

**A LAYMAN'S SYSTEMATIC  
AND BIBLICAL EXPOSITION  
OF THE 1689 LONDON BAPTIST  
CONFESSION OF FAITH  
VOL. II**



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**CHAPTERS 19-32**

**SIMON WARTANIAN**

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*A Layman's Systematic and Biblical Exposition of the 1689 London Baptist Confession of Faith: Vol. II*

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This work is dedicated to every man and woman,  
who is not formally educated in theology,  
but loves and devotes themselves to the study of the Word of God.

But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.  
(2 Tim. 3:14-17)

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# CHAPTER 19

## OF THE LAW OF GOD

### Introduction

What is the relationship between the Christian and the law? Do we have to obey the law? What is the threefold division of the law? Are we saved by the law? What are the threefold uses of the law? What is the moral law and is it binding on all people? What are the Ten Commandments? Were the Ten Commandments known before Sinai? What is the relationship between the believer and the Ten Commandments? What is the doctrine of the law and the gospel?

There is a lot of work to be done in this chapter and I think that this is a crucial chapter, one that I want to study myself. I do believe what is confessed here, but I do also want to be able to make a *biblical* case for it. The case that I will lay down is obviously convincing to me. I will not be able to address every objection that may come up. What I want to lay down here is the binding authority and nature of the Decalogue on all people, whether saved or unsaved; what the relationship of the Christian is to the law and such questions.

### Defining our Terms

Before we proceed further in this chapter, we must define our terms.

#### Natural Law

Natural law is the law of God as revealed in creation and which man knows by virtue of the fact that he's a creature made in the image of God (see **ch. 4:2**). Natural law may be discovered by reason and innate knowledge. The Reformed Baptist theologian Richard Barcellos writes the following concerning the substance and form of the moral law:

Protestant Scholasticism taught that the Decalogue summarily contains the Moral Law and is the in-scripturated form of the natural law, as to its substance. A distinction was made between substance and form. Substance is one; form (and function) may vary. For example, when the Westminster Larger Catechism Q. 98 says, "The moral law is summarily comprehended in the ten commandments," it refers to the fact that the substance (i.e., the underlying essence) of the Moral Law is assumed and articulated in the propositions of the Decalogue as contained in Exodus 20 and Deuteronomy 5. The form (and function) fits the redemptive-historical circumstances in which it was given. The substance, or underlying

principles, are always relevant and applicable to man because he is created in the image of God. The application may shift based on redemptive-historical changes, such as the inauguration of the New Covenant, but its substance and utility never changes.<sup>1</sup>

## Moral Law

The moral law, on the other hand, is the law which is revealed and summarized by God in the Ten Commandments, the Decalogue, which is the substance of the natural law. Richard Muller is quoted in Barcellos on the definition of the moral law, saying:

specifically and predominantly, the Decalogue, or Ten Commandments; also called the *lex Mosaica*..., as distinct from the *lex ceremonialis*...and the *lex civilis*, or civil law. The *lex moralis*, which is primarily intended to regulate morals, is known to the *synderesis* [the innate habit of understanding basic principles of moral law] and is the basis of the acts of *conscientia* [conscience—the application of the innate habit above]. In substance, the *lex moralis* is identical with the *lex naturalis* ...but, unlike the natural law, it is given by revelation in a form which is clearer and fuller than that otherwise known to the reason.<sup>2</sup>

And then Dr. Barcellos adds:

As noted above, the Moral Law is summarily comprehended in the Decalogue, not exhausted by it. Though the formal promulgation of the Decalogue had a unique redemptive-historical context and use, it is nothing other than the Natural Law incorporated into the Mosaic Covenant. This is one of its uses in the Bible but not all of its uses.

The Decalogue contains the *summary* and the *essence* of the moral law, but it does not contain all the moral laws. For example, there is no “thou shalt respect elders,” but we understand that this is comprehended under the fifth commandment to honor our parents, and derived from it.

## Positive Law

Positive law simply said is a moral law that has no basis in nature nor is it self-evident, but is based upon a commandment of God. Dr. Barcellos defines positive laws as:

Positive laws are those laws added to the Natural or Moral Law. They are dependent upon the will of God. These laws are “good because God commands them.” They become just because commanded. The first Positive Laws were given to Adam in the Garden (Gen. 1:28; 2:17), as far as we know. Subsequent Positive Laws are spread throughout the Old and New Testaments. Positive laws can be abrogated for various reasons. They are not necessarily universal or perpetual. Some obvious illustrations of Positive Law in the Old Testament are circumcision and animal sacrifices and two New Testament illustrations are baptism and the Lord’s Supper under the New Covenant...Neither circumcision, animal sacrifices, baptism, or the Lord’s Supper are either universal or perpetual.<sup>3</sup>

## §1 The Moral Law of God

1 | God gave to Adam **a law of universal obedience written in his heart, 1** and a particular precept of not eating the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil; **2 by which he bound him and all his posterity** to personal, entire, exact, and perpetual obedience; **promised life upon the fulfilling, and threatened death upon the breach of it, and endued him with power and ability to keep it. 3**

1. Gen. 1:27; Eccl. 7:29; Rom. 2:12a, 14-15
2. Gen. 2:16-17

<sup>1</sup> Richard Barcellos, *Definition of Key Terms and Phrases*, pp. 1-2. Retrieved from [http://www.1689federalism.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/Barcellos\\_LawWritings.pdf](http://www.1689federalism.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/Barcellos_LawWritings.pdf).

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 2.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 2-3.

## 3. Gen. 2:16-17; Rom. 10:5; Gal. 3:10, 12

Adam was given a **law of universal obedience written in his heart** (Rom. 2:14-15). Even in his innocence, man was never without the law of God (**ch. 4:2**). This law is a law of **universal obedience**, i.e., it concerns everyone. The location of this law was not in stone, but **in his heart**; it was inward. In addition to this law, he was also given a **particular precept of not eating the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil** (Gen. 2:16-17). By obedience to the law and the precept he was given, he was **bound** along with **all his posterity to personal, entire, exact, and perpetual obedience**. *Everyone* was to obey *all* of the law, *exactly* as God required and *forever*. This law being given in the context of the Covenant of Works had promises and threats. For a law without a covenant has no rewards or threats. But when it is placed in a covenantal context, it is expanded with rewards and threats. The reward or **promised life** was upon the condition of obedience, which is implied if they did not breach the covenant but would eat of the tree of life (Gen. 2:9; 3:22; cf. **ch. 7:1**). But **death** was the punishment for **the breach of** the commandments and the covenant (2:17). Furthermore, God **endued Adam with the power and ability to keep** all those things which He commanded and gave him. Therefore, Adam was not placed in a disadvantaged state.



