

## **THE TWO COVENANTS: EXPERIENCE AND DISPENSATIONS**

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Questions arise upon 2 Cor. 3:7-11. As that is a passage which those who are striving to teach the law often find difficult to explain, and which enemies of truth use with great confidence as being opposed to the law, we will try to give a simple scriptural exposition of it. The fifth and sixth verses of the chapter read as follows:—

“Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think anything as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God; who also hath made us able ministers of the new testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit; for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life.”

It will be noticed that the last clause of verse 5 is an answer to the question, “Who is sufficient for these things?” asked in verse 16 of the preceding chapter. The subject which is under consideration is the Christian ministry, as is seen by verse 6, and the first verse of chapter 4. The apostle is showing its excellence, and in so doing contrasts it with the ministry of the old covenant. The word “testament” in verse 6, means “covenant,” and the statement is that we are made ministers of the new covenant; “not of the letter, but of the spirit; for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life.” Many people seem to have the idea that in this verse Paul is contrasting the two testaments or covenants. The old covenant they call the letter, and the new covenant the spirit. But one who reads the verse carefully cannot fail to see that this is an error. The old covenant is not referred to till we reach the seventh verse. Paul’s statement is simply to the effect that he and his associates were ministers of the spirit of the new covenant, and not of its letter; for the new covenant has its letter as well as the old. On this point Dr. Clarke makes the following pertinent comment:—

“Every institution has its letter as well as its spirit; as every word must refer to something of which it is the sign or signicator. The gospel has both its letter and its spirit, and multitudes of professing Christians, by resting in the letter, receive not the life which it is calculated to impart. Water, in baptism, is the letter that points out the purification of the soul; they who rest in this letter are without this purification; and dying in that state, they die eternally. Bread and wine in the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper, are the letter; the atoning

efficacy of the death of Jesus, and the grace communicated by this to the soul of the believer, are the spirit. Multitudes rest in this letter, simply receiving these symbols without reference to the atonement or to their guilt; and thus lose the benefit of the atonement and the salvation of their souls. . . . It may be safely asserted that the Jews in no period of their history ever rested more in the letter of their law than the vast majority of Christians are doing in the letter of their gospel. Unto multitudes of Christians Christ may truly say, Ye will not come unto me that ye may have life.”

In the above quotation it is shown that the letter of the new covenant kills; but the reason why it kills will be made plain after we have made a brief comparison of the two covenants. These two covenants with their ministrations are brought to view in contrast in verses 7 and 8, which read thus:—

“But if the ministration of death, written and engraven in stones, was glorious, so that the children of Israel could not steadfastly behold the face of Moses for the glory of his countenance; which glory was to be done away; how shall not the ministration of the Spirit be rather glorious?”

In this verse the old covenant is called the “ministration of death.” Why it was so called is very apparent to one who understands what the old covenant was. We will state it briefly. Before the Lord gave the ten commandments from Mount Sinai, he said to the Jews:—

“Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles’ wings, and brought you unto myself. Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people; for all the earth is mine; and ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation. These are the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel.” Ex. 19:4-5.

On the third day after this, the Lord spoke the ten commandments in the hearing of all the people: “and he added no more; and he wrote them in two tables of stone.” Deut. 5:22. Then Moses went up to the Lord in the mount, and the Lord gave to him precepts growing out of the ten commandments. See Ex. 21, 22 and 23. The confirmation of the covenant, the preliminaries of which are given in Ex. 19:5-8, is related in Ex. 24:3-8. There learn that,

“Moses came and told the people all the words of the Lord, and all the judgments; and all the people answered with one voice, and

said, All the words which the Lord hath said will we do." After this "Moses wrote all the words of the Lord;" and after he had built an altar and offered sacrifices, and read in the audience of the people; and they said, All that the Lord hath said will we do, and be obedient." Then "Moses took the blood, and sprinkled it on the people, and said, Behold, the blood of the covenant, which the Lord hath made with you concerning all these words." Thus was the covenant confirmed. We learn from this that the old covenant was simply an agreement between God and the children of Israel, concerning the commandments of God. The people on their part promised faithfully to keep the commandments, and the Lord promised to make of them a great nation.

In connection with this covenant there were "ordinances of divine service, and a worldly sanctuary," Heb. 9:1. This sanctuary is described in Ex. 25, 26, 27, and 30, and the principal "ordinances of divine service," are described in Ex. 29:38-42, and Leviticus, chapters 4 and 16. With these facts before us, we may understand why the ministration of the first covenant was called a "ministration of death."

