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PAUL, THE LAW, AND DISPENSATIONALISM

by
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INTRODUCTION

In this essay I propose to explore how Paul understands the role of the Mosaic Law in the life of the New Testament believer. When I speak of the Mosaic Law or use the term *Law* capitalized, I am referring to the 613 commands, as the rabbis counted them (365 positive commands and 248 prohibitions),[2] with sanctions, given through Moses at Sinai to Israel, what is also called the Mosaic legal system. This Law has been preserved for us in the Pentateuch.

I believe Paul's view of the Law's applicability to believers today fits within the discontinuity of a dispensational framework.[3] This discontinuity is clearly seen in a text like 1 Corinthians 7:19, "Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing, but *what matters is* the keeping of the commandments of God."[4] Can you imagine Paul saying that to Moses? After all, "The LORD spoke to Moses, saying…when a woman gives birth and bears a male *child*…on the eighth day the flesh of his foreskin shall be circumcised" (Lev 12:1–3). What could be a more clear command of God than circumcision? Yet in the New Testament age, Paul makes it clear that circumcision is no longer to be listed as one of God's commandments to his people. This raises a couple of obvious questions: what are these "commandments of God" that Paul says believers must "keep," and where do we find them?

Because of statements like 1 Corinthians 7:19, most everyone agrees that there is some level of discontinuity between the Mosaic Law and its applicability in the church age. The question is just how much. One of the first attempts to address this issue came from the second-century heretic Marcion, who solved the problem by cutting all the Old Testament Scriptures out of the Bible.[5] Possibly as early as Tertullian

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[2]David A. Dorsey, "The Law of Moses and the Christian: A Compromise," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 34 (September 1991): 321.

[3]See especially John S. Feinberg, "Systems of Discontinuity," in *Continuity and Discontinuity: Essays in Honor of S. Lewis Johnson, Jr.,* ed. John S. Feinberg (Westchester, IL: Crossway, 1988), 63–86.

[4]Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture references are from the NASB, 1995 edition.

[5]Richard N. Longenecker, "Three Ways of Understanding Relations between the Testaments: Historically and Today," in *Tradition and Interpretation in the New Testament: Essays in Honor of E. Earle Ellis for His 60th Birthday,* ed. Gerald F.

(c. 160–220), the Law came to be viewed by the church in a three-fold scheme, recognizing moral, civil, and ceremonial aspects.[6] Quite early the church emphasized it was mainly the moral aspect of the Law that Christians were obliged to keep. By many accounts Martin Luther departed from this idea and held that the believer is not bound by the Law in any sense.[7] But Melanchthon, his successor, sided with Calvin and the Reformers in upholding the third use of the Law—that the Law is a norm or guide for the believer's sanctification. Dispensationalism, with its sharp dichotomy between Israel and the church, has generally sided with Luther against most other evangelicals, who have stressed the eternal and absolute validity of the Old Testament moral law.[8]

The evangelical landscape began to change somewhat in the 1980s.[9] One particular book has had a profound impact on the issue: Stephen Westerholm's *Israel's Law and the Church's Faith*, published in 1988.[10] He convincingly argues, in a well-written book, that Luther was basically correct, and that the believer is not under the Law in any sense. In a review in the *Trinity Journal,* Thomas Schreiner called it "the most helpful extant work on Paul's theology of the law."[11] Writing in the Reformed *Westminster Theological Journal*, Moisés Silva said: "Between the covers of this unpretentious paperback readers will find more exegetical common sense and theological sophistication than in the many erudite volumes (not to mention the vast number of articles) on Paul's view of the law that have appeared during the past fifteen years."[12] And later he adds: "Reformed scholarship may need to incorporate Westerholm's criticisms so as to formulate a more coherent doctrine of the place of the law in the Christian church."[13] Westerholm's book was well received and appears to have greatly influenced other scholars.[14]

Hawthorne (Grand Rapids; Eerdmans), 22–23.

[6]Ibid., 24, 31, n. 9.

[7]See Thomas R. Schreiner, *The Law and Its Fulfillment: A Pauline Theology of Law* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1993), 16, and Douglas J. Moo, "'Law,' 'Works of the Law,' and Legalism in Paul," *Westminster Theological Journal* 45 (Spring 1983): 73.

[8]See e.g., Carl F. H. Henry, *Christian Personal Ethics* (Grand Rapids; Zondervan, 1957): 350–53.

[9]Many also cite the publication of E. P. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1977), as the catalyst for sparking renewed interest and assessment of Paul's understanding of the law.

[10]Grand Rapids: Eerdmans. The book is out of print, but Westerholm has revised and updated it in a much larger work titled *Perspectives Old and New on Paul: The "Lutheran" and His Critics* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004). Most of the original is retained except for an original chapter titled "The Law and Christian Behavior."

[11]9 (Spring 1988): 123.

[12]51 (Spring 1989): 174.

[13]Ibid., 177.

[14]Positive reviews of the book can be found in *Bibliotheca Sacra* (146 [July–September 1989]: 356), *Review and Expositor* (87 [Summer 1990]: 491–92), *Journal for*

The question of the Law and the believer is, as one might imagine, a complex one that has generated an immense amount of literature, especially since the publication of Westerholm's book. However, the various positions have been fairly well laid out. The best summary of the views is found in the book *Five Views on Law and Gospel*.[15] Among the endless number of books and articles on this subject that have been written in the last thirty years, two men's works will probably be the most helpful for the knowledgeable inquirer: Douglas J. Moo, currently a professor at Wheaton College, and Thomas R. Schreiner, currently a professor at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. Moo's most helpful work in this area is his chapter titled "A Modified Lutheran View"[16] in the aforementioned *Five Views on Law and Gospel*. But Moo has also written a series of important articles on the subject, as well as commentaries on the book of Romans.[17] Some of Moo's writings predate Westerholm's book, and it is clear that he was already thinking along similar lines (i.e., Lutheran), but it is hard to read Moo and not see the influence of Westerholm.[18] Schreiner's most helpful work is his latest book, *40 Questions about Christians and Biblical Law*.[19] Schreiner has also written articles and another book on the subject, as well as commentaries on Romans and Galatians.[20] Schreiner seems also to have

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the Study of the New Testament (41 [Fall 1991]: 123–24), *Journal of Biblical Literature* (109 [Winter 1990]: 729–31), *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* (34 [December 1991]: 523–26), *Calvin Theological Journal* (25 [November 1990]: 253–61), and many others.

[15]Stanley N. Gundry, ed., *Five Views on Law and Gospel* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996). This is a republication of *The Law, the Gospel, and the Modern Christian* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1993).