## The Law Upon the Hearts of all Men

We believe that when Adam stood in the Garden, he stood as a representative of all his posterity (see **ch. 6:3** for more on Adam’s federal headship). He did not stand to represent himself alone, but God placed him as the covenant head over the whole human race. His obedience would be our obedience and his disobedience would be our disobedience. Sadly, we know what Adam did. Therefore, we believe that Adam did have the perfect law of God upon His heart. He knew the moral law or the natural law, simply by being a man in God’s image, knowing what morality is. Adam certainly knew that he was present in a good creation with a good God. There was a standard before the Fall. The moral law, we believe was summarized in the Ten Commandments on Mount Sinai (§2). But how does it make sense, then, to say that Adam had the moral law upon his heart even when there was no sin and there was no Fall? The objection would be, what does “Thou shalt not steal” and “Thou shalt not commit adultery” mean to a creature who is sinless? It is a valid objection, but obviously, it is not convincing for it assumes that the only way that the moral law can be expressed is in the negatives (thou shalt *not*) and not in the positives also (thou *shalt*). For example, we can state the seventh commandment in the negative just like it is in the text, “You shall not commit adultery” (Ex. 20:14), or we can state it positively as “You shall remain faithful to your spouse.” The same idea is communicated, whether stated negatively or positively, and that idea is that one should be faithful to their spouse. Let’s take for example the third commandment. Negatively, “You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain” (20:7), or we can express it positively as, “You shall honor and glorify the name of the LORD your God.” It is only because of the wicked perversity of man that these commandments had to be stated negatively because disobedience to them is part of our depraved nature.

Adam stood in our place. If he had obeyed God in his time of probation, then we would all have never fallen and received rewards by virtue of his obedience. Not only was the moral law written in his heart, but God gave him one positive precept, namely, “of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat” and threatened death and misery upon the breach of that particular commandment saying, “for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die” (Gen. 2:16). He did eat of it, he died spiritually at that moment, and death came through his sin into the world. We all died in Adam (Rom. 5:12-14).<sup>4</sup>

That law, which as the Confession says was written upon Adam’s heart, did not vanish away with his disobedience, but remained. The radical difference now is that Adam had lost the freedom to will the good (see **ch. 9**) and therefore, obedience to the law without grace became impossible. While before the Fall, the creation being “very good” (Gen. 1:31), he did not have to put effort into obedience as that was the “very good” state in which he was. Obedience came naturally to him as a very good creature. While after the Fall, obedience does not come naturally, but rather disobedience comes naturally. The

<sup>4</sup> For more on federal headship and Adam’s disobedience, see **ch. 6:3** (vol. I).

moral law within man is part of what it means to be a rational creature and a human being in the image of God. What separates us from the brute beasts is that we act according to choice and not by instinct. We can think through our choices and their consequences. We can know the difference between good and evil. Such knowledge animals don't have, and I believe it is in this sense that man is in the *Imago Dei*. We reflect (or better said, we were supposed to perfectly reflect) the person of God, His rationality, His goodness, His love, and represent Him in the world (see **ch. 4:2**).

It is part of the moral argument for God to claim that for objective moral standards there must be a Lawgiver. Man, by virtue of him being a creature of God, has in him an innate knowledge of good and evil. We know what is good and what is not good even if we had never heard of the Ten Commandments. But, before some protest, knowing the law of God, or knowing what is good and what is evil, does *not* mean that we are *willing* to follow that lead. As far as I know, every country and society has criminalized murder, but that hasn't yet stopped people being murdered. Our depraved nature is averse to the law of God and we often go against our conscience (e.g., Rom. 8:7-8). I believe that the conscience and the moral sense that all people have is proof for the assertion that this law, which was written in Adam's heart, was not destroyed but is written in every person's heart which enables them to know good and evil.

#### Romans 2:12-16

All people know that God exists by virtue of them being creatures of Him. They have the moral law upon their hearts. They know good from evil, whether they do that which is pleasing in God's sight is another story. They have knowledge of God's law. The text chiefly cited in support of this is Romans 2. I would like to make a few comments on this passage.

For all who have **sinned without the law** will also **perish without the law**, and all who have **sinned under the law** will be **judged by the law**. 13 For it is not the hearers of the law who are righteous before God, but the doers of the law who will be justified. 14 For when Gentiles, who **do not have the law, by nature do what the law requires, they are a law to themselves**, even though they do not have the law. 15 They show that **the work of the law is written on their hearts**, while their **conscience also bears witness**, and their conflicting thoughts accuse or even excuse them 16 on that day when, according to my gospel, God judges the secrets of men by Christ Jesus.

1. Paul has just concluded a section on the fact that God is impartial with regards to Jew or Gentile in His judgment. He will judge both according to the light they had. For "those who by patience in well-doing seek for glory and honor and immortality, he will give eternal life", but for those who "do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, there will be wrath and fury" (vv. 7-8). God makes no distinction between Jew and Greek in that He will judge the one, but pardon the other. In fact, it is much more severe to the Jew than to the Gentile because of the light and knowledge which the Jew has over the heathen.

2. The word "law" is used in v. 12 four times and it is used in two senses: 1) the natural law and 2) the revealed moral law. In the case of the Gentiles, the apostle says that they sinned without the law and by "law" he means that they sinned without the written revelation of God. They knew by virtue of the moral law written upon their hearts that they should not sin, but they did. They did not have a written and therefore unmistakable revelation of God concerning his will. They sinned without the written law and revelation of God, and therefore, they will perish and be judged *not* based upon the written revelation and law of God. This does not mean that they will not be punished on the basis of the moral law, that is certainly the case, but it means that they will be judged according to the measure of light that they had. In contrast to this, the apostle points to those who have sinned under the law, speaking of the Jews here sinned *while* knowing the written revelation and law of God which is unmistakable. Unlike the Gentiles, the Lord had chosen the people of Israel to be His old covenant people and He has revealed Himself to them especially, unlike anything He had done and unlike any light of knowledge that He had shed upon any other nation. Israel knew who God was. They knew that obedience pleased Him, and He greatly abhorred sin, it was clear to them from Holy Scripture. They who sinned while living under the written law, will perish and be judged on the basis of that written law. This means that they will be judged on the basis of the greater light that they had received. The knowledge of the Jew concerning the true God here is much greater than the Gentile, although they knew God (1:21), obviously, they did not have as much knowledge of His will as the Jew did.



Therefore, this Jew here will be punished more severely because of the greater revelation which he lived under. The heathen will receive a “light beating”, while those who know God’s will and still rebel against Him will receive a “severe beating” (Luke 12:47-48).

