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THE CHRISTIAN AND THE LAW



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THE CHRISTIAN
AND THE LAW

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The Founders Journal



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The Christian and the Law

Editorial Introduction

Ken Puls

How are we as Christians to rightly understand the Law of God? We know, as Paul tells us in Romans 7:12 that “the law is holy, and the commandment is holy and righteous and good.” But how does it apply to us as believers in Christ? How do we know what the law can and cannot do for us? How do we avoid the dangers of carelessly abandoning the law when it should be our delight, and futilely clinging to the law when it can never hold us up? How do we relate to the law in light of Christ’s fulfillment of it on our behalf?

In this issue of the *Founders Journal* we highlight some helpful resources for addressing these questions: two from the past and two from the present day.

The first is a letter written by John Newton (1725–1807). Newton was rescued by God’s grace and converted from a wicked life as a slaver trader. He is best known for the hymns he has written, including “Amazing Grace” and “Glorious Things of Thee Are Spoken.” But he was also an avid letter writer. He himself affirmed of the usefulness of his ministry in God’s providence “that I should do most by my letters.”

The Banner of Truth has reprinted Newton’s letters in *The Works of John Newton*. Letter 30 “On the Right Use of the Law” from volume 1 provides an exposition of 1 Timothy 1:8 under three main headings: the meaning of the law, how we come to know that the law is good, and what it means to use the law “lawfully.” Newton observes that ignorance of the right use of the law “is at the bottom of most religious mistakes.”

The second article is an excerpt from a book written by another hymn writer, Horatius Bonar. In *God’s Way of Holiness*, first published in 1864, Bonar contrasts true holiness as defined by Scripture with false views of holiness. Chapter 6 explains the relationship of the Christian to the Law of God.

The final two articles are on the issue of the Sabbath. Bob Gonzales draws connections between the 4th commandment, creation and the resurrection in “Following My Re-Maker’s Example: Why I ‘Sabbath’ on Sunday.” “The Sabbath Rest of Creation” is an excerpt from a new book by Richard Barcellos entitled *Better Than the Beginning: Creation in Biblical Perspective* (2013) now available from Reformed Baptist Academic Press. ☺

On the Right Use of the Law

John Newton

Letter 30 from Volume 1 of *The Works of John Newton*
(London: Hamilton, Adams & Co., 1820; reprint ed.,
Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1985), 339–350.

Dear SIR,

You desire my thoughts on 1 Timothy 1:8, “We know the law is good, if a man use it lawfully,” and I willingly comply. I do not mean to send you a sermon on the text; yet a little attention to method may not be improper upon this subject, though in a letter to a friend. Ignorance of the nature and design of the law is at the bottom of most religious mistakes. This is the root of self-righteousness, the grand reason why the gospel of Christ is no more regarded, and the cause of that uncertainty and inconsistency in many, who, though they profess themselves teachers, understand not what they say, nor what they affirm. If we previously state what is meant by the law, and by what means we know the law to be good. I think it will, from these premises, be easy to conclude what it is to use the law *lawfully*.

The law, in many passages of the Old Testament, signifies the whole revelation of the will of God, as in Psalm 1:2 and 19:7. But the law, in a strict sense, is contradistinguished from the gospel. Thus the apostle considers it at large in his Epistles to the Romans and Galatians. I think it evident, that, in the passage you have proposed, the apostle is speaking of the law of Moses. But to have a clearer view of the subject, it may be proper to look back to a more early period.

The law of God, then, in the largest sense, is that rule or prescribed course, which He has appointed for His creatures according to their several natures and capacities, that they may answer the end for which He has created them. Thus it comprehends the inanimate creation. The wind or storm fulfills His word or law. He has appointed the moon for its seasons, and the sun knows his going down

or going forth, and performs all its revolutions according to its Maker's pleasure. If we could suppose the sun was an intelligent being, and should refuse to shine, or should wander from the station in which God has placed it, it would then be a transgressor of the law. But there is no such disorder in the natural world. The law of God in this sense, or what many choose to call the law of nature, is no other than the impression of God's power, whereby all things continue and act according to His will from the beginning: for "He spoke, and it was done; He commanded, and it stood fast."

The animals destitute of reason are likewise under a law; that is, God has given them instincts according to their several kinds, for their support and preservation, to which they invariably conform. A wisdom unspeakably superior to all the contrivance of man disposes their concernments, and is visible in the structure of a bird's nest, or the economy of a bee-hive. But this wisdom is restrained within narrow limits; they act without any remote design, and are incapable either of good or evil in a moral sense.

When God created man, He taught him more than the beasts of the earth, and made him wiser than the fowls of heaven. He formed him for Himself, breathed into him a spirit immortal and incapable of dissolution, gave him a capacity not to be satisfied with any creature-good, endued him with an understanding, will and affections, which qualified him for the knowledge and service of his Maker, and a life of communion with Him. The law of God, therefore, concerning man, is that rule of disposition and conduct to which a creature so constituted ought to conform; so that the end of his creation might be answered, and the wisdom of God be manifested in him and by him. Man's continuance in this regular and happy state was not necessary, as it is in the creatures who, having no rational faculties, have properly no choice, but act under the immediate agency of Divine power. As man was capable of continuing in the state in which he was created, so he was capable of forsaking it. He did so, and sinned by eating the forbidden fruit. We are not to suppose that this prohibition was the whole law of Adam, so that, if he had abstained from the tree of knowledge, he might in other respects have done (as we say) what he pleased. This injunction was the test of his obedience; and while he regarded it, he could have no desire contrary to holiness, because his nature was holy. But when he broke through it, he broke through the whole law, and stood guilty of idolatry, blasphemy, rebellion and murder. The divine light in his soul was extinguished; the image of God defaced; he became like Satan, whom he had obeyed; and lost his power to keep the law which was connected with his happiness. Yet still the law remained in force: the blessed God could not lose His right to that reverence, love and obedience, which must always be due to Him from His intelligent creatures. Thus Adam became a transgressor and incurred the penalty, death. But God who is rich in mercy, and according to His eternal purpose, revealed the promise of the Seed of the woman, and instituted sacrifices as types of

that atonement for sin, which *He* in the fullness of time should accomplish by the sacrifice of Himself.

Adam, after his fall, was no longer a public person; he was saved by grace, through faith; but the depravity he had brought upon human nature remained. His children, and so all his posterity, were born in his sinful likeness, without either ability or inclination to keep the law. The earth was soon filled with violence. But a few in every successive age were preserved by grace and faith in the promise. Abraham was favored with a more full and distinct revelation of the covenant of grace; he saw the day of Christ and rejoiced. In the time of Moses, God was pleased to set apart a peculiar people to Himself, and to them He published His law with great solemnity at Sinai; this law consisted of two distinct parts, very different in their scope and design, though both enjoined by the same authority.

The Decalogue, or Ten Commandments, uttered by the voice of God Himself, is an abstract of that original law under which man was created; but published in a prohibitory form, the Israelites, like the rest of mankind, being depraved by sin, and strongly inclined to the commission of every evil. This law could not be designed as a covenant, by obedience to which man should be justified; for long before its publication the gospel had been preached to Abraham, Galatians 3:8. But the law entered, that sin might abound; that the extent, the evil and the desert of sin might be known; for it reaches to the most hidden thoughts of the heart, requires absolute and perpetual obedience, and denounces a curse upon all who continue not therein.

To this was superadded the ceremonial of Levitical law, prescribing a variety of institutions, purifications and sacrifices; the observance of which were, during that dispensation, absolutely necessary to the acceptable worship of God. By obedience to these prescriptions, the people of Israel preserved their legal rights to the blessings promised to them as a nation, and which were not confined to spiritual worshipers only: and they were likewise ordinances and helps to lead those who truly feared God and had conscience of sin, to look forward by faith to the great sacrifice, the Lamb of God, who in the fullness of time was to take away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. In both these respects the ceremonial law was abrogated by the death of Christ. The Jews then ceased to be God's peculiar people; and Jesus having expiated sin, and brought in an everlasting righteousness by His obedience unto death, all other sacrifices became unnecessary and vain. The gospel supplies that place of the ceremonial law, to the same advantage as the sun abundantly compensates for the twinkling of the stars and the feeble glimmering of moonlight, which are concealed by its glory. Believers of old were relieved by a direct application of the blood of the covenant. Both renounce any dependence on the moral law for justification, and both accept it as a rule of life in the hands of the Mediator, and are enabled to yield it a sincere, though not a perfect, obedience.

If an Israelite, trusting in his obedience to the moral law, had ventured to reject the ordinances of the ceremonial, he would have been cut off. In like manner, if any who are called Christians are so well satisfied with their moral duties, that they see no necessity of making Christ their only hope, the law, by which they seek life, will be to them a ministration unto death. Christ, and He alone, delivers us, by faith in His name, from the curse of the law, having been made a curse for us.

