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**SERMONS AND TRACTS OF JOHN GILL**  
**GOD'S LAW**

**The Law in the Hand of Christ**

**DEUTERONOMY 20:5**

*by John Gill*

*(London: George Keith, 1761)*

*Thou hast given a standard to them that fear thee;  
that it may be displayed because of the truth*

— Psalm 60:4

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# SERMON 32

## THE LAW IN THE HAND OF CHRIST

### A SERMON,

*Preached May 24, 1761, at Broad-Mead, in Bristol.*

#### ~~(5015)~~ DEUTERONOMY 10:5

*And I turned myself and came down from the mount, and put the tables in the ark which I had made; and there they be, as the Lord commanded me.*

MOSES being called up to mount *Sinai*, the Lord delivered to him two tables of stone, with the writing of the law upon them; when he descended from thence, perceiving that the children of *Israel* had sinned, by making and worshipping the golden calf, in great indignation at it, he cast them out of his hands, and broke them at the bottom of the mount: for this sin wrath came upon the people, and many of them fell by the sword of the sons of *Levi*; upon which *Moses* had compassion on them, and entreated the Lord for them; who promised to make his goodness before him, and proclaim his name gracious and merciful; and ordered him to hew two tables of stone like the first, and come up into the mount, and bring them with him, and he would write upon them the same words which were on the first; and also directed him to make an ark of shittim wood to put them in; all which he did: for having hewed two tables of stone, he carried them up to God in the mount, who wrote on them the ten commandments, according to the first writing, and gave them to *Moses*; who having received them, *turned himself*, as our text says, from the place where the divine Majesty was; *and came down from the mount*, from mount *Sinai*, with the two tables in his hands, and the, writing of God on them, one table in one hand, and the other in the other hand; *and put the tables in the ark which he had made*, or ordered to be made by *Bezaleel*; for it was the same with that he made, and not a temporary one made for the present purpose till that was finished: *and there they be as the Lord commanded me*; there the two tables were when *Moses* rehearsed what is contained in this book on the plains of *Moab*, which was about eight and thirty years after the delivery

and renewal of the tables on mount *Sinai*; and here they were in *Solomon's* time, when the ark was brought into the temple built by him; and when, as it is said,

there was nothing in it, save the two tables of stone which Moses put there at Horeb; (1 Kings 8)

and here they continued as long as the ark was in being. ***In discoursing on these words, and in order to improve them to some spiritual purposes, I shall consider,***

- I. The ark *Moses* made, into which the tables were put, as a type of Christ.
- II. What was put into the ark, the two tables of stone on which the law was written.
- III. What the putting of the tables into the ark signified; and,
- IV. The continuance of them there; *there they be as the Lord commanded me.*

***I. The ark may be considered as a type of Christ, both with respect to the names and epithets given unto it, and with respect to the matter of which it was made.***

*First*, There is an agreement between that and Christ, in the names and titles by which it is called; its general name is an *ark* or chest, such an one in which men put their wealth and riches, their gold and silver, their jewels and precious stones, and whatsoever is of worth and value: in *Christ* are put and *hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, all the riches of grace and glory* besides the fullness of the Godhead which dwells bodily in him, it has pleased the Father that all fullness of grace should dwell in him, for the supply of the wants of his people in all ages of time; he *is full of grace and full of truth*; there is a fullness of justifying grace and righteousness in him, a fullness of pardoning grace, a fullness of sanctifying and persevering grace; and from him and by him does the Lord supply the need of his people, according to his riches in glory, or glorious riches which are in him.

The ark is sometimes called *the ark of God*, (1 Samuel 4, 11, 13, 17, 19, 21, 22) being made by his order and direction, and for his service and

worship, and was his property: Christ, as a divine person, is the Son of God, his own Son, his proper Son; as mediator, he was set up, constituted, and invested with this office, by him; as man, he prepared a body for him in council and covenant, and in time actually formed the human nature, and filled and adorned it with the gifts and graces of his Spirit. Sometimes it goes by the name of the ark of his strength,

Arise, O Lord God, into thy resting-place; thou, and the ark of thy strength. (~~406B~~2 Chronicles 6:41)