3. In both cases, the apostle is not assuming that Gentiles will go to heaven because they did not know the written law of God, or that they would not be judged by the law of God. It is a basic biblical assumption that all people will be judged by the law of God because the law of God is not something arbitrary that God thought of someday, but it is a reflection of His pure and glorious character. The moral law reflects the Lawgiver. Things are good because they reflect Him, and they are evil because they don’t. It is essential to understand that the moral law is a reflection of God’s holy character. He is the standard. There is nothing above God. 1 Samuel 2:3 says “the LORD is a God of knowledge, and by him actions are weighed.” We will stand before Him and give an account on the day of judgment and the standard to be judged by is His perfection, as expressed in the Decalogue/moral law. If you are afraid, you should be because none of us can live such a perfect life, therefore, flee to Christ the Savior!

4. What does Paul mean to say in v. 13? He presents two groups: 1) the hearers of the law which are the Jews, and 2) the doers of the law which are presumably Jews and Gentiles. Is the apostle here teaching that people can be justified by works despite what his conclusion in chapter 3 on chapters 1-2 says? I don’t think so. Perhaps he is here speaking about the hypothetical justification by the law, by this I mean, that theoretically, it is possible to be justified by the law, but only if you do all that God commands without any disobedience (Gal. 3:10). Oh, and did I mention, that men are born in and prone to sin from the womb (Ps. 51:4-5; Gen. 6:5; 8:21; see **ch. 6**)? Therefore, this is an impossible task for anyone, but the Lord Christ. I don’t have a firm opinion on this passage, and I don’t think that its proper understanding is essential to the points I’m trying to make here about the moral law, therefore, I will move on.

5. Now the apostle in v. 14 connects vv. 12-13 together. The Gentiles do not have the written law, but, says the apostle, they actually do what the law requires! How can this be? Here the apostle is referring to moral laws like stealing, murder, adultery, which have not been seen as virtues and from which tons of godless people have abstained. They abstained from these things because they knew the *unwritten* moral law of God. They do that “by nature.” The Greek word here is φύσις (*phusis*) and is defined by Mounce as:

*essence*, Gal. 4:8; *native condition, birth*, Rom. 2:27; 11:21, 24; Gal. 2:15; Eph. 2:3; *native species, kind*, Jas. 3:7; *nature, natural frame*, 2 Pet. 1:4; *nature, native instinct*, Rom. 2:14; 1 Cor. 11:14; *nature, prescribed course of nature*, Rom. 1:26...<sup>5</sup>

They do what the law requires by “nature”, by virtue of what they are, namely creatures in the image of God. They do that by “native instinct.” Albert Barnes observes, “The expression means clearly by the light of conscience and reason, and whatever other helps they may have *without* revelation. It denotes simply, *in that state which is without the revealed will of God*. In that condition they had many helps of tradition, conscience, reason, and the observation of the dealings of Divine Providence, so that to a considerable extent they knew what was right and what was wrong.”<sup>6</sup>

6. When Gentiles follow the law externally, without themselves being conscious of following the true God’s will, they become the law to themselves. This does not mean that whatever they think is good, becomes good, but rather, they, or more exactly, their conscience wherein God’s law is, becomes the measure of good and evil. The same moral law is revealed to the Jew as well as to the Gentile, what differs is the mode of revelation. The Gentile, as we see in v. 14, becomes the law to himself. But the Jew has the written law already in his hands and knows God’s will more clearly and more unmistakably than a Gentile who has no access to Scripture whereby he may know the will of God. The Gentile becomes the law to himself, although he does not possess the written Ten Commandments. The moral law, which was later summarized in the Ten Commandments on Sinai, was already written in the heart of Adam and continued to be part of what it meant to be in the *Imago Dei* in every man. But I repeat again, merely having the moral law upon the heart does not mean the willingness to follow that law. We are able to sear and wound our conscience by continual sin whereby it approves of things which are not lawful. Our whole being is affected by sin, the conscience is not exempt from the corruption of

<sup>5</sup> William D. Mounce, *Mounce’s Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2006), pp. 1309-1310, number 5882. Emphasis original.

<sup>6</sup> Albert Barnes, *Notes on the Bible* (1847–1885), on Rom. 2:14. Retrieved from TheWord Bible Software.

sin.

7. By Gentiles doing what the law requires they demonstrate that although they do not have the law in written form upon tablets of stone, they do have the law written upon their hearts. Not only that, but their conscience evaluates their deeds. There is a conflict within their mind about their actions, some things are commended while others are condemned. Each person has had that feeling when doing something wrong that he remains uneasy with himself. He is troubled within himself, especially the Christian when sinning against God. While at other times we feel good when doing something good. Our conscience is the place where the law is written. We know God's law through our conscience. We have the moral law within us by our creation and by nature of being creatures in God's image. But we must acknowledge that this law, through the Fall, has been marred and continually been disobeyed. People can certainly follow the law outwardly as the things expressed in the Decalogue are "common sense" and "self-evident," but true obedience to the law can happen only by a regenerate person because the law, first of all, begins with the love and adoration of the true God, from whence all the other commandments about the love of the neighbor flow. John Calvin observed on v. 15:

*Who show the work of the law written, etc.;* that is, they prove that there is imprinted on their hearts a discrimination and judgment by which they distinguish between what is just and unjust, between what is honest and dishonest. He means not that it was so engraven on their will, that they sought and diligently pursued it, but that they were so mastered by the power of truth, that they could not disapprove of it. For why did they institute religious rites, except that they were convinced that God ought to be worshipped? Why were they ashamed of adultery and theft, except that they deemed them evils? ...

Nor can we conclude from this passage, that there is in men a *full* knowledge of the law, but that there are only some seeds of what is right implanted in their nature, evidenced by such acts as these — All the Gentiles alike instituted religious rites, they made laws to punish adultery, and theft, and murder, they commended good faith in bargains and contracts. They have thus indeed proved, that God ought to be worshipped, that adultery, and theft, and murder are evils, that honesty is commendable. It is not to our purpose to inquire what sort of God they imagined him to be, or how many gods they devised; it is enough to know, that they thought that there is a God, and that honor and worship are due to him. It matters not whether they permitted the coveting of another man's wife, or of his possessions, or of any thing which was his, — whether they connived at wrath and hatred; inasmuch as it was not right for them to covet what they knew to be evil when done.<sup>7</sup>

John Gill adds that "Though the Gentiles had not the law in form, written on tables, or in a book, yet they had "the work", the matter, the sum and substance of it in their minds; as appears by the practices of many of them, in their external conversation."<sup>8</sup>

8. Verse 16 concludes by stating that people will be judged and that would be through the consciences, i.e., the moral law on their conscience will bear witness *against* them, and they will be judged according to the gospel. There is a judgment coming upon everyone and there is a moral standard by which everyone will be judged. Either we will be judged in ourselves or a Substitute's perfect righteousness will be imputed to us.