A second inquiry is: How did we come to know the law to be good? For naturally, we do not, we cannot think so. We cannot be at enmity with God, and at the same time approve of His law; rather, this is the ground of our dislike to Him, that we conceive the law by which we are to be judged is too strict in its precepts, and too severe in its threatenings; and therefore men, so far as in them lies, are for altering this law. They think it would be better if it required no more than we can perform, if it allowed us more liberty, and especially if it was not armed against transgressors with the penalty of everlasting punishment. This is evident from the usual pleas of unawakened sinners. Some think: "I'm not so bad as some others," by which they mean, God will surely make a difference, and take favorable notice of what they suppose good in themselves. Others plead: "If *I* should not obtain mercy, what will become of the greatest part of mankind?" by which they plainly intimate, that it would be hard and unjust in God to punish such multitudes. Others endeavor to extenuate their sins, as Jonathan once said, I did but taste a little honey, and I must die. "These passions are natural to me, and must I die for indulging them?" In short, the spirituality and strictness of the law, its severity, and its leveling effect, confounding all seeming differences in human characters, and stopping every mouth without distinction, are three properties of the law, which the natural man cannot allow to be good.

These prejudices against the law can only be removed by the power of the Holy Spirit. It is His office to enlighten and convince the conscience; to communicate an impression of the majesty, holiness, justice and authority of the God with whom we have to do, whereby the evil and desert of sin is apprehended; the sinner is then stripped of all his vain pretences, is compelled to plead guilty, and must justify his Judge, even through He should condemn him. It is *His* office likewise to discover the grace and glory of the Savior, as having fulfilled the law for us, and as engaged by promise to enable those who believe in Him to honor it with a due obedience in their own persons. Then a change of judgment takes place, and the sinner consents to the law, that it is holy, just and good. Then the law is acknowledged to be holy: it manifests the holiness of God; and a conformity to it is the perfection of human nature. There can be no excellence in man, but so far as he is influenced by God's law; without it, the greater his natural powers and abilities are, he is but so much the more detestable and mischievous. It is assented to as just, springing from His indubitable right and authority over His

creatures, and suited to their dependence upon Him, and the abilities with which He originally endowed them, and though we by sin have lost those abilities, His right remains unalienable; and therefore He can justly punish transgressors. And as it is just in respect to God, so it is good for man; his obedience to the law, and the favor of God therein, being his proper happiness, and it is impossible for him to be happy in any other way. Only, as I have hinted, to sinners these things must be applied according to the gospel, and to their new relation by faith to the Lord Jesus Christ, who has obeyed the law, and made atonement for sin on their behalf; so that through Him they are delivered from condemnation, and entitled to all the benefits of His obedience: from Him likewise they receive the law, as a rule enforced by His own example and their unspeakable obligations to His redeeming love. This makes obedience pleasing and the strength they derive from Him makes it easy.

We may now proceed to inquire, in the last place: What is it to use the law lawfully? The expression implies that it may be used unlawfully, and it is so by too many. It is not a lawful use of the law to seek justification and acceptance with God by our obedience to it; because it is not appointed for this end, or capable of answering it in our circumstances. The very attempt is a daring impeachment of the wisdom and goodness of God; for if righteousness could come by the law, then Christ has died in vain (Galatians 2:21; 3:21); so that such a hope is not only groundless, but sinful; and when persisted in under the light of the gospel, is no less than a willful rejection of the grace of God.

Again: It is an unlawful use of the law, that is, an abuse of it, an abuse both of law and gospel, to pretend that its accomplishment by Christ releases believers from any obligation to it as a rule. Such an assertion is not only wicked, but absurd and impossible in the highest degree: for the law is founded in the relation between the Creator and the creature, and must unavoidably remain in force so long as that relation subsists. While He is God and we are creatures, in every possible or supposable change of state or circumstances, He must have an unrivaled claim to our reverence, love, trust, service and submission. No true believer can deliberately admit a thought or a wish of being released from his obligation of obedience to God, in whole or in part; he will rather start from it with abhorrence. But Satan labors to drive unstable souls from one extreme to the other, and has too often succeeded. Wearied with vain endeavors to keep the law, that they might obtain life by it, and afterwards taking up with a notion of the gospel devoid of any power, they have at length despised that obedience which is the honor of a Christian, and essentially belongs to his character, and have abused the grace of God to licentiousness. But we have not so learned Christ.

To speak affirmatively, the law is lawfully used as a means of conviction of sin; for this purpose it was promulgated at Sinai. The law entered, that sin might abound; not to make men more wicked, though occasionally and by abuse it has

that effect, but to make them sensible how wicked they are. Having God's law in our hands, we are no longer to form our judgments by the maxims and customs of the world, where evil is called good, and good evil; but are to try every principle, temper and practice, by this standard. Could men be prevailed upon to do this, they would soon listen to the gospel with attention. On some the Spirit of God does thus prevail; then they earnestly make the jailer's inquiry: "What must I do to be saved?" Here the work of grace begins; and the sinner, condemned in his own conscience, is brought to Jesus for life.

Again: When we use the law as a glass to behold the glory of God, we use it lawfully. His glory is eminently revealed in Christ, but much of it is with a special reference to the law, and cannot be otherwise discerned. We see the perfection and excellence of the law in His life: God was glorified by His obedience as a man. What a perfect character did he exhibit! Yet it is no other than a transcript of the law. Such would have been the character of Adam and all his race, had the law been duly obeyed. It appears therefore a wise and holy institution, fully capable of displaying that perfection of conduct by which man would have answered the end of his creation. And we see the inviolable strictness of the law in His death. There the glory of God in the law is manifested. Though He was the beloved Son, and had yielded personal obedience in the utmost perfection, yet, when He stood in our place to make atonement for sin, He was not spared. From what He endured in Gethsemane and upon the cross, we learn the meaning of that awful sentence, "The soul that sins shall die."

Another lawful use of the law is, to consult it as a rule and pattern by which to regulate our spirit and conversation. The grace of God, received by faith, will dispose us to obedience in general; but through remaining darkness and ignorance, we are much at a loss as to particulars. We are therefore sent to the law, that we may learn how to walk worthy of God, who has called us to His kingdom and glory; and every precept has its proper place and use.

Lastly: We use the law lawfully when we improve it as a test whereby to judge of the exercise of grace. Believers differ so much from what they once were, and from what many still are, that, without this right use of the law, comparing themselves with their former selves, or with others, they would be prone to think more highly of their attainments than they ought. But when they recur to this standard, they sink into the dust, and adopt the language of Job, "Behold I am vile; I cannot answer You one of a thousand."

From hence we may collect, in brief, how the law is good to them that use it lawfully. It furnishes them with a comprehensive and accurate view of the will of God, and the path of duty. By the study of the law, they acquire an habitual spiritual taste of what is right or wrong. The exercised believer, like a skillful workman, has a rule in his hand, whereby he can measure and determine with certainty; whereas others judge as it were by the eye, and can only make a random guess,

in which they are generally mistaken. It likewise, by reminding them of their deficiencies and short-comings, is a sanctified means of making and keeping them humble; and it exceedingly endears Jesus, the law-fulfiller, to their hearts, and puts them in mind of their obligations to Him, and of their absolute dependence upon Him every moment.

If these reflections should prove acceptable to you, I have my desire; and I send them to you by the press, in hopes that the Lord may accompany them with His blessing to others. The subject is of great importance, and, were it rightly understood, might conduce to settle some of the angry controversies which have been lately agitated. Clearly to understand the distinction, connection and harmony between the law and the gospel, and their mutual subserviency to illustrate and establish each other, is a singular privilege and a happy means of preserving the soul from being entangled by errors on the right hand or the left.

I am &c. ☺

News

2013 Founders Fellowship Breakfast

Make plans to join us at the Founders Fellowship Breakfast at the SBC in Houston, Texas this June. Voddie Baucham, Pastor of Preaching at the Grace Family Baptist Church in Spring, TX, will be speaking on “The Reformation We Need.” The breakfast will be at 6:30 AM on Tuesday, June 11, 2013 in Room 353 (D,E,F), Level 3 of the the George R. Brown Convention Center.

Tickets are \$25 and include breakfast. Space is limited, so register early. Register by May 15th for an early registration discount and receive \$5 off the ticket price.

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The Saint and the Law

Horatius Bonar

Chapter 6 from *God's Way of Holiness* (Kelso Scotland, 1864; reprint ed., Durham: Evangelical Press, 1972), 68–88.

“GOD imputeth righteousness without works,” says the Holy Spirit, speaking through Paul (Romans 4:6); and he who is in possession of this righteousness is “a blessed man.”