Christ is both the mighty God and the mighty man, the man of God's right hand, whom he has made strong for himself and for his people; in whom there is not only righteousness, but strength for them, to enable them to exercise every grace, to bear up under every affliction, to withstand every temptation, to oppose every sin, and to perform every duty of religion; for though they can do nothing of themselves, yet they can do all things through the strength of Christ communicated to them. The ark is also called *the ark of the covenant*, (~~380B~~Hebrews 9:4) because the law or testimony, which sometimes has the name of *a covenant*, was put into it: and not only the law has been fulfilled in Christ, but the covenant of grace was made with him, as the head and representative of his people, and is kept and stands fast with him; he is the surety, mediator, and messenger of it, yea, the covenant itself; he is the sum and substance of it; all the blessings of it are in his hands, and all the promises of it are yea and amen in him. The ark has the epithet of *holy* given to it; *Josiah* ordered the Levites to put the *holy ark* into the temple built by *Solomon*: (~~48B~~2 Chronicles 35:3) Christ is the holy one of God, holy in his divine nature, glorious in the perfection of his holiness, and is such as is not to be found in creatures, angels, or men there is none holy as he is; the *seraphim* cover their faces when they celebrate this perfection of his; he is holy in his human nature, that is the holy thing born of the virgin, without the spot and blemish of original sin; he was holy and harmless in his life and conversation here on earth, did no sin, nor was conscious of any; and he is the fountain and source of all holiness to his people; and *is of God made unto them sanctification, as well as wisdom, righteousness, and redemption*; to all which may be added, that the ark is called the glory of God, the face of God, and Jehovah himself; (~~378B~~Psalm 78:61 and ~~19A50B~~Psalm 105:4; ~~040B~~Numbers 10:35, 36) being a symbol of his presence: Christ is the brightness his Father's glory, the angel of his presence, and Jehovah our righteousness.

*Secondly*, The ark may be considered as a type of Christ, with respect to the matter of which it was made; it was made of wood, even of shittim wood, and that covered with gold: it being of wood, may denote the meanness of Christ in the human nature; *when he was found in fashion as a man*; in his state of humiliation, he appeared *in the form of a servant*, and was of no reputation among men, emptied himself, as it were, and seemed as if he was stripped of the glories of Deity, which were hid under the coarse veil of humanity; he took upon him all our sinless infirmities, *was in all things made like unto us, excepting sin*; hence he was disesteemed of by men, despised and rejected by them, yea rejected from being a man; was scarcely allowed the name of a man; and was reckoned a worm, and no man. It being Shittim wood of which the ark was made, and which was incorruptible and durable, may signify the incorruption of Christ, even in the human nature; for though he was crucified through weakness, died the death of the cross, and was laid in the grave, yet he was not left there so long as to see corruption; though he was dead, he was soon raised from the dead, and now lives for evermore. *Melchizedek* was an eminent type of Christ, *he having neither beginning of days, as God, nor end of life now as man*; and having *an unchangeable priesthood*, (~~scrib~~ Hebrews 7:2, 24, 25) which does not pass from one to another, and in which there is no succession. Christ is durable, even everlasting in his person, offices, grace, and fullness, and in the efficacy of his blood, righteousness, and sacrifice. The wood of which the ark was made, being covered with gold, and having a crown of gold on it, may point at Christ, whose head, the principal nature in him, is as the most fine gold; and who as mediator has a crown of pure gold set on his head by his divine Father, and whom we now see by faith crowned with glory and honour in the human nature in heaven. It may be expressive of the richness of Christ as man and mediator, whose riches of grace and glory are unsearchable; and of the worth and value believers in him put upon him, and of the high esteem he is had in by them, and how exceeding precious he is to them.

There are one or two things more, which though not reducible to either of the above heads, yet are worthy of notice; as that the ark was portable, and might be carried on occasion from place to place, as it sometimes was; for which purpose it had rings at the four corners of it, two on each side of it, and staves provided to put into those rings: and which also were made of Shittim wood covered with gold, and were emblems of the ministry of the word, and of the ministers of it who, though mean in themselves, are

adorned and enriched with the gifts and graces of the Spirit of God, and have the rich treasure of the gospel put into their earthen vessels; and are chosen vessels, as the apostle *Paul* was, to hear the name and gospel of Christ in the world, and carry it about from place to place; so the disciples of Christ carried it through all the cities of *Israel*, and from *Judea* into the Gentile world, and through the several parts of it; and it was brought from the eastern into the western parts of the world, and at length to these northern isles of our. Moreover, let it be observed, that there was but one ark. Some Jewish writers<sup>f1</sup> think there were two arks; one that *Bezaleel* made, and this made by *Moses*; the one had the tables in it, and the other went out to battle on occasion: but for this there is no foundation. There was but one ark, and so there is but one Son of God, the only begotten of the Father; *one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus*; one Saviour and Redeemer; *the same today, yesterday, and for ever*; there is none besides him; there is *no other name given under heaven among men whereby they must be saved*. In this ark is salvation, and no where else.

***II. I shall next consider what were put into the ark, two tables of stone, with the Law written upon them by the Lord himself; and may inquire into the matter, number, writing, and form of them.***

**1st**, The matter of them; they were of stone; of what stone is not said, nor is it of any great avail to know what it was. Some Jewish writers<sup>f2</sup> will have them, at least the first tables, to be of the sapphire stone, which is not probable; and what they ground it upon is not sufficient to support it, namely, <sup>(1240)</sup>*Exodus 24:10* where the elders of *Israel* are said to see the God of *Israel*; and *there was under his feet as it were a paved work of a sapphire stone*: it is more probable these tables were marble slabs, since there was a great quantity of marble in those parts; and the rock at *Sinai* was a marble rock; granite marble of a reddish color, as appears at this day;<sup>f3</sup> and one of the paraphrast<sup>f4</sup> expressly calls them two marble tables however, it is certain they were tables of stone, to which the apostle opposes the *fleshy tables of the heart*. (<sup>(400)</sup>2 Corinthians 3:3) Now their being of stone may denote either,