9. In conclusion, this passage teaches that everyone knows the law of God that is on their heart and in their conscience. Those who have the written revelation of God know it more clearly and have a greater knowledge of it, while those who do not possess the written revelation of God, are the law unto themselves. They function as the revelation of the law of God. The same law is there in written revelation (i.e., the Ten Commandments) and in the heart, but the manner and clarity of revelation are different. However wounded and seared our conscience may be, it is enough to testify against us. This is not to mean that natural revelation is vague or unclear. But it is simply that man is disposed to misinterpret it because of the Fall more so than special revelation. The conscience may be wounded and through continual sin taught to approve evil, yet the written revelation of God can never be changed to say that evil is good and good is evil. The written revelation has more clarity, and on the basis of that, those who have lived under that written revelation have more light than those who have not known the Scriptures. The former is judged harsher than the latter because of the light of knowledge which they had. Every child of Adam has access to the law of God, first of all, within their hearts and secondly in the

<sup>7</sup> John Calvin, *Commentaries* (1540-1563), on Rom. 2:15. Retrieved from TheWord Bible Software.

<sup>8</sup> John Gill, *Exposition on the Entire Bible* (1746-1763), on Rom. 2:15. Retrieved from TheWord Bible Software.

Holy Scriptures.

Did people sin before the law?

The question sounds ridiculous, but we must ask it here. What is sin? 1 John 3:4 says that sin is “lawlessness” or as the KJV has it, “sin is the transgression of the law.” Transgression of what law? Laws made by man or the law of God? The obvious answer is that sin is the transgression of the moral law of God. This point supports the assertion in this paragraph that all people have the law on their hearts in that there is a standard against which people sin. The mere existence of sin and of sinning proves that people had the moral law to sin against. The apostle Paul, in the previous passage above, Romans 2:12, does *not* claim that people did not sin when they were not under the written law. No, they certainly did sin, and they perished. Sin cannot exist without the moral law of God. Where there is no law of God, there cannot be sin, for sin is the transgression of that law. What does the apostle then mean when he says sin is not counted where there is no law in Romans 5:12-14?

Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned—13 for sin indeed was in the world before the law was given, but sin is not counted where there is no law. 14 Yet death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those whose sinning was not like the transgression of Adam, who was a type of the one who was to come.

1. The first observation is the apostle’s claim that death has come through the consequence of sin, which he repeats in Romans 6:23. There was no death when there was no sin. But all the posterity of Adam sinned in him. We did not personally sin with him, but he, being our representative, his disobedience is imputed to all of us. We sinned when our representative sinned.

2. What is the “law that was given” in v. 13? I believe the obvious answer is that this is speaking about the written Mosaic law, for the apostle had already established (in 2:12-14)<sup>9</sup> that all people have access to the law of God, whether written on tablets of stone or written on the heart. Therefore, Romans 5:13 cannot refer to the moral law absolutely, but rather, the written and therefore, clearer light of the law in stone. If the apostle says that sin was in the world, then this necessarily means the existence of the moral law of which sin is a transgression. If the law did not exist at all, either on stone or on the heart, then there would be no sin, yet the apostle affirms the opposite. Therefore, it seems to me that there are two senses in which this passage may be taken. **a)** The first sense is to see the law being spoken of here as the clearer light of the written law, which cannot be wounded and seared like our consciences. When we sin without knowing the written moral law continually, we even distort our conscience to approve of that which is unlawful. Even our conscience is tainted by sin and is not exempt from corruption. Therefore, there is a greater knowledge of sins being “counted” or “charged” when there is a written moral law. But the second sense is much greater and to the point of the passage. **b)** The passage speaks of something in the hypothetical: *if* there was no moral law, then people would not be judged according to their sins. But based on what he established in chapter 2, the apostle teaches that all have access to the moral law of God, therefore this refers to a hypothetical and not the actual situation. Furthermore, the apostle, in the same passage at hand, acknowledges that all in Adam die. But why do they die? They die because we all sinned in Adam and “the wages of sin is death” (6:23). Death came from sin. But what is sin? As 1 John 3:4 says, sin is lawlessness or “the transgression of the law” (KJV). To sin is to disobey the law and to break it. But if sin did exist before the giving of the Mosaic law to Israel, then this necessarily implies the existence of the moral law, which was transgressed before Moses. If the effects of sin were present before Moses, how can sin then *not* be imputed? It certainly was imputed, and it was severely punished by God, just think of the Flood, and Sodom and Gomorrah.

3. “Sin is not counted where there is no law” is a truism just like “sin is the transgression of the law.” The apostle does not, in fact, say that there was absolutely no law before Moses, but rather he clearly has in mind the whole law of Moses (moral, ceremonial, and civil), which was not given before Moses. He goes on in v. 14 to yet again confirm the effects of sin upon the world before Moses and thereby again establish the moral law.

4. To conclude, we have in this passage and from this idea, namely—that the existence of sin presupposes the existence of the moral law of which sin is the transgression—that the moral law did pre-

<sup>9</sup> See pp. 4-7 above.

exist Moses and is known by all men, whether in written form or from their conscience. God did, in fact, punish sin before Moses, therefore this proves that even without the written revelation of God, people did sin and violate God’s law and brought God’s judgment upon themselves. Therefore, there is certainly “a law of universal obedience written in [our] heart” which God demands that we obey and every falling short to obey that law is a transgression and sin.

## The Threefold Division of the Law

This is an awkward place to argue for it, but I must, since the Confession goes on in the following three paragraphs to talk about the moral, ceremonial, and judicial law. Basically, the threefold division of the law stresses the superiority of the moral law contained in the Ten Commandments above the ceremonial and judicial/civil, which were abrogated and fulfilled by the life, death, and resurrection of the Lord of Glory. I have benefited from:

- Philip S. Ross, *From the Finger of God: The Biblical and Theological Basis for the Threefold Division of the Law*
- David Chanski, *The Law of God II – Threefold Division*<sup>10</sup>
- *Tripartite Division of the Law of God: A Patristic and Reformed Orthodox View*<sup>11</sup>
- Jonathan F. Bayes, *The Threefold Division of the Law*<sup>12</sup>

It has been a classic Christian doctrine to divide the law of Moses or the law of the Pentateuch into three divisions, which are 1) the moral laws, 2) the ceremonial laws, and 3) the judicial or civil laws. This does not mean that we have neat categories, and we know to which category every commandment belongs because some laws are difficult to discern or are a combination. But we do believe that the Bible gives us such a division to understand the abiding validity of the moral law and the abrogation of the ceremonial and judicial laws. The question that we need to answer is: Does the Bible make a distinction between the Decalogue (Ten Commandments) and the other laws? If the answer is positive, then a division of the law is established. If not, then the threefold division would be proven false. What is to follow is not a detailed case for the threefold division, but this is what convinces *me* of the validity of the division.<sup>13</sup>

That the threefold division is not neat and exact is acknowledged by the Confession. In §3, it is said that “God was pleased to give to the people of Israel ceremonial laws, containing several typical ordinances, **partly** of worship... **partly** holding forth divers instructions of moral duties”. This means that just because there are ceremonial laws does not mean that they do not have moral aspects. In fact, the ceremonial laws were moral as long as they were binding on the people of Israel and had not yet been fulfilled in the Lord Jesus Christ. They were positive laws for only a limited time, unlike the Decalogue which is moral law for all time and rooted in the nature of God. Some laws were specific applications of the Decalogue, and thus had a moral character.

