

# *A Response to Michael Myers*

In a recent article, Michael Myers writes:

I will begin by defending the uniqueness and permanence of the moral law (*a.k.a* the ten commandments)... God *himself* speaks all the words of the ten commandments... While there is usefulness in studying the ceremonial and civil applications of the moral law, those aspects have either been abrogated or have expired. The moral law is different... God spoke it; Moses either wrote or spoke all the others (Deut. 4:33; Ex. 20:22). God wrote the law with his own finger in tablets of stone (Ex. 31:18; 32:16; 34:1); Moses wrote the other words by hand (Ex. 17:14; 34:32). Interestingly,<sup>1</sup> the book of the covenant was placed beside the ark of the covenant (Deut. 31:26), whereas the two tablets containing the moral law were placed *inside* the ark (Deut. 10:2). In the new covenant, God would write the words of this moral law, not upon tablets of stone, but upon the heart (Jer. 31:33).<sup>2</sup>

My response, I am afraid, has turned out longer than I intended, but the issues Myers raised call for a thorough examination and exposure.<sup>3</sup>

I start by drawing attention to a very serious confusion at the heart of the extract in question. Let me quote the relevant words:

While there is usefulness in studying the ceremonial and civil applications of the moral law, those aspects have either been

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<sup>1</sup> But Myers' argument implies that this is more than 'interesting'; he clearly regards it as highly significant.

<sup>2</sup> Michael Myers: 'The Law is a Light', *The Banner of Truth*, Aug.- Sept., 2022, pp4-5, emphasis original.

<sup>3</sup> My supporting arguments can be found in my *Christ Is All: No Sanctification by the Law; Psalm 119 and The New Covenant; The Glorious New-Covenant Ministry; Assurance in the New Covenant; Believers Under the Law of Christ*; and so on. In addition, several relevant articles can be found in the various volumes of my *New-Covenant Articles*. See also my video-series 'New-Covenant Theology Made Simple' on YouTube.

abrogated or have expired.<sup>4</sup> The moral law is different... God spoke it; Moses either wrote or spoke all the others...

In order to expose this confusion I will, at this stage, accept Myers' use of Reformed terminology. He admits that 'the moral law' (in his terms, the ten commandments) contains 'ceremonial and civil' aspects which are not permanent. This, of course, leaves us with a serious problem. How can we know which parts of this permanent 'moral law' are 'moral' and therefore permanent, and which are 'ceremonial or civil' and therefore temporary and now abolished? Scripture does not use a magic marker to make this vital distinction clear. This is no idle question or mere debating point. As Myers knows, Reformed teachers have always had huge difficulties with Calvin's interpretation of the fourth commandment, for instance.<sup>5</sup>

But this does not exhaust the confusion; far from it! According to Myers, God himself wrote 'the moral law' on stone tablets, thereby distinguishing the ten commandments from 'the ceremonial and civil law' written by Moses in a book. He continues: 'The moral law', written by God, is permanent; 'the ceremonial and civil law' is not. Yet some of that 'moral law', written by God, which is permanent, is not actually 'moral' at all,

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<sup>4</sup> Myers justifies his claims by two references to the Westminster documents. In fact, he misrepresents the Westminster Confession, claiming that 19.3 supports his claim that the moral law contained ceremonial and civil aspects. It does not: '*Beside this law, commonly called moral, God was pleased to give to the people of Israel... ceremonial laws, containing several typical ordinances, partly of worship... and partly holding forth divers instructions of moral duties... All which ceremonial laws are now abrogated, under the new testament [better, covenant – DG]*'. Clearly, according to the Westminster Confession, 'the moral law' stands quite separate and distinct from 'the ceremonial and civil law'. The Confession does not state (as Myers does) that any part of 'the moral law' is ceremonial or civil and therefore temporary. The most that can be said is that it leaves the question open – open for theologians to fill the gap.

<sup>5</sup> In addition to my other works already listed, see my *Sabbath Notes; Sabbath Questions: An open letter to Iain Murray; The Essential Sabbath*.

but is ‘ceremonial or civil’, and, consequently, not permanent. So says Myers. Accordingly, it’s not only a case, as in the previous paragraph, of how we are to decide whether or not any commandment is ‘moral, ceremonial or civil’: the real confusion is this: When is ‘the moral law’ ‘the moral law’? When is ‘permanent’ ‘permanent’?

So much for the confusion. Putting that to one side for the moment, I now want to tease out the consequences of Myers’ claims. They are serious.

But before we get carried away by all this talk of the law being ‘moral, ceremonial or civil’, we need to keep in mind that this is not Scripture-speak; it is Reformed-speak. Myers’ theological standpoint, the presupposition with which he approaches Scripture, is the covenant theology encapsulated in the Westminster Confession and associated documents. On what grounds do I say that? *First*, he is a Presbyterian minister.<sup>6</sup> *Secondly*, on the very first page of his article, Myers refers four times to the Westminster documents. Clearly the covenant theology of the Westminster Confession underlies his approach. I am saying nothing pejorative; I am simply stating a fact. But it is vital to remember that our presuppositions can so easily – almost inevitably – determine how we interpret Scripture. We can read out of Scripture – *exegesis* – what we have first read in – *eisegesis*. This is as true for me as it is for Myers. The fact is, if a man is convinced of the Westminster Confession and committed to its underlying system of covenant theology, inevitably he will read Scripture in light of that Confession based on that theology. And so on. Believers, of course, should read Scripture unfiltered. While this is not so easy as it sounds, unless we do, we shall risk arguing in a circle; our reading will tend to confirm our

