. The subject is the law of God. I affirm **The law of Christ is the only divine law in effect in this age.**

Definitions

A "law" is "*a rule governing one's actions*" (Arndt & Gingrich. 544). The phrase "law of Christ" (Galatians 6:2) denotes the body of teaching also called the "gospel" (cf. Romans 8:2; 1:16-17), "the faith" (cf. Galatians 1:6-12, 23), the doctrine (teaching) of Christ (cf. 1 Timothy 1:8-11) or the New Testament (Covenant; Hebrews 8:6-13). "Divine" means "proceeding from God" (Webster. 1:663; cf. 1 Corinthians 2:6-13). The phrase "in effect" means "the quality or state of being operative" (Ibid: 1:724). "This age" refers to the time that began on the first Pentecost after the resurrection of Jesus and that shall last until the end of this world (cf. 1 Corinthians 10:11).

If my proposition is true, the single, exclusive rule of action from God for all mankind, from Pentecost until the return of Christ, is the law God has given through His Son Christ Jesus in the New Testament.

God Formerly Spoke in Various Ways

The Hebrew writer affirmed, "God ... at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets" (Hebrews 1:1).

Adam

Genesis 2:15-17 records the only laws God gave Adam before his first sin. Adam and Eve were then in a state of childlike innocence, not having had the difference between good and evil revealed to them (Genesis 2:17; 3:5-6,22). By eating the forbidden fruit, the knowledge of good and evil was miraculously revealed to them (Ibid).

The Fathers

From that time forward man has had divine law (Romans 5:13) which passed from generation to generation by teaching (Genesis 18:17-19). This being the only law prior to Christ the Gentiles had, by it they will be judged (Romans 2:12-16). The corruption of this tradition was the ruin of the Gentiles (Romans 1:18-25; 1 Peter 1:18).

Law of Moses

God chose the nation of Israel as His own special people (Exodus 19:5-6). The covenant He made with them consisted of the law of Moses (Deuteronomy 4:44 - 5:3; 29:21), the heart of which was the Ten Commandments (Deuteronomy 5:4-22). Moses put the tablets of stone containing the Ten Commandments into the ark of the covenant (Deuteronomy 10:1-5). When King Solomon had finished the Temple, "Nothing was in the ark except the two tablets of stone" (1 Kings 8:9). But the ark contained "the covenant of the Lord which He made with our fathers, when He brought them out of the land of Egypt"(1 Kings 8:21). Thus, the Ten Commandments were the heart of God's covenant with national Israel.

God Now Speaks Through His Son

Moses prophesied God would raise up a Prophet like him, Who would speak all God commanded, and Whom the people would be required to hear (Deuteronomy 18:15,18-19). This Prophet is Christ (Acts 3:19-23). Although God formerly spoke through Moses and the prophets, He now speaks exclusively through His Son (Matthew 17:1-5; Hebrews 1:1-2).

Jeremiah foretold a "new covenant" for Israel, "not according to the covenant" God made with their fathers (Jeremiah 31:31-34). The author of Hebrews declares that Christ is "the Mediator of a better covenant, which was established on better promises" (Hebrews 8:6), citing Jeremiah 31:31-34 as proof (verses 8-12). He then observes, "In that He says, 'A new covenant,' He has made the first obsolete..." (verse 13).

Isaiah prophesied that "in the latter days" the law of the Lord would go forth from Jerusalem (Isaiah 2:1-3) and would be for "all nations" (verse 2). This was to occur when the apostles received power from on high (Luke 24:44-49). This came about on the first Pentecost after Jesus' resurrection (Acts 1:1-8; 2:1-4, 38). This law is the gospel of Christ (Mark 16:15-16; Romans 1:16-17; 8:2). Beginning from Pentecost, based on the absolute authority of Jesus Christ, it is the divine standard for all nations (Matthew 28:18-20).

The law from Sinai was never intended to be a permanent and full revelation of God's mind to man, but rather was given to prepare the way for Christ (Galatians 3:23-25). Furthermore, the law given through Moses was never intended for any people except the nation of Israel (Deuteronomy 5:1-3; 6:6-7). Thus, with the death of Christ, this temporary law, the Old Testament, was taken away (Colossians 2:13-17). Now, instead, God "has in these last days spoken to us by His Son" (Hebrews 1:2; cf. Matthew 17:1-5).