### The division of the law in the Old Testament

We will start this survey by looking to what the OT says about this threefold division.

#### *The division in the Pentateuch*

From the beginning, the Decalogue is distinguished from the other laws that God gave. Most of the Pentateuch contains laws given by God to Moses. Although the Pentateuch is often called the law of *Moses*, this does not refer to the origination of the laws, but rather to the way in which they were

<sup>10</sup> Retrieved from <http://heraldofgrace.org/biblicalexpositions/the-law-of-gods-session-2-threefold-division/>.

<sup>11</sup> Retrieved from <https://mintdill.wordpress.com/2016/03/08/tripartite-division-of-the-law-of-god-a-patristic-and-reformed-orthodox-view/>.

<sup>12</sup> Retrieved from <http://www.christian.org.uk/wp-content/downloads/the-threefold-division-of-the-law.pdf>.

<sup>13</sup> For those wanting a detailed, exhaustive and interactive treatment of this subject, I recommend Philip S. Ross’ *From the Finger of God*. The book is technical containing a lot of Hebrew and Greek, and interacting with a lot of pro and con literature. It is not a book for the average reader, but it is a very detailed book.

communicated to Israel. The Decalogue alone was spoken and delivered directly by God; all the other laws were mediated through Moses. The Ten Commandments were directly **spoken by God** to the people (Ex. 20:1; Deut. 4:33; 5:4-5, 22; 9:10). This already gives us the idea that there is some significance to the Decalogue in contrast to the other laws, for why would God *only* speak these Ten Commandments and not the other ones directly to Israel? This already suggests their primacy over the other laws. In fact, Moses tells us the purpose of why God directly came and spoke the words to Israel, namely, “that the fear of him may be before you, that you may not sin” (Ex. 20:20). Obviously, this does not mean that they would not sin merely because of hearing the law, they surely did. But it does increase their liability as they heard these words directly from the mouth of God and still rebelled against Him.

That only the Decalogue was **written by the finger of God on tablets of stone** shows their everlasting character (Ex. 24:12; 31:18; 32:15-16; Deut. 4:13; 5:22; 9:10). To be written in stone means that they are meant to survive and remain unchanged, unlike all the other laws which were communicated by God to Moses and written by the hand of Moses. This shows the non-temporary character of the Decalogue, unlike the ceremonial and judicial laws. This is even the case when we use the expression in our daily lives. Furthermore, the Decalogue was to be stored in the Ark of the Covenant showing its centrality to the Old Covenant, unlike all the other laws (Ex. 25:16; 40:20; Deut. 10:1-5; Heb. 9:4). It also formed the core of the Mosaic Covenant (Ex. 34:28; Deut. 4:13).

The Decalogue has a **timeless character** to it, unlike the other laws which were only for a particular time shadowing the sacrifice of Christ and thereby showing that they were temporary. The laws of the Decalogue are “obvious” and self-evident to man in general. If God exists, we are to worship Him and to obey Him. If we want to live a good life, we must love our neighbor as ourselves. These laws are not things like bringing animal sacrifices or not eating pork, which do not have the *same* moral character as the laws of the Decalogue. The ceremonial laws had moral aspects as long as they were binding on the Old Covenant people of God and their shadowing-function was not fulfilled in Christ. After their fulfillment in Christ, they were abrogated by fulfillment.

In Deuteronomy 5:22, we read of the time when God came upon the mountain and delivered the Ten Commandments in speaking to the people and then it is said that “he added no more.” It is significant that when God spoke these commandments, it is explicitly said that He did not add anything to them because they were all He had to say directly to the people concerning the moral law. Calvin observes that

When Moses states that God “added no more,” he signifies that a perfect rule of life is contained in the ten commandments, and that, when their instruction is fully received, the whole body of wisdom is attained to, so that the people need seek to know no more; when God, then, made an end of speaking, he Himself laid down the bounds of legitimate inquiry.<sup>14</sup>

God said all that He had to say about the moral law in the Ten Commandments and He declared and summarized His mind about the moral law. That was His ultimate and final word about the moral law. That Moses himself distinguished between the moral, ceremonial, and judicial laws may be seen in Deuteronomy 4:

Deut. 4:12-14 Then the LORD spoke to you out of the midst of the fire. You **heard the sound of words**, but saw no form; there was only a voice. 13 And he declared to you **his covenant**, which he **commanded you to perform**, that is, the **Ten Commandments**, and **he wrote them on two tablets of stone**. 14 And the LORD commanded me at that time to teach you statutes and rules, that you might do them in the land that you are going over to possess.

Moses here recounts to the people the time when God came upon the mountain and gave the Decalogue to the people and later the rest of the law. We must notice here the distinguishing character that is given to the Ten Commandments. First of all, it is said that the Lord with His voice spoke these Ten Words to the people of Israel. They heard His voice speaking the Decalogue to them and were terrified. Second, the Decalogue is said to be His “covenant”, they were the substance of the Old Covenant. They were central to it and this is also seen in the fact they were stored in the Ark of the Covenant. Third, and this is an extension of the first point, the Lord Himself through His voice commanded the people

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<sup>14</sup> Calvin, on Deut. 5:22.

to perform the Ten Commandments. Fourth, the Decalogue was written by the finger of God on two tables of stone. This shows the care of God to this law and its importance to Him that He Himself would write it, rather than have Moses do it. And this shows the unchanging character of the Decalogue in that it was written in stone. But now we notice a shift in v. 14 in that all the other laws, the ceremonial and judicial laws which follow after the giving of the Ten Commandments, the sacrifices, the death penalties, the tabernacle and so on, were communicated through Moses. It was Moses who taught the people to do these statutes and rules and not God, unlike what He did for the Decalogue. Another interesting point is that Moses says that these statutes and rules, or judgments (KJV) or ordinances (NET) are said to be kept “in the land that you are going over to possess.” They have a limited character and a limited place where they are to be observed, namely, in the Promised Land. This does not mean that none of the ceremonial or judicial laws were observed in the wilderness, but rather that they should characterize life in the Promised Land. But no such thing is said about the Ten Commandments, showing that they are timeless and not bound to place. Dr. Philip Ross says on this limitation of “in the land” (Deut. 4:5, 14; 15:31; 6:1; 12:1) that