This righteousness is at once divine and human, “The righteousness of God” (Romans 1:17): the “righteousness of Him who is our God and Savior” (2 Peter 1:1; see Greek); the righteousness of Him whose name is “Jehovah our righteousness” (Jeremiah 23:6). It is “righteousness without the law” (Romans 3:21); yet righteousness which has all along been testified to by “the law and the prophets.” It is the “righteousness which is of faith” (i.e., which is got by believing, Romans 10:6), “without the deeds of the law” (Romans 3:28), yet arising out of a fulfilled law. It is the righteousness, not of the Father or of Godhead, but of the Son, the Christ of God, the God-man; of Him who, by His obedient life and death, magnified the law and made it honorable.

Thus, then, on believing the divine testimony concerning this righteousness, we are no longer “under the law, but under grace” (Romans 6:14); we are “dead to the law by the body [the crucifixion, or crucified body] of Christ”; we are “delivered from the law; that being dead [namely, the law] wherein we were held” (Romans 7:6).

It appears, then, that the gospel does not change the law itself, for it is holy, and just, and good; that grace does not abate the claims, nor relax the penalties of law. The law remains the same perfect code, with all its old breadth about it, and all its eternal claims. For what is the purport of the gospel, what is the significance of grace? Is it perfect obedience on our part to the perfect law? That would be neither gospel nor grace. Is it perfect obedience to a relaxed, a less strict law? That would be the ruin of law on the one hand, and the exaction of an obedience on the other, which no sinner could render. Is it imperfect obedience to an unrelaxed,

unmodified law? That would be salvation by *sin*, not by *righteousness*. Or, lastly, is it imperfect obedience to a relaxed and imperfect law? That would be the destruction of all government, the dishonor of all law; it would be setting up “the throne of iniquity” and “framing mischief by a law” (Psalm 94:20). The demand of the law is *perfection*. Between *everything* and *nothing* the Bible gives us our choice. If we are to be saved by the law, it must be wholly by the law; if not wholly by the law, it must be wholly without the law.

But while it is clear that the law is not changed, and cannot be changed either in itself or in its claims, it is as clear that our relation to the law, and the law’s relation to us, are altered upon our believing on Him who is “the end [or fulfilling] of the law, for righteousness to every one that believeth.” If, indeed, the effect of Christ’s death had been to make what is called “evangelical obedience to a milder law,” our justifying righteousness, then there would be a change in the law itself, though not in our relation to it, which would in that case remain the same, only operating on a lower scale of duty. But if the end of Christ’s life and death be to substitute His obedience for ours entirely, in the matter of justification, so that His doings meet every thing in law that our doings should have met, then the relationship between us and law is altered. We are placed upon a new footing in regard to it, while it remains unchanged and unrelaxed.

What, then, is this new relationship between us and the law, which faith establishes?

There are some who speak as if in this matter there is the mere breaking up of the old relationship, the canceling of the old covenant, without the substitution of anything new. They dwell on such texts as these: “Not under the law,” “delivered from the law,” “without the law,” affirming that a believing man has nothing more to do with law at all. They call that “imperfect teaching” which urges obedience to law in the carrying out of a holy life. They brand as bondage the regard to law which those pay, who, studying Moses and the prophets, and specially the psalms of him who had tasted the blessedness of the man to whom the Lord imputeth righteousness without works (Psalm 32:1), are drinking into the spirit of David, or more truly, into the spirit of the greater than David, the only begotten of the Father, who speaks, in no spirit of bondage, of the laws and statutes and judgments and commandments of the Father.

Our old relationship to law (so long as it continued) made justification by law a necessity. The *doing* was indispensable to the *living*, so long as the law’s claims over us personally were in force. We strove to obey, in order that we might live; for this is *law’s* arrangement, the *legal* order of things; and so long as this order remained there was no hope. It was impossible for us to “obey and live,” and as the

law could not say to us, “live and obey,” it could do nothing for us. Only that which could reverse this order in our case, which could give *life in order to obedience*, would be of any service to us. This the gospel steps in to do. Not first obedience and then life, but first life and then obedience.

This argues no weakness or imperfection in the law. For if any law could have given life, this law would have done it (Galatians 3:21). But law and life, in the case of the sinner, are incompatible. It is the very perfection of the law that makes life impossible under it, unless in the case of entire and ceaseless obedience, without a flaw. “By the law is the knowledge of sin;”¹ and where sin is, law proclaims death, not life.

So long, then, as the old relationship continued between us and the law; or, in the apostle’s words, so long as we were “under law,” there was nothing but condemnation and an evil conscience, and the fearful looking for of judgment. But with the change of relationship there came pardon and liberty and gladness. “Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us” (Galatians 3:13); and so we are no longer under law, but under grace. The law is the same law, but it has lost its hold of us, its power over us. It cannot cease to challenge perfect obedience from every being under heaven, but to us its threat and terror are gone. It can still say “Obey,” but it cannot now say, “Disobey and perish.”

Our new relationship to the law is that of Christ Himself to it. It is that of men who have met all its claims, exhausted its penalties, satisfied its demands, magnified it, and made it honorable. For our faith in God’s testimony to Christ’s surety obedience has made us one with Him. The relation of the law to Him is its relation to us who believe in His name. His feelings toward the law ought to be our feelings. The law looks on us as it looks on Him; we look on the law as He looks on it. And does not He say, “I delight to do Thy will, O my God; yea *Thy law* is within my heart” (Psalm 40:8)?

Some speak as if the servant were greater than the Master, and the disciple above his Lord; as if the Lord Jesus honored the law, and His people were to set it aside; as if He fulfilled it for us, that we might not need to fulfill it; as if He kept it, not that we might keep it, but that we might not keep it, but something else in its stead, they know not what.

The plain truth is, we must either keep it or break it. Which of these men ought to do, let those answer who speak of a believer having nothing more to do with law. There is no middle way. If it be not a saint’s duty to keep the law, he may break it at pleasure, and go on sinning because grace abounds.

The word *duty* is objected to as inconsistent with the liberty of forgiveness and sonship. Foolish and idle cavil! What is duty? It is the thing which is due by

me to God; that line of conduct which *I owe to God*. And do these objectors mean to say that, because God has redeemed us from the curse of the law, therefore we owe Him nothing, we have no duty now to Him? Has not redemption rather made us doubly debtors? We owe Him more than ever; we owe His holy law more than ever—more honor, more obedience. Duty has been *doubled*, not *canceled*, by our being delivered from the law; and he who says that duty has ceased, because deliverance has come, knows nothing of duty, or the law, or deliverance. The greatest of all debtors in the universe is the redeemed man, the man who can say, “The life that I live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.” What a strange sense of gratitude these men must have who suppose that because love has canceled the penalties of law, and turned away its wrath, therefore reverence and obedience to that law are no longer *due*! Is terror, in their estimation, the only foundation of duty; and when love comes in and terror ceases, does duty become a bondage?

“No,” they may say; “but there is something higher than duty. There is privilege; it is that for which we contend.”

I answer, the privilege of what? Of obeying the law? *That* they cannot away with; for they say they are no longer under law, but under grace. What privilege, then? Of imitating Christ? Be it so. But how can we imitate Him whose life was one great law-fulfilling, without keeping the law? What privilege, again we ask? Of doing the will of God? Be it so. And what is law but the revealed will of God? And has our free forgiveness released us from the privilege of conformity to the revealed will of God?

But what do they mean by thus rejecting the word “duty,” and contending for that of “privilege”? Privilege is not something distinct from duty, nor at variance with duty, but it is duty *and something more*; it is duty influenced by higher motives, duty uncompelled by terror or suspense. In privilege the *duty* is all there; but there is something superadded, in the shape of motive and relationship, which exalts and ennobles duty. It is my duty to obey government; it is my privilege to obey my parent. But in the latter case is duty gone, because privilege has come in? Or has not the loving relationship between parent and child only intensified the duty, by superadding the privilege, and sweetening the obedience by the mutual love? “The love of Christ *constraineth*.” That is something more than both duty and privilege added.

Let men who look but at one side of a subject say what they will, this is the truth of God, that we are liberated from the law just in order that we may keep the law; we get the “no condemnation,” in order that “the *righteousness of the law* may be fulfilled in us” (Romans 8:4); we are delivered from “the mind of

the flesh,” which is enmity to God, and not *subject to His law*, on purpose that we may be subject to His law (Romans 8:7), that we may “*delight in the law* of God after the inward man” (Romans 7:22); nay that we may “with the mind *serve the law* of God” (Romans 7:25); that we may be “*doers of the law*” (James 4:11). These objectors may speak of obedience to the law as bondage, or of the law itself being abolished to believers; here are the words of the Holy Ghost: the law of God is “holy, just, and good,” that very law which David loved, and in which David’s Son delighted—it would be well for such men meekly and lovingly to learn what serving and delighting in it is.

