

PROTESTANT RHETORIC AGAINST OBSERVING THE SABBATH EXAMINED

Eric Snow

Often Sabbath observance is attacked by arguments that sound very spiritual, but lack real substance. Evangelical Protestants will make general arguments against keeping the Sabbath that would also attack observing other laws that they do believe are in force. They give a general principle against keeping the Sabbath (or some other Old Testament law of God) that is so broadly drawn that it proves way too much, so it has to be rejected. Often Evangelical Protestant rhetoric, when carefully examined in the light of Scripture and logic, simply evaporates. It's almost as if after merely invoking the name "Jesus Christ," all careful thinking about soteriology (salvation theology) and the law ceases. Sloppy thinking about the interrelationship of such terms as "grace," "law," "justification," "salvation," "faith," "repentance," "sin," "righteousness," "works," "baptism," and "sanctification" holds millions unknowingly in its thrall. Often anti-law (antinomian) evangelicals hide their careless reasoning by spouting vague, vacuous rhetoric or generalizations about Jesus' role as our Savior, ignoring that the conclusions they're drawing don't follow from the premises they're using. In order to put their Sabbatarian opponents on the defensive, they will usually claim spiritual superiority by saying something about Jesus' role as Savior in order to "prove" that Sabbatarians are obeying an abolished law. But merely citing Jesus' role as Savior of humanity from its sins doesn't prove the conclusions they wish, since their premise (something said about Jesus) lacks the Scriptural support for the conclusion (that the Sabbath was abolished) they want. Simply by asking whether these general arguments against the Sabbath would abolish other laws that the arguer does believe are in force is often enough to annihilate them. So now, let's examine briefly some of the general kinds of arguments that can be made against the observance of the seventh-day Sabbath, tithing, the Holy Days of Leviticus 23, and avoiding unclean meat that ultimately prove too much, so they have to be rejected.

DOES JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH ABOLISH THE SABBATH?

"Justification by grace through faith alone abolishes Sabbath observance." True, Paul told the Galatians that "a man is not justified by the works of the Law but through faith in Christ Jesus, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we may be justified by faith in Christ, and not by the works of the law; since by the works of the Law shall no flesh be justified" (Gal. 2:16). But does being justified by faith mean a Christian is free to sin as much as he or she pleases? Paul didn't think so: "What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace might increase? May it never be! How shall we who died to sin still live in it?" (Rom. 6:1-2). How does this argument prove that Christians need not observe the Sabbath, but still avoid committing adultery, theft, and murder? But just because obeying a law doesn't justify us doesn't mean we don't still have to obey it. Although the law can't save us, it still has a valuable role to play: It tells us what to do and not do. It guides our Christian conduct. It defines "love" so that we aren't making up our own rules to guide our conduct towards God and our fellow man. After all, couldn't a 60's hippie define "love" to include fornication and/or adultery? God doesn't

leave it up to our own discretion to figure out what “love” is. James explained that the law was a spiritual mirror that tells us how to improve our behavior: “But the one who looks intently at the perfect law, the law of liberty, and abides by it, not having become a forgetful hearer but an effectual doer, this man shall be blessed in what he does” (James 1:25). The law defines sin, thus telling us what it off-limits in our Christian walk. As Paul knew, “I would not have come to know sin except through the Law; for I would not have known about coveting if the Law had not said, ‘You shall not covet’” (Rom. 7:7). If there was no law, there would be no sin, for “sin is not imputed when there is no law” (Rom. 5:12), “through the Law comes the knowledge of sin” (Rom. 3:20), and “where there is no law, neither is there violation” (Rom. 4:15). Hence, if Jesus’ death cancelled the whole law, not just the penalty of the law assessed for violating it when one accepts His sacrifice by faith, no one would have sinned since His crucifixion in A.D. 31. Complaining that the law has no value because it doesn’t save us is like arguing that because a curling iron can’t cook dinner, it’s totally useless. The law has a proper function, that of guiding conduct and assessing sin, but it can’t give humans eternal life. It’s necessary to carefully analyze soteriological terms, such as “grace,” “law,” “faith,” “repentance,” “justification,” and “sanctification,” and put them into their correct logical relationship with each other. True, obeying the Sabbath doesn’t earn salvation. Neither does avoiding adultery or murder. But God still wants us to obey all Ten Commandments nevertheless. Salvation theology shouldn’t be simple-mindedly reduced to bumper-sticker slogans like, “Christ replaces the law!” or “Being Christ-centered frees us from obeying the law,” which ignore both Scripture and sound theological conceptual interrelationships.

DOES HAVING THE MIND OF CHRIST ABOLISH THE SABBATH?

“The mind of Christ replaces the law for Christians.” But how do we know that having the mind of Christ doesn’t enjoin on Christians the need to observe the Sabbath and to tithe? Didn’t Jesus himself observe the Sabbath (Luke 4:16; Mark 2:27-28)? If He kept it in both mind and body, shouldn’t we do the same? Where does it say in Scripture that having the mind of Christ allows Christians to work on the seventh day, but still prohibits adultery, theft, and idolatry? It’s quite true that once a Christian has the Holy Spirit he has the mind of Christ inside himself. Paul told the Colossians that the Holy Spirit in them was “Christ in you, the hope of glory” (Col. 1:27). A man or woman is a Christian only so long as the Holy Spirit remains in him or her: “However, you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him” (Rom. 8:9). Nevertheless, having Jesus in us doesn’t mean we don’t need to make conscious efforts to overcome sin. It’s utterly false to call all careful obedience to God’s law, meaning, following His revealed will for us, “legalism.” It requires conscious, willful effort to avoid committing sin. It isn’t an automatic process that the Holy Spirit makes us follow. A demon-possessed person can be forced to do various things, but that isn’t how the Holy Spirit works within Christians. Although it’s also wrong to think we have to use our willpower unaided by God’s Spirit to overcome sin, it’s equally wrong to accept the opposite extreme, and think conscious, deliberate efforts to avoid sin are unspiritual or unfaithful. Paul told the Philippians to “work out your salvation with fear and trembling” (Phil.

2:12). Similarly, Paul made conscious efforts in his own spiritual life to avoid sin in order to ensure he wouldn't lose his own salvation: "Therefore I run in such a way, as not without aim; I box in such a way, as not beating the air; but I buffet my body and make it my slave, lest possibly, after I have preached to others, I myself should be disqualified" (I Cor. 9:27). Clearly, having the mind of Christ (i.e., the Holy Spirit) doesn't abolish any Old Testament law, considered by itself.