Not only did Jesus replace Moses as Prophet and lawgiver, His law replaced the traditions handed down to the Gentiles.

Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent, because He has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained. He has given assurance of this to all by raising Him from the dead (Acts 17:30-31).

Christ will be the final Judge of all mankind (John 5:22,28-29). The basis of judgment for everyone since His law became effective will be His Word (John 12:48-49). His authority as lawgiver is supreme, absolute, and universal, including, but not limited to, the church (Ephesians 1:18-23).

We are under law to Christ (1 Corinthians 9:19-22). By his death He brought in a new law or covenant (Hebrews 7:12; 9:15). We are saved by this law (Romans 8:1-4), we are obligated to obey it (James 1:25), and we will be judged by it (James 2:12).

Ten Commandments Removed

In Romans 7:1-6 Paul informed Jewish Christians (verse 1) that they were free from the law. The law from which they had been freed includes the command, "You shall not covet" (verse 7). Of course, this is the tenth of the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:17; Deuteronomy 5:21). The law to which they were dead includes the Ten Commandments.

Does this mean we can worship idols, use the Lord's name in vain, curse our parents, commit murder and adultery, steal, lie and covet with God's approval? No, the law of Christ forbids all these sins (Acts 14:14-15; 17:22-31; 2 Timothy 3:2; Ephesians 6:1-3; 1 John 3:15; Hebrews 13:4; Ephesians 4:28, 25; Colossians 3:5). It is sinful to do them, not because the Ten Commandments forbade them, but because Christ does.

Colossians 2:13-17 teaches uncircumcised Gentiles (verse 13) that God has "wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross" (verse 14). This "handwriting of requirements" included laws about food, drink, festivals, new moons, and sabbaths (verse 16). The Mosaic covenant imposed regulations concerning foods (Leviticus 11), drink (Numbers 6:1-3), festivals (Leviticus 23; Numbers 28-29) and sabbaths (Leviticus 23:1-3). The Sabbath has been removed. Since the Sabbath is the fourth of the Ten Commandments, this conclusively proves Jesus removed the Ten Commandments as law.

Further Arguments

Even when the Old Covenant was still in force, the Master taught that, when it was fulfilled, it would be abrogated (Matthew 5:17-20). The Law, having fulfilled its purpose of preparing Israel for Christ (Galatians 3:23-25), has been abolished.

In 2 Corinthians three Paul argues the superiority of the apostolic ministry of the New Testament over the Old Testament. The apostles are "ministers of the new covenant" (verse 6) in contrast with "the Old Testament" (verse 14). The Old Testament was "engraved on stones" (verse 7). This, of course, refers to the Ten Commandments. As Paul wrote to Corinth, this covenant was "passing away" (verse 11).

In Galatians 4:21-31 the apostle constructs an allegory based on Hagar, Ishmael, Sarah, and Isaac. Hagar represents the Old Testament (verses 24-25), and Ishmael represents fleshly Israel (verses 21-25). Paul concludes, "Cast out the bondwoman and her son" (verse 30). The Old Testament, the Law, including the Ten Commandments, was cast out as a binding law from God.

In Ephesians 2:14-18 the apostle explains that Christ made peace between Jew and Gentile, "having abolished in His flesh the enmity, that is, the law of commandments contained in ordinances, so as to create in Himself one new man from the two, thus making peace" (verse 15). Christ abolished the law that distinguished between Jew and Gentile.

God took away the first covenant in order to establish the second (Hebrews 10:9).