[16]The reason that Moo calls his position a modified Lutheran perspective is perhaps found in this statement: "In the New Testament, therefore, Law and 'Gospel' primarily denote, not two constant aspects of God's word to us, but two successive eras in salvation history" ("The Law of Christ as the Fulfillment of the Law of Moses," in *Five Views on Law and Gospel*, 322). Luther classified all Scripture, both Old and New Testament, as either Law or Gospel. Law is what God demands of us, and Gospel is what God promises us. Moo, however, is using the terms in something closer to a dispensational sense.

[17]Douglas J. Moo, "'Law,' 'Works of the Law,' and Legalism in Paul," *Westminster Theological Journal* 45 (Spring 1983): 73–100; idem, "Jesus and the Authority of the Mosaic Law," *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 20 (February 1984): 3–49; idem, "Paul and the Law in the Last Ten Years," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 40 (1987): 287–307; idem, "The Law of Moses or the Law of Christ," in *Continuity and Discontinuity: Essays in Honor of S. Lewis Johnson, Jr.,* ed. John S. Feinberg (Westchester, IL: Crossway, 1988); idem, *The Epistle to the Romans,* New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996); idem, *Romans,* NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000).

[18]Willem A. VanGemeren remarks that Moo's position is "virtually the same as that of S. Westerholm" ("Response to Douglas Moo," in *Five Views on Law and Gospel*, ed. Stanley N. Gundry [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996], 378, n. 6.

[19]Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2010.

[20]Thomas R. Schreiner, "Is Perfect Obedience to the Law Possible? A

been impacted by Westerholm. Schreiner has modified his understanding of some texts over the years,[21] but he and Moo come to basically the same conclusions regarding the role of the Law in the believer's life.

Overall, as a dispensationalist, I find myself in general agreement with Moo's handling of the important texts. Interestingly, in his response to Moo's essay in *Five Views on Law and Gospel*, Greg Bahnsen describes Moo's position as "dispensational."[22] In Walter Kaiser's response to Moo, Kaiser claims that Moo's position "may be legitimately labeled dispensational."[23] In *Five Views on Law and Gospel*, it is Wayne Strickland who writes the essay formally defending the dispensational view of the Law, but in their responses to each other, it is clear Strickland and Moo agree on the broad theological issues. Moo would not call himself a dispensationalist, but his "Modified Lutheran" view seems to many of us to be a somewhat better correlation of the biblical data than Strickland's, one that is in agreement with the traditional dispensational view of the Law, and thus overall slightly more satisfying.

THE MEANING OF THE TERM *LAW*

We begin by observing how Paul uses the term *law* in his epistles. The Greek term νόμος occurs 121 times in Paul's writings. The standard Greek lexicon (BDAG) suggests that these fall into three broad categories:[24]

1. A procedure or practice that has taken hold, *a custom, rule, principle, norm.*
2. Constitutional or statutory legal system, *law.*
3. A collection of holy writings precious to God's people, *sacred*

Re-examination of Galatians 3:10," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 27 (June 1984): 151–60; idem, "Paul and Perfect Obedience to the Law: An Evaluation of the View of E. P. Sanders," *Westminster Theological Journal* 47 (Fall 1985): 245–78; idem, "The Abolition and Fulfillment of the Law in Paul," *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 35 (February 1989): 47–74; idem, "'Works of the Law' in Paul," *Novum Testamentum* 33 (July 1991): 215–44; idem, *The Law and Its Fulfillment: A Pauline Theology of Law* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1993); idem, "Paul's View of the Law in Romans 10:4–5," *Westminster Theological Seminary* 55 (Spring 1993): 113–35; idem, *Romans,* Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998); idem, *Galatians,* Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010).

[21]For instance, Schreiner once held that the moral Law was binding on New Testament believers ("The Abolition and Fulfillment of the Law in Paul," *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 35 [February 1989], 59–66; *The Law and Its Fulfillment*, 160–78) but now views the entire Law as nonbinding (*40 Questions about Christians and Biblical Law*, 89–94). However, admittedly, the difference here is more in the way the issue is framed; the actual practical difference works out to be minimal.

[22]"Response to Douglas Moo," 387.

[23]"Response to Douglas Moo," 393.

[24]S.v. "νόμος," 677–78.

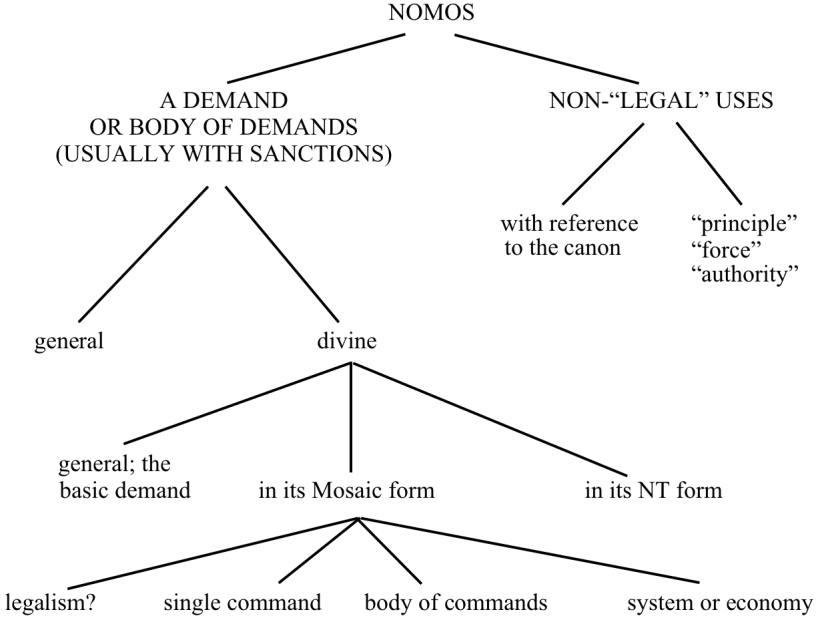
ordinance.

Paul's uses of νόμος can be found in all three of these categories. Moo has done an extensive study of Pauline usage in his article "'Law,' 'Works of the Law,' and Legalism in Paul."[25] His analysis suggests two main categories that parallel BDAG:

1. A demand or body of demands (usually with sanctions) — BDAG's (2).
2. Non-"legal" uses — BDAG's (1) and (3) combined.

A helpful diagram reproduced from Moo's article is found below.[26]

A CATEGORIZATION OF PAUL'S USE OF *NOMOS*



The first subcategory within the non-"legal" heading (2) is the concept of "principle," "force," or "norm" (BDAG 1) such as when one speaks of *the law of gravity*. This is illustrated in Romans 7:21, "I find then the principle [νόμος] that evil is present in me, the one who wants to do good." The second subcategory is the idea of the canon of

[25]75–90.

[26]"'Law,' 'Works of the Law,' and Legalism in Paul," 76. Used by permission of *Westminster Theological Journal*.

Scripture (BDAG 3), either the Pentateuch or the Old Testament as a whole: "Or does not the Law also say these things? For it is written in the Law of Moses, 'YOU SHALL NOT MUZZLE THE OX WHILE HE IS THRESHING'" (1 Cor 9:8, 9).