“Do we make void the law by faith? God forbid: yea, we *establish* the law” (Romans 3:31); that is, we set it on a firmer basis than ever. That law, “holy, and just, and good,” thus doubly established, is now *for* us, not *against* us. Its aspect toward us is that of friendship and love, and so we have become “the servants of righteousness” (Romans 6:18), “yielding our members *servants* to righteousness” (Romans 6:19). We are not men delivered from service, but delivered from one kind of service, and by that deliverance introduced into another, “that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter” (Romans 7:6), as “the Lord’s *freemen*,” yet Christ’s *servants* (1 Corinthians 7:22). Thus, obligation, duty, service and obedience still remain to the believing man, though no longer associated with bondage and terror, but with freedom, and gladness, and love. The law’s former bearing on us is altered, and, with that, the *nature* and spirit of the service are altered, but the service itself remains, and the law which regulates that service is confirmed, not annulled.

Some will tell us that it is not *service* they object to, but service regulated by *law*. But will they tell us what it is to regulate service, if not law? *Love*, they say. This is a pure fallacy. Love is not a rule, but a *motive*. Love does not tell me *what* to do; it tells me *how* to do it. Love constrains me to do the will of the Beloved One; but to know what the will is, I must go elsewhere. The law of our God is *the will* of the Beloved One, and were that expression of His will withdrawn, love would be utterly in the dark; it would not know what to do. It might say, I love my Master, and I love His service, and I want to do His bidding, but I must know *the rules of His house*, that I may know *how* to serve Him. Love without law to guide its impulses would be the parent of will-worship and confusion, as surely as terror and self-righteousness, unless upon the supposition of an inward miraculous illumination, as an equivalent for law. Love goes to the law to learn the divine *will*, and love delights in the law, as the exponent of that will; and he who says that a believing man has nothing more to do with law, save to shun it as an old enemy, might as well say that he has nothing to do with the will of God. For the divine

law and the divine will are substantially one, the former the outward manifestation of the latter. And it is “*the will* of our Father which is in heaven” that we are to do (Matthew 7:21); or proving by loving obedience what is that “good, and acceptable, and perfect *will of God*” (Romans 12:2). Yes, it is “he that doeth *the will* of God abideth forever” (1 John 2:17); it is to “*the will* of God” that we are to live (1 Peter 4:2); “made perfect in every good work *to do His will*” (Hebrews 13:21); and “fruitfulness in every good work” springs from being “filled with the knowledge of His *will*” (Colossians 1:9,10).

As to the oneness between divine *will* and divine *law*, I need only quote the words of Him who came to fulfill the law, “Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me, I delight to do *Thy will*, O my God: yea, *Thy law* is within my heart” (Psalm 40:7,8; Hebrews 10:7).

If *law* be not *will*, what is it? And if will has not uttered itself in law, in what has it spoken? Truth is the utterance of the divine mind, but law is the utterance of the divine will. When a father teaches his child, we see simply mind meeting mind; but when he commands or gives rules, we see will meeting will. When Parliament publishes reports of proceedings, or the like, there is simply the expression of its mind; when it passes an act, here is the declaration of its will.

I ask attention to this the real meaning of “law,” because it is the key to the solution of the question before us. That question is really not so much concerning the *law* of God as concerning His *will*, and the theology which would deny the former would set aside the latter. Conformity to the will of God can only be carried out by observance of His law, for we know His will only through His law.

I do not see how a crooked will is to be straightened unless by being brought into contact with “the perfect *will* of God”; nor do I see how that will is to be brought to bear upon us, for the rectification of our will, unless by the medium of the revealed law. *Will* must be brought to bear upon *will*, the divine upon the human will, and this must be through that part of revelation which embodies *will*, unless some miraculous power be put forth in us apart altogether from the truth of God; and he who affirms this may also affirm that peace is to be dropped into us apart from the gospel of peace. The divine volition, embodied in a force or power which we call gravitation, rules each motion of the unconscious planets, and this same divine volition or will, embodied in intelligible law, is that which regulates the movements of our conscious wills, straightening them and keeping them straight, though without wrong done to their nature, or violation of their true freedom.

Should it be said that will and law are now *embodied* in Christ; and that it is to this model that we are to look, I ask: What do we see in Christ? The fulfiller of

the law. He is the embodiment and perfection of law-fulfilling. We cannot look at Him without seeing the perfect law. God has given us these two things in these last days, the law and the living model; but was the living model meant to *supersede* the law? Was it not to illustrate and enforce it? We see the law now, not merely in the statute-book, but in the person of the King Himself. But is the statute-book thereby annihilated, and its statutes made void? Were Christ's expositions of the law, in the fifth, sixth and seventh chapters of Matthew, intended to overrule or abrogate the law itself? No; but to show its breadth and purity. And when He thus expounded the law, did He say to His disciples, "But you have nothing to do with this law; it is set aside for all that shall believe in my name"? Did He not liken to a wise man every one who should hear these sayings of His and do them (Matthew 7:24); nay, did He not say, "Think not that I am come to destroy *the law*, or the prophets. I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill... Whosoever therefore shall break *one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so*, he shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whosoever *shall do and teach them*, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 5:17-19). Now one would think that this should settle the question. For the Lord is speaking of the law and its commandments, lesser and greater, and He is speaking of it as binding on them who are heirs of the kingdom of heaven.

Should it be said that it is only exemption from obligation to the moral law or Ten Commandments that is pleaded for, and not the law or will of God in general, I answer, the Ten Commandments are the summary or synopsis of God's will as to the regulation of man's life; and every other part of the Bible is in harmony with this moral law.² So that exemption from compliance with any Bible statute, or from the obligation of submitting ourselves to any Bible truth, might be pleaded for as properly as exemption from the law. For the law cannot be cut out of the Bible and set aside by itself, while all else remains in force. Either all must go or none.

If the objection is to the use of the word "law" or "commandment," as implying bondage, I answer, obedience to law is true liberty; perfect obedience to perfect commandments is perfect liberty. And there must be some dislike of the law's strictness where this dislike of obligation to it is felt; nay, there must be ignorance of gospel, as well as law, in such a case, ignorance of that very redemption from the curse of the law for which the objectors profess such zeal, ignorance of the complete "righteousness without the law" which we have in Christ. I am persuaded of this, that where there is this shrinking from the application of the law as our rule of life, there is a shrinking *from perfect conformity to the will of God*; nay, more, there is *unbelief in the gospel*, the want of a full *consciousness of the perfect forgiveness which the belief of that gospel brings*; for were there this full consciousness of pardon,

there would be no dread of law, no shrinking from Sinai's thunders, no wish to be exempted from the broadest application of Sinai's statutes. In all Antinomianism, whether practical or theological, there is some mistake both as to law and gospel.

But why object to such words as "law," and "commandment," and "obedience"? Does not the apostle speak of "the *law* of the Spirit of life"? Does he not say, "This is His *commandment*, that we should believe on the name of His Son Jesus Christ" (1 John 3:23)? Is not "the new commandment" said to be only a repetition of "the *old commandment* which we have heard from the beginning" (1 John 2:7)? Does he not speak of "*obedience* unto righteousness" (Romans 6:16), and of "*obedience* to the faith" (Romans 1:5)?

When the apostle is exhorting Christians in the 12th and 13th chapters of Romans, is he not giving precepts and laws? Nay, and does he not found his exhortations on the Ten Commandments? "For this, ... Thou shalt not kill, thou shalt not steal, ... thou shalt not covet; and if there be *any other commandment*, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. Love worketh no ill to his neighbor, therefore love is the *fulfilling of the law*" (Romans 13:9,10). The Ten Commandments are here presented as our guide and rule, which guide and rule love enables us to follow; for the apostle does not say "love is an exemption from the law, or love is the abrogation of the law," but "love is the fulfilling of the law." Love does not supersede law, nor release us from obedience to it; it enables us to obey. Love does not make stealing or coveting, or any such breach of law, *no sin in a Christian*, which would seem to be the meaning which some attach to this passage; but it so penetrates and so constrains us, that, not reluctantly or through fear, but right joyfully, we act toward our neighbor in all things, great and small, as the law bids us do. Yes, Christ "hath redeemed us from the curse of the law," but certainly not from the law itself; for that would be to redeem us from a divine rule and guide; it would be to redeem us from that which is "holy and just and good."