**1.** The hardness of the heart of man, which is called a stony *heart*, (<sup>(335)</sup>Ezekiel 36:26) and is as hard as a piece of the nether millstone; as hard as the adamant stone, which is the hardest of all stones: it is obdurate and obstinate, inflexible, and not subject to the law of God; nor can it be, without the powerful and efficacious grace of God is exerted on it, and

makes it pliable, and bends it to it: without this men live and die in the hardness of their hearts, and *after their hard and impenitent heart treasure up wrath against the day of wrath, and righteous judgment of God.* Or rather these tables being of stone denote

2. The firmness, stability, and duration of the law, which is invariable, unalterable, unchangeable, and eternal:

Concerning thy testimonies, says David, I have known of old, that thou hast founded them for ever; (~~1015~~ Psalm 119:152)

they were made to continue for ever; and they do, and will continue for ever, even as long as there is any use for them in the world; they are more unalterable and unchangeable than the laws of the Medes and Persians. The law is not destroyed by Christ., but. fulfilled by him; not a jot or tilde of it has failed, but all has been fulfilled: and whoever breaks, or teaches men to break, the least of the commandments of it, *shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven*, be reprov'd and chastis'd, if not punished for it. This must be understood, not with respect to the ministry of the law by *Moses*; as such as it has ceased, and the cessation of it as a ministry of his, was signified by the casting the tables out of his hands, and the breaking of them. *The law was given by Moses*, and as it was a ministration of his, it concerned the Jews only; it was given to him for them, and it was given by him to them, and to them only; and ceased as such when their church and civil state were at an end, and the gospel-dispensation took place; when *grace and truth*, the doctrine of grace and truth, *came by Jesus Christ*: (~~1017~~ John 1:17) *the law and the prophets*, as ministered by *Moses*, and them, *were until John*, the forerunner of Christ, and Christ himself came, and ministered, and held forth both law and gospel in a different manner; wherefore, when *Moses* the giver of the law, and *Elias* the chief of the prophets, were with Christ when transfigured on the mount, a voice came from the excellent glory, saying,

This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased, hear ye HIM; (~~1018~~ Matthew 17:5)

not *Moses* nor *Elias*, but *HIM*, and *HIM* only. *Moses* was the lawgiver to the Jews, but Christ is the lawgiver to us Christians. The Jews boasted that they were the disciples of *Moses*, but our greatest glory is, that we are the disciples of Jesus: when we say, therefore, that the law is immutable and unalterable, it must be understood not of the ministry of it, but of the

matter of it, and that as moral; for whatsoever of a ceremonial kind may be thought to be in it, there is a disannulling of that, because of the weakness and unprofitableness of it; but whatever is of a moral nature in both tables, is unchangeable and eternal; whatever was *holy, just, and good*, under the former dispensation, or in ages past, is so now. The first table of the law concerns the worship of the one true and living God, and the reverence that is due to his name; and though the time and place of worship, and the outward forms and rites of it are alterable things, yet worship itself, as it is of a moral and spiritual nature, and consists of acts of devotion to God, of prayer to him and praises of him, and lies in acts of faith in him, fear of him, and a reverential affection for him, and obedience to him, is the same in all ages, unchangeable and unalterable. The second table of the law respects our neighbors, and our conduct towards them; and whatever was injurious to their characters, persons and properties in former times, is so still, and ever will be, and to be carefully avoided; and particularly the firmness, the constancy, stability, and durableness of the law, are to be understood of it, as it is in the hands of Christ, the king and lawgiver in his house, where it abides firm and sure, unalterably fixed, and is held forth by him as a rule of walk to his people under the gospel-dispensation; so that they are *not without law to God, but under the law to Christ*. (<sup>4121</sup>1 Corinthians 9:21)

**2dly**, The number of these tables deserves some notice, which are *two*, as containing the distinct duties which are owing both to *God* and *man*. Our Lord accordingly has reduced the several commandments on them to *two* general comprehensive ones, in answer to the question put by the scribe,

Which is the great commandment in the law? Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, and with all thy mind: This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets. (<sup>4126</sup>Matthew 22:36-40)

Moreover to these two tables answer the tables of the *heart* and *mind*, on which the law is re-inscribed in regeneration and conversion: according to the promise in the covenant of grace,

I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts; (<sup>3880</sup>Hebrews 8:10)



and though the mind and heart are in effect the same, yet they are distinctly mentioned, and as it should seem with reference to the two tables of the law; and the apostle, when he puts in contrast the tables of stone on which the law was written, and the fleshly tables of the heart on which the epistle of Christ is written, uses the plural number. (~~ARB~~2 Corinthians 3:3)