The other major category for νόμος according to Moo is "a demand or body of demands" (1), what BDAG glosses as *law* (2). Though Paul may use the νόμος to denote *law* generally (Gal 5:23), most every occurrence in this category has reference to divine law. A few uses may refer to divine law generally: "For if a law had been given which was able to impart life" (Gal 3:21b). Separately, on one occasion Paul speaks of divine law in its New Testament form, "the law of Christ" (Gal 6:2), though the Greek ἔννομος in 1 Corinthians 9:21 seems to mean the same thing ("though not being without the law of God but under the law of Christ"). But we will examine these uses later. The important thing to note is that the overwhelming majority of examples of divine law are explicitly references to the Mosaic Law. In fact, Moo says that over 90 percent of all the occurrences of νόμος in Paul refer to the Mosaic Law.[27] Paul can refer to a single command (Rom 7:2b, 3) or a body of commands (Rom 2:13), and by extension to the Mosaic economy. This is often the idea when Paul speaks about being "under the Law": "To the Jews I became as a Jew, so that I might win Jews; to those who are under the Law, as under the Law though not being myself under the Law, so that I might win those who are under the Law" (1 Cor 9:20). To be a part of the Mosaic economy is equal to being under the Mosaic Covenant (2 Cor 3:14).

Moo's chart also lists one other possible meaning for law in its Mosaic form—legalism or misuse of the Law. This connotation is suggested by those who argue that the Law has not been abolished, and at least part of it, the moral Law, is still binding on believers today.[28] This meaning for νόμος attempts to explain how, if the Law is still in effect, we are to account for Paul's negative statements about the Law. For instance, how can Paul say that "Christ is the end of the law" and believers "were made to die to the Law" (Rom 7:4) and "have been released from the Law" (Rom 7:6) if the Law is not abolished? Cranfield supplies the answer: "The meaning is that Christians have been through Christ's death died to, and been discharged from, the law's…legalistic misunderstanding and misuse of the law."[29] But one wonders why Christ had to die to correct a misuse or misunderstanding of the Law. Could God not have just sent a prophet to correct the

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[27] *Romans,* 145, n. 7.

[28] C. E. B. Cranfield, "St. Paul and the Law," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 17 (March 1964): 43–68; Ernest de Witt Burton, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Galatians,* International Critical Commentary (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1921), 458; Daniel P. Fuller, *Gospel and Law: Contrast or Continuum?* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), 87–99.

[29] Cranfield, "St. Paul and the Law," 56.

misunderstanding? Westerholm, Moo, and others have demonstrated that such a meaning is not viable.[30] A text like Galatians 3:17–19 shows how impossible it would be for Paul to speak of the Mosaic Law in verse 17 ("the Law, which came four hundred and thirty years later"), switch to the legalism in verse 18 ("if the inheritance is based on law, it is no longer based on a promise"), and then back to the Mosaic Law in verse 19 ("Why the Law then? It was added because of transgressions"). A legalistic view of the law is proposed for verse 18 because Paul depicts the Law as incompatible with the promise. This change of meaning for νόμος in verse 18 is so difficult that Fuller devotes an entire appendix in an attempt justify it.[31] Paul is quite capable of speaking of legalism, but he does so by using expressions like "seeking to be justified by the Law" (Gal 5:4).[32]

THE MOSAIC LAW WAS GIVEN EXCLUSIVELY TO ISRAEL

The Mosaic Law was given to Israel at Sinai when it was constituted a nation-state: "These are the statutes and ordinances and laws which the LORD established between Himself and the sons of Israel through Moses at Mount Sinai" (Lev 26:46). "He declares His words to Jacob, His statutes and His ordinances to Israel. He has not dealt thus with any nation; And as for His ordinances, they have not known them" (Ps 147:19–20). Paul says "my kinsmen according to the flesh…are Israelites, to whom belongs the adoption as sons, and the glory and the covenants and the giving of the Law and the *temple* service and the promises" (Rom 9:4). That means that all the rest of humanity are "Gentiles who do not have the Law" (Rom 2:14).

The Law was given to Israel for a limited time and purpose.[33] The 613 laws were stipulations of a suzerainty-vassal treaty, the Mosaic Covenant that Yahweh made with a particular group of West Semitic people living in a particular location, the southeastern coast of the Mediterranean Sea.[34] The Law was "designed to regulate the lives of a people living in the distinctive geographical and climatic conditions found in the southern Levant, and many of the regulations are inapplicable, unintelligible, or even nonsensical outside that regime."[35] The

[30]Westerholm, *Israel's Law and the Church's Faith*, 130–35; Moo, "'Law,' 'Works of the Law,' and Legalism in Paul," 86–88.

[31]*Gospel and Law*, 199–204.

[32]Moo, "'Law,' 'Works of the Law,' and Legalism in Paul," 85–88.

[33]Douglas J. Moo, "Response to Willem A. VanGemeren," in *Five Views on Law and Gospel*, 84.

[34]Meredith G. Kline, *Treaty of the Great King* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1963), 27–44; Dorsey, "The Law of Moses and the Christian," 325; Moo, "The Law of Christ as the Fulfillment of the Law of Moses," 344; "William D. Barrick, "The Mosaic Covenant," *The Master's Seminary Journal* 10 (Fall 1999): 213–32.

[35]Dorsey, "The Law of Moses and the Christian," 325.

Law regulated every detail of an Israelite's life, including the cultivation of the olive tree (Exod 23:11), the plowing of fields (Deut 22:10), sowing fields (Exod 23:10), threshing (Deut 25:4), raising and using animals (Exod 20:17; 21:28–22:4; 23:12; 34:19; Lev 9:4; 22:23; Deut 14:4; 22:10), slavery (Exod 20:8–10; 21:1–11, 20–21, 26–27, 32), polygamy and the custom of levirate marriage (Deut 17:17; 21:15–17; 25:5–10), stoning (Deut 13:10; 17:5; 21:21; 22:21, 24), swearing of oaths (Lev 5:4; 19:12; Deut 6:13; 10:20), altars (Exod 20:24; 21:14; 29:37, 44; 30:27; 34:13; Deut 7:5; 12:13) incense (Exod 30:8–9; Lev 16:13), the treatment of captive women (Deut 21:10–14), and other activities too numerous to mention.[36] Many of the laws regulate activities peculiar to the culture of the ancient Near East. Every house that was built absolutely *required* the inclusion of a parapet around the roof (Deut 22:8), which of course was specifically designed for the cultural context of ancient Israel with its flat roofs that were used for extra living space. The Mosaic Law was a complete body of statutes, designed by God to regulate the personal, moral, judicial, and political affairs of a nation-state. As a covenant document, we should expect the Mosaic Law to endure only so long as the Mosaic Covenant itself. Dorsey argues: "In sum, virtually all the regulations of the corpus—certainly ninety-five percent—are culturally restricted, geographically limited, and cultically and politically specific, and as a result are inapplicable to, and in fact unfulfillable by, Christians living throughout the world today."[37]