DOES BEING UNDER GRACE AND NOT THE LAW ABOLISH THE SABBATH?

"Christians are not under law, but under grace." True, but how does this principle release us from obeying the Sabbath, but not from avoiding adultery? Paul made a point of anticipating how this principle could be abused, that it doesn't authorize us to sin (i.e., to break the law): "What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? May it never be!" (Rom. 6:15). Importantly, Paul does use the term "under the law" in places to refer to a state in which someone hasn't been forgiven for their sins and is still not reconciled to God by accepting Jesus' sacrifice by faith. This term doesn't have to mean believing one is under the jurisdiction of the law, i.e., believes in obeying it. After all, any conservative Evangelical Protestant would say Christians have to avoid theft, murder, coveting, lying, idolatry, etc. By using the "jurisdictional" meaning of "under the law," rather than a dispensationalist (time period during which God works with humanity in a certain way) one, even Evangelicals would believe they are still "under the[se] laws"! Notice how Paul uses the term "under the law" to mean "a state of being guilty of sin" in Rom. 3:9, 19:

We have already charged that both Jews and Greeks are all under sin . . .
Now we know that whatever the Law says, it speaks to those who are under
[or "in," lit. marg. NASB] the Law, that every mouth may be closed, and
all the world may become accountable to God.

The comparison between the two terms, "under sin" and "under the Law," shows that the law makes everyone guilty because they violated it, since it makes "all the world . . . accountable to God." The "tutor" analogy of Gal. 3 is susceptible to the same interpretation, since the "tutor," the law, leads us to Christ because the law itself can't forgive sin or give us eternal life. Notice that a key phrase in v. 22 helps explain another analogous phrase in v. 23 since they effectively have the same meaning: "But the Scripture has shut up all men under sin, that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe. But before faith came, we were kept in custody under the law." Before we had faith in Jesus' sacrifice for our sins, we were kept in a state guilty of sin. But after accepting Jesus' sacrifice by faith, "we are no longer under a tutor" (v. 25). This obviously doesn't mean we can sin with impunity, and violate God's laws against (say) having sex outside of marriage. After all, as explained above, the law defines what is and isn't sin, since "Everyone who practices sin also practices lawlessness; and sin is lawlessness" (I John 3:4). It's absurd to think that God abolished the law, which then would allow us to do anything we wanted without sin being charged against us. Christians are to live a transformed life, and to stop sinning since "the requirement of the Law [would] be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh,

but according to the Spirit” (Rom. 8:4). Instead, God removed the penalty inflicted by the law when we accept Jesus as our personal Savior, since “the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Rom. 6:23). Although the “dispensationalist” definition of “under the law” does appear in Gal. 4:4, 21, the overwhelming point of Galatians was to prove that gentiles didn’t need to receive circumcision (note the “bottom-line” conclusion in Gal. 5:2, 11-12), not that (say) they were free to disobey the laws against murder, theft, adultery, etc. Clearly, being under grace and not the law no more releases Christians from observing the Sabbath or paying tithes than from obeying the law against adultery or avoiding theft, since it’s too general a principle just to abolish the former without wiping out the latter.

WHEN CHRIST FULFILLED THE LAW, DID THAT END THE SABBATH?

“Christ fulfilled the law.” True, but how does this principle obliterate (say) the clean/unclean meat distinction, but keeps in force the laws against idolatry or lying? After all, no conservative Christian would dream of saying that because Jesus obeyed the laws against adultery and stealing, Christians are allowed to be adulterers and thieves after accepting Him as their personal Savior. So why does the fact that Jesus observed the Sabbath (Luke 4:16; Mark 2:27-28) prove that we don’t have to obey it today ourselves? On the contrary, the fact that He kept the Sabbath is evidence that we should also, since “the one who says he abides in Him ought himself to walk in the same manner as He walked” (I John 2:6; cf. I Peter 2:21). Now consider: Exactly how did Jesus “fulfill” the law? Did he “fulfill” it prophetically, by being the one to whom it pointed in type? No doubt, the abolition of the animal sacrifices could be explained in this manner, since they portrayed His sacrifice in advance, such as when the Passover lambs were sacrificed in the Temple, “For Christ our Passover also has been sacrificed” (I Cor. 5:7; cf. Heb. 9:9-14; 10:1-18). Did he “fulfill” the law by literally obeying all its commands that applied to Him personally? Did He abolish it by obeying it? He denies this kind of interpretation in Matt. 5:17: “Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish, but to fulfill.” If the word “fulfill” means “abolish,” or some other word that amounts to the same thing, then Christ contradicted himself: “I did not come to abolish, but to [abolish].” True, it’s sensible to assume that all laws which have only a prophetic/typological function, such as the animal sacrifices, could be abolished by Jesus becoming the sacrifice Himself for humanity, thus replacing them once for all time (Heb. 10:14). But how does Jesus’ obedience to (say) the laws against idolatry, stealing, or coveting release us from having to obey the same laws? Furthermore, what text says that because Jesus obeyed the Sabbath, therefore, we don’t have to today? Notice that the word “fulfill” can mean “obey.” For example, in Gal. 5:16 (KJV): “Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfill [i.e., ‘carry out’—NASB] the lust of the flesh.” Likewise, there’s James 2:8: “If, however, you are fulfilling the royal law, according to Scripture, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself,’ you are doing well.” Now, was the Sabbath a law that pointed exclusively to Christ, and had no other typological or memorial functions? Isn’t the Sabbath a law that makes a continuous moral requirement of people, much like the laws against stealing, lying, and idolatry? It isn’t only typological in nature, unlike the animal sacrifices (Heb. 9:9-10). Since it is, Jesus’ acts of obedience to it (re: Luke 4:16) can’t release us from it.