*3dly*, The writing on them, what it was, and whose it was; what was written on the tables, were the Decalogue or the ten words; the same which the Lord spoke with an audible voice on mount *Sinai*, in the hearing of the children of *Israel*; the same he wrote on two tables of stone, plainly and legibly, that they might be easily read, and that even *he that ran might read them*, and that they might remain and be read in after ages; for *litera scripta manet*; and that they might remain unalterable, as *Pilate* said, concerning the inscription he put on the cross of Christ, *What I have written, I have written*; (~~ARB~~John 19:22) signifying that it should continue as it was, and not be altered; so what God has written, he has written, and it shall remain so without any alteration and this writing, both on the former tables and on these latter tables, were the Lord's own writing, written by the finger of God himself; *Moses* wrote nothing, he only brought the two tables hewed, but quite empty and destitute of any thing on them; what was written was by the Lord himself: so the re-inscription of them on the hearts of men in regeneration is the Lord's own work, according to his promise; they

are the epistle of Christ, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; (~~ARB~~2 Corinthians 3:3)

it is not men nor ministers that inscribe these things on the fleshly tables of the heart, but the Lord himself; it is not by might or power of man, but by the Spirit of the Lord of hosts: and what was written on these renewed tables of stone, was exactly the same that was written on the former; the same laws in the same words and in the same letters. The law of God is the same, let it be where and when it will: the same law as moral was written on the heart of *Adam* in innocence: and the remains of the same law are to be observed by the Gentiles, since

they do by nature the things contained in the law, which shew the work of the law written in their hearts: (~~ARB~~Romans 2:14, 15)

and the same is written again by the Spirit of God in the hearts of his people in conversion; and it is the same law which was in the heart of

Christ, and he became subject to, and is the fulfilling end of, for righteousness to those that believe in him.

**4thly**, The form of them; they were slabs of marble, hewed and formed into tables by *Moses*; but the matter of them was still the same they were tables of stone, denoting the same things as before, and which have been observed; and the hewing of them by *Moses* may denote the greater polishing of the law, or the brighter edition of it by him; it is but a rough draught of it, which is found written on the hearts of the Gentiles; but the law as delivered to *Moses* and given forth by him, was such as no nation under the sun had, besides the Israelites; What *nation is there so great*, says *Moses*,

that hath statutes and judgments so righteous, as all this law which I set before you this day? (~~4018~~Deuteronomy 4:8)

The Psalmist *David* likewise takes notice of the distinguishing kindness of God to *Israel*, in giving them his word, statutes, and judgments, which he did not to others and for which therefore they had reason to praise the Lord, and which he thus expresses:

He sheweth his word unto Jacob, his statutes and his judgments unto Israel. He hath not dealt so with any nation; and as for his judgments, they have not known them. Praise ye the Lord.  
(~~4579~~Psalm 147:19, 20)

And the apostle *Paul* enumerating the peculiar privileges of the children of *Israel*, reckons among them *the giving of the law, and the service of God*; (~~4804~~Romans 9:4) in the enjoyment of which they had the advantage and the preference to the nations of the world.

**III. I proceed to shew what the putting the tables into the ark signified. And this denotes,**

**1st**, The being of the law in the heart of Christ, of which he himself says to his God and father, *Thy law is within my heart*; (~~4918~~Psalm 40:8) where it was in a much higher sense than it was in the hearts of the Gentiles, who by nature do the things in it; or than it was in heart of *Adam* in his innocent state or than it is in the heart of a regenerate man. And its being in his heart, is expressive of the perfect knowledge he has of it: as a divine person, he is omniscient and knows all things, as mediator; the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hid in him; and the spirit of wisdom and

understanding, of counsel and knowledge rest upon him; as man, he was filled with wisdom, and increased in it; and as he spoke such words of wisdom and grace as never man did, being full of doctrines of grace and truth, so he had such knowledge of the law as never man had. This appears from his ready answer to the scribe, which he delivered in so full and concise a manner, when he questioned him about which was the greatest commandment in the law, before observed. It denotes also his strong and cordial affection for it. *David* describes a good man, and some think the Messiah, as one

whose delight is in the law of the Lord, and in his law doth he meditate day and night: (~~1900C~~ Psalm 1:2)

and of himself, and from his own experience, he could say,

O how love I thy law, it is my meditation all the day;  
(~~1900B~~ Psalm 109:97)

in which, as in other things, he was a type of Christ: and if every man that is born again delights in the law of God after the inward man, and takes pleasure in obedience to it, much more must Christ, whose *meat and drink it was to do the will of him that sent him*; (~~1900B~~ John 4:34) one part of which was to obey and fulfill the law of God. Yea this includes and supposes complete conformity of heart and nature, of life and conversation in Christ unto it. There is a most perfect agreement between him and that. Is that holy? so was he in heart and life, Is that just? he is Jesus Christ the righteous. Is that good? he is good, and did good, and went about constantly doing good. Does the law require a holy nature perfectly free from sin? It is to be found in Christ, who is *holy, harmless, and undefiled, and separate from sinners*; free from the spot of original sin, and from any blemish of actual transgression. Does it demand and insist on sinless obedience? This is to be met with in none of *Adam's* race, only in Christ, who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth.