THE MOSAIC LAW CANNOT BE DIVIDED UP

Generally, no one attempts to make the entire Mosaic Law, all 613 commands, applicable to believers today. Those who wish to apply parts of it argue that the Law can be rightly separated into three distinct divisions: moral, civil, and ceremonial law. For instance, the Westminster Confession says: "Besides this law, commonly called moral, God was pleased to give to the people of Israel,…ceremonial laws…. To them also, as a body politic, He gave sundry judicial laws (19:3–4).[38] It is not disputed that thematically the Law does seem capable of being broadly viewed in this tripartite scheme. There are moral laws such as those against murder (Exod 20:13) and stealing (Exod 20:15); civil laws such as the requirement that a case not be decided on the evidence of a single witness (Deut 19:15) and the prohibition not to execute one guilty of a capital offense before he has stood trial (Num 35:12); and ceremonial laws such as those regulating religious feasts (Lev 23) and sacrifices (Exod 29). It is universally agreed that the ceremonial law has been set

[36]See David A. Dorsey, "The Use of the OT Law in the Christian Life: A Theocentric Approach," *Evangelical Journal* 17 (Spring 1999): 5–10.

[37]Ibid., 10.

[38]19.3–4, available at http://www.reformed.org/documents/wcf_with_proofs (accessed 24 October 2013).

aside, having been fulfilled in Christ. The debate comes with the moral and civil aspects, particularly the moral.

Theonomy ("God's Law") or Christian Reconstruction can be traced to the writings of Rousas John Rushdoony and his two disciples, Greg Bahnsen, and Gary North.[39] In particular I would note Greg Bahnsen's essay in *Five Views on Law and Gospel*. This view argues that both the civil and moral aspects of the Law are binding on New Testament believers, and modern society needs to be "reconstructed" on the basis of God's (Mosaic) Law.

The most common position advocating the continuing authority of the Law comes from the Reformed camp, those associated with covenant theology. They contend that believers today are obligated to keep the moral aspect of the Mosaic Law, particularly as expressed in the Decalogue, or Ten Commandments, found in Exodus 20:1–17 and Deuteronomy 5:6–21. These commandments are viewed as a summary of the moral law and form the basic constitution of Israel.[40] In *Five Views on Law and Gospel*, the essays by both Willem VanGemeren and Walter Kaiser, though expressing some differences here and there, share this viewpoint.[41] It is the view commonly found in Reformed systematic theologies,[42] and has probably been the view of most Bible believers since the Reformation. Its common acceptance is the reason the Ten Commandments can be found engraved on many public buildings and, until recent times, why it was posted in most every school classroom in our country.

By their very nature, however, these 613 laws we call the Mosaic Law are a unit and stand or fall together. Dorsey notes that "the scheme of a tripartite division is unknown both in the Bible and in early rabbinic literature."[43] Jews viewed the Law as an essential unity. The rabbis said: "As the native born Jew takes upon him [to obey] all the words of the Law, so the proselyte takes upon him all the words of the Law. The authorities say, if a proselyte takes upon himself to obey all the words of the Law except one single commandment, he is not to be received."[44]

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[39]Rousas J. Rushdoony, *The Institutes of Biblical Law* (Nutley, NJ: Craig, 1973); G. L. Bahnsen, *Theonomy in Christian Ethics* (Nutley, NJ: Craig, 1977); G. North, "Common Grace, Eschatology, and Biblical Law," *Journal of Christian Reconstruction* 3 (1976–77): 23–64.

[40]Willem A. VanGemeren, "The Law Is the Perfection of Righteousness in Jesus Christ: A Reformed Perspective," in *Five Views on Law and Gospel*, ed. Stanley N. Gundry (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 29.

[41]See also Knox Chamblin, "The Law of Moses and the Law of Christ," in *Continuity and Discontinuity: Essays in Honor of S. Lewis Johnson, Jr.,* ed. John S. Feinberg (Westchester, IL: Crossway, 1988), 181–202.

[42]E.g., Robert L. Reymond, *A New Systematic Theology of the Christian Faith* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1998): 770–78.

[43]"The Law of Moses and the Christian," 329.

[44]Sifra, Kedoshim Perek 8, quoted in George F. Moore, *Judaism in the First Centuries of the Christian Era: The Age of Tannaim* (reprint of 1927 ed.; Peabody, MA:

Similarly, the New Testament speaks quite clearly to this unity. All 121 uses of the word *law* in Paul are singular, probably reflecting his thinking that the Law is a single entity. Paul reminds the Galatians that they cannot just pick out some commands from the Law to obey: "And I testify again to every man who receives circumcision, that he is under obligation to keep the whole Law" (5:3). And James also asserts the unity of the law: "For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles in one *point,* he has become guilty of all" (Jas 2:10). The "moral" parts of the Law are not clearly distinguished from the rest. Even some of the Ten Commandments are culturally bound. For example, the fifth commandment is tied to the land of Israel: "Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be prolonged in the land which the LORD your God gives you (Exod 20:12). Thus, even the Ten Commandments do not represent pure "moral" law. It is practically impossible to divide up the Law so as to continue the authority of some of it while ignoring the rest. Practically all, if not all, of the 613 commands have a moral component. For example the Law forbade the taking of interest (Exod 22:25), but those who insist on the continued validity of the moral aspect of the Mosaic Law do not normally make this a requirement for New Testament believers, yet clearly this command has a strong moral element. One can certainly find valuable moral principles in the Law, but it is not exegetically or theologically valid to section out only a portion of the Law as legally binding on believers while ignoring the rest.[45]

CHRIST IS THE END OF THE LAW

A key text in Paul's view of the continuing validity of the Law is Romans 10:4, "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes." There is general agreement among scholars that by "law" Paul means the Mosaic Law.[46] But there are still two important interpretive questions to be decided. The first is whether the word *end* (τέλος) means either "end" or "goal." The second is the syntactical relationship between the prepositional phrase "for righteousness" (εἰς δικαιοσύνην) and the assertion that "Christ is the end of the law." The NASB and some other versions (ESV, HCSB, KJV) connect "for righteousness" with "law": "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness." Those commentators who take it this way also generally understand τέλος to mean "end" or "termination," a temporal idea. Thus Christ is the end or termination of the Law "for" or "with reference to" righteousness. Though this might mean that with the coming of Christ the use of the Law to obtain righteousness (salvation) was no longer valid,

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Hendrickson, 1997), 1:331.

[45]See also the discussion in Brian S. Rosner, *Paul and the Law: Keeping the Commandments of God* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2013), 36–37.