In other Epistles the same reference occurs to the Ten Commandments, as the basis of a true and righteous life. Thus, in speaking of the family relationship, the apostle introduces the moral law as the foundation of obedience, "Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right. Honor thy father and mother, which is the first commandment with promise; that it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth" (Ephesians 6:1-3), where, writing to those who are *in the Lord*, and not Jews, but Gentiles, he demands obedience and honor, in the name of *the fifth commandment*. Yet surely, if any duty might have been left to the impulses of Christian love, without reference to law, it would be that of a believing child to its parent. Was the apostle then a legalist when he referred the

Ephesians to the moral law as a rule of life? Did he not know that they were “not under the law, but under grace”? In the Epistle of James we find similar appeals to the moral law as the rule of Christian life. That he is speaking of the Ten Commandments is evident, for he quotes *two of them* (2:11), as specimens of what he calls the law. This law he bids his Christian brethren “look into” (1:25), “continue in” it (1:25), “fulfill” it (2:8), “keep” it (2:10), be “doers” of it (4:11). And this law he calls “the law of liberty” (2:12); nay, “the perfect law of *liberty*” (1:25), carrying us back to the psalmist’s experience, “I will walk at *liberty*, for I seek thy precepts” (Psalm 119:45); for law is bondage only to the unforgiven; all true obedience is liberty, and all true liberty consists in obedience to law. This law, moreover, the apostle so delights in that he calls it “the royal law” (2:8), the “perfect law” (1:25), pronouncing those blessed who are “not forgetful hearers, but *doers* of the work” (1:25). Had this apostle forgotten that we were “not under the law, but under grace”? But he was writing to Jews, some say. Yes, but to *believing Jews*, just as Paul was when writing to “the Hebrews,” and when writing to “the Romans” also (Romans 2:17–29). And do men mean to say that there is one gospel for the Jew and another for the Gentile; that the Jew is still “under the law, and *not under grace*; and that in Christ Jesus all nations of men are not entirely one”? (Ephesians 2:14–22; 1 Corinthians 12:12,13; Galatians 3:28).

If the objection to the believer’s use of the law be of any weight, it must apply to *everything in the form of precept*, for the reasons given against our having anything to do with the moral law are founded upon its *preceptive* or *commanding* character. The law, in itself, is admitted to be good, and breaches of it are sin, as when a man steals or lies; but then, the form in which it comes, *of do or do not*, makes it quite unsuitable for a redeemed man! Had it merely said “stealing is wrong,” it might have been suitable enough; but when it issues its precept, “*Thou shalt not steal*,” it becomes unmeet; and one who is “not under the law, but under grace,” must close his ears against it, as an intruder and a tyrant!

Of angels this is said to be the highest felicity, that “they do *His commandments*, hearkening unto the voice of His word” (Psalm 103:20); just as of those from whom the Lord has removed transgression as far as the east is from the west,” it is said that “they remember *His commandments* to do them” (Psalm 103:12,18). But if this theory of the total disjunction of the law from believers be true, then angels must be in bondage, and they also to whom Paul refers as specimens of the blessed men whose transgressions are forgiven by the imputation of “righteousness without works” (Romans 4:6). To unforgiven men law is bondage; but is it so to the forgiven? Do pardoned men hate or love it? Do they dread it or delight in it? Do they disobey it or obey it? Do they dismiss it from their thoughts and

consciences, or do they make it their “meditation all the day”? Yet there are men who speak of law as abrogated to a believer, who look with no favor on those who listen to it but pity them as ill-taught, ill-informed men, who, if in Christ at all, are only Christians of the lowest grade, the least in the kingdom of heaven.

And this is said to be the proper result of a believed gospel! This is called an essential part of higher Christianity; and is reckoned indispensable to the right appreciation of a saint’s standing before God. The realizing of it is a proof of true spirituality, and the denial of it an evidence of imperfect knowledge and a cramped theology!

We can find no such spirituality, no such Christianity in the Bible. This is license, not liberty; it is freedom *to* sin, not freedom *from* sin. It may be spiritual sentimentalism, but it is not spirituality. It is sickly religionism, which, while professing a higher standard than mere law, is departing from that healthy and authentic conformity to the will of God which results from the love and study of His statutes. It is framing a new and human standard, in *supplement*, if not in contradiction, of the old and the divine.³

This dislike of the law as a rule of life, and a guide to our knowledge, both of what is right and what is wrong, bodes nothing good. It bears no resemblance to the apostle’s delight in the law of God after the inner man, but looks like dread of its purity and searching light. Nay, it looks more like the spirit of antichrist than of Christ: the spirit of him whose characteristic is lawlessness (*anomia*, “without law”) than that of Him who, as the obedient Son, ever did the Father’s will, in accordance with the holy law. “I delight to do Thy *will*, O my God: yea, Thy *law* is within my heart” (Psalm 40:8). It is granted that “the law worketh wrath” (Romans 4:15), and yet that to a believing man legal threats of condemnation have no terror. It is granted that in the matter of forgiveness and acceptance law is to him nothing save as seen fulfilled in his Surety.

That law has no claim upon him which should break his peace, or trouble his conscience, or bring him into bondage; that law can only touch him and deal with him in the person of his Substitute; that the righteousness in which he stands before God is a “righteousness without the law,” and “without the deeds of the law,” that the sin which still remains in him does not give the law any hold over him, or any right to enforce its old claims or threats. It is granted that it is in grace alone that he stands, and rejoices in hope of the glory of God, in a condition at all times to take up the challenge, “Who shall lay anything to the charge of God’s elect?” “Who is he that condemneth?” But admitting fully all of this, we ask, “What is there in this to disjoin him from the law, or exempt him from obedience to it?” Are not all these things done to him for the purpose of setting him in a position

wherein he may love and keep the blessed law which Jesus kept? And should he not feel and cry, as did the redeemed men of other days, “Oh, that my ways were directed to keep Thy *statutes*”? (Psalm 119:5); “Oh, let me not wander from Thy *commandments*” (v 10); “I have rejoiced in the way of Thy *testimonies*” (v 14); “my soul breaketh for the longing that it hath unto Thy *judgments*” (v 20); “make me to understand the way of Thy *precepts*” (v 27); “I will run the way of Thy *commandments*, when Thou shalt enlarge my heart” (v 32).⁴

Should any one say that it is not to *service*, but to *bondage*, they object, I answer, no one contends for bondage. It is in the spirit of adoption and filial love that we obey the law, even as the Son of God obeyed it. But it is somewhat remarkable that the word which the apostle uses, in reference to his connection with law, is not that for *priestly* service or ministration, but for *menial offices*; “that we should *serve* [*douleuo*, be a slave] in newness of spirit” (Romans 7:6); “with the mind I myself *serve* the law of God” (v 25); “yield your members servants to righteousness” (Romans 6:19); Thus, as the strictest conformity to the law was that in which he delighted, so it is that in which he calls on us to delight.

When he speaks of not being “under the law,” but “delivered from the law,” his meaning is so obvious that it is somewhat difficult to misunderstand him. His whole argument is to show how the law affected a sinner’s standing before God, either in condemning or in justifying. He shows that it cannot do the latter, but only the former; and that, for justification, we must go to something else than law; for “by the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified.” In everything relating to our justification, everything connected with pardon or the giving of a “good conscience,” we are not under law. But does this release us from conformity to the law? Does this make it less a duty to walk according to its precepts, or make our breaches of law no longer sin? Does our being, in this sense, “delivered from the law” cancel the necessity of loving God and man? The summing up of the law is, “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and thy neighbor as thyself.” Is a saint not under obligation so to love? Would the fulfillment of this be bondage, and inconsistent with the spirit of adoption? Is liberty claimed for a Christian either to love or not to love, as he pleases? If he does not love, is he not sinning? Or does his not being under law, but under grace, make the want of love no crime? Is obedience a matter of option, not of obligation? If it is answered, No; we will love God with all our heart, but not because the law enjoins; I answer, this looks very like the spirit of a froward child, who says to a parent, I will do such and such a thing because I please, but not because you bid me.

As the common objections to the observance of the Sabbath take for granted that that day is a curse and not a blessing—bondage, not liberty—so the usual ob-

jections to the keeping of the law assume that it is in itself an evil, not a good—an enemy, and not a friend.

Say what men will, obedience to law is liberty, compliance with law is harmony, not discord. The *force* of law does not need always to be *felt*, but its object, whether felt or unfelt, is to keep everything in its proper place, and moving in its proper course; so that one man's liberty may not interfere with another man's, but each have the greatest amount of actual freedom which creaturehood is capable of, without harm to itself or others. Law does not interfere with true liberty, but only with that which is untrue, promoting and directing the former, discouraging only the latter. As with the orbs of heaven, so with us. Obedience to their ordered courses is not simply a necessity of their *being*, but of their *liberty*. Let them snap their cords, and choose for themselves the unfettered range of space; then not only is order gone, and harmony gone, and beauty gone, but *liberty* is gone; for that which keeps them in freedom is obedience to the forces of their constitution, and non-departure from their appointed orbits. Disobedience to these, departure from these, would bring about immediate collision of star with star, the stoppage of their happy motions, the extinction of their joyful light, havoc and death, star heaped on star in universal wreck. ☽

Notes:

¹ This text, Romans 3:20, does not apply merely to the operation of law upon the sinner's conscience, convincing him of his guilt; it points also to the instruction which law gives us regarding sin all the days of our life. We learn sin and its details from the law; we learn the penalty elsewhere.