The Sabbath in type (predictive function) points to the salvation gained by saved in the kingdom of God and the rest the world receives from sin and war that the millennium will be when Christ rules the earth (cf. Heb. 4:1-11). Since the millennium is yet in the future, and the kingdom of God has yet to arrive on earth (Dan. 2:35, 44; Rev. 5:10; 11:15-18), the Sabbath's anti-type (fulfillment) has yet to come to pass, so it couldn't be abolished for that reason alone. Furthermore, Isa. 66:22-23 makes it clear that the Sabbath will still be observed even after the millennium ends: "For just as the new heavens and the new earth which I make will endure before Me . . . it shall be from new moon to new moon, and from Sabbath to Sabbath, all mankind will come to bow down before Me." For since the Sabbath was created before sin entered into the world on the seventh day of "creation week," it couldn't mainly have a typological function since there was no need yet then for a Savior to die for humanity's sins. The Fourth Commandment itself makes it clear that the Sabbath had a memorial function, and wasn't merely a way to mark off Israel as being different from the gentiles surrounding them: "For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea and all that is in them, and rest on the seventh day; therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy" (Ex. 20:11). Therefore, since the Sabbath is a memorial of creation, any typological functions it has were added after its creation in Gen. 2:2-3: "And by the seventh day God completed His work which He had done; and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done. Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because in it He rested from all His work which God had created and made." Since the Sabbath isn't typological mainly in meaning or in origin, and since it makes continuous requirements of humanity as individuals, much like the laws against murder or adultery that Christ's sacrifice couldn't fulfill (or do) for us, Christ's obedience to the Sabbath command (i.e., "fulfilling it") can't be seen as a reason for its abolition.

DOES BEING CHRIST-CENTERED ABOLISH THE SABBATH?

"Christians should be Christ-centered, not law-centered." This vacuous rhetoric is an excellent example of how, by invoking Jesus' name, evangelicals throw into the wind all careful reasoning about soteriology and the law. It's quite true Christians should think carefully and continually about their personal relationship with Jesus. After all, didn't Paul say, when discussing his initial efforts to evangelize the Corinthians (I Cor. 2:2): "For I determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified"? But does knowing Jesus mean we're free to disobey any and all of God's laws and commandments? John didn't think so (I John 2:3-4): "And by this we know that we have come to know Him, if we keep His commandments. The one who says, 'I have come to know Him,' and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him; but whoever keeps His word, in him the love of God has been perfected. By this we know that we are in Him." Hence, obedience to God's commandments is a requirement to really know Jesus. Similarly, Jesus Himself said: "You are my friends, if you do what I command you" (John 15:14). Likewise, he proclaimed to a crowd listening to Him: "For whoever does the will of My Father who is in heaven, he is My brother and sister and mother" (Matt. 12:50). In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus declared that those who said His name but who didn't obey Him could not be saved:

“Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord,’ ‘Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven; but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven.” Therefore, anyone who says, “I know the Lord,” but routinely disobeys God’s law without repentance really doesn’t know Jesus as their Savior. Furthermore, does being “Christ-centered,” a term that per se doesn’t appear in Scripture, release Christians from obeying the laws against adultery, coveting, or idolatry? Obviously not. Therefore, why should it release Christians from having to obey the Sabbath or the Holy Days? What does the term “being Christ-centered” do that magically changes the contents of the law’s requirements by itself? The conclusion simply doesn’t follow from the premises. Merely uttering Jesus’ name or mentioning His role as Savior doesn’t release us from having to obey any laws. Specific texts have to be cited to accomplish this objective instead, such as Heb. 9:9-10; 10:1-14, which abolish the animal sacrifices. A Sabbatarian who keeps the Sabbath or tithes is no less “Christ-centered” than an Evangelical who keeps the laws against adultery or murder. (Whether instead we should be “God-centered,” or even “Father-centered,” opens up a can of worms too large to pursue here).

DID THE NEW COVENANT ABOLISH THE SABBATH?

“Since Christians are under the new covenant and not the old covenant, they don’t have to observe the Sabbath.” But doesn’t this argument bite off more than it can chew as well? Who believes that Christians don’t have to obey the laws against murder or theft because of the new covenant? Why should the Sabbath be treated any differently then? Consider carefully the central text about the new covenant prophetically, which the author of Hebrews quoted to show the old covenant had ended (Jer. 31:31-34; cf. Heb. 8:8-12):

“Behold, days are coming,” declares the Lord, “when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah, not like the covenant which I made with their fathers in the day I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt. My covenant which they broke, although I was a husband to them,” declares the Lord. “But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days,” declares the Lord, “I will put My law within them, and on their heart I will write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. And they shall not teach again, each man his neighbor and each man his brother, saying, ‘Know the Lord,’ for they shall all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them,” declares the Lord, “for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more.”

Now, so far as this text reveals, exactly how does the new covenant change the contents of the Old Testament’s law? How does the phrase, “**I will put My law within them, and on their heart I will write it,**” abolish any requirements of the law? Couldn’t someone who believes Christians should avoid eating unclean meat say, “The law against eating unclean meat was written onto my heart by the new covenant”? All the new covenant does, so far as this passage in Jeremiah proves, is that the method of the administration of the law has changed. Christians will have the Holy Spirit to help them to obey the law

(Rom. 8:4; Acts 2:38). But before Christ died, most of Israel didn't have such supernatural help (cf. John 16:7-14). Israel, except for a few inspired prophets and kings, had to try to obey the law by their own physical strength. When agreeing to the old covenant (or the Ten Commandments as a possibly separate covenant) they said: "All that the Lord has spoken we will do!" (Ex. 19:7; 24:3). Their promise was shortly broken thereafter, when they worshiped the Golden Calf (Ex. 32). By trying to obey God by their own strength, they failed, which was why the author of Hebrews said, the fault lay with the people, not the laws to which they had agreed (Heb. 8:7-8): "For if the first covenant had been faultless, there would have been no occasion sought for a second. For finding fault with them . . ." One of the Galatians' central errors was to try to obey God by fulfilling physical requirements of the ceremonial law instead of using the Holy Spirit to become righteous (Gal. 3:2, 5, 14):

This is the only thing I want to find out from you: did you receive the Spirit by the works of the Law, or by hearing with faith? . . . Does He then, who provides you with the Spirit and works miracles among you, do it by the works of the Law, or by hearing with faith? . . . Christ Jesus [died so that] the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith. (See also Gal. 5:5).

But since Christians have the law written onto their hearts by the Holy Spirit under the new dispensation, the law's spiritual requirements actually have been expanded, as Jesus explained in the Sermon on the Mount, in which, for example, the law against adultery became also a prohibition against a man lusting after a woman in his heart, not just a prohibition of the physical act (Matt. 5:27-28). Here Jesus fulfilled His prophesied role to make the law greater, or to magnify it (Isa. 42:19, 21). Far from abolishing the law, under the new administration of the new covenant, its requirements actually have been intensified!

ARE THE TEN COMMANDMENTS IDENTICAL TO THE OLD COVENANT?