(1) In this covenant the people had made an explicit agreement to keep the law of God. (2) By this law is the knowledge of sin (Rom. 3:20), "for sin is the transgression of the law." 1 John 3:4. (3) The "ordinances of divine service" connected with the first covenant were for sin; but Paul tells us (Heb. 10:4) that "it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins." Those "ordinances of divine service" were only "a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things" (Heb. 10:1), and therefore the sacrifices which the people offered had no power to make them perfect. Therefore (4) all who had to do with the old covenant alone were condemned to death; "for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23); "and the wages of sin is death." Rom. 6:23. There was in the old covenant no provision for the forgiveness of sins; therefore the ministration of that old covenant, which was performed by earthly priests, was, so far as their work extended, the ministration of death. Only the perfect can have life, and their ministration made nothing perfect. Heb. 10:1.

It is true that during the time of the ministration of the old covenant, sins were forgiven (Lev. 4:26, 31, 35), and this forgiveness was real, but it was obtained solely by virtue of faith in the promised sacrifice of Christ, and not because of anything in the old covenant. Paul says of Christ, in Heb. 9:15, that "he is the mediator of the new

testament, that by means of death, *for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament*, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance.” Thus we see that when sins committed under the first covenant were forgiven, they were forgiven by virtue of the second covenant.

Some stumble over the first clause of 2 Cor. 3:7, “The ministration of death, written and engraven in stones,” but the Scriptures furnish means for the complete exposition of this. Paul cannot mean that the ministration was written and engraven in stones, for that would be impossible, because the ministration was the service of the priests. Then it must be that he means that death was written and engraven in stones. But some will say, “This makes nonsense of the text.” Let us see. It is very easy to ascertain what was written and engraven in stone. Ex. 31:18 says that the Lord “gave to Moses, when he had made an end of communing with him upon Mount Sinai, two tables of testimony, tables of stone, written with the finger of God.” “And Moses turned, and went down from the mount, and the two tables of the testimony were in his hand. The tables were written on both their sides; on the one side and on the other were they written. And the tables were the work of God, and the writing was the writing of God, graven upon the tables.” Ex. 32:15, 16. These two tables were broken, and after Moses had, by the command of the Lord, made two other tables, he said, “And he [the Lord] wrote on the tables, according to the first writing, the ten commandments, which the Lord spake unto you in the mount, out of the midst of the fire, in the day of the assembly.” Deut. 10:4. These texts show that it was the ten commandments, and the ten commandments alone, that were written and engraven in stones; and therefore by the word “death,” in 2 Cor. 3:7, Paul must refer to the ten commandments.

But is it allowable to speak of the ten commandments as “death”? Are they death to anybody? It certainly is allowable, for they are death to all men, because all have sinned, and the “wages of sin is death.” The law is the cause of death to every sinner that shall perish, and so by metonymy it is called death. In like manner the sons of the prophets said of the poisonous gourds, “There is death [*i.e.*, a cause of death] in the pot” (2 Kings 4:40); and the Lord said that “the tree of the field is man’s life” (sustainer of life). Deut. 20:19. So when Paul describes his conviction as a sinner, he says of the law, “And

the commandment, which was ordained to life, I found to be unto death.” Rom. 7:10.

Thus we find that in every case of the word, the ministration of the old covenant was “the ministration of death.” We have found, then (1) that the law, which was the basis of the covenant, was death to all, and (2) that the ministration concerning that violated law offered no relief, but in itself tended to death.

Notwithstanding all this, there was a wonderful glory connected with the old covenant and its service. The giving of the law was attended with glory the like of which has never been seen on earth before or since, and will not be until the Lord shall come in the glory of his Father with all his angels. When Moses returned from the mount, his face was so glorified that the people could not look at it; and the glory of the Lord was present in the sanctuary to so great a degree that the priests were forced to obscure it with a cloud of incense, lest they should die.

NOW let us briefly outline the new covenant. Paul says that this was established upon “better promises.” Its terms are found in Heb. 8:8-12, which reads thus:—

“For finding fault with them, he saith, Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah; not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they continued not in my covenant, and I regarded them not, saith the Lord. For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts; and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people; and they shall not teach every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord; for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest. For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more.”