[46]Moo, *Romans,* 636.

most everyone rejects the idea that the Law was ever intended for such a purpose. Instead the verse is taken to mean that what was ended was a false idea about securing righteousness by means of the Law.[47]

Both Moo and Seifrid have demonstrated there are number of syntactical reasons why the prepositional phrase should not be understood to modify "law."[48] Probably less than five percent of the uses of the preposition εἰς in the New Testament modify a noun. When modifying a noun, usually the prepositional phrase occurs either before or after the noun. In no case, as would be the situation in Romans 10:4, is the prepositional phrase separated from the noun it modifies by the subject of the sentence (τέλος γὰρ νόμου Χριστὸς εἰς δικαιοσύνην), in this case "Christ." More likely the prepositional phrase εἰς δικαιοσύνην functions as a purpose or result clause that modifies the rest of the clause. Thus Paul is saying that Christ is the end of the Law, with the result (or for the purpose) that there may be righteousness for "everyone who believes." Similarly, the NIV11 reads: "Christ is the end of the law so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes" (so also NET and NRSV).

The other major question to be decided is whether τέλος has a temporal meaning, "end," "termination," or a teleological sense, "goal." Some argue for an exclusively temporal sense.[49] However, even though a number of scholars support the temporal idea, their overall interpretations of Romans 10:4 are decidedly different. On the one hand are those who say that Christ is the end of the Law for attempting to obtain righteousness—the view mentioned above.[50] On the other hand are those who understand Christ to be the end of the Law in the sense that the Law has been completely abrogated. Dispensationalists[51] and a

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[47]John Murray, *The Epistle to the Romans,* New International Commentary on the New Testament, 2 vols. in 1 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1959, 65), 2:49–50; Richard N. Longenecker, *Paul, Apostle of Liberty* (reprint of 1964 ed.; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1976), 144–53; Leon Morris, *The Epistle to the Romans,* Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 381–82; Schreiner, *Romans,* 547–48.

[48]Moo, *Romans,* 637–38; Mark A. Seifrid, "Paul's Approach to the Old Testament in Rom 10:6–8," *Trinity Journal* 6 (Spring 1985): 8–9.

[49]William Sanday and Arthur C. Headlam, *A Ciritical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans,* 5th ed., International Critical Commentary (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1902), 284; Heikki Räisänen, *Paul and the Law*, 2nd ed. (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983) 54–55; Ernst Käsemann, *Commentary on Romans* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980) 282–83; Westerholm, *Israel's Law and the Church's Faith*, 130; Schreiner, "Paul's View of the Law in Romans 10:4–5," 117–21.

[50]See footnote 47.

[51]Roy L. Aldrich, "Has the Mosaic Law Been Abolished?" *Bibliotheca Sacra* 116 (October 1959): 322–35; Charles C. Ryrie, "The End of the Law," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 124 (July–September 1967): 239–47; David K. Lowery, "Christ, the End of the Law in Romans 10:4," in *Dispensationalism, Israel and the Church*, ed. Craig A. Blaising and Darrell L. Bock (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992), 230–46; Wayne G. Strickland, "The Inauguration of the Law of Christ with the Gospel of Christ: A Dispensational View," in *Five Views on Law and Gospel*, ed. Stanley N. Gundry (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 269.

number of non-dispensationalists[52] (including probably Martin Luther himself.[53]) fall into this category.

Other scholars argue for an exclusively teleological sense for τέλος ("goal").[54] But an exclusively teleological sense is difficult to maintain in light of how Paul uses the term (14 times). We can set aside two uses in Romans 13:7 where τέλος means "tax." Out of the other twelve occurrences, in only one instance is a teleological meaning probable: "But the goal of our instruction is love from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith" (1 Tim 1:5).[55] In the remaining eleven occurrences, the NASB twice translates τέλος as "outcome": "the outcome of those things is death" (Rom 6:21); "But now having been freed from sin and enslaved to God, you derive your benefit, resulting in sanctification, and the outcome, eternal life" (Rom 6:22). Once it is rendered "to the utmost" (1 Thess 2:16). The rest of the occurrences are all translated "end" (Rom 10:4; 1 Cor 1:8; 10:11; 15:24; 2 Cor 1:13; 3:13; 11:15; Phil 3:19). Τέλος occurs 26 times outside of Paul and only in Luke 22:37 is a teleological meaning likely; the temporal idea is dominant.

After surveying the data, Schreiner argues for an exclusively temporal meaning in Roman 10:4.[56] Looking at the exactly the same data, Moo believes that τέλος primarily has a temporal sense, but he feels that a teleological nuance is also present.[57] According to Moo, "the analogy of a race course (which many scholars think *telos* is meant to convey) is helpful: the finish line is both the 'termination' of the race (the race is over when it is reached) and the 'goal' of the race (the race is run for the sake of reaching the finish line)."[58] Moo argues that he is not giving τέλος a double meaning, but that τέλος commonly has a semantic range that includes both a temporal and teleological sense, an idea that might

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[52]F. F. Bruce, "Paul and the Law of Moses," *Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library* 57 (Spring 1975): 262; Frederick L. Godet, *Commentary on Romans* (reprint of 1883 ed.; Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1977), 376; Räisänen, *Paul and the Law*, 53–56; Westerholm, *Israel's Law and the Church's Faith*, 130.

[53]According to Schreiner, *The Law and Its Fulfillment,* 16, and Moo, "'Law,' 'Works of the Law,' and Legalism in Paul," 73.

[54]C. E. B. Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans,* 2 vols. (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1979): 2:519; Fuller, *Gospel and Law*, 84–85; Robert Badenas, *Christ the End of the Law: Romans 10.4 in Pauline Perspective* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1985), 38–80; Chamblin, "The Law of Moses and the Law of Christ," 188.

[55]Schreiner, "Paul's View of the Law in Romans 10:4–5," 119; idem, *Romans,* 545; Moo, *Romans,* 640, n. 41. BDAG has a similar assessment (s.v. "τέλος," 998–99).

[56]"Paul's View of the Law in Romans 10:4–5," 119; idem, *Romans,* 545.

[57]Also Seifrid, "Paul's Approach to the Old Testament in Rom 10:6–8," 10. It should be noted that in his latest work Schreiner has now concluded that τέλος means both "end" and "goal" in Rom 10:4 (*40 Questions about Christians and Biblical Law*, 69).

[58]*Romans,* 641.

be more accurately expressed by the English words *culmination* or *consummation*.[59] This understanding of τέλος also happens to parallel Moo's interpretation of another key text in the overall debate, Matthew 5:17, where Jesus says that he has come "to fulfill" (πληρόω) the Law.[60] Moo concludes: "We find in Paul's teaching about Christ as the culmination of the law another evidence of the beautiful unity of the NT message. For what Paul says here is almost exactly what Jesus claims in one of his most famous theological pronouncements: 'Do not think that I have come to abolish the law and the prophets. I have not come to abolish them, but to fulfill them' (Matt 5:17). Each pictures Christ as the promised culmination of the OT law."[61] There is nothing objectionable about including a teleological nuance for τέλος in Romans 10:4 as long as the temporal idea is seen to be primary. This idea is probably what the NIV11 was hoping to capture with their translation of Romans 10:4, "Christ is the culmination of the law so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes." Of course, Moo is the chairman of the NIV Committee on Bible Translation. What this means is that "Christ is the end/culmination of the Law so that everyone who believes may be declared righteous."