The qualification ‘in the land’ therefore restricts the binding force of the ‘statutes and ordinances’ to the Promised Land. In so doing, it distinguishes them from the Decalogue, which was always binding, and from the ‘pattern’ laws, which were binding even in the wilderness. The Decalogue as the ‘self-understood’ ‘constitution of the universe’ was the unchanging basis on which God judges all men and nations. The ‘pattern’ laws were exclusively cultic and determined religious practice immediately and in any location. They would only ever be altered at God’s own command (1 Chron. 28:12).<sup>15</sup>

“Pattern law” refers to laws that were modeled after something not of this creation. For example, the tabernacle was modeled after heaven itself. In Hebrews, we read that Moses was told, “See that you make everything according to the pattern that was shown you on the mountain” (8:5; Ex. 25:9, 40; Num. 8:4; Acts. 7:44). The pattern laws were a shadow (Heb. 10:1; Col. 2:16-17) of greater realities that were to come. Dr. Ross says, “The tabernacle was to be a ‘pattern’ or ‘model’ (תבנית) of a greater reality just as an idol was an image (תבנית) of a real creature (Deut. 4:16-18) or a god.”<sup>16</sup>

Thomas Aquinas, who is seen as the one who systemized the threefold division, used some biblical texts to argue his case among other things. He was not the one who invented the threefold division for Dr. Ross shows that even Judaism and early Christianity believed in some form of division of the law, whether it was twofold, threefold or fourfold, they did not think of the law as an indivisible, moral whole. My purpose is not to argue for the division historically, but biblically. Aquinas saw a threefold division in Deuteronomy 4:13-14 and 6:1. The following heavily relies upon Dr. Ross’ discussion since I have no knowledge of Hebrew, but I still find this point an important part of the argument for the classic threefold division.

Deut. 4:13-14 And he declared to you his covenant, which he commanded you to perform, that is, **the Ten Commandments**, and he wrote them on two tablets of stone. 14 And the LORD commanded me at that time to teach you **statutes and rules**, that you might do them in the land that you are going over to possess.

Deut. 6:1 Now this is the commandment—**the statutes and the rules**—that the LORD your God commanded me to teach you, that you may do them in the land to which you are going over, to possess it...

He comments:

“The three Hebrew words used in Deuteronomy 6:1, the text in which Aquinas found moral, civil, and ceremonial precepts, are צוה [mitsvah], חק [choq], and משפט [mishpat]. They are among the most frequently used words for law and occur together four times in Deuteronomy (5:31; 6:1; 7:11; 26:17).<sup>17</sup>

He admits that while “no particular expression exclusively describes individual laws”, yet it has

<sup>15</sup> Philip S. Ross, *From the Finger of God: The Biblical and Theological Basis for the Threefold Division of the Law* (Fearn, Ross-shire, Scotland: Christian Focus, 2010), pp. 114-115.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 11.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 108.

been “shown that the individual words do refer to specific categories in certain contexts.”<sup>18</sup> He cites as examples Deuteronomy 4:10, 13, 36; 5:5, 22; 9:10; 10:2 as examples where the word דְּבָרִים [*dabarim*], which is translated with “words” does refer specifically to the commandments of the Decalogue. Yet he is careful to add that “This does not prove that דְּבָרִים [*dabarim*] always means the Decalogue, yet it shows that it is a distinct element of the law which Deuteronomy sometimes recognizes by the use of דְּבָרִים [*dabarim*].”<sup>19</sup>

Furthermore, Ross writes, “מִצְוָה [*mitsvah*] was used in certain cases to refer to the Ten Words (Deut. 5:10, 29; 6:17; 7:9; 8:2; 13:5) and Aquinas may have been right to understand Deuteronomy 6:1 in that way. Deuteronomy 6:1-3 links the Horeb revelation and the teaching that begins at 6:4 with the *Shema*.” And Dr. Ross concludes this section with:

This investigation shows that the individual Hebrew words for law do not divide the law into cast-iron categories. Even so, the Deuteronomy’s use of the words sometimes makes a distinction between the Decalogue and the rest of the Mosaic code. That distinction does not force the practical-theological conclusion that the Decalogue ‘doth for ever bind all’. It does, however, further challenge the view that the Old Testament law was written, and always viewed, as an indivisible whole.<sup>20</sup>

Therefore, we, along with Dr. Ross, conclude with “In giving these designations it was not Justin, Aquinas or the Westminster Assembly that first distinguished those laws as the Ten Commandments. Moses is entirely to blame.”<sup>21</sup>

### *Mercy and not sacrifice*

In many places, we read of the preference of obedience to God and mercy to fellow man, rather than rituals and sacrifices (e.g., Hos. 6:6; Ps. 50:7-9; 51:17; Jer. 7:21-23; Mic. 6:8; 1 Sam. 15:22-23; Isa. 1:11-17). To me, this clearly points to a division of the law and rejection of the idea that the law is an indivisible whole and God regarded the law equal and the same in all points. If this observation is right, then we have proven that the OT believers were *conscious* of the division. Let’s take the example of David. He sinned against God and against Bathsheba when he committed adultery with her. In his prayer of repentance in Psalm 51, he declares:

Ps. 51:15-17 O Lord, open my lips, and my mouth will declare your praise. 16 For **you will not delight in sacrifice**, or I would give it; you will not be pleased with a burnt offering. 17 **The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart**, O God, **you will not despise**.

God would not delight in sacrifice because that is not a proof of true and godly repentance, rather what God delights in is a broken spirit who knows that he is broken God’s law and has defied God. One must have a broken and a repentant heart, that is what God delights in and not sacrifice. In this we see clearly, the distinction and division between the moral and ceremonial, and David places the moral law *above* the ceremonial. But what is interesting here is the fact that he thereby does *not* nullify the ceremonial law for he was still under its administration. But what he clearly does is distinguish between the moral and ceremonial law and puts the moral law above the ceremonial laws of sacrifice. In v. 19, David declares:

then will you **delight in right sacrifices**, in burnt offerings and whole burnt offerings; then bulls will be offered on your altar.

When the sacrifices are offered from a repentant heart, then the Lord will take delight in them because He has ordained them under the Old Covenant as part of the ceremonial law. God *did* desire their proper and faithful observance, as that is what He has commanded, but His servants acknowledge that these are subordinate to the moral law.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., pp. 109-110.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., p. 108.