² Besides, the Ten Commandments were for redeemed Israel. The Sinaitic code began with redemption, "I am the LORD thy God which brought thee out of the land of Egypt, and out of the house of bondage" (Exodus 20:2; Deuteronomy 5:6). Israel was to keep them because they were redeemed; "the LORD thy God redeemed thee, therefore I command thee this day" (Deuteronomy 15:15). Redemption forms a new obligation to law-keeping, as well as puts us in a position for it. And was it not to Sinai and its burnings that the apostle referred when he said, "We receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear, for our God is a consuming fire" (Hebrews 12:28,29)? Some would, perhaps, call this legality and bondage, a motive unfit to be addressed to a saint.

³ "Not without law to God," says the apostle; nay, "under the law to Christ" (1 Corinthians 9:21), and yet he understood well enough what it is to be "not under the law, but under grace."

⁴ The 19th and 119th Psalms must be very uncomfortable reading to those who think that a saint has nothing to do with the law. Will it be said that such legal Psalms were only for Old Testament saints?

Following My Re-Maker's Example

Why I Sabbath on Sunday

Robert Gonzales, Jr.

Sometimes parents lead their children by command. Other times, they lead by example. The same is true of our heavenly Father. In some cases, God explicitly tells us what to do. In other cases, He acts and expects us to follow His example. In the Decalogue, God commands His people to rest from their weekly labors one day a week. Moreover, the Lord grounds this command in His own example:

For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy (Exodus 20:11, ESV).

So Israel should set the “Sabbath day” apart because God Himself set it apart. They are responsible in this case to follow their Maker’s example.

Christ also roots the Sabbath obligation in creation and underscores its beneficent aim: “The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath” (Mark 2:27). God didn’t rest on the seventh day merely for His own benefit. He did it for *mankind* (ἄνθρωπος). This implies that the Sabbath was first instituted at creation, not Sinai. What’s more, the Sabbath wasn’t instituted solely for Israel’s benefit. It was made for humanity.¹

God’s Enthronement

Is there a theological rationale for the Sabbath as it applies to God and to man? Elsewhere, the Bible links “Sabbath-rest” with *kingly enthronement* (cf. 1 Chronicles 28:2; Psalm 132:7–8, 13–14; Isaiah 66:1).² Accordingly, we may view God’s six days of creative activity as divine empire building. On the seventh, the Creator-King assumed His throne.³

How does this apply to the human observance of Sabbath-rest? The Bible says God created man in His “image.” In its biblical and ancient Near Eastern context, the concept of divine image denoted the idea of a *visible replica* and *vice regent* of the deity.⁴ Hence, God creates man in His image in order to fill the earth

(with visible replicas of Him) and to subdue the earth, as vice regent, bringing the created order to its consummation. The implied goal, which in later revelation is explicitly revealed, is that man will assume his place at God's right hand and enjoy eternal Sabbath-rest (cf. Hebrews 4:1–11). Until the consummation, then, the weekly Sabbath day serves as a commemoration of God's creative work and royal rest. It also serves as a reminder the rest that awaits us in the age to come.

But if our Creator worked the first six days of the week and rested on the seventh, why do we, as Christians, celebrate our "Sabbath" on the first day of the week? Why do we worship on Sunday instead of Saturday? Granted, the apostolic church met for worship on Sunday (Acts 20:7; 1 Corinthians 16:1–2).⁵ But is there any theological rationale for this practice?

Jesus' Enthronement

Early Christians justified Sunday worship on the basis of Christ's resurrection. This makes perfect sense since Jesus' resurrection is His enthronement (compare Psalm 2:6–7 with Acts 13:33; see also Philippians 2:5–11). Because divine enthronement is linked with Sabbath-rest, Christians are justified in keeping Sunday as a Sabbath on the basis of Christ's example. In other words, *just as God's example of resting on the seventh day was sufficient warrant for man to follow his Maker's example, so Jesus' example of resting on the first day is sufficient warrant for the new humanity to follow its Re-Maker's example.*

So I don't need a direct New Testament command to keep Sunday holy. I have Jesus' example to follow.⁶ Keeping a first-day Sabbath allows me to declare to the world at large that Jesus, as the first-fruits from the dead (1 Corinthians 15:20, 23a), has already set into effect the New Creation (2 Corinthians 5:17). It also reminds me on a weekly basis that my labor in the Lord is not in vain—the day's coming when I'll be raised with Christ to rule and reign with Him forever (1 Corinthians 15:23b, 51–58; cf. 1 Corinthians 6:3; Revelation 5:10; 22:5). ☺

Notes:

¹ I'm aware of scholars who deny that Jesus' use of *ανθρωπος* expands the scope of Sabbath observance beyond Israel to humanity and who deny, therefore, Jesus is alluding to the Sabbath's institution at creation. In support of the idea that the Sabbath was originally instituted at Sinai not creation, these scholars often cite passages like Ezekiel 20:10–12 and Nehemiah 9:13–14. The first reads, "So I led them out of the land of Egypt and brought them into the wilderness. *I gave them* my statutes and *made known to them* my rules, by which, if a person does them, he shall live. Moreover, *I gave them* my Sabbaths, as a sign between me and them, that they might know that I am the LORD who sanctifies them" (emphasis added). The language of the second is similar: "You came down on Mount Sinai and spoke with them from heaven *and gave them* right rules and true laws, good statutes and commandments, and *you made known to them* your holy Sabbath and commanded them

commandments and statutes and a law by Moses your servant” (emphasis added). By way of response, three observations are in order: (1) the verbs “make known” and “gave” are used synonymously in both texts. (2) Not only the Sabbath but God’s “statutes,” “rules,” “commandments,” and “law” were *made known* and *given* at Sinai. So whatever one concludes about the origination of the Sabbath based on the language of “make known” or “give,” he’s obliged to say of the other ethical norms God revealed on Sinai. (3) To “make known” or “give” a norm or stipulation doesn’t necessarily imply that said norm or stipulation wasn’t already previously instituted or binding. Moses portrays primeval and patriarchal history in a way that assumes humans generally and the patriarchs especially were aware of the kind of divinely revealed moral norms we find in the Decalogue (see, for instance, Genesis 4:14; 9:23–25; 18:19; 20:9; 26:5, 10; 39:9; 42:22; 50:17). While humans would have had a general awareness of God’s moral law by means of conscience, it’s also likely that God had revealed to certain individuals laws and stipulations that reflected His moral character and by which He expected them to live (Genesis 4:9–13; 9:5–6; 18:19; 26:5). (4) When God tells Moses in Exodus 6:3, “I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, as God Almighty, but by my name the LORD *I did not make myself known to them*” (emphasis added), He isn’t saying the Patriarchs or primeval saints were unaware of His name Yahweh (see Genesis 4:26; 12:8; 13:4; 16:13; 21:33; 22:14; 26:25; 29:32, 33, 35; 30:24). Rather, He’s signifying that *He will now cause the Israelites to understand more fully the significance of that name*. Similarly, one might interpret the references to God’s “making known” His laws and, in particular, the Sabbath, at Sinai. It wasn’t the first revelation of the Sabbath obligation. But it was a point in redemptive history when God would reveal more fully the significance of that ordinance. (5) It’s possible that the Israelites had either neglected Sabbath observance or were forbidden it during their time of bondage in Egypt. In that case, the exodus occasioned the reestablishment of its practice *before Sinai* (Exodus 16) and its covenantal codification *at Sinai* (Exodus 20:8–11).

² Meredith Kline remarks, “To predicate an enthronement of God on the seventh day of creation history is not to deny that the creative activity of God is from the beginning an exercise of an ultimate and absolute sovereignty which he enjoys as an original and everlasting prerogative of his very godhead. It is simply saying that creation produced a new theater for the manifestation of God’s eternal majesty, and when the heavenly throne and earthly footstool had been prepared, God assumed his rightful royal place in that new sphere.” *Kingdom Prologue: Genesis Foundations for a Covenantal Worldview* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2006), 37. The reader is encouraged to read the entire section where Kline develops the Sabbath-enthronement link (34–38).

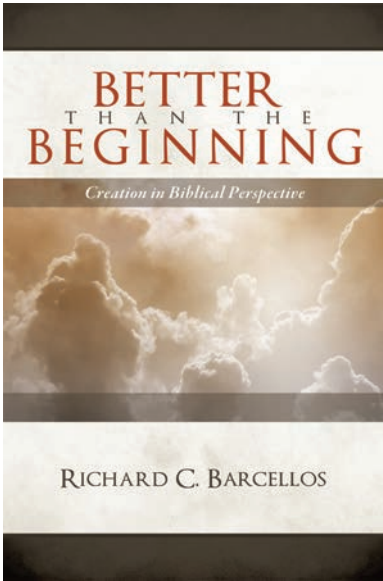
³ I develop the “kingdom” motif of the creation week/Sabbath in my article, “The Covenantal Context of the Fall: Did God Make a Primeval Covenant with Adam?” *Reformed Baptist Theological Review* 4:2 (2007): 17–30.