THE NEW TESTAMENT BELIEVER IS NOT UNDER THE MOSAIC LAW

If Christ is the "end" or "culmination" of the Law, then it makes sense that New Testament believers are not "under the Law." The phrase "under the Law" (ὑπὸ νόμον) occurs eleven times in Paul (Rom 6:14, 15; 1 Cor 9:20 [four times]; Gal 3:23; 4:4, 5, 21 5:18). In each of these verses, νόμος has no article, yet the context makes it clear that Paul is thinking of *the* Mosaic Law. It is universally recognized today that the presence or absence of the article with νόμος is of no help in determining its meaning, and that νόμος commonly means the Mosaic Law when the article is lacking.[62] This is particularly true when the noun, in this case νόμος, is the object of a preposition, since prepositional phrases commonly lack the article even though the noun may be definite.[63]

"Under the Law" means, according to BDAG, to be "under the control of" or "under obligation."[64] One who is "under the Law" is under the binding authority of the Mosaic Law. Schreiner concludes: "To

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[59]Ibid., n. 44.

[60]Moo, "The Law of Moses or the Law of Christ," 208; idem, "The Law of Christ as the Fulfillment of the Law of Moses," 359.

[61]*Romans,* 642.

[62]Schreiner, *The Law and Its Fulfillment*, 34.

[63]Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 247.

[64]S.v. "ὑπό," 1036.

be under the Mosaic law, says Paul, is to be under the power, authority, and dominion of sin."[65] Moo adds: "We conclude that as in Galatians 3–4 and 1 Corinthians 9, 'under the law' in Romans 6 refers broadly to being under the dominating influence or binding authority of the Mosaic law."[66]

The first three uses of "under the Law" in Galatians 3:15–4:7 demonstrate the role of the Law in the history of redemption. In Old Testament times Paul and other Jews "were kept in custody under the law" (Gal 3:23). The role of the Law for the Jewish people was like a παιδαγωγός, a "guardian" (NIV), which had authority over them. Jesus himself was born "under the law," subject to the requirements of the Mosaic code (Gal 4:4). He came to "redeem those under the law." Because he lived "under the Law" and kept it perfectly, he was able to liberate those "under the Law" (Gal 4:5).[67] These three uses of "under the Law" portray "the situation of Jews before the coming of Christ, when they were subject to the authority and supervision of the Mosaic law."[68] Since the era of the Law has passed, Paul is amazed that the Galatians "want to be under the law" (Gal 4:21), which is what they were saying by submitting to circumcision (5:2) and observing Jewish festivals (4:10). Paul reminds the Galatians that they cannot just pick out some commands from the Law to obey: "And I testify again to every man who receives circumcision, that he is under obligation to keep the whole Law" (5:3).

In Romans 6:14–15 Paul contrasts being "under the law" with being "under grace." Paul promises the Roman believers that "sin shall no longer be your master, because you are not under the law, but under grace" (v. 14, NIV). Though believers still sin, sin is no longer their "master"; they are no longer under the dominion of sin. To be under the dominion of sin is to be a slave to sin (6:17), an unregenerate condition. The reason believers are no longer under the dominion of sin, Paul says, is that they are "not under the law" (6:14, NIV). But what does not being under the Law have to do with freedom from the dominion of sin? In Romans 3–5 Paul has frequently mentioned the role of the Law in redemptive history and what the situation was like before the coming of Christ. Unfortunately, in the old era before the cross, the Law did not really help Israel with the sin problem. Law does not and cannot turn an unregenerate person into a regenerate one no matter how well it is kept. Moo explains: "The Mosaic law has had a definite sin-producing and sin-intensifying function: it has brought 'knowledge of sin' (3:20), 'wrath' (4:15), 'transgression' (5:13–14), and an increase in the severity of sin (5:20)."[69] To be in the old era before the coming of

[65] *The Law and Its Fulfillment*, 77.

[66] "The Law of Christ as the Fulfillment of the Law of Moses," 366.

[67] Schreiner, *40 Questions about Christians and Biblical Law*, 74.

[68] Moo, "The Law of Christ as the Fulfillment of the Law of Moses," 362.

[69] *Romans*, 389.

Christ was for most people to be under the dominion of sin—unregenerate. And being "under the Law" did not really help things; it made them worse. "The law, as Paul puts it in 1 Cor 15:56, is 'the power of sin.' This means, then, that there can be no final liberation from the power of sin without a corresponding liberation from the power and lordship of the law. To be 'under the law' is to be subject to the constraining and sin-strengthening regime of the old era; to be 'under grace' is to be subject to the new era in which freedom from the power of sin is available."[70]

Although every Old Testament person was technically under the Law all his life in the sense that the Law was the legal code of national Israel, genuine believers (e.g., David, Rom 4) could escape the condemnatory rule of the law in the sense Paul means in Romans 6. At the same time, though Gentiles were never under the Mosaic Law in the same sense as Israel (Rom 2:14; 1 Cor 9:21), Paul seems to treat them as though they are in a similar situation to Israel. In Romans 2:14–15 he argues that "when Gentiles who do not have the Law do instinctively the things of the Law, these, not having the Law, are a law to themselves, in that they show the work of the Law written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness and their thoughts alternately accusing or else defending them." Because Gentiles are in the image of God, they have the moral law of God "written in their hearts." This can be demonstrated by the fact that they have a conscience which debates right and wrong. This moral law of God causes them sometimes to "do instinctively the things of the Law"—things like refraining from murder and theft. Paul sees Gentiles "responsible for those moral standards that God has laid upon them."[71] In this sense Gentiles our "under law," not the Law of Moses exactly, but law nevertheless. Thus, Israel's experience with the Mosaic Law can be viewed as a pattern for all people with "law."[72] Therefore, Gentiles as well as Jews must "die to the Law" (Rom 7:4).

OTHER PAULINE TEXTS ON THE ABROGATION OF THE MOSAIC LAW

Beyond the clear teaching that Christ is the end of the Law and the believer is not under the Law, many other texts and arguments support the truth that the Law has been abolished for the believer. In 1 Timothy 1:9 Paul says that the Mosaic Law "is not made for a righteous person." The verb "made" (κεῖμαι) has the idea of "be given" or "be valid,"[73] which probably means that the Law is "not binding on Christians, on

[70]Ibid.

[71]Moo, "The Law of Moses or the Law of Christ," 213.

[72]Moo, *Romans*, 417.