"Because the Ten Commandments are identical to the old covenant, they were abolished, including the Sabbath, when the old covenant ended." This argument harnesses Deut. 4:13; 9:9-11; Heb. 8:13 in order to argue its point. But does anybody advocating this argument really believe it? Does anybody believe that the day before Jesus died, murder was a sin according to God's law, but the day after it was permissible because the Sixth Commandment was abolished? Actually, if somebody believes nine of the Ten Commandments are still in force (besides the Sabbath command), and that the old covenant is identical to the Ten Commandments, then they believe that the old covenant is still nine-tenths in force! If it were still 90% in force, it was hardly "becoming obsolete and growing old" or "ready to disappear" (Heb. 8:13)! Likewise, we find Paul and James quoting from this allegedly abolished law as if it were still in force (Rom. 7:7; 9:9; Eph. 6:2-3; James 2:8, 11). They weren't giving these laws authority by quoting them; rather, they supported their own arguments by citing a pre-existing authority (the Old Testament's law). After all, "**ALL** Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness" (II Tim.

3:16), right? Also, if the Ten Commandments are identical to the old covenant, then all the other Old Testament laws outside of the Decalogue weren't affected by the old covenant's end. After all, neither circumcision and the animal sacrifices, nor tithing, the Holy Days, and the clean/unclean meat distinction, are listed as part of the Ten Commandments. How does this argument prove that the whole "Law of Moses" was abolished then after Jesus' death? Likewise, if this argument is correct, any text mentioning the "law" could have "old covenant" inserted into it as a substitute since the two are said to be identical. This produces many absurd results, especially when examining Paul's "pro-law" texts: "Do we then nullify the [old covenant] through faith? May it never be! On the contrary, we establish the [old covenant]" (Rom. 3:31). "Sin is not imputed when there is no [old covenant]" (Rom. 5:13). "In order that the requirement of the [old covenant] might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit" (Rom. 8:4). "So then, the [old covenant] is holy, and the commandment is holy and righteous and good" (Rom. 7:12). "I agree with the [old covenant], confessing that it is good" (Rom. 7:16). "For I joyfully concur with the [old covenant] of God in the inner man" (Rom. 7:22). "Because the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the [old covenant] of God, for it is not even able to do so" (Rom. 8:7). "For not the hearers of the [old covenant] are just before God, but the doers of the [old covenant] will be justified" (Rom. 2:13). What could be more absurd? The real error in the "old covenant = Ten Commandments" argument is that a covenant is really a contract (formal agreement) to keep the law, not the law itself. Even in the Deut. 9:9, the "tablets of the covenant" can't be deemed the same thing as the covenant itself. After all, if the philosopher Aristotle had owned a chair, and so it was "the chair of Aristotle," or Aristotle's chair, the chair obviously isn't identical to its owner! A genitive pronoun, "of" in English here, indicates possession, or who "owns" what. It hardly proves the two are the same exact same thing! Therefore, the old covenant's end no more abolishes the Sabbath than the law against murder.

DID CHRIST END THE LAW, INCLUDING THE SABBATH?

"Christ ended the law." Of course, Paul did write, "For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes" (Rom. 10:4). But does this text abolish the law against murder or theft? Even unbelievers might find that a mental stretch! If this text does away with the Sabbath command, wouldn't it also abolish the laws against coveting or dishonoring our parents? Furthermore, wouldn't Paul be contradicting himself? After all, as noted in the preceding paragraph, he wrote a number of "pro-law" statements. Why would Paul say the law is "good," "spiritual," and "holy," and the commandment "holy," "righteous," and "good," three chapters earlier, only to abolish it later in the same letter? Two chapters earlier he wrote about Christians fulfilling the "requirements of the Law" by not walking according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit (Rom. 8:4). At this point, it's necessary to engage in some systematic hermeneutics (methods of discovering the meaning of Scripture). To quote Paul's "anti-law" texts, but ignore his "pro-law" texts, is the sloppiest, most deceptive form of Biblical exegesis imaginable. It can only convince and impress the ignorant. The basic solution to resolving Paul's initially seemingly contradictory views on the law is to note that Paul condemns the use of the law as a means to gain imputed righteousness, justification, or

salvation, but approves of it as a guide to conduct and moral actions. Hence, he tells the Romans, “we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from works of the law” (Rom. 3:28). He condemned the Galatians for “seeking to be justified by faith; you have fallen from grace” (Gal. 5:4) when they sought to be circumcised, a rite in Judaism analogous to baptism for Christians, that marks the initial stage of the conversion/salvation process. So when we turn to Rom. 10:4, obviously enough it doesn’t say the “law ended” per se, but that the law ended “for righteousness,” a state of being judged innocent of sin. So even given the “termination” interpretation of Rom. 10:4, it can’t prove that a given law ended, but rather it ended a dispensation in which people (the Jews) sought to be righteous by obeying the law. But did God ever intend that His people, in any time or place, ever to have the ability to justify themselves, to make themselves free from guilt for violating the law, by obeying the law? Even this interpretation goes astray, since the Greek word translated “end,” which is “telos,” can also mean “goal,” as the NASB margin for this verse reminds us. Hence, since the law can’t make us righteous (free from guilt for violating the law), it makes us turn to Christ for a solution to our existential dilemma. Only through faith in Jesus’ sacrifice can our sins be taken off us (i.e., justified), and only through the Holy Spirit being placed in us can we ultimately be given eternal life. Jesus is the solution for sin, which is what the law produces whenever we violate it. Notice that “righteousness” can be both (1) actual, a sanctified state in which we have developed the habits of obeying God’s law, and (2) imputed, a justified state in which God has arbitrarily (by our faith in Jesus) judged us innocent of sin, although we’re really guilty intrinsically. On the one hand, Paul wrote about actual righteousness in Rom. 6:16: “Do you not know that when you present yourselves to someone as slaves for obedience, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin resulting in death, or of obedience resulting in righteousness.” Hence, Rom. 10:4 couldn’t mean that Christ ended a dispensation in which people obeyed the law in order to become actually righteous, or else Paul contradicted himself. But then, Paul plainly believed in imputed righteousness as well: “If you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved; for with the heart man believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation” (Rom. 10:9-10). Plainly enough, Paul wasn’t contradicting himself about how righteousness is gained, but rather is describing two kinds of righteousness, one of which is imputed, one of which is actual. Hence, Romans 10:4 doesn’t mean that the law ceased to exist, which then would legalize adultery and murder, not just Sabbath-breaking, nor does it mean that Christ’s sacrifice ended a dispensation during which people (the Jews) were actually authorized by God to gain righteousness (an innocent, guilt-free, justified state) by their own efforts.