Another example is Saul. God commanded him to wipe out the Amalekites in 1 Samuel 15, yet Saul did not obey the voice of the Lord leaving cattle and Agag the king alive. When Samuel came to know of this, his reaction was telling:

1 Sam. 15:22-23 And Samuel said, “**Has the LORD as great delight** in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, **to obey is better than sacrifice**, and to listen than the fat of rams. 23 For rebellion is as the sin of divination, and presumption is as iniquity and idolatry. Because **you have rejected the word of the LORD**, he has also rejected you from being king.”

Saul uses the excuse that he had spared the cattle for sacrifice to the Lord, but Samuel knew better, Saul was motivated and moved by the people (v. 24). Notice that this passage does not say that the Lord has completely no delight, but rather “as great delight”, it compares the delight of the Lord in sacrifices and in obedience. The Lord had given Saul a moral command to wipe out the Amalekites and all that belongs to them, but he despised the word of the Lord and did not fulfill it, using the pretense that he would have used the animals for sacrifice. Samuel rebukes Saul for his rebellion declaring that God has greater delight in obedience rather than sacrifice. In fact, “to obey is better than sacrifice”, herein we see clearly the division of the law, it may not be a “threefold” division in this passage, but there is certainly a division between the moral and the ceremonial law wherein the moral law has primacy. To me, this alone is a clear testimony to the division of the Mosaic law even when it was administered, and not only that but that believers themselves were conscious of this division.

### The division of the law in the New Testament

Now we will take a look at this threefold division as it is detected in the NT Scriptures beginning with the Lord Jesus.

#### *The Lord Jesus*

##### *The summary of the law*

Did the Savior in His lifetime treat the Decalogue as the sum of the moral law and thus above the ceremonial and judicial laws? I believe that the answer is yes, and I am indebted to Dr. Ross’ discussion on pp. 154-160 on this question. It is generally accepted that the Savior summarized the law in two commandments: 1) the love of God, and 2) the love of neighbor. We read

Matt. 22:36-40 “Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?” 37 And he said to him, “**You shall love the Lord** your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. 38 This is the great and first commandment. 39 And a second is like it: **You shall love your neighbor as yourself**. 40 On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets.”

The first commandment comes from the *Shema*, which religious Jews to this day recite every day (Deut. 6:4-5). There, we are told that there is but one God, and that we should love this one God with everything that we have. This summarizes the first four commandments which are about 1) the exclusivity of that one God, 2) the right worship of that one God, 3) the honoring of that one God, and 4) the public worship of that God. The first four commandments are expressions of what it means to love God with everything that we have and are.

The second commandment, given by the Savior, is that of loving our neighbor. The commandment is ancient and given by God to Israel all the way back in Leviticus:

Lev. 19:18 You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against the sons of your own people, but **you shall love your neighbor as yourself**: I am the LORD.

And there is a similar commandment in v. 34 of the same chapter:

You shall treat the stranger who sojourns with you as the native among you, and **you shall love him as yourself**, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt: I am the LORD your God.



It is interesting to see the connection that the LORD makes in v. 34 between what He did for the Israelites, and in turn what the Israelites should do to other people. To “love your neighbor as yourself” summarizes the second table—commandments 5 through 10. 5) We are to obey our parents. 6) We are not to harm our neighbor. 7) We are not to commit adultery against our neighbor. 8) We are not to steal from our neighbor. 9) We are not to bear false witness against our neighbor. 10) We are not to covet anything that is our neighbor’s. The one who does these things loves their neighbor.

### *The commandments*

The Lord, in Mark 10:19, lists the commandments of God, referring to the second table of the Decalogue:

You know the commandments: ‘Do not murder [6], Do not commit adultery [7], Do not steal [8], Do not bear false witness [9], Do not defraud [10], Honor your father and mother [5].’”

“To defraud” here refers to the tenth commandment about coveting. Ross writes, “it could be as Wessel suggests, ‘a substitute for the commandment against coveting, fraud being a manifestation of coveting.’”<sup>22</sup> Here we learn that the commandments of God, referred to by the Lord Jesus, *are* the second table of the Decalogue. He did not refer to any laws about sacrifices or feasts, but rather went to the heart of God’s law, namely, the Decalogue. This is significant, as in it we see the essence of God’s moral law being upheld by the Lord Jesus. The second table of the Decalogue is that which He lists as “the commandments”.

### *Weightier matters*

Matthew 23 is directed at the hypocrisy and evil of the religious establishment of Jerusalem and in it we find this woe:

Matt. 23:23-24 Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe mint and dill and cumin, and have **neglected the weightier matters of the law**: justice and mercy and faithfulness. These you ought to have done, without neglecting the others. 24 You blind guides, straining out a gnat and swallowing a camel!

The Lord directs His woe against the scribes and Pharisees for their utter hypocrisy in taking care of the tiniest of matters, yet forgetting what the law is actually all about. Much like His charge against them who see the speck in another’s eye, but not the log in their own eye (7:3-5). The Pharisees are all worked up about their agricultural tithes, making sure that they fulfill these commands to the full extent, but they have lost the heart of the law. The Lord declares that they neglected the “weightier” matters of the law. This alone is a blow to the idea that the law is an indivisible whole and that God required obedience in all matters equally. Here the Lord declares that there are “weightier matters.” Notice that He does not say that they should have neglected their tithes, but rather “These you ought to have done, *without neglecting the others.*” What are then “weightier matters of the law”? We need not search because the Lord defines what He means by the weightier matters of the law, namely, justice, mercy, and faithfulness. These are not ceremonial laws, but rather moral laws. To uphold the cause of the widow and the orphans is the cry of the prophets. Showing kindness and love to one another and remaining faithful to God and to one’s neighbor. That is more important, that is “weightier”, rather than the ceremonial laws or the laws about tithing. We have a division here between things that are moral and things that are not moral in the same sense.

### *The bread of presence and David*

Another example is the case where David ate the Bread of Presence. As an answer to the accusation of the Pharisees against the disciples’ plucking heads of grain, the Lord Jesus raises the example of David. He says:

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid., p. 159.

Matt. 12:3-4 ...Have you not read what David did when he was hungry, and those who were with him: 4 how he entered the house of God and **ate the bread of the Presence**, which it was **not lawful for him to eat** nor for those who were with him, but only for the priests?