Conclusion

The law given through Christ has superceded all previous divine laws and will continue to be the sole divine law until the end of this world (1 Corinthians 15:20-28). **The law of Christ is the only divine law in effect in this age.**

Works Cited

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Negative

David N Landon

It has been said that he who distinguishes well teaches well. There are many important distinctions in our subject that Keith has failed to make. These include distinctions between:

1. Continuity and discontinuity. Keith' s approach to Scripture seems to be one of discontinuity. According to Keith, while God spoke in various ways in the Old Testament, "He now speaks exclusively through His Son." (The word *exclusively*, incidentally, is not in any of the texts Keith quotes.) According to this model all the old law is abrogated except what Christ has repeated. This model represents God as changing His mind and then changing it back again. Concerning the sins forbidden by the Ten Commandments, Keith writes, "It is sinful to do them, not because the Ten Commandments forbade them, but because Christ does." My approach is one of continuity; the Scripture cannot be broken, John 10:35. The Old Testament continues to be binding except for what is repealed in the New. Given the fact that the law is holy, just, good, and spiritual (Romans 7:12, 14) the presumption ought to favor continuity.
2. Written and unwritten. According to Keith, "Genesis 2:15-17 records the only laws God gave Adam. . ." Had he written "Genesis 2:15-17 gives us the only record of the laws God gave Adam" I might agree. Adam also had the moral law given to him at his creation. This law, certainly, was first given in written form at Sinai; yet it was the same law that was given in unwritten form to all men by virtue of their creation in the image of God. Certainly Paul makes this point when he writes of the Gentiles, "who have not the law," and yet "do by nature the things contained in the law."
3. Law and covenant. Keith seems to make the law of Moses and the covenant God made with Israel identical. At most, the law was an instrument of the covenant. Keith cites the commentary of Hebrews 8:6 on Jeremiah 31:33 that "[God] has made the first obsolete." The covenant has been made obsolete, but not the law. It was, in fact, the promise of the new covenant that the law of God would be written on the heart.
4. Moral, ceremonial, & judicial. The Jews lumped all the different laws of God into one category of 613 precepts. Negative and positive were the only distinctions they recognized in this *law of Moses*. This led them to unjustly accuse Paul of forsaking Moses, Acts 21:21. It leads Keith to say that "the law given through Moses was never intended for any people except the nation of Israel." If he means the ceremonial and judicial laws we are agreed. All nations were bound to obey the moral law. Paul clearly shows in Romans 1-3 that both Jew and Gentile are under the judgment of God, therefore under the authority of His law.
5. Fulfill and abrogate. There has been much debate amongst commentators as to the meaning of the words *fulfill* and *fulfilled* in Matthew 5:17 & 18. It is certain, however, that they cannot mean abrogate. The immediate context forbids it. The very next verse pronounces a curse on he who breaks the least commandment. Throughout the remainder of the chapter Jesus sets an opposition, not between the law of Moses, and Christ' s supposed new law, but, rather, between a true and spiritual understanding of the Mosaic law and, on the other hand, the false teachings about the law by the scribes and Pharisees.
6. Covenants: Works, Grace, Old, New, Mosaic. These several names given to Covenants in Scripture add to the difficulty of our subject. The following entries should be considered:
 - A. Other covenants could be added to the above list; ones with Noah, Abraham, David and others, but for the purpose of salvation there have been only two,- the Covenant of Works, which says that "the man that does these things shall live" (Gal. 3:12) and the Covenant of Grace which says "believe and live."
 - B. Upon the first entrance of sin into the world, the Covenant of Works ceased as far as any ability it had to give life. However, all men continue to be, by nature, under this covenant, and bound to it, until such time as they are, by grace, through faith, placed under the Covenant of Grace.

C. After sin entered, men have been saved by the Covenant of Grace. This covenant was gradually unfolded; first, in the form of a promise (Gen.3:15) then more fully in the promise made to Abraham, and finally and completely under the new covenant.

D. The covenant at Sinai (also called the Mosaic, and the old covenant) was a dispensation of neither the Covenant of Works, nor the Covenant of Grace. It had elements of both covenants. The moral law was repeated with all the adjuncts of terror and threatening. The people were made to feel the full requirements of the Covenant of Works. But the promises of grace were also repeated, together with the institution of the ceremonial law which was intended to prefigure, and point to Christ. This old covenant was also a particular, or national covenant with Israel, hence the judicial laws. It was not the purpose of this covenant to give life upon obedience to it, and it was the great mistake of the Jews (and Keith) to suppose that it was, Romans 10:3-5.