**2dly**, The putting the two tables of the law into the ark, signifies Christ's subjection to the law, which was not only in him, but he was under that. As a Jew, he was under the civil law: a Jew he was by birth; the *Shiloh* that was to come, and did come from the tribe of *Judah*; from which tribe the whole body of the nation were denominated Jews. He was of the family of *David*, which was of that tribe. He was born at *Bethlehem Ephratah*, or *Bethlehem of Judah*: so that as the apostle says, *it is evident that our Lord*

*sprang out of Judah;* (<sup><8174</sup>Hebrews 7:14) and was a native of that land, and strictly and properly a Jew; and as such was subject to the laws of his country; and even when it was reduced to a Roman province, and obliged to pay tribute to the Roman governors, and which he did not refuse to do; for as he taught men to give to *Cæsar* the things which were *Cæsar's*, he did the same himself, and even wrought a miracle to perform it: for when the receivers of tribute came to *Peter* for it, he ordered him to cast his hook into the sea, and out of the first fish that came up, to take a piece of money, and pay the tribute for him and himself; so far was he from being chargeable with the imputation laid upon him, that he was an enemy to *Cæsar*, a stirrer up of sedition, a perverter of the nation, and forbad the people to give tribute to *Cæsar*. As he was a son of *Abraham*, he was under the ceremonial law, and subject to that; so he was throughout the whole course of his life: he was circumcised the eighth day, presented by his parents to the Lord in the temple at the proper time, and went up to *Jerusalem* with them to keep the pass-over, when but twelve years of age; we often hear of him at the Jewish festivals in their synagogues and temple, attending the service of them; and one of the last actions of his life was keeping the pass-over with his disciples before he suffered. The ceremonies of the law were shadows of him, of which he was the body and substance, and had their accomplishment in him. As a creature, as a man, he was under the moral law, and subject to that, as every man is and ought to be: being made of a woman, or born of one, he was in course *made under the law*; and *being found in fashion as a man*, he was in the form of a servant, and under obligation to do duty and service, to *fear God and keep his commandments*, which is *the whole duty of man*, (<sup><2073</sup>Ecclesiastes 7:13) or the duty of every man:<sup>f5</sup> especially he was under this law, and obliged to obey it, as he was the surety of his people. That he became their surety is certain; hence he is called the *surety of a better testament*: (<sup><8172</sup>Hebrews 7:22) he engaged in the covenant of grace, which is the better testament, to be the bondsman of his people, to pay their debts for them, to satisfy divine justice, to redeem and save them, to bring them back, and restore them, and set them before his divine Father; all which could not be done without fulfilling the law. This was a principal part of the will of God, which he agreed to do, saying, *Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire*, such as were of a ceremonial kind, they being insufficient to atone for sin, and take it away; but the sacrifice of himself, body and soul, he did desire, which was typified by the sin-offerings and burnt-offerings under the law;

Then said I, Lo I come, in the volume of the book it is written of me; I delight to do thy will, O my God; (~~1946~~ Psalm 40:6-8)

which was to offer himself a victim to divine justice, and be subject both to the precepts and penalty of the law, which as a surety for sinners he was obliged to be, and was: he was subject to the precepts of the law, and strictly observed them; he did always the things which pleased his Father, and all things that were pleasing to him, even his whole will and pleasure, and omitted nothing which he commanded and required; by which means he was fit to be a sacrifice for sin, since in him was no sin: he was not guilty of any breach of the law, in thought, word, or deed, and hereby became a proper pattern and example for his people to copy after; for though they are not able perfectly to conform to him as such, yet he is worthy of their imitation in all they can and it becomes them *to walk even as he walked*, (~~1006~~ 1 John 2:6) though they can only do it in an imperfect manner: and besides the precepts of the law, as the sinner's surety, he was subject to the penalty of it; for though, as a mere creature, and a sinless man, he was only bound to keep the commands of the law; yet as a surety for sinners he was obliged to bear the penalty of it in their room and stead, which they through disobedience to the law were liable to, which penalty is death,

In the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die;  
(~~1007~~ Genesis 2:17)

which is not only true of the first sin of man, but of every other, for *the wages of sin is death*; (~~1023~~ Romans 7:23) not death corporal only, but death eternal, or the wrath of God, which comes upon the children of disobedience, even on every one that has no share in the suretiship of Christ; but for whomsoever he became a surety, for them he became obedient unto death, and bore the curse of the law and wrath of God, and thereby delivered them from it.

**3dly**, The putting the tables into the ark, signified Christ's fulfillment of the law in the room and instead of his people. He not only had it in him, and was made under it, but he perfectly fulfilled it. This it became him to do as a surety; *it became him indeed to fulfill all righteousness*, civil, ceremonial, and moral, but especially the latter; since his work and business was, as a surety, to bring in everlasting righteousness for the justification of his people, and thereby justly and truly merit and claim the character of *the*

*Lord our righteousness.* He came into the world in our nature, to fulfill the moral law and righteousness of it:

Think not, says he, that I am come to destroy the law or the prophets; I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill.