[73]BDAG, s.v. "κεῖμαι," 537–38.

those who have been made righteous by Christ."[74]

In Ephesians 2:14–15 Paul declares that Christ "broke down the barrier of the dividing wall, by abolishing in His flesh the enmity, *which is* the Law of commandments *contained* in ordinances." The word *abolish* is the verb καταργέω, often used by Paul, not to mean that something is abolished in the sense that it no longer exists but, as BDAG suggests, "made powerless" or "invalidated."[75] The cross-work of Christ has made the Law invalid. It is no longer authoritative for God's people. In language similar to Ephesians, Paul says in Colossians 2:14 that Christ "canceled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us," which seems to be a clear reference to the Mosaic Law.[76] In Romans 7:6 Paul says, "But now we have been released from the Law, having died to that by which we were bound, so that we serve in newness of the Spirit and not in oldness of the letter." The word "released" is the verb καταργέω that we previously noticed was used in Ephesians 2:15. Through the death of Christ believers have been released from some Mosaic Law so that it is no longer a valid authority over them.

THE MOSAIC LAW AND THE NEW TESTAMENT BELIEVER

Those who believe the Mosaic Law in its entirety has been abolished for the believer are sometimes charged with antinomianism. But Paul himself provides an answer to that accusation in 1 Corinthians 9:20–21, "To the Jews I became as a Jew, so that I might win Jews; to those who are under the Law, as under the Law though not being myself under the Law, so that I might win those who are under the Law; to those who are without law, as without law, though not being without the law of God but under the law of Christ, so that I might win those who are without law." Though we discussed the phrase "under the Law" earlier, I did not include 1 Corinthians 9:20, where it is used four times. In this context Paul is explaining some of the social settings in which he practiced evangelism.[77] The distinction, if any, that Paul is drawing between "becoming a Jew" and being "under the Law" is not perfectly clear. It may be that "under the Law" is simply explaining more precisely what Paul means by "becoming a Jew," or "under the Law" may be added so as to include proselytes, who though not ethnically Jews, were among those who placed themselves under the Mosaic

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[74]Stephen Westerholm, "The Law and the 'Just Man' (1 Tim 1:3–11)," *Studia Theologica* 36 (1982), 79–95; Moo, "The Law of Christ as the Fulfillment of the Law of Moses," 367; William D. Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles,* Word Biblical Commentary (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2000), 34–35.

[75]BDAG, s.v. "καταργέω," 525.

[76]Peter T. O'Brien, *Colossians, Philemon,* Word Biblical Commentary (Waco, TX: Word, 1992), 124–26.

[77]Gordon D. Fee, "*The First Epistle to the Corinthians,* New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 427.

code. Whatever the case, this is another clear statement by Paul that he, as a New Testament believer, was not under the authority of the Mosaic Law. He did, however, at certain times voluntarily comply with some Mosaic regulations in order to more effectively evangelize those who still believed the Law was binding upon them.

The truth of the situation, Paul says, is that he was literally and actually not under the Mosaic Law, but that did not mean he was "without the law of God" (ἄνομος, v. 21) since he was "under the law of Christ" (ἔννομος). As we noted earlier in Romans 2:14–15, all people possess God's moral law since it is written on their hearts. The moral law of God is eternal. It was reflected in the Mosaic Law, though the Mosaic Law is much broader, including civil and ceremonial laws binding only on the nation of Israel. The Mosaic Law is an indivisible unit that reached its culmination in Christ and has been abrogated. The Mosaic Law as a code or contractual obligation is not directly applicable to New Testament believers. It is "no longer a *direct and immediate* source of, or judge of, the conduct of God's people."[78] Dorsey explains:

> According to the OT writers this treaty was violated and in fact repudiated by that nation (e.g., Jer 11:10; 22:9; 31:32; Ezek 44:7), and according to the NT writers God has consequently abrogated the treaty and has established a new (not a "renewed") treaty with a reconstituted covenant people (1 Cor 11:25; 2 Cor 3:6; Heb 8:6–13; 9:15–18; etc.; cf. Jer 31:31–34). When a new treaty or contract replaces an older one, as in modern labor contracts, the terms of the older contract are normally nonbinding upon the parties. Granted, parties might be interested in the terms of a former contract for various reasons. But as far as legal applicability is concerned, it is the terms of the new contract, not the old, that are binding.[79]

On the other hand, moral truth or precepts that flow from the character of God do not change and cannot change. This eternal moral law has always been and always will be binding on human creatures. For example, murder was wrong before the Law, during the period of the Law, is wrong in the New Testament age, and will be wrong in the Kingdom. For Israel the moral law became part of a larger legal system, the Mosaic Law, which included civil and ceremonial demands, along with precise penalties that were culturally specific to a particular people living in a particular location at a particular time.

What is binding upon Paul, and us, is "the law of Christ." Among those who believe the Mosaic Law is no longer binding upon believers, there is still some debate as to what is to be included in this category. Westerholm is representative of one school of thinking. The problem with the Mosaic Law, according to this view, is simply that it is law. Paul says the Law brings "the knowledge of sin" (Rom 3:20) and "brings about wrath" (Rom 4:15). "The Law came in so that the transgression would increase" (Rom 5:20) and "the power of sin is the law"

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[78]Moo, "The Law of Christ as the Fulfillment of the Law of Moses," 343.

[79]Dorsey, "The Law of Moses and the Christian," 325.

(1 Cor 15:56). When Paul asks rhetorically in Galatians 3:19, "Why then was the law given?" his answer is that "it was added because of transgressions." The preposition χάριν seems to be commonly understood among commentators to have a purposive sense, "to bring about transgressions."[80] If the Law causes the transgression to increase and actually brings about transgressions, then Westerholm reasons, the Law must be abolished to counter sin; law itself is an inherently negative force in sanctification. This means that while Christians are bound to do the will of God, there are no laws, "no concrete formula" to guide the believer. They must look to their renewed minds (Rom 12:2) and discover for themselves what the will of God is for them.[81]

The same sort of aversion to the idea of *law* for the Christian is apparently found among some dispensationalists. Alva J. McClain in his generally helpful book *Law and Grace* goes to great lengths to disallow any connection between the idea of law and the believer.[82] Like Westerholm, McClain argues it is the will of God that is the standard for the believer's conduct, appealing especially to Romans 12:1–2.[83] There is a similar rejection of law in some of Charles C. Ryrie's statements. He says that the Mosaic Law cannot sanctify.[84] This is because, according to Ryrie, law and grace are antithetical concepts and the dominion of sin that Paul speaks of in Romans 6 is due to the person being "under law" and not "under grace."[85] Contrary to Ryrie's claim, in fact, the Mosaic Law could and did sanctify individuals who were regenerate. David speaks of the man who "delights in the law of the LORD" and goes on in Psalm 1 to describe its sanctifying effects. Sanctification for the regenerate comes through obedience to the will of God, including its Mosaic form.