We find here the same condition as in the old covenant,—the people are to obey the law of God. But this covenant is established on “better promises” (Heb. 8:6) than the first, in that the Lord promises to forgive their sins, to write the law in their hearts, and to remember their iniquities no more. These things are all accomplished by virtue of Christ, who is the mediator of the new covenant. Heb. 8:9; 9:15. “The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin” (1

John 1:7), by securing the remission of past sins (Rom. 3:24, 25), and enabling us to walk in harmony with the law. Gal. 2:20; Eph. 2:10; Heb. 13:20, 21.

The law, then, is the basis of both covenants; hence it could not be done away with the old covenant, else there could be no new covenant. The terms of the new covenant leave no doubt on this point, and Christ's connection with it brings the fact out still more clearly. Thus Christ is the minister of this new covenant (Heb. 8:1, 2), and is now performing the ministration in the true sanctuary in heaven. Heb. 9:24. His ministration has reference to the law, for he came to save sinners (1 Tim. 1:15), and he is offering his blood to save men from sin. Rom. 3:24; 1 John 1:7; Matt. 1:21. This redemption we get through faith (Rom. 3:24), and faith establishes the law. Rom. 3:31. The law itself, having been violated, brings death; Christ redeems us from its curse (Gal. 3:13), and thus becomes our life. Col. 3:4.

Now note the contrast between the two covenants. The first had the ministration of death, because everything connected with it tended to death; the violated law was death to the sinner, and the earthly ministration freed no one from that condemnation. The second covenant has the ministration of the Spirit, because "the Lord is that Spirit" (2 Cor. 3:17), and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty and life. Gal. 6:8. But although there is no death in the second covenant, there is in the rejection of it, for the law is still death to sinners, and all who are opposed to Christ are sinners, and condemned to death; so Paul says that the letter of the new covenant kills. The reason is that holding the mere letter of the new covenant,—the performance of the gospel ordinances while not receiving Christ in the heart,—is really a rejection of Christ. Of the Lord's Supper, Paul says that he who does not discern the Lord's body, eats and drinks damnation to himself. 1 Cor. 11:20. He is in the same condition as though he had never heard of the new covenant. But in every case, whether of the sinner under the old covenant, or of one who rejects the new, it is the law that causes his death.

In the text under consideration Paul contrasts the two ministrations as to glory. If the ministration which could not cleanse from sin, was glorious, the ministration of the Spirit, which gives freedom from sin, must be more glorious. "If the ministration of condemnation be glory, much more doth the ministration of righteousness exceed in glory." 2 Cor. 3:9. And so much more

glorious is the ministration of the second covenant than that of the first, that in comparison the first covenant seems to have had no glory. Why the ministration of the second covenant should be so much more glorious than that of the first, is because it is established upon "better promises," and Christ is its minister.

"For if that which is done away was glorious, much more than which remaineth is glorious." 2 Cor. 3:11. Now what was done away? The answer must be that it is that which was glorious. Verse 9 states that it was the *ministration* of condemnation that was glorious. Then it must be the *ministration* of condemnation that was done away; that which remains is the ministration of the Spirit. By no possibility can verse 11 be made to refer to the law, because it contrasts something done away with something that remains. And we have found that the law is the basis of both covenants, and therefore it cannot have been done away but the *ministration* of the old covenant as well as the covenant itself was done away [in a dispensational sense the ministrations of the old covenant was abolished], as was indicated by the fading glory upon the countenance of Moses. But it needs no abstract reasoning to show that it is the tabernacle service, and that alone, to which the apostle refers in verse 11 as being "done away," for he says, "if that which is done away was glorious," showing by the "if" that he had before called attention to something glorious; and the only thing which he has so designated in this connection, is the *ministration* of death. Verse 7.

We think that any reader who carefully follows this brief exposition will be able to see for himself, on reading 2 Cor. 3:7-11 that the apostle is simply contrasting the glory of the *service* of the two covenants, and that the law of God is not under consideration at all, except by an incidental allusion which goes to show its permanent character.

About this time Waggoner published a wonderful little article in the editorial column of *The Present Truth* which connected the message of the new covenant with the high priestly role of Christ in the sanctuary. Although he never used the word sanctuary in the article he addressed the issue of Christ as Mediator of the new covenant.

Several denominational writers over the years sought to defend the Sabbath by saying that it was included in the new covenant because Christ kept the Sabbath before He died and thus confirmed it in His will upon His death. Once a person had died nothing could be

added to a person's testament or subtracted from it. Thus the Sabbath was confirmed in Christ's last will and testament by His blood on the cross.