⁴ See my article “Man—God’s Visible Replica and Vice-Regent,” *Reformed Baptist Theological Review* 5:2 (2008): 63–87.

⁵ John’s reference to “the Lord’s Day” in Revelation 1:10 is probably a reference to the first day of the week. This is supported by the fact that the adjective when predicated of a day had already obtained this meaning by the latter first century and early part of the second century AD.

⁶ Many Christians today do not tie a Sabbath-theology to Sunday but worship on the first day of the week simply because of early church precedent or because of cultural convention. They often point out that there’s no explicit command in the NT to observe Sunday as a Sabbath day. Moreover, they cite certain texts (i.e., Romans 14:5–6; Galatians

4:8–11; Colossians 2:11–17), which at first glance seem to discount an ongoing weekly Sabbath. I've already demonstrated that a direct command is not needed for Sabbath-observance. Moreover, I'm inclined to view the so-called problem passages as abolishing the Jewish calendar with its seventh-day Sabbath but not necessarily overruling a first day Sabbath, i.e., "the Lord's Day." For those interested in reading both sides of the debate, see R. T. Beckwith and W. Stott, *This Is the Day: The Biblical Doctrine of the Christian Sunday in Its Jewish and Early Christian Setting* (London: Marshall, Morgan and Scott, 1978), as well as John Frame, *The Doctrine of the Christian Life* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian & Reformed, 2008), 513–74, for my position, and D. A. Carson, ed. *From Sabbath to Lord's Day: A Biblical, Historical and Theological Investigation* (Grand Rapids: MI: Zondervan, 1982) for the non-Sabbatarian position.



After reading this book, I wonder, “is it possible that we are functional deists?” Have we been so profoundly influenced by the secular culture around us that we fail to see the centrality and foundational character of the doctrine of creation? Is it possible that even while giving lip-service to the doctrine we fail to live in the light of its implications? In this work, Dr. Barcellos shows us why this doctrine is so very important. Not only does he reflect upon the account of creation in Genesis, but he also demonstrates the implications of creation found throughout Scripture. In a day of increasing

secularization, it is refreshing to think of the divine purpose in making and sustaining the world. Read this book, and you will deepen your understanding of the Lord’s purposes in bringing the world into existence.

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The Sabbath Rest of Creation

Creation's Coronation and Goal

Richard Barcellos

Chapter 10 from *Better Than the Beginning: Creation in Biblical Perspective* (Palmdale, CA: Reformed Baptist Academic Press, 2013). Re-printed with permission.

Thus the heavens and the earth were completed, and all their hosts. By the seventh day God completed His work which He had done, and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done. Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because in it He rested from all His work which God had created and made. (Genesis 2:1–3)¹

Introduction

This is a massive subject. The issue of the Sabbath has caused much ink to be spilled in our day as well as in previous days. Sabbath simply means *rest*. But what does God's rest mean for God and for us? There is much confusion on this issue due to not understanding the first revelation of the Sabbath as found in Genesis 2:1–3. This confusion, in part, is due to not allowing other parts of the Bible to explain the function of the Creator's Sabbath. In order to understand the Bible correctly, we have to understand what the Creator's Sabbath means, not only for us but for God. In order to do that, we have to let the Creator tell us what it means. He does just that in various places in the rest of Scripture.

Every picture tells a story and every person has a story. But there is one Person whose story stands apart from all others and that story is God's, recorded for us in the Bible. God's story tells us *that* He created, *what* He created in the first place, *why* He created man and *what* man's supposed to do, *why* there's so much trouble on the earth, and *where* history is heading. In the next two chapters, I want

to show that understanding the Creator's Sabbath helps us understand the entire Bible—what it is about, what went wrong, how God's going about fixing what went wrong, and where history is heading. In order to do that, it is important to understand the Bible's diversity and unity and its beginning and end.

The Bible's Diversity

The Bible is a huge book with many diverse parts. We have both an Old and a New Testament. There are thirty-nine books in the Old Testament, written over a period of about 1,500 years by many different authors, in different cultural and religious circumstances from which we live. The New Testament has twenty-seven books, written within the time-frame of one generation, a little over 2,000 years ago. But that generation existed in a world different than ours as well. Add to that the fact that the Bible has different kinds of literature, like narratives that tell stories of ancient events, people, and places, prophecies that tell of things to come, and epistles, which are letters written by apostles to local churches in the first century, and the Bible gives the appearance of being made up of disconnected books, written by various authors who did not know each other over a long period of time with no central point, no plot, no story-line, and no conclusion.

The Bible's Unity

Those who read and think deeply upon the text of Holy Scripture realize that though it has diverse books and diverse authors and even diverse languages,² in all its diversity there is a wonderful unity in it. This unity is due to its divine author, who is none other than God Himself.

One of the ways the overall unity of the Bible may be seen is by comparing the beginning of the Bible with its end. I have a book on one of my shelves entitled, *The End of the Beginning: Revelation 21–22 and the Old Testament*.³ The author, William J. Dumbrell, argues that the end of the Bible is the beginning of the Bible brought to its intended goal. He argues that the end is actually better than the beginning. Another author, T. D. Alexander, says:

As is often the case, a story's conclusion provides a good guide to the themes and ideas dominant throughout. By resolving an intricate plot that runs throughout a story, a good denouement⁴ sheds light on the entire story.⁵

This is true in a good mystery novel or movie. The plot (or riddle or problem to be solved) is revealed early on and is finally solved at the end and then everything in between makes more sense. But suppose you start a movie, then 15 minutes later someone walks in and begins to watch. They will have many ques-

tions. Though you might be hooked by then, the person who came late will not understand the plot, or setting, or background of the story. By the middle of the movie you will be putting clues together trying to solve the riddle. The other person will be asking you to either explain the various scenes, start the whole thing over, or they will leave. As well, there is usually a twist or twists in the story that finally ends in an amazing way that far exceeds your initial thoughts. The end ties up the loose ends of the beginning and middle and makes sense of the whole. So it goes with the Bible.

Commenting on the relationship between the beginning and end of the Bible Alexander says:

The very strong links between Genesis 1–3 [the first three chapters of the Bible] and Revelation 20–22 [the last three chapters of the Bible] suggest that these passages frame the entire biblical meta-story.⁶

A meta-story is the overarching story that all the parts of a book are serving. What are some of those themes that end up being in both the beginning and the end of the Bible? Let us explore a proposed answer to this question.

Seven Observations Tying the End of the Bible with the Beginning of the Bible

In this section, I want to explore some themes that occur at the end of the Bible which find their origin in the beginning of the Bible. This will help us see the big-picture so as not to lose the forest for the trees. It also will set a proper context for understanding the Creator's Sabbath—what it means for God and us.

The devil, who first appears in Genesis 3, ends up thrown into the lake of fire.

Revelation 20:7–10 says:

When the thousand years are completed, Satan will be released from his prison, and will come out to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together for the war; the number of them is like the sand of the seashore. And they came up on the broad plain of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city, and fire came down from heaven and devoured them. And the devil who deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are also; and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever (Revelation. 20:7–10).

The Bible has threads within it that deal with the effects of the devil's activity, not only in the garden of Eden but afterward as well. There is conflict between the woman's seed and the devil's seed throughout—the people of God and the children of the devil.

The first heavens and first earth of Genesis 1:1 become a new heaven and a new earth.

Revelation 21:1 says, “Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth passed away, and there is no longer any sea.” Peter tells us that in this new heaven and earth “... righteousness dwells” (2 Peter 3:13). Remember, God kicked Adam and Even out of the garden because they became unrighteous.

The tree of life, first revealed in Genesis 2, ends up on the new earth.

Describing the eternal state, Revelation 22:2 says, “On either side of the river was the tree of life...” Revelation 22:14 adds, “Blessed are those who wash their robes, so that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter by the gates into the city.” The eschatological city, the new earth, contains the tree of life, which first appears in the Bible in Genesis 2:9.

God will dwell among all the citizens of the new earth.

Revelation 21:3 says, “And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, ‘Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men, and He will dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be among them.’” God dwelt in the garden with Adam and Eve but they were exiled from that first dwelling place of God among men because of their sin. Then God dwelt in Israel's tabernacle and temple, then in Jesus Christ, as John tells us in John 1:14, “And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us...” God's dwelling with men is now experienced by the church, the new temple of God, the new house of God, which is “...a dwelling of God in the Spirit” (Ephesians 2:22). But in the new earth, God will dwell with everyone, not just the church in distinction from the outer world of men. The whole earth will be a special dwelling place of God among men.

There will no longer be any death in the new earth.

Revelation 21:4 says, “...there will no longer be any death.” Death came when sin came way back in Genesis 3. In the new earth, there will no longer be any death.

The new Jerusalem is described with the symbolic language often used of temples.

Here is Revelation 21:10–22.