(~~4157~~ Matthew 5:17)

Some of the Jews thought that Christ was an Antinomian, as these words plainly shew; just as some ignorant persons now reckon the faithful ministers of the gospel to be: and if our Lord himself was so ill thought of, it need not seem strange that his faithful followers should have each a brand of infamy fastened upon them: but certain it is, that Christ came not with such an intent, nor did he do anything in doctrine or practice which tended to destroy the law, but every thing which served to fulfill it; being sent

in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin condemned sin in the flesh, that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us,

(~~4188~~ Romans 8:3, 4)

as represented by him. And this is done, and effectually done; he is *become the end of the law*, the fulfilling end of the law *for righteousness to every one that believeth.* (~~4504~~ Romans 10:4) This is completely done; it is finished, and was finished when he died the death of the cross: and hereby *the law is magnified, and made honourable;* (~~2322~~ Isaiah 42:21) more so by the obedience and sufferings of the Son of God, than by the obedience of angels in heaven, or of *Adam* in paradise, or by the sufferings of the damned in hell to all eternity; the obedience and sufferings of these being that of creatures, whereas the righteousness that Christ has brought in and yielded to the law, is the righteousness of God; not only what is approved of by God, and accepted with him, and imputed by him to his people, but is what was wrought by him, who is God as well as man: and though his suffering the penalty of the law was in the human nature, yet in that nature as in union with the Son of God: whence the law has had such a glory put upon it, and an honour done it, it never otherwise could have had; wherefore we should look not to our own righteousness as justifying, which is but filthy rags, but to the righteousness of Christ, which he is the author of, and is in him; and who was

made sin for his people, that they might be made the righteousness of God in him. (~~4152~~ 2 Corinthians 5:21)

**IV. *The last thing to be considered is, the continuance of the tables in the ark;*** which remained there until the time that *Moses* was about to die, even many years after they had been put there; and they remained there many ages after that; and which may signify the abiding of the law in the hands of Christ, the anti-type of the ark, even under the gospel-dispensation; the typical ark, and the tables in it, being no more, having their full accomplishment in Christ.

**1st,** Let it be observed that there is a sense in which the law is abolished, and continues not; the law and gospel are set in a contrast by the apostle; the one is said to be *done away*, and the other *that which remaineth*; (~~1~~2 Corinthians 3:11) which is the everlasting gospel, the word of God that abides for ever. When the law is in a sense said to become *dead*, and believers in Christ *dead* to that, and *delivered from it*; (~~1~~Romans 7:4, 6) this must be understood of it as a covenant of works; as such it was made with *Adam*, the federal head of all his posterity, in which he was a figure and type of the Messiah that was to come, the covenant-head of his spiritual offspring. This covenant *Adam* broke, and all his posterity in him; and so he conveyed sin and death to them, from which there is no deliverance but by Christ the second *Adam*: and he has redeemed his people that were under the law, and subject to the curse and condemnation of it, from it, as a covenant of works, entailing death and damnation on them so that they are not *under the law* as a covenant of works, but *under grace*, (~~1~~Romans 6:14) the covenant of grace; even as they are not under the law of sin as a reigning principle in them, but under grace as a governing one.

Likewise the law remains not as a yoke of bondage: it gendered, indeed unto bondage, and brought a spirit of bondage on them that were under it; but Christ has made his people free from it, and called them to liberty; and they are bid to *stand fast in the liberty with which he has made them free*, and *not he in tangled again with the yoke of bondage*. And indeed the law itself, as in the hands of Christ, is a law of liberty, and which his people serve cheerfully and voluntarily, being *made willing in the day of Christ's power upon them*; not only to embrace his gospel, and submit to his ordinances, but *to serve the law of God* with their whole mind and spirit. The commandments of it are not grievous and heavy, being assisted by the Spirit and grace of God to obey them from right principles, and from right views; not to obtain life, but from a principle of life and grace implanted in



them; so that this burden, if it may be called one, is light and easy, and borne with delight and pleasure.

The law remains not as a terrifying law; it was attended with terror when delivered on mount *Sinai*; it was a fiery law to the Israelites, when they heard it spoken out of the midst of fire, and saw the lightnings, and heard the thunder that accompanied it, it made them tremble, and *even Moses himself exceedingly feared and quaked*; and when it comes into a sinner's conscience, it works wrath, and leaves *a fearful looking-for of judgment and fiery indignation*. It is dreadful to them that are under it; hence, says the apostle,