WAS THE LETTER OF THE SABBATH COMMAND ABOLISHED?

“The letter of the law has been abolished, but not the spirit of the law. Therefore, since we ‘rest in Christ’ spiritually, which allows us to keep the Sabbath command every day of the week, there’s no need for literal obedience to the command enforcing resting from physical work on the seventh day.” One of the main texts trotted out to prop up this kind of argument is II Cor. 3:6-8:

[God] also made us adequate as servants of a new covenant, not of the letter, but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life. But if the ministry of death, in letters engraved on stones, came with glory, so that the sons of Israel could not look intently at the face of Moses because of the glory of his face, fading as it was, how shall the ministry of the Spirit fail to be even more with glory?

But can those spewing forth this argument swallow all of its consequences? If the law against working from Friday sunset to Saturday sunset has been abolished in its literal letter so Christians can work on it, is it literally permissible to murder, steal, lie, etc. likewise? Does the new covenant prohibit hating our brother in our heart, which is the spirit of the law that prohibits murder (Matt. 5:22-24; I John 3:15), but allow the literal murdering of others? Why does abolishing the letter of the law only seem to affect the four disputed Old Testament laws listed above, not (say) the Nine Commandments no conservative Christian would dispute? Furthermore, the commandment against coveting always concerned a prohibition of certain thoughts, not outward actions. So it's wrong to say that the old covenant only concerned the regulation of outward actions. Jesus, in the Sermon on the Mount, spoken while the old covenant was yet in force, noted that the law against adultery also prohibited a man lusting after a woman in his heart (Matt. 5:27-28), and the law against murder also prohibited insulting one's brother, not just physically ending his life (Matt. 5:21-22). Actually, the text cited above from II Cor. 3 merely is another way to state the truth of Jer. 31:31-34: The law no longer is written on tablets of stone merely, but on human hearts. Notice what Paul wrote earlier in v. 2-3: "You are our letter, written in our hearts, known and read by all men; being manifested that you are a letter of Christ, cared for by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tables of stone, but on tables of human hearts." So although the administration of the law changed such that the literal writing of the Ten Commandments on stone no longer mattered (i.e., it was only an obsolete "holy relic," cf. Heb. 8:5; 9:23), the law's principles are now written on Christians' hearts through the Holy Spirit, thus fulfilling the prophecy of Jer. 31:33: "I will put My law within them, and on their heart I will write it." Again, both Jer. 31 and II Cor. 3 concern a change in the administration of the law, not a change in its specific requirements, so far as these texts reveal. Notice also that Paul, even in II Cor. 3:6, still believes that the law is in force, because "the letter kills" (present tense), not that it "did kill" (past tense). "The Spirit gives life" because it's by the Holy Spirit that salvation is given conditionally to converted Christians. The Spirit is a "pledge" (II Cor. 5:6) of the salvation to come: "You were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is given as a pledge of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of God's own possession, to the praise of His glory" (Eph. 1:13-14; cf. 4:30). It's by the Holy Spirit that Jesus is within us, since "the Lord is the Spirit" (II Cor. 3:17), and so is "Christ in you, the hope of glory" (Col. 1:27). It's actually Jesus in us who helps us to obey the law, both in its spirit and in its letter. But, notice, having the Holy Spirit as a source of salvation by itself doesn't change the specific contents of the law. Does having the Holy Spirit abolish the

requirement to avoid worshipping false gods or making graven images? Hardly! To summarize, the end of the administration of laws without the Spirit as an aid doesn't end the laws themselves, nor does the end of the death penalty inflicted by the law end the laws themselves since the Spirit/Jesus gives Christians eternal life.

DID THE PRINCIPLE OF LOVE ABOLISH THE SABBATH?

“The principle of love abolishes the law.” Does expressing love towards God and our fellow man allow Christians to specifically avoid obeying particular commandments? For example, it's been argued that because Paul said loving our neighbor “fulfills” the law, therefore, the specific points of the Ten Commandments have been abolished (Rom. 13:8-10):

Owe nothing to anyone except to love one another, for he who loves his neighbor has fulfilled the law. For this, “You shall not commit adultery, You shall not murder, You shall not steal, You shall not covet,” and if there is any other commandment, it is summed up in this saying, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” Love does no wrong to a neighbor; love therefore is the fulfillment of the law.

But does any conservative Christian seriously believe that the specific commands against stealing, adultery, or murder have been abolished? Why does the principle of love abolish the Sabbath, but not the laws against coveting or idolatry? Here Paul was merely summarizing in the shortest possible form (similar to how a bumper sticker's slogan sums up a political or religious viewpoint) the overall principle of the law: We are to show love to our neighbor and God. But just as reading a book review doesn't eliminate the need to read the book it describes if one wishes to know it in depth, the principle of love doesn't abolish the specific points in the law. The law defines love so that human beings don't go around cooking up their own definitions of “love” to suit their own convenience or desires. It still must have specific points that express God's will for guiding our actions and thoughts, or else we're left on our own to invent definitions of “love.” After all, as already mentioned above, couldn't a '60's hippie, given his or her value system, plausibly define “love” to include fornication and/or adultery? Furthermore, notice that the law quoted in v. 9, the second of the two Great Commandments, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself,” is actually a quote from Leviticus 19:18. How does citing from the law abolish the law? When Jesus Himself quoted the two Great Commandments (Matt. 22:37-40), He obviously wasn't abolishing any specific points of the Old Testament law by merely commenting on them. Likewise, Paul's citation of these laws in Rom. 13 shows that he believed that they were still in force. After all, would he cite the Tenth Commandment (against coveting) in Rom. 7:7 only to abolish it six chapters later? The mere fact anti-Sabbatarians will desperately seize upon a mere summarization of the law as a way to abolish its specific points shows how desperate they are to rush off to work, the store, or the game on the seventh day of the week.

DID THE JERUSALEM COUNCIL IN ACTS 15 ABOLISH THE SABBATH?