And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me the holy city, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, having the glory of God. Her brilliance was like a very costly stone, as a stone of crystal-clear jasper. It had a great and high wall, with twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels; and names were written on them, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the sons of Israel. There were three gates on the east and three gates on the north and three gates on the south and three gates on the west. And the wall of the city had twelve foundation stones, and on them were the twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb. The one who spoke with me had a gold measuring rod to measure the city, and its gates and its wall. The city is laid out as a square, and its length is as great as the width; and he measured the city with the rod, fifteen hundred miles; its length and width and height are equal. And he measured its wall, seventy-two yards, according to human measurements, which are also angelic measurements. The material of the wall was jasper; and the city was pure gold, like clear glass. The foundation stones of the city wall were adorned with every kind of precious stone. The first foundation stone was jasper; the second, sapphire; the third, chalcedony; the fourth, emerald; the fifth, sardonyx; the sixth, sardius; the seventh, chrysolite; the eighth, beryl; the ninth, topaz; the tenth, chrysoprase; the eleventh, jacinth; the twelfth, amethyst. And the twelve gates were twelve pearls; each one of the gates was a single pearl. And the street of the city was pure gold, like transparent glass. I saw no temple in it, for the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb are its temple (Revelation 21:10–22).

Eschatological or new Jerusalem is described as a cubed city of pure gold. Listen to Revelation 21:16–18 again.

The city is laid out as a square, and its length is as great as the width; and he measured the city with the rod, fifteen hundred miles; its length and width and height are equal. And he measured its wall, seventy-two yards, according to human measurements, which are also angelic measurements. The material of the wall was jasper; and the city was pure gold, like clear glass (Revelation 21:16–18).

The only other golden cube in the Bible is the inner sanctuary of Israel's temple, called the holy of holies, the special dwelling place of God with man. Listen to 1 Kings 6:20, "The inner sanctuary was twenty cubits in length, twenty cubits in width, and twenty cubits in height, and he overlaid it with pure gold."

Also, gold is often linked with the special dwelling place of God among men. Listen to Genesis 2:10–12.

Now a river flowed out of Eden to water the garden; and from there it divided and became four rivers. The name of the first is Pishon; it flows around the whole land of Havilah, where there is gold. The gold of that land is good; the bdellium and the onyx stone are there (Genesis 2:10–12).

It is important to note that in Revelation 22:1 John was shown “a river of the water of life... flowing from the throne of God and from the Lamb.” The entire new Jerusalem appears to be an expanded holy of holies—the special dwelling place of God among men.

One more observation on rivers in light of Revelation 22:1 may help. Rivers flow downhill. Since this is so, the rivers of Eden (Genesis 2:10–12) flowed downhill, which puts it uphill or upon a mountain. Now listen to Revelation 21:10–11a and 22:1, “And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me the holy city, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, having the glory of God” and “Then he showed me a river of the water of life...” Do you see it? The new Jerusalem is pictured as having a river flowing out of it and connected to a high mountain. The special dwelling place of God among men in the end of the Bible depicts a river of life and a high mountain. Where did this type of language and these concepts come from? From the Bible itself. The entry for “Mountain” in the *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery* reads:

Almost from the beginning of the Bible, mountains are sites of transcendent spiritual experiences, encounters with God or appearances by God. Ezekiel 28:13–15 places the *Garden of Eden on a mountain. *Abraham shows his willingness to sacrifice Isaac and then encounters God on a mountain (Genesis 22:1–14). God appears to Moses and speaks from the *burning bush on “Horeb the mountain of God” (Exodus 3:1–2 NRSV), and he encounters Elijah on the same site (1 Kings 19:8–18). Most impressive of all is the experience of the Israelites at Mt. *Sinai (Exodus 19), which *Moses ascends in a *cloud to meet God.

A similar picture emerges from the NT, where Jesus is associated with mountains. Jesus resorted to mountains to be alone (John 6:15), to *pray (Matthew 14:23; Luke 6:12) and to teach His listeners (Matthew 5:1; Mark 3:13). It was on a mountain that Jesus refuted Satan’s temptation (Matthew 4:8; Luke 4:5). He was also transfigured on a mountain (Matthew 17:1–8; Mark 9:2–8; Luke 9:28–36), and he ascended into heaven from the Mount of Olives (Acts 1:10–12).⁷

Jesus also designated a mountain in Galilee from which He gave the Great Commission to the eleven in Matthew 28:16, “But the eleven disciples proceeded to Galilee, to the mountain which Jesus had designated.” Jesus is both the tabernacle of God among men (John 1:14) and a temple (John 2:19–22) who builds the new temple (1 Corinthians 3:16–17; Ephesians 2:19–22), His body, the church. Hebrews 12:18–24 contrasts Mount Sinai and Mount Zion in the context of the transition from the Old Covenant to the New Covenant. God’s people have gone from one mountain to another. Surely these mountains are symbols of the Old Covenant and the New Covenant and have their foundation in the first mountain-temple, the garden of Eden.

The curse that was inflicted in Genesis 3 due to Adam’s sin is no more.

Revelation 22:3 says, “There will no longer be any curse; and the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and His bond-servants will serve Him.” Due to not serving God, the curse came upon man and the earth. In the eternal state, “there will no longer be any curse.”

Conclusion

The Bible ends “[w]ith [a] remarkable vision of God coming to dwell with humanity on a new earth.”⁸ But the Bible started with God in the midst of His people in the garden of Eden, on a mountain, with precious stones present, with water flowing out of it, and in a context where Adam, the first prophet-priest-king, was supposed to subdue the earth and fill it with other image-bearers who were like him (i.e., sinless sons of God). What happened? Sin happened.

How Does all this Relate to the Creator’s Sabbath?

The connections between the end of the Bible and its beginning are very instructive for our study at this point.

The connections between the end of the Bible and its beginning set the broader, big-picture context in order that the details might be easier to understand.

When we know the end of the story, we may know better the beginning and everything in between. For example, at the end of the Bible, the entire new earth is sacred space. God dwells with all those in that place. In the beginning of the Bible, the sacred space was limited to the garden of Eden. In the middle of the Bible we see altars, a tabernacle, Israel’s temple, Christ Himself, and then the church as sacred space—where God dwells with man in a special, unique way. All of these

things—the garden of Eden, altars, Israel’s tabernacle and temple, Christ and His church—point forward. They are symbolic of God’s special dwelling among men on the earth but also mini-glimpses of the future. One day the whole earth will be sacred space where God dwells with men. Stephen G. Dempster says of the Old Testament what is true of the entire Bible, “The goal of the canon is clearly the great house of God, which is as inclusive as the globe.”⁹ What was instituted in the garden and spoiled by sin ends up brought to completion by our Lord Jesus Christ.

The connections between the end of the Bible and its beginning put the Creator’s Sabbath in the context of completed temple-building.

We will discuss this further in the next chapter, but for now remember that temples are where God dwells on earth among men. The first temple was the garden of Eden, the first high mountain of the earth, where God dwelled with Adam and Eve. The Creator’s Sabbath comes after He made the earth; it comes after He completed the crafting of His temple.

The connections between the end of the Bible and its beginning instruct us that the Bible goes from what God intended in the beginning, which was not accomplished by the first Adam, to what God Himself accomplishes through the last Adam, our Lord Jesus Christ.

In other words, the end is better than the beginning. The Bible goes from old creation to new creation via redemption. It goes from a good creation made bad by Adam’s sin to a new, perfected creation made so by Christ’s obedience.

The connections between the end of the Bible and its beginning help us understand the gospel.

God takes it upon Himself to dwell among men as the man, Christ Jesus. He came to be the hero of redemption, to do what Adam failed to do, to bring many sons to glory through sinless obedience. Because of sin, the last Adam, the Lord Jesus Christ, came to die for the forgiveness of our sins and create a seed, or spiritual children, who one day will fill the new earth, and enjoy inviolable communion with God. What Adam brought upon us all (i.e., guilt), Christ absolves and what Adam failed to do, Christ does (i.e., He brings many sons to glory through obedience). This is the gospel. ☺

Notes:

¹ Bible references are from the NASB.

² The Old Testament was written in Hebrew and the New Testament in Greek.

³ William J. Dumbrell, *The End of the Beginning: Revelation 21–22 and the Old Testament* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2001; previously published by Baker Book House, 1985).

⁴ A denouement is the final resolution of a plot, as in a drama or novel, a solution, or the end of a story that ties together its various parts.

⁵ T. Desmond Alexander, *From Eden to the New Jerusalem: An Introduction to Biblical Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Academic & Professional, 2008), 10.

⁶ Alexander, *From Eden to the New Jerusalem*, 10.

⁷ “Mountain” in Leland Ryken, James C. Wilhoit, Tremper Longman III, Editors, *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1998), 573.

⁸ Alexander, *From Eden to the New Jerusalem*, 14.

⁹ Stephen G. Dempster, *Dominion and Dynasty: A Biblical Theology of the Hebrew Bible* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003, reprinted 2006), 227.

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