The reason Paul speaks so negatively about being "under the law" in Romans 6 is not because the Mosaic Law is law, but because he is viewing the Law, as I noted above, in a redemptive-historical scheme where the Law is an inseparable part of the old era in which Israel was under the Mosaic covenant. The problem was not with the Law itself, as law, since Paul himself says that the Law is good (Rom 7:16; 1 Tim 1:8) and holy (Rom 7:12). But the Law, as part and parcel of the Mosaic covenant, provided within itself no power to obey that Law.

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[80]BDAG, 1079; Burton, *Galatians,* 188; F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Galatians,* New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), 175; Schreiner, *Galatians*, 240. See especially the discussion in Schreiner, *The Law and Its Fulfillment,* 74–77, and idem, *40 Questions about Christians and Biblical Law*, 83.

[81]*Israel's Law and the Church's Faith,* 209.

[82]McClain attempts, unsuccessfully in my opinion, to read Paul's declaration that he is "under the law of Christ" (1 Cor 9:21) out of the Bible (*Law and Grace* [reprint of 1954 ed.; Chicago: Moody Press, 1967], 79–80).

[83]Ibid., 54.

[84]*The Grace of God* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1963), 103.

[85]*Balancing the Christian Life* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1969), 151.

Regeneration was not a guaranteed part of the old covenant, as is it is in the new covenant (Jer 31). Therefore, Israel under the law is generally a picture of the unsaved condition. The Law is good in itself, but it always has negative consequences for those in the flesh: "For while we were in the flesh, the sinful passions, which were *aroused* by the Law, were at work in the members of our body to bear fruit for death" (Rom 7:6). Those "in the flesh" are the unregenerate, according to Romans 8:9. The problem with the Law, as Schreiner observes, "was not its content, but the inability of unregenerate people to obey it."[86] But in the new era after Christ, the power of the Spirit allows believers to obey God. Though believers are not under the Mosaic Law since that has been ended as a historical situation, they are still responsible for God's moral law. Moo explains: "Paul affirms here that the believer is no longer under the authority of the Mosaic law, not that he or she is under no law at all. In fact, Paul himself makes clear that the believer is still 'under law' in the broader sense—still obligated to certain commandments (see Gal 6:2; 1 Cor 7:19; 9:20–22)."[87]

Concerning the content of the "law of Christ," I find myself in basic agreement with a number of statements that Moo makes on the issue. I do have a quibble or two, as when he seems to downplay the role of specific commandments. For instance: "This 'law' [the law of Christ] does not consist of legal prescriptions and ordinances, but of the teaching and example of Jesus and the apostles, the central demand of love, and the guiding influence of the indwelling Holy Spirit."[88] In this same article, Moo says almost the exact same thing three more times.[89] It does seem true that the New Testament believer does not find as much detail and specificity about how to regulate his life, as did the Old Testament believer under the Law. But when I read Moo's description of the law of Christ, I wonder if he allows for more subjectivity than necessary, given Paul's statement that believers are still under the "commandments of God" (1 Cor 7:19). I might have said that the law of Christ "does not *primarily* consist of legal prescriptions and ordinances." Moo goes on to say:

> This teaching and witness, as we have noted, is built on and incorporates

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[86]Thomas R. Schreiner, review of *Israel's Law and the Church's Faith* by Stephen Westerholm, *Trinity Journal* 9 (Spring 1988): 125.

[87]*Romans,* 416.

[88]"The Law of Christ as the Fulfillment of the Law of Moses," 343.

[89]"This 'law' is not a set of rules but a set of principles drawn from the life and teaching of Jesus, with love for others as its heart and the indwelling Spirit as its directive force," 357; "Christians are not, according to Paul, bound to the law of Moses but, secondly, are bound to those principles established by Christ in his life and teaching—principles mediated and motivated by the Spirit and focused on love; this constitutes 'the law of Christ,'" 361; "I will argue that this 'law of Christ,' the new covenant form of God's law, is not a code or series of commandments and prohibitions, but is composed of the teachings of Christ and the apostles and the directing influence of the Holy Spirit," 368.

> within it many provisions of the Mosaic law. Indeed, we can confidently expect that everything within the Mosaic law that reflected God's "eternal moral will" for his people is caught up into and repeated in the "law of Christ." Having recognized the place within "the law of Christ" of specific commandments, however, I want to insist that they must not be given too much prominence. The basic directive power of "new covenant law" lies in the renewed heart of the Christian (Rom 12:1–2), a heart in the process of being transformed by God's Spirit into a perfect refractor and performer of God's will. Commandments, even with the work of the Spirit, are still necessary, for our hearts are not yet, and in this life will never be, in perfect conformity with God's will. But Paul would protest against their being given a position of supremacy within new covenant ethics.[90]

Again, I am a slightly uneasy with this last statement. Paul does not seem at all bashful about handing down moral imperatives in his epistles. Moo's view seems to reflect a line of thinking shared by him and some others (e.g., Westerholm) that there is guidance available from the Spirit that is superior to the bare commandments in the New Testament. It seems to me that the Spirit works with the commandments of the New Testament in a perfectly compatible way. This illuminating ministry of the Spirit does not convey knowledge or content, but only enables the believer to understand the significance of Scripture.

Although the Christian is not technically under the authority of the Law, it is still part of inspired Scripture, and, therefore, as Paul says, is "profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness" (2 Tim 3:16). Dorsey suggests that though the Law is "no longer legally binding upon Christians," it is "profoundly binding upon Christians in a revelatory and pedagogical sense."[91] That seems correct to me, but how do we apply the Law to New Testament believers? Speaking to this issue, Moo says: "While my Reformed colleague might argue that we are bound to whatever in the Mosaic law has not been clearly overturned by New Testament teaching, I argue that we are bound only to that which is clearly repeated within New Testament teaching."[92] It may be that Moo's principle for applying Old Testament law is too narrow. In his response to Moo's essay, Bahnsen observes that the Law forbade bestiality (Exod 22:19), but according to Moo's principle, Christians would be free from that commandment since the prohibition is not repeated in the New Testament.[93] It may be that there are parts of God's eternal moral law, binding on Christians, that are not stated in the New Testament, but are to be found in the Old Testament and specifically in the Mosaic Law. Though New Testament believers are not directly under the authority of the Mosaic Law, it does reveal

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[90]Ibid., 369–70.

[91]"The Law of Moses and the Christian," 325. Schreiner endorses this characterization (*40 Questions about Christians and Biblical Law*, 94).

[92]"The Law of Christ as the Fulfillment of the Law of Moses," 376.

[93]"Response to Douglas Moo" in *Five Views on Law and Gospel,* 386.

truth about God and his ways that can teach and give additional guidance as we follow the Law of Christ.[94]

[94]Dorsey has a helpful discussion built around four general principles designed to guide the believer in applying the Law ("The Law of Moses and the Christian," 332–34).