“Acts 15 proves that the Old Testament law was abolished for Christians.” It’s commonly argued that the Jerusalem conference in Acts 15 abolished not just circumcision for gentiles, but the entire Old Testament law. Advocates of this position will cite Acts 15:5, which mentions what some of the Pharisees who became Christians said concerning having the gentiles circumcised: “It is necessary to circumcise them, and to direct them to observe the Law of Moses.” Hence, when the Council decided to set aside circumcision, it’s said that it also set aside the entire Old Testament law code. The Greek of v. 5, however, indicates this interpretation is unwarranted: It’s a periphrastic construction, or an intentional roundabout way to say something, which the “and” between the second and third verbs (“direct” and “observe”) strongly suggests. But even if the linguistic issues are discounted, does anyone plausibly think that the conference in Acts 15 not only abolished the four laws that the anti-Sabbatarians hate (the Sabbath, the Holy Days, tithing, and clean/unclean meat), but the laws against murder, adultery, coveting, idolatry, or theft? Were the two Great Commandments, which Jesus quoted with approval, trashed as well? Once again, the anti-Sabbatarians overshoot their mark, since their argument disposes of much too much. Furthermore, if the entire Law of Moses was obliterated, why are these four laws from the Old Testament singled out as being in force?: “It seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us to lay upon you no greater burden than these essentials: that you abstain from things sacrificed to idols and from blood and from things strangled and from fornication; if you keep yourselves free from such things, you will do well” (Acts 15:28-29). If Jesus’ death annihilated the entire “Law of Moses” or the entire “Old Covenant,” then why are these four laws retained? The mere fact that they still exist proves that the Old Testament law wasn’t completely abolished! Furthermore, when the apostle James announces the final decision of the Council, if he meant to nullify the authority of Moses, why does he say (Acts 15:21): “For Moses from ancient generations has in every city those who preach him, since he is read in the synagogues every Sabbath”? Why cite Moses as an authority when you’ve just destroyed his authority?

All the absurdities flowing from the antinomian interpretation of Acts 15 proves alternatives should be considered. The conference in Acts 15 was really about what could be called “justification,” or the initial stage of the salvation process. After all, what set off the entire debate was this assertion: “Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved” (v. 1). The real dispute was over what gives salvation, not so much over what laws still have to be obeyed intrinsically. It’s especially important now to realize that the Jews considered circumcision as an initiation rite analogous to what Christians consider baptism’s role in Christianity: You can’t be a (male) Jew without being circumcised. This worked fine for those born Jews, but what about adult male converts to Judaism? (Another problem cropped up concerning those ex-pagans who were circumcised for “the wrong reasons”!) Previously, before the Acts 15 Council occurred, in Judaism historically near and before the time of Jesus’ death and resurrection, a running debate had festered between different rabbinical schools over which Old Testament laws needed to be imposed on gentile converts of Judaism. These four laws (listed in vs. 28-29) weren’t randomly plucked from thin air, but were the same

ones that the standard alternative non-Pharisaical interpretation of what the law imposed on gentile converts so they could become full members of the covenant community of Israel. The Pharisees (or at least one of their major schools) believed circumcision had to be added to this list of four requirements (which originates in Lev. 17-18), but their opponents in Judaism felt otherwise. Actually, all the church did in Acts 15 was to choose the competing interpretation among Jews that denied that gentiles had to be circumcised in order to become converts to the faith. So when Peter calls some aspect of the law a “yoke which neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear,” it shouldn’t be assumed that this was the entire law of Moses. Again, it’s necessary to note that just because obeying any given law doesn’t justify us, whether it be the law against murder, the law about helping the poor, or the law about tithing, that doesn’t prove no sin is assessed when we violate it or that we don’t still have to obey it. Since the issue in debate concerned circumcision and the initial stage of the salvation process as Judaism had considered it, it’s wrong to assume that the Acts 15 Council abolished the entire Old Testament law.

WAS THE SABBATH NAILED TO THE CROSS?

“The law, including the Sabbath, was nailed to the cross.” The seemingly most relevant text cited to support this assertion is Col. 2:13-14: “And when you were dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made you alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our transgressions, having canceled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us and which was hostile to us; and He has taken out of the way, having nailed it to the cross.” The NASB translation here prevents the misleading interpretation read into the KJV’s translation, which has “blotting out the handwriting of ordinances,” which would seem to be a reference to the Old Testament law in general. The term translated “handwriting” in the KJV and “certificate of debt” in the NASB is “cheirographon,” which means “a (handwritten) document, specif. a certificate of indebtedness, bond,” according to the Bauer-Arndt-Gingrich Greek-English Lexicon (p. 880). Hence, it was our sins (i.e., our debts owed to God) committed for violating the law, not the law itself, that were nailed to the “stake.” Here it’s necessary to keep the soteriological terms in their proper logical relationship with each other, since being forgiven for our sins for breaking the law doesn’t entail abolishing the law itself. (Ending the law itself wouldn’t remove from us the guilt assessed from previously committed violations anyway). Does anyone really believe that God abolished the laws against stealing, murder, idolatry, lying, coveting, or adultery when His Son died? It was a sin, a transgression of the law, to murder the day before Jesus died, and it remained a sin the day after He died. Why is the Sabbath command singled out as a law abolished by Jesus’ crucifixion and death, but not the others?

WAS THE SABBATH COMMAND ONLY FOR THE JEWS, NOT GENTILES?

“The Sabbath command was only for the Jews, not gentiles.” Unlike all the arguments examined above, at least this one purports to keep the laws Evangelicals like, but get rid of the ones (such as the Sabbath) they don’t like. It has been commonly argued that the commands concerning the Sabbath, tithing, the Holy Days, and

clean/unclean meat were only intended for the Jews to mark them off as different from all other nations, the gentiles. But is it true that the Sabbath, for example, was only intended for the Jews? Jesus in Mark 2:27 said, “The Sabbath was made for man,” not just the Jews. The Sabbath was created on the seventh day of creation (Gen. 2:2-3), long before there were any Jews. The Fourth Commandment itself says the Sabbath is a reminder of God’s works of creation since the seven-day week is analogous to the six days God created the world and the seventh to the day He rested: “For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day; therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy” (Ex. 20:11). Therefore, the Sabbath wasn’t intended merely for the Jews. Isa. 56:3-7 reveals that the gentiles could embrace it as well:

Let not the foreigner who has joined himself to the Lord say, “The Lord will surely separate me from His people.” Neither let the eunuch say, “Behold, I am a dry tree.” For thus says the Lord, “To the eunuchs who keep My Sabbaths, and choose what pleases Me, and hold fast my covenant [the old covenant!—EVS], to them I will give in My house and within My walls a memorial, and a name better than that of sons and daughters; I will give them an everlasting name which will not be cut off. Also the foreigners who join themselves to the Lord, to minister to Him, and to love the name of the Lord, to be His servants, every one who keeps from profaning the Sabbath, and holds fast my covenant; Even those I will bring to My holy mountain, and make them joyful in My house of prayer. . . . For My house will be called a house of prayer for all the peoples.