Tell me, ye that desire to be under the law, do ye not hear the law?  
(~~Ⓜ~~ Galatians 4:21)

its dreadful menaces and curses? But the believer in Christ has nothing to fear from the terrors of the law and its threatenings, for he is delivered from the curse and condemnation of it by Christ; and though it thunders out terrible volleys of curses on such who are of the works of it, and are under it, and *continue not in all things written in it to do them*, yet none of these can reach to or fall on the believer in Christ; for Christ *has redeemed him from the curse of the law, being made a curse for him*: nor is there any *condemnation*, not one condemnation,<sup>f6</sup> (~~Ⓜ~~ Romans 8:1) were there as many sentences of condemnation pronounced as sins committed, not one of them that can be executed on them that are *in Christ*, who are secured in his person, and redeemed by his blood; since he has been condemned: for them, and sin has been condemned in his flesh, when he suffered and died for them; and therefore *who is he that condemneth? it is Christ that died*; (~~Ⓜ~~ Romans 8:33) whose death is a security from all condemnation by sin, Satan, the world, or by their own hearts and consciences. They that believe in Christ are passed from death to life, and shall never enter into condemnation; and therefore, however the law may be a cursing and damning law to others, it remains not so to them.

Moreover it remains not, and is not to be sought unto for justification; for *by the deeds of it there shall no flesh, or any man, be justified in the sight of God*; but *a man*, and every man that is justified in a gospel sense, is *justified by faith, without the deeds of the law*; (~~Ⓜ~~ Romans 3:20, 28) and it is a vain and fruitless thing to seek for righteousness by it. The Jews who *followed after the law of righteousness*, and pursued it with great vigor and earnestness, did not *attain* unto it,



because they sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law; (~~403B~~Romans 9:31, 32)

and this is the case of every man that takes the same course: nay, it is not only vain and fruitless to attempt to obtain righteousness that way, but it is sinful and wicked for such who *go about to establish their own righteousness*, not only betray their ignorance of God's righteousness, and the pride and vanity of their hearts, and *trust in themselves, and despise others*, but even submit not to, yea treat with neglect and contempt, the righteousness of the God-man and mediator, Jesus Christ. (~~403B~~Romans 10:3) But then,

**2dly**, In other respects the law continues invariable, unalterable, and unchangeable; nor is it made null and void under the gospel-dispensation, or by it; *Do we make void the law through faith? Do we disannul it, set it aside, and make no use of it, or render it of no effect, either through the grace of faith, or believing in Christ, or through the doctrine of faith in general, the gospel, or through the particular doctrine of justification by faith in the righteousness of Christ, of which doctrine the apostle is treating? God forbid; it is detested by us, yea, we establish the law:* (~~403B~~Romans 3:31) we set it on its proper basis, on a sure foundation; and bring that righteousness to it wrought out by Christ, which is commensurate to all its demands, and gives it honour:<sup>f7</sup> *for we know that the law is good, the author of it is good, who is God; the matter of it is good, being holy, just, and good; and the use of it is good, if a man use it lawfully;* (~~403B~~1 Timothy 1:8) for there is a lawful and an unlawful use of the law. It is used unlawfully when men make the works of it the terms of their acceptance with God, the matter of their justification before him, and the causes or conditions of their salvation. Otherwise it may be law fully used; and it is of use to believers themselves, as,

**1.** To point out to them *what is the good, acceptable, and perfect will of God;* (~~403B~~Romans 7:2) what that is which is holy, just, and good; what ought to be done, or not to be done; what should be carefully performed, and what shunned and avoided; what is a man's duty to God and to his neighbour. For the law of God, as we have seen, includes both, and is a transcript of the holy and unchangeable will of God; what is his pleasure men should do or abstain from.

**2.** Another use of it, and for which it remains, is, that it is a glass in which believers may behold the deformity of their nature, the impurity of their

hearts, and the imperfection of their obedience; and it is only of this use to enlightened minds: for of what service is a glass to a blind man? hold it before him, and he can see nothing in it, or by it: so set the law before an unenlightened sinner, and he will see nothing in it, nor through it; but an enlightened man, a believer in Christ, can see his face in it, and perceive what manner of man he is, in his nature, life, and actions: and when he compares himself with the law that is holy, just, good, and spiritual, he sees that he is in himself unholy unrighteous, evil, and carnal, and sold under sin, as the apostle did: (~~4:17~~Romans 7:12, 14) when he is led to observe the extent of the law, and the spirituality of it, reaching to the thoughts of the heart, as well as to the outward actions of life; he cries out with *David*,

I have seen an end of all perfections, thy commandment is exceeding broad: (~~4:39~~Psalm 119:96)

he despairs of attaining to perfection by it, and even of attaining to a righteousness through it, adequate to its requirements; he grows out of conceit with himself and his own righteousness, which he now renounces and rejects in the business of his justification before God, and acceptance with him. Wherefore,

**3.** The law is occasionally of further use to believers, to endear the righteousness of Christ unto them, and to make them value it the more; when they see their own righteousness in the account of the law, being neither as to matter nor manner done as that requires; that it is a covering too narrow to wrap themselves in, and a bed too short to stretch themselves on; that it will not cover their naked souls, nor shelter them from the wrath and justice of God, or render them acceptable in his sight. How precious then is the righteousness of Christ, when set before them as revealed in the gospel, from faith to faith; that being the righteousness of God and not of a creature; a righteousness pure and perfect, well-pleasing in the sight of God, answerable to all the demands of law and justice, which *justifies them that believe, from all things they could not be justified from by the law of Moses*; an everlasting righteousness, and which will answer for them in a time to come! hence they love it, prize it, praise it, lay hold upon it, and desire to be found in it, living and dying, and not in their own.