But Waggoner refused to set up the analogy of a will and God's covenant. He said:

"Many theories and arguments have been built on the idea of a will which Christ made, and which came into force after His death, but not before; but all of them were wasted breath and energy; yes, worse than wasted, for they tend only to mislead the hearers or readers, instead of to instruct them."<sup>1</sup>

By this Waggoner means that a will leaves the impression that the new covenant is not in force until the death of Christ on the cross. This is a dispensational construct where the new covenant commences at the cross and is effective until the second advent.

This is exactly the use Uriah Smith and others<sup>2</sup> make of this argument that the covenant is Christ's will. Smith is trying to exclude Sunday-keeping because it is not included by Christ in His will/covenant before the cross. Smith's dispensational view of the change from the old covenant to the new covenant comes through clearly when he says:

". . . Christ's blood was actually shed upon the cross, and there the new covenant was ratified and sealed. . . .

"From that moment the new covenant was in *force*. . . .

"When a covenant is once confirmed, no change can be made in it, not an item can be added to it, and not an item can be taken from it."<sup>3</sup>

Waggoner saw through the dispensationalism of this argument and viewed it as faulty and unbiblical.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> E. J. Waggoner, "One Mediator," *PT* 16, 52 (December 27, 1900), p. 820.

<sup>2</sup> F. Hilliard said: "No provision whatever for the substitution of Sunday, the first day, in place of the seventh-day Sabbath, was made prior to the cross; therefore it never could be added this side of the cross. It comes in too late to find any place in the new covenant." *The Signs of the Times* [Australian] (September 18, 1906), p. 458. Cf. F. L. Sharp, "The Two Covenants," *The Signs of the Times* [Australian] (September 30, 1907), p. 615.

<sup>3</sup> U. Smith, "Was the New Covenant Made with the Gentiles?" *The Signs of the Times* [Australian] 22 (August 12, 1907), 503. Emphasis added.

<sup>4</sup> This same argument is used today in Adventist evangelism to support the seventh day Sabbath being included within the new covenant. See Joe Crews, *Why the Old Covenant Failed* (Amazing Facts, Inc., 1980), pp. 21-22.

The text used to support this argument was Hebrews 9:17, "For a testament is of force after men are dead: otherwise it is of no strength at all while the testator liveth." The Greek *diatheke* is translated as "testament" in the Authorized Version. However, *diatheke* is translated "covenant" from Hebrews 8:6-9:1. Then from Hebrews 9:15-18 *diatheke* is translated "testament." In the remainder of Hebrews 9:19ff., the King James Version goes back to "covenant." *Diatheke* should have been consistently translated "covenant" through Hebrews 9:15-18. *Diatheke* does mean a "will" or "last testament" in these verses.

The Hebrew word for "covenant" is *berith*. It never means "testament." Wherever the Hebrew word *berith* is found in the Hebrew Bible, the Greek Septuagint translates it *diatheke*. The Apostle means "covenant" by using the word *diatheke* in Hebrews 9:15-18.

The Apostle's main point is that a "covenant" is confirmed or ratified by the death of a victim. "For where a covenant exists, the death of that which has ratified it is necessary to be produced; because a covenant is firm over dead victims, since it was never valid when that which ratifies it lives" (Hebrews 9:17, *Emphatic Diaglott*). When Jesus died upon the cross and said, "It is finished," the covenant between the Father was fully legitimized and made legally binding in the eyes of the universe and the Adversary. The two thousand-year-old promise and oath of the Abrahamic covenant was legally confirmed by the blood of the Son of Man.

To allow the idea of a last will and testament which became effective upon the death of a Testator into the text is to change the meaning of *diatheke*. This interpretation was unfortunately endorsed by *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*. "A will has no force whatever so long as the testator lives. For it to become effective, the testator must die."<sup>5</sup> It was in no case true that a will came into force in New Testament times upon the death of a testator. For example, the prodigal son demanded the inheritance of his father and received it before the testator's death.

To use this argument of a "testament" in Hebrews 9:17 is to play right into the hands of the dispensationalists. Stanley W. Paher observes:

"As part of the popular theology of the establishment of a new-in-kind covenant after the death of Christ, there is often an appeal to

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<sup>5</sup> F. D. Nichol, ed., *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, Vol. 7, p. 454.

Hebrews 9:15-18 to set forth the notion that, in God's plan for man's redemption, He established a 'last will and testament' as part of a proper understanding of the nature of law. . . .