E. The new covenant is the Covenant of Grace, no longer merely a promise, but now actually established by the death of Christ, and formally instituted. This new, gospel administration of the covenant, is better than the old (Mosaic) in that it has a better mediator, priest, and sacrifice. It has also the better promise of now having the law of God written on our hearts. It is not the law, but the believers relation to the law that has changed. The believer understands that Christ has fulfilled the obligations of the law on his behalf and, like the writer of Psalm 119, his delight is in the law.

Why The Above Distinctions About Covenants Are Necessary

Failure to make the above scriptural distinctions between covenants is, perhaps, the chief cause why Keith has made unlawful distinctions between laws, 1 Timothy 1:8. The moral law, being a reflection of God' s own holy nature, is necessarily immutable. It is the same moral law given to Adam that is written on our hearts of stone at birth, on tables of stone on Sinai, and rewritten as the law of Christ on hearts of flesh at our new birth.

Keith distinguishes between laws; Adamic, divine, Mosaic, and law of Christ. Although he appears to distinguish between covenants, it is obvious that for him there is but one covenant; that of works. This is evidenced not merely by his position that commandments formed the heart of God' s covenant with Israel (a covenant which, in spite of laws, was essentially gracious) but especially by his statement about the new covenant, and the law of Christ; that we "are [present tense] saved by this law." Keith fails throughout his essay to make what is perhaps the most important distinction of all; a distinction between two different senses in which we may be said to be dead to the law. For we *are* dead to the law as it is a covenant of works able to give life, but we *are not* dead to the law as it is a rule of life directing our lives in obedience to God. Keith may call his scheme the Covenant of Grace if he pleases, but its plan of salvation follows the same law formula ("do, and you will live") of the Covenant of Works.

Keith' s position places him on the horns of a dilemma. If the law of Christ is essentially different from the moral law of the Old Testament, is it more exact and rigorous in its requirements of us, or less so? If more, it places a greater burden upon us than what the Jews suffered under, Acts 15:10. If less, it both dishonors and fails to establish the law. We honor the law by confessing that it is holy, just, and good. We establish the law (Romans 3:31) by confessing that Jesus perfectly obeyed the law on our behalf, and by His Spirit writes this same law on our hearts.

Conclusion

Keith writes, concerning the ark of the covenant, that towards the end of the Old Testament age "nothing was in the ark except the two tablets of stone." A wonderful proof of my position,- for the ark was an Old Testament adumbration and type of Christ. As the former dispensation draws to its close those items in the ark that typified the old priesthood, and the ceremonial law, are taken from view. The moral law of God however, continues with Jesus, the true ark, and continues to be honored and established in the lives of His people.

Response

Keith Sharp

It is my privilege and pleasure to conclude my part of this debate on the law of God by responding to my friend Dave's negative. My proposition is: **The law of Christ is the only divine law in effect in this age.**

The primary responsibility of the negative is to answer the arguments advanced by the affirmative in support of the proposition. I advanced arguments based on the following passages which my friend failed to even notice: Deuteronomy 18:15,18-19; Isaiah 2:1-3; Galatians 3:23-25; Colossians 2:13-17; Acts 17:30-31; John 5:22,28-29; 2 Corinthians 3:6-7,11,14; Galatians 4:21-31; Ephesians 2:14-18; and Hebrews 10:9. Thus, ten separate arguments remain totally untouched, each proving my position. If I wrote no more, readers would be intellectually and morally obligated to believe my proposition.

Peter proposed tabernacles for Moses, Elijah, and Christ (Matthew 17:4). The Father replied, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Hear Him!" (Verse 5). Did the Father mean for us to keep on hearing Moses and Elijah to receive our rule of life, or was He announcing a change in spokesmen? When the inspired writer contrasted past times in which God spoke "in various ways" with the present time during which He has "spoken to us by His Son" (Hebrews 1:1-2), was he telling us He is still speaking to us "in various ways" to give us our rule of life? Do these passages not imply Christ is now the Father's **exclusive** spokesman?