Jesus raises this example without the slightest idea that David was in the wrong, or that he committed a sin in eating what was forbidden in the law of Moses for any other than the sons of Aaron (Ex. 29:32-33; Lev. 8:31). This is an example where the breaking of a particular law, in this case, ceremonial and one which was pointing to Christ as the Bread from heaven (John 6:41) Who is always at the presence of God on our behalf, was not sinful. But what if, for example, to get that bread David would first have to kill the priests? Would the Lord Jesus exonerate him because he was hungry? Such a suggestion is absurd and would never have come to the Lord's mind. What we see here is a distinction between the moral and the ceremonial law. To break the ceremonial law was not the same as breaking the moral law. If David had broken the moral law, he would not have been exonerated like he was for breaking the ceremonial law.

### *Paul the Apostle*

I believe that I have so far argued a case (which for me is convincing) of a threefold division of the law. I have tried to show that the law was certainly not understood as an indivisible, moral whole by the biblical authors. My last survey will be with the apostle Paul. We will look at a few things from the apostle which show us that he did not understand the law as an indivisible whole, but rather distinguished certain things. I will try to be brief.

### *The law of commandments expressed in ordinances*

Eph. 2:14-16 For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has **broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility** 15 by **abolishing the law of commandments expressed in ordinances**, that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace, 16 and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility.

Paul claims that Christ is the peace between Jew and Gentile believers, Who through His sacrifice has "broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility". But how? "by abolishing the law of commandments expressed in ordinances" (vv. 14-16). Does the abolition of this "law of commandments" refer to the abolishment of the whole Mosaic law—moral, civil, and ceremonial? I don't believe that's the case, rather the apostle specifies what law he is referring to, namely, the one "expressed in ordinances". But what is this? We can know what he is referring to directly by looking at how the apostle starts his discussion from v. 11. He refers to such an ordinance and Israelite law, namely, circumcision of the male on the eighth day. This is part of the "dividing wall" in v. 14. Circumcision divided those God-fearers and the Jews. It divided pagans and Jews, and the Jews prided themselves in circumcision. You can already hear the Jewish pride and distinctiveness in the way that the apostle writes vv. 11-12. Could it be said that the moral law separated Jew and Gentile? I don't believe that's the case. The moral law or natural law of the Decalogue is common to all people in accordance with the apostle's argument in Romans 1-2.<sup>23</sup> The moral law could not have separated Jew and Gentile. Could it have been the civil law? I don't think that's the case either, for the Mosaic civil law was not radically different than laws existing already at that time. Dr. Ross notes, "The Code of Hammurabi provides examples: Hands cut off for striking one's father, a nurse's breast cut off over contractual disagreements, and different standards for rich and poor."<sup>24</sup> What definitely separated the Jews from the Gentiles were laws given specifically to separate them like circumcision (Gen. 17:14) or food laws (Lev. 20:24-26), which we know from the rest of the NT (e.g., Acts 10) were problematic for the infant church. Therefore, we see in this passage that the apostle declares the abolishing and destruction of such ceremonial laws while not speaking a word about the abolishing of the moral law, but rather, elsewhere arguing that it is common for all men (Rom. 1:18-32; 2:12-15). This he could not have done if he had not seen a certain division within the law.<sup>25</sup>

<sup>23</sup> See pp. 4-7 above.

<sup>24</sup> Ross, *From the Finger of God*, p. 282n65.

<sup>25</sup> See also pp. 81-82 below for more.

*The commandments summed up*

Rom. 13:8-10 Owe no one anything, except to love each other, for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law. 9 For the commandments, “You shall not commit adultery, You shall not murder, You shall not steal, You shall not covet,” and any other commandment, are summed up in this word: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” 10 Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.

In this passage, the apostle cites four laws from the second table of the Decalogue and then adds “any other commandment” and finally concludes that this is fulfilled in loving one’s neighbor as one’s self. What other commandments could the apostle have in mind other than moral commands like the fifth commandment about honoring our parents, or the ninth commandment not to lie or bear false witness. It is the commandments of the Decalogue and those derived from them that fulfill the “law”. How is love shown to a neighbor by being circumcised, not eating certain foods or offering sacrifices? Rather, if we love our neighbor, we will not do anything morally wrong to them, but will love them and thereby fulfill the moral law.

## Conclusion

Putting all the biblical evidence together, especially from the OT itself, we see a certain and a three-fold division arise in the Mosaic law. The law is divided between the moral law, which is unchanging and always binding; the ceremonial law which was typical, shadowy and temporary; and the civil law which was the constitution of Israel and also had a temporary character. But these things will be discussed later in the appropriate paragraphs (ceremonial law in §3, civil law in §4, moral law in §5).

## §2 The Ten Commandments

2 | The **same law** that was first written in the **heart of man continued to be a perfect rule of righteousness** after the Fall, **1** and **was delivered by God upon Mount Sinai, in ten commandments, 2** and written in two tables, the four first containing our duty towards God, and the other six, our duty to man. **3**

1. The commandments:
  - i. Gen. 35:1-4; Ex. 18:11; Job 31:28; 42:1-2; Josh. 24:2
  - ii. Gen. 35:1-4; Lev. 18:21, 27
  - iii. Ex. 5:2; Lev. 18:21, 27; Job 2:9
  - iv. Gen. 2:2-3; Ex. 16; Gen. 7:4; 8:10, 12; Mark 2:27
  - v. Gen. 3:17; 9:20-27; 37:10
  - vi. Gen. 4:3-15; John 8:44; Ex. 1:15-17; Job 24:14
  - vii. Gen. 12:17; 39:7-9; Lev. 18:20, 27; Job 24:15; 31:1
  - viii. Gen. 3:11; 30:33; 31:30-32; 40:15; 44:8-9; Job 24:14
  - ix. Gen. 3:4, 13-14; 12:11-13; 27:12; 29:25; Job 24:25; 27:4; 36:4; John 8:44
  - x. Gen. 3:6; 6:2, 5; 13:10-11; Ex. 15:9-10; Job 31:1, 9-11
2. Rom. 2:12a, 14-15
3. Ex. 32:15-16; 34:4, 28; Deut. 10:4

**The same law**, which God gave Adam in his heart (without the “*particular precept*”) was likewise **first written in the heart of man** (Rom. 2:14-15). This is spoken of man generally and not Adam particularly, although he is the covenantal head of humanity. This **same law** remained and **continued to be a perfect rule of righteousness**, meaning, it was the measure of what is good and what God required of us. Notice that the law is the same in substance before and **after the fall**. God did not give a new law now that man was fallen because God’s standards did not change. After that, this **same law...was delivered by God upon Mount Sinai, in ten commandments** (Ex. 20). The same law which was written in the heart of man and is in the heart of every man, God was pleased to give verbally and write in stone. The Ten Commandments are the summary of **our duty towards God and to man** (Matt. 22:37-40). The first four commandments concern our **duty towards God** and the other six speak of