"The two-covenant advocates insist that *diatheke* be translated 'testament,' to allow a new law given by Christ to be instituted alongside a new covenant, just as the law of Moses was the legal auxiliary to an old covenant."<sup>6</sup>

It will be noted in the subsequent survey how this erroneous understanding has played a key role in Adventist evangelism to support the idea that the Sabbath is part of the new covenant.

"And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses; blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross; and having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it. Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of a holyday, or of the new moon, or of the Sabbath days; which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ." Col. 2:13-17.

The text, like Eph. 2:15, 16, is often misapplied; it cannot, however, be applied to those things contained in the ten commandments, unless the texts which show the enduring nature of that law are either forgotten or ignored. The ten commandments were graven on tables of stone, by the finger of God. See Ex. 32:15, 16; Deut. 4:12, 13. Now the Bible is a consistent book, and has respect to the fitness of things; but it is evident enough that there would be no fitness in speaking of "blotting out" something that was chiseled in the rock. Neither is it an appropriate figure to speak of nailing tables of stone to a cross. Therefore even if the Bible did not assure us that the commandments of God "stand fast forever and ever," we should know that the apostle has in this text no reference whatever to the law of God. The things which God gave through Moses were written in a book, and only in a book; consequently it is perfectly appropriate to speak of blotting them out. If it be objected that the ten commandments were also written by Moses in a book, we reply that that makes no difference; since the ten commandments were

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<sup>6</sup> Stanley W. Paher, *The Covenant of Peace* (Las Vegas, Nevada: Nevada Publications, 1996), p. 55.

engraved in stone, they could not be blotted out even though all the books in the world were destroyed.

The fact that the thing here spoken of came to an end by the cross of Christ, should cause us to conclude that the same thing is here spoken of that is spoken of in Eph. 2:15, 16 as having been abolished “in his flesh.” In this text it is said to have been “contrary;” in the other it is called “enmity;” and Peter called it a burdensome yoke. This, Paul says, was “against us.” But the law of God is holy, and just, and good in its requirements. We conclude, therefore, that the “handwriting of ordinances,” which was nailed to the cross of Christ, was the Levitical law. The ceremonies were typical of the sacrifice of Christ, and when that sacrifice was actually made on the cross, the types at the same time ceased.

We notice that because these ordinances have been blotted out, therefore we are not to be judged concerning certain things. This indicates that those things were part of the ordinances. Paul enumerates them as meats and drinks, feast days, new moons, and sabbaths; “which are a shadow of things to come.” The very enumeration of these things shows us that the law of God is not here under discussion, for none of these things formed a part of it. It is true that the fourth commandment is concerning the Sabbath; but the Sabbath of the fourth commandment dates from creation (compare Ex. 20:8-11; Gen. 2:2, 3), before the fall of man made the coming of Christ a necessity; while the sabbaths mentioned in Colossians were shadows of things in the work of Christ. These sabbaths are given in Lev. 23, in the ceremonial law. They occurred only once a year, and were—the first and seventh days of unleavened bread (Lev. 23:5-8); the day of Pentecost (verses 15-21); the first day of the seventh month, being the memorial of blowing of trumpets (verses 24, 25); the tenth day of the seventh month, or the day of atonement (verses 27-32); and the first and eighth days of the feast of tabernacles. Verses 34-36.

All these days, as is seen at once in the case of the passover and the day of atonement, were feast days typifying certain parts of Christ’s mediatorial work for sinners. Of them the Lord said: “These are the feasts of the Lord, which ye shall proclaim to be holy convocations, to offer an offering made by fire unto the Lord a burnt offering, and a meat offering, a sacrifice, and drink offerings, everything upon his day.” Lev. 23:37. Notice: The Lord said to Moses, “These are the feast days. . . which ye shall proclaim to be holy

convocations.” These are some of the things which God gave by the hand of Moses (Neh. 9:14); but the Sabbath of the fourth commandment was proclaimed by God’s own voice. This distinction is plainly marked, for after enumerating the ceremonial sabbaths which were to be observed by the people, the Lord added: “Beside the Sabbaths of the Lord.” Lev. 23:38. This shows beyond all question that the sabbaths which ceased when the “handwriting of ordinances” was blotted out, were the ceremonial sabbaths, and consequently that it was not the moral law, but the ceremonial law, which constituted that “handwriting of ordinances.”<sup>7</sup>

In addition to these proofs, it may not be amiss to cite the following statements of learned commentators, to show that the same proofs were conclusive to their minds also. Says Dr. Clark:—

“The apostle speaks here in reference to some particulars of the handwriting of ordinances, which had been taken away, viz., the distinction of meats and drinks, what was clean and what unclean, according to the law; and the necessity of observing certain holy days or festivals, such as the new moons and particular sabbaths, or those which should be observed with more than ordinary solemnity. . . . There is no intimation here that the Sabbath was done away, or that its moral use was suspended, by the introduction of Christianity. I have shown elsewhere that, ‘Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy,’ is a command of perpetual obligation.”