**4.** The law is in the hands of Christ as a rule of walk and conversation, directing believers how to conduct and behave themselves under his influence. The whole scripture, given by inspiration of God, is the standard of faith and practice, and the rule of both; the gospel-part of it is profitable

for doctrine, and is the test of that; and the law-part of it respects duty, and points to that; wherefore *to the law and to the testimony; if men speak not, and act not*

according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.  
(~~2380~~ Isaiah 8:20)

Christ is king and lawgiver in his house and kingdom, the church and besides some positive commands which he has delivered out, there is a repetition of the law in the New Testament; a new edition of it, published under the authority and sanction of Christ; so that we are now *under the law to him*, (~~432~~ 1 Corinthians 9:21) and under new obligations to obey it, as held forth by him. And it is to be obeyed from love, in faith, and to the glory of God, without any sinister, selfish, mercenary ends and views. It is to be obeyed from love to God and Christ;

the end of the commandment is charity, or love; out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and faith unfeigned: (~~5005~~ 1 Timothy 1:5)

not the terrors of the law, but the love of Christ constrains believers in him to yield a cheerful obedience to it: which they do through faith in him, depending on him for grace and strength to serve him in it. Of all men in the world none are under greater obligations to be careful to maintain good works than believers, and none so capable of performing them as they, and none so ready to do them; and in doing which they seek not themselves, but the glory of God; and which, as it should be, they make their chief end, as in civil things, so much more in religious duties; and when they have done all they can, and are assisted to do, they own they are but unprofitable servants; do not and cannot merit any thing at the hands of God, but expect eternal life and salvation as the free gift of God through Christ. And now, true believers, who behold the law in the hand of Christ, and as fulfilled by him, *delight* in it, *after the inward man*; and though *with the flesh* they serve *the law of sin*, to the grief and distress of their souls, yet *with the mind the law of God*. (~~4572~~ Romans 7:22, 25)

***Upon the whole, let it be an instruction and direction to you to look to the law only as in Christ;*** viewed otherwise it is a terrible law, a fiery one, working wrath and threatening with it; throwing out its menaces, curses, damnation and death; but view it in Christ, and there it is fulfilled, its curse is removed, its demands answered, and that itself magnified and made honourable: and appears lovely and amiable, to be delighted in and served

with pleasure. Look upon both tables of the law as in the ark, look to the ark, and them in that; and forget not to cast an eye to the mercy-seat so near it, which was a cover or lid unto it, and of equal length and breadth with it; the mystery of which you will easily understand, that Christ in his obedience, sufferings, and death, and as the propitiation, is equal to all the demands of law and justice. The ark, with the tables in it, the mercy-seat upon that., the cherubim of glory overshadowing the mercy-seat, between which the *Shekinah* or divine Majesty dwelt, are such a glorious spiritual hieroglyphic as was never seen in the world besides; such a group of wonders, such an assemblage of the mysteries of grace, such a cluster of glorious truths are in it, which when you behold, say, if ever you saw a sight like this! The ark, and the tables in it, signify, as we have seen, Christ, and the law fulfilled by him, and continued in him; the mercy-seat, Christ the propitiation, and the grace and mercy of God streaming through him as such; the cherubim, the ministers of the word in general; and being two, may respect the prophets of the Old Testament, and the apostles and ministers of the New, looking at one another, and agreeing together, and both pointing at Christ the mercy-seat; among whom Jehovah dwells, and with whom he is and will be unto the end of the world. Here may be seen at once the law fulfilled and justice satisfied, mercy in its triumphs over justice, and yet both in perfect harmony and concord. Here *mercy and truth meet together, righteousness and peace kiss each other*. Most of these truths may be seen together in one passage of the apostle; *whom, speaking of Christ, God hath set forth, in his eternal purposes and decrees, to be a propitiation, (ἰλασθριον, the word the Greek version uses for the mercy-seat)*

through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God. To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness, that he might be just and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.

(~~ROM~~ Romans 3:25, 26)

# FOOTNOTES

ft1 vid. Jarchium in 5:1

ft2 Targum Jon. in ~~<0218>~~ Exodus 31:18.

ft3 See Shaw's Travels, p. 317, 443. Ed. 2.

ft4 Targ. Jon. in loc.

ft5 μδah | k hw hoc est totum hominis, Junius & Tremellius; hoc est omnium hominum, Piscator, Gejerus.

ft6 ουδεν κατακριμα, ~~<6101>~~ Romans 8:1.

ft7 See the Sermon called, The Law established by the Gospel, on ~~<6101>~~ Romans 3:31.