Fundamentally, the concept that the four laws in dispute here (the Sabbath, the Holy Days, tithing, and the clean/unclean meat distinction) are “markers” that make the Jews distinct from the gentiles, and that the latter never needed to obey them, unlike (say) the laws against murder, idolatry, and adultery, involves circular reasoning. The argument essentially becomes this: Because the vast majority of people never kept these laws, therefore, the vast majority doesn’t need to keep them today. Why are the Jews, a tiny minority of the world’s population, the only ones who should keep these laws? Because the gentiles don’t keep them, now or in the past. So why are the Jews different? Because they keep them and the gentiles don’t. If the Jews had given up observing these laws, they long ago would have been absorbed into the surrounding gentile (whether pagan, Muslim, or Christian) culture. So now, when Christians/gentiles reason, “Those laws are only for the Jews!” they implicitly assume that because their ancestors didn’t keep them, therefore, they are exempt from them. So where does it say in the Old Testament that these four laws were only intended for the Jews to observe them? We know from Zechariah 14:16-19 that gentile nations during the millennium will observe the Feast of Tabernacles, one of the seven annual holy days listed in Lev. 23:

Then it will come about that any who are left of all the nations that went against Jerusalem will go up from year to year to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, and to celebrate the Feast of Booths. And it will be that whichever of the families of the earth does not go up to Jerusalem to

worship the King, the Lord of hosts, there will be no rain on them. And if the family of Egypt does not go up or enter, then no rain will fall on them; it will be the plague with which the Lord smites the nations who do not go up to celebrate the Feast of Booths. This will be the punishment of Egypt, and the punishment of all the nations who do not go up to celebrate the Feast of Booths.

We find that the priests in the millennium “shall also keep My laws and My statutes in all My appointed Feasts, and sanctify My Sabbaths” (Eze. 44:24). Now, if the purpose of Christ’s sacrifice was to rid us of this terrible monster forever—God’s law (which, incidentally, Paul calls holy, righteous, and good (Rom. 7:12))—why is it back among us during the millennium? Was Christ’s sacrifice not “good enough” to permanently trash it? Or was it only “good enough” to get rid of it for a mere (say) two thousand years, and then our “protection” against it expires? The logic of antinomian (anti-law) dispensationalism produces blasphemous absurdities concerning the relationship of God’s law and Christ’s sacrifice, which was offered once for all time (Heb. 10:12, 14). Saying these four laws were only intended for the Jews and no one else because no one else keeps them or has kept them is the worst kind of circular reasoning. Majority opinion is a poor guide to theological truth, since even today a majority of the world’s population worships either no god at all or some other God besides Yahweh. Contrary to what Texas Guinan claimed, fifty million Frenchmen can be wrong.

DOES NATURAL LAW REASONING PROVE THE SABBATH IS GONE?

One seemingly objective approach to figuring out which Old Testament laws were only intended for the Jews to keep for a brief dispensation (period of time during which God works in certain ways with humanity) is to reason that whatever laws can be proven by human reason alone are in force, but those which can’t be, aren’t. Now natural law theorizing does have some validity to it, even from a Scriptural viewpoint. Consider Paul’s statement concerning the gentiles obeying a moral code based on their conscience despite they hadn’t known the law of God revealed through Moses and the prophets (Rom. 2:14-15):

For when the 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 alternatively accusing or else defending them.

But although mankind can discover, using the human reason that God gave it, basic moral truths, such as the immorality of murder or theft, why does this ability become a method for sorting out which Old Testament laws are still in force and which ones aren’t? Where does it say in Scripture that because the law against murder can be proven by human reason, it’s still in force, but because the Sabbath can’t be, it isn’t? Do we have the right to exalt our human reason against the plain words of God’s revelation to humanity? Does that allow us to nullify parts of it because our human reason can’t discover on its own the reasons why God

rested on the seventh day, and thus created a Sabbath day? The great medieval Catholic philosopher/theologian Thomas Aquinas reasoned that Sunday worship was just as good as worship on the Sabbath because the rest function of the Sabbath command could be proven by human reason, but not what day it occurred on, because human reason/speculative moral philosophy can't figure that part out on its own. Similarly, the Reformer John Calvin reasoned that the specific day of the week to rest on was typological in nature, and thus both temporary and limited to the Jews, but not the Christian Sunday. Naturally enough, the reason why the Sabbath falls on the seventh day can only be known from accepting the revealed truth of the Pentateuch that God rested on this day during the week of the world's creation, not on some other day. But just because human reason can't find a reason for why God rested on the seventh day, rather than (say) a mid-week break on the fourth, or chose this occasion (the week of creation) to create a special day, a holy day, rather than some other, doesn't authorize humans to reject it as not binding on them. Where does the New Testament say that because a certain law can't be proven by human reason it's now nullified? Hence, since the Old Testament plainly commands the Sabbath to be observed, the burden of proof is on its rejecters (without any use of natural law theory) to show it is abolished, not on Sabbatarians to prove it is still in force as against the New Testament's alleged "silence."

OTHER ARGUMENTS THAT "PROVE TOO MUCH" AGAINST THE LAW

Given the above extensive analysis of various faulty reasons given against observing the seventh-day Sabbath, many others can be easily disposed of since they're merely variations on these arguments and/or "prove too much," and so they have to be rejected. For example, it was argued that certain Sabbatarians didn't believe that faith in Christ was sufficient for salvation, but that they believed in faith in Christ plus Sabbath observance. Casting aside all the complexities of Paul's soteriology (salvation theology) here, why doesn't somebody accuse a Sunday-keeper of believing that faith in Christ plus avoiding adultery is necessary for salvation? The Sunday-observer merely has a shorter list of requirements than the Sabbatarian has then, so why accuse the latter of denying justification by faith alone on that basis? It was said that certain Sabbatarians made Christ of no effect, and put Him on the sidelines by believing in the Sabbath. Why doesn't the Sunday-observers' belief in the laws against murder, idolatry, or theft also put Christ on the sidelines? If having Christ as the Christian standard in place of the Old Testament law abolishes the Sabbath, why doesn't that also abolish the law against murder? If avoiding unnecessary work or worldly pleasure on the Sabbath is "legalistic," why isn't avoiding the reading of (say) pornographic magazines or renting smutty videos "legalistic" when observing the command against adultery (Matt. 5:27-28)? It was said that the "doctrinal growth" of a church that rejected the Sabbath (despite a "sizable minority" resisting it) focused on one thing: "Jesus Christ is Lord!" Readers by now, even as much as they may believe Jesus is their Savior, ought to see that merely invoking the name of Christ isn't enough to abolish a single Old