Dr. Barnes also says on the same point:—

“There is no evidence, from this passage, that he would teach that there was no obligation to observe any holy time, for there is not the slightest reason to believe that he meant to declare that one of the ten commandments had ceased to be binding on mankind. If he had used the word in the singular number—‘the Sabbath,’ it would then, of course, have been clear that he meant to affirm that that commandment ceased to be binding, and that a Sabbath was no longer to be observed. But the use of the term in the plural number, and the connection, show that he had his eye on the great number of days which were observed by the Hebrews as festivals, as a part of their ceremonial and typical law, and not on the moral law, or the ten

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<sup>7</sup> “The mercy seat, upon which the glory of God rested in the holiest of all, is opened to all who accept Christ as the propitiation for sin, and through its medium, they are brought into fellowship with God. The veil is rent, the partition walls broken down, the handwriting of ordinances cancelled. By virtue of His blood the enmity is abolished.” {SD 228.3}

commandments. No part of the moral law, no one of the ten commandments, could be spoken of as 'a shadow of things to come.' These commandments are, from the nature of moral law, of perpetual and universal obligation."

A few words now concerning the different relations which the people sustained toward the moral law and toward the ceremonial law. The moral law was of primary obligation, and it was binding upon all men alike. The Gentile as well as the Jew was under obligation to worship God, to keep his Sabbath, and to abstain from murder, adultery, and theft. It was the moral law which convicted men of sin (Rom. 7:7), and which showed all the world to be guilty before God. Rom. 3:9.

The ceremonial law, on the other hand, was not of primary obligation. Having reference only to the mediatorial work of Christ, it had no existence before man fell. Moreover it was not of universal obligation. It would have been thought sacrilegious for an uncircumcised person, an idolater, or an atheist, to attempt to engage in the Jewish ceremonies. Yet whenever a Gentile accepted the true religion, he was, through circumcision, admitted on an equal footing with the Jew. Where, then, in individual experience, did the ceremonial law come in? Read what Paul says of Abraham, in this connection:—

"We say that faith was reckoned to Abraham for righteousness. How was it then reckoned? when he was in circumcision, or in uncircumcision? Not in circumcision, but in uncircumcision. And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had yet being uncircumcised." Rom. 4:9-11.

From this we learn, what none will deny, that circumcision and its kindred ceremonies, while they pointed forward to the real work of Christ, did not precede faith in Christ. They were the means by which the people signified that faith which was necessary before they could participate in them. To the man who had never heard of Christ, those ceremonies were meaningless; but to the one who had faith in Christ and his promised work for man, they were a beautiful means of expressing that faith.

The moral law, being of primary and universal obligation, would be impressed by the Holy Spirit on the heart of a heathen. By it he would see himself to be a sinner. Earnestly seeking freedom from condemnation, he would find that the Messiah for whose coming the pious Jews looked with longing hearts, was the only one who could

take away his sin. Joyfully seizing upon this hope, he would separate himself from his heathen associates; by circumcision he would signify the putting off of his own sinful habits; and henceforth, so long as he retained his faith in Christ, he would gladly manifest that faith, and with each manifestation thereof quicken it into renewed activity, by celebrating the ordinances which prefigured the promised sacrifice and atonement of Christ.

But when the reality came, the types ceased. Not so the moral law, the ten commandments of God. Being the foundation of God's Government, there was nothing in them of a fleeting or shadowy nature. They still remain of primary, universal, and eternal obligation. They still convict of sin; and he who by them is convinced of his need of One who can save from sin, may still come to a Saviour who has suffered for sin, and may obtain pardon. Through the ordinances of the Lord's house,—baptism and the Lord's Supper,—he may show his faith in a sacrifice already made, until his promised redemption is consummated by the return of his Lord; and then from Sabbath to Sabbath he may worship before the Lord, and see his face; and the law, which stands fast forever and ever, will witness to his loyalty to the Creator.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> E. J. Waggoner, "The Handwriting of Ordinances," *The Signs of the Times* 12, 16 (April 22, 1886) pp. 247, 248.