The negative maintains that Adam had the divine moral law prior to eating of the forbidden fruit but offers no proof. What, pray tell, did he learn by eating "of the tree of knowledge of good and evil"? (Genesis 2:15-17) How were their eyes opened? (Genesis 3:7)

Dave asserts I believe "discontinuity" of divine law, whereas he believes "continuity." We both believe God abrogated some of His law given to Moses; we just differ on the amount. Thus, his argument is essentially meaningless.

He further argues, "According to this model all the old law is abrogated except what Christ has repeated." Wrong. All the law of Moses was abrogated, including the Ten Commandments (Romans 7:1-7; Colossians 2:13-17). Both the law of Great Britain and the law of the State of New York forbid murder. When New York was a British colony, murder was a felony because England so declared. Now murder is a felony in New York because the State of New York so declares. Murder is a sin, not because the Ten Commandments forbade it, but because Christ forbids it.

Rather than representing "God as changing His mind and then changing it back again," I specifically argued, "The law from Sinai was never intended to be a permanent and full revelation of God's mind to man, but rather was given to prepare the way for Christ (Galatians 3:23-25)."

Dave employs John 10:35 to prove the law cannot be abrogated, but immediately asserts, "The Old Testament continues to be binding except for what is repealed in the New." Could those parts "repealed in the New" be broken? By demonstrating the purpose of the law, I "establish the law" (Romans 3:31).

Certainly "the law is holy, just, good, and spiritual (Romans 7:12, 14)," since it was the expression of God's nature and will, but its purpose was temporary (Galatians 3:19-25).

The negative asserts, "At most, the law was an instrument of the covenant." But he makes no attempt to answer my argument that the terms "law" and "covenant" are used interchangeably (Deuteronomy 4:44 - 5:22; 29:21; 1 Kings 8:9,21).

Then he alleges, "The covenant has been made obsolete, but not the law." When the Hebrew writer declares, "He takes away the first that He may establish the second" (Hebrews 10:9), "the first" is "the law" (verses 1,8).

Dave makes the Protestant distinction between moral, ceremonial, and judicial laws, a distinction the Bible never makes. The law that was repealed included the Ten Commandments (Romans 7:1-7; Colossians 2:13-17).

Jesus "pronounces a curse on he who breaks the least commandment" of the law (Matthew 5:19) because the law had not then been abrogated (Galatians 4:4; Colossians 2:13-17). If the Sermon on the Mount is only a correct explanation of the law, either the Sermon does not apply to us, or we may divorce for "some uncleanness", and a woman may not divorce for any reason (Deuteronomy 24:1-4; cf. Matthew 5:31-32; 19:3-9).

The law itself, not just "the believers relation to the law," has been changed (Hebrews 10:1-9).

My friend asserts, "The moral law, being a reflection of God's own holy nature, is necessarily immutable." What about his law on adultery? (Exodus 20:14; 21:7-11; Deuteronomy 24:1-4; Matthew 5:31-32; 19:3-9).

The law of works, the Old Covenant, demanded sinless obedience to maintain life (Galatians 3:10), which none save Christ rendered (Romans 3:27; Hebrews 4:15). It had no sacrifice that would actually remove sin (Hebrews 10:4). The New Covenant, the law of Christ, does (Hebrews 9:13-14), so, although its moral requirements are even higher than the old (Matthew 5:17-48), it gives life (Romans 8:2,13). It is a law or covenant of grace (Titus 2:11-12).

Yes, we are "dead to the law" as a rule of life (Romans 7:1-7). Is a wife guided by the law of a former husband?

My friend ignores the argument I made on 1 Kings 8:9,21, but creates a fanciful argument that the fact the tables of stone alone remained in the ark typifies the perpetuation of the moral law stated by Moses. Never mind that neither the Old or New Testament writers ever draw any such conclusion from the type. Never mind that Paul teaches the opposite (Romans 7:1-7; Colossians 2:13-17). But, a desperate position calls for a desperate argument.

My proposition honors Christ as God's exclusive spokesman in this age. It establishes the law by recognizing its purpose. It points to a higher moral standard than that set forth by Moses. **The law of Christ is the only divine law in effect in this age.**