Testament law of God without proof. How does saying, “Jesus Christ is Lord!” abolish the Sabbath, but not the laws against murder or coveting? If imputed righteousness (Rom. 3:21-22; 4:1-9) or God’s gift of grace abolishes the Sabbath, why doesn’t it also abolish the law against theft? If new covenant Christians don’t have to literally observe the Sabbath because they daily experience a salvation rest in Jesus, why doesn’t that let us off the hook from obeying the laws against taking the Lord’s name in vain or dishonoring our parents? If Jesus “replaced the law,” how does that abolish the Sabbath but not the law against coveting? Plainly enough, the anti-Sabbatarians repeatedly use verbal “shotguns” to attack Sabbath observance, when they really need a “rifle” if they wish to blow out the Fourth Commandment out of the Decalogue but preserve the other nine. They must be desperate to avoid having to rest on the seventh day of the week, or else they wouldn’t be constantly devising such lousy arguments!

IS THE OLD TESTAMENT LAW IN FORCE BUT NOT IN FORCE?

At this point, confronted by the absurdity of many of their pet arguments against the Sabbath, Evangelicals might resort to some variation of this self-contradictory argument: “The Old Testament law is in force, but not in force.” They have to engage in double-talk, or else their artifices will be exposed. It may be said that there is a law of Christ and that it’s different from the “law of Moses” or the law of God. Of course, since Christ was God (John 1:1, 14; 5:18, 20:28; 10:33; I Tim. 3:16; Col. 2:9; Heb. 1:8), it’s not obvious how the Law of God is different from the Law of Christ. Since Yahweh was seen and heard in the Old Testament (Ex. 20:1; 34:5-6, 3:6; 33:18, 23; Deut. 5:4-5, 22-28; Judges 6:14, 13:22), but the Father wasn’t (John 1:18; 5:37), it was the One who became Jesus who spoke the Ten Commandments to Israel. And, plainly enough, the Law of Moses was the revealed will of God, not some law code invented from scratch by some talented Hebrew shepherd engaged in religious mythmaking. Many chapters in Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy will begin their first verse with some variation on “The Lord spoke to Moses” before enumerating various commands or laws. The “Law of Moses” is the law of God, since God inspired Moses to write it. It’s been argued that the Ten Commandments are a nullified law code for Christians for the same reason that the ordinances of one city (say, Cleveland, Ohio) are invalid elsewhere (say, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania) since they have no jurisdiction elsewhere. But where does the New Testament say the entire Old Testament law is now invalid for Christians? Murder was a sin (a violation of the law) the day before Jesus’ crucifixion, and it was the day after, so what’s the difference? In both cases, the revealed will of God condemned murder, and this revealed will of God for guiding humanity’s actions is His “law.” What so bad about that? The fallacy in this jurisdictional argument is that there is the same “Lawgiver” both before and after the crucifixion, the same God who does not change (Mal. 3:6). By analogy, consider the role of federal law between the cities (here) of Cleveland and Philadelphia. Unless Congress made some special, spelled-out exceptions, the same law applies to both cities. Even when revolutions or major constitutional changes in

governments occur, often they keep many of the same laws: In Italy, many laws passed by the fascist dictator Benito Mussolini remained in force even after a democratic regime was proclaimed and instituted. Likewise, both before and after the crucifixion, God's will should be assumed to not have changed, unless it's been clearly revealed otherwise, such as on circumcision (Rom. 2:26-29; Gal. 5:2, 11, 6:15; I Cor. 7:18-19 (a text that distinguishes the moral law from the ceremonial law)) or the animal sacrifices (Heb. 9:9-10; 10:1-18).

In order to run the “the law is in force but not in force” argument, the anti-Sabbatarian will have to state a further argument that allows him to keep the laws he wants, but to dispose of the laws he doesn't like (such as the Sabbath or tithing). But any principle that an anti-Sabbatarian will name that allows him to keep the laws he wants, a Sabbatarian can cite as reason for the Sabbath still being in force also. For example, it has been said that although the Ten Commandments have been abolished, the last six commandments should be kept because of the law (or principle) of love. But a Sabbatarian can easily hitch his wagon to the anti-Sabbatarian's horse: “I keep the Sabbath (the Holy Days, tithing, etc.) in order to show love to God.” And again—how does the principle of love abolish the Sabbath, but not the laws against murder or adultery? Here we have yet again the antinomians wielding a meat ax against the Sabbath when they require a scalpel instead.

IT'S TIME TO STOP USING THEOLOGICAL “SHOTGUNS”

In conclusion, if Evangelical Protestants are going to attack the Sabbath, it's time for them to stop using broad, general, even vacuous, arguments against God's law that trash not just the Sabbath, the Holy Days, tithing, and the clean/unclean meat distinction, but laws they believe in, such as the prohibitions against murder, theft, adultery, coveting, and idolatry. It's time for them to stop proclaiming the name of Christ as a substitute for reasoned Biblical exegesis and careful soteriological analysis. It's deceptive to use nice-sounding, sentimental rhetoric about Jesus' role as Savior to replace the need for carefully defining and analyzing the meaning and inter-relationships of such terms in Paul's Letters as “grace,” “law,” “repentance,” “justification,” “baptism,” “sanctification,” “salvation,” etc. Anti-Sabbatarians should stop using blunderbuss arguments against the Sabbath which are calculated to sound emotionally pleasing, but which blow away many laws that they believe in also. Evangelicals should also drop all double-talk about the Old Testament law being in force yet not in force while hoping their rhetoric will sufficiently distract their Sabbatarian opponents from noticing such an argument's blatant self-contradiction. In short, anti-Sabbatarians should cease using arguments that use sentimental rhetoric and sloppy, overly broad reasoning against the rest in God humanity so badly needs in this frantically paced modern world.