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<sup>6</sup> On the inside cover of the magazine referred to earlier, Myers is listed as ‘Pastor of Heritage Presbyterian Church, Royston, Georgia, USA’. ‘We are part of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC), a denomination that holds to the Westminster Confession of Faith and Catechisms as its confession of faith. While certainly not equal with the Bible, we believe it accurately summarises what the Bible teaches’ (Heritage website). See the following note.

underlying presuppositions. In other words, our authority, though we may claim it to be Scripture, though we may sincerely believe it to be Scripture, will in fact be our theology or Confession. Notice how often the advocates of the Westminster Confession stoutly claim that the Confession is only a secondary standard, yet their works frequently belie them.<sup>7</sup> Myers' use of covenant-theology terms – phrases and concepts such as 'the moral law', 'the tripartite division of the law', and Calvin's 'threefold use of the law' – is a sure indication of where he is coming from.<sup>8</sup>

Let us remind ourselves that the phrase, 'the moral law', and defining the ten commandments as 'the moral law', are human inventions, devices imposed by theologians on Scripture. Although Confessions, Systematic Theologies and Reformed theologians make frequent use of such language, Scripture itself never does – not once.<sup>9</sup> As can be seen, Myers, typical of the Reformed approach, simply states or assumes that the ten commandments form this 'moral law'.

Now for the extract.

Myers is right in saying that Scripture records that God wrote the ten commandments with his own finger directly on the stone tablets, but Moses wrote or spoke the book of the covenant. He is also right in stating that the stone tablets were placed within the ark of the covenant, while the book of the covenant was placed

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<sup>7</sup> See the previous note. See also my 'Is it Me? Or The Cat Let Out of the Bag'; 'No Confession? Nothing to Debate!'; 'A Must-See Debate'; 'A Must-Listen Podcast'.

<sup>8</sup> Myers is quite open about the fact that his talk of the threefold use of the law is based on Calvin's teaching: 'Following Calvin's order, let us explore the [Note the definite article, implying that this really is established – leaving no hint of doubt – DG] three uses of the law' (Myers p5). Let me be blunt. This statement reads as though 'the threefold use of the moral law' is scriptural. It is not. What Myers is really saying is: 'Following Calvin's order, set out in his *Institutes*, let us explore Calvin's system (adopted from Thomas Aquinas and others) of the three uses of the law'.

<sup>9</sup> The issue, of course, is not whether Confessions or theologians assert anything. Rather, does Scripture state it?

alongside the ark. Scripture offers no explanation of these facts; it simply records them.

Myers, however, regarding these facts as hugely significant, draws far-reaching conclusions from them. He argues for the permanence of ‘the moral law’ as opposed to the temporary nature of the book of the covenant; he also asserts that when God used Jeremiah to predict that in the new covenant ‘I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts’ (Jer. 31:33), he was saying that ‘the moral law’ would be written on the believer’s heart. In both cases, by ‘the moral law’ Myers means the ten commandments.

Let us get down to brass tacks.<sup>10</sup> Myers is drawing a clear and permanent distinction between the ten commandments and the book of the covenant. I am not trying to put words into his mouth, and I admit that he does not explicitly state it, but Myers really is speaking of two distinct laws – the law of God and the law of Moses. The law of God was written directly by God, but the law of Moses (though it came from God) was written or spoken by Moses. The former was permanent; the latter, temporary. God gave both, but he deliberately made a clear distinction between the two, and had that distinction recorded in his word. And in the new covenant, God writes ‘the moral law’ (God’s law), but not ‘the ceremonial and civil law’ (Moses’ law), on every believer’s heart. I cannot see how this can be described as anything other than two distinct laws. To my mind, it is the inevitable conclusion to be drawn from Myers’ arguments.

I apologise for labouring the point, but we must be clear about what is being said. If Myers is right, ‘the law’ is not a single law; it consists of two separate and distinct laws. On the one hand, we have the law of God (that is, the ten commandments written by God on tablets of stone) applicable to all men for all time (apart from those aspects of this permanent law which are not in fact permanent – see above); and, on the other hand, we have the law of Moses applicable to Israel only and only during the time of the

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<sup>10</sup> For American readers, ‘cut to the chase’.

old covenant, and consisting of two parts – ceremonial and civil. Two very different laws. This, it seems to me, is what Myers' argument amounts to.

Once again we need to cut to the chase.<sup>11</sup> The truth is, Myers is setting out his understanding of yet another theological invention, one which is vital to the Reformed system; namely, 'the tripartite division of the law'.<sup>12</sup> As before, while this phrase is loved by theologians, it never appears in Scripture.

Let me repeat the cardinal point. If Myers is right, then he has actually established far more than the tripartite division of the law: the law is not a single law in three compartments, moral, ceremonial and civil, but two distinct laws – the law of God and the law of Moses, the former being moral with some ceremonial and civil aspects, the latter being entirely ceremonial or civil.

We are not playing word-games. If Myers is right, his argument must assume a major role in our understanding of Scripture. For instance, when we come across the phrase 'the law', we have to gloss the text by adding explanatory words in line with Myers' doctrine. Let me illustrate. Take the words of John:

*The law* was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ (John 1:17).

This could mean:

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<sup>11</sup> American for 'getting down to brass tacks'.

<sup>12</sup> While, as so often with man-made systems, there are variations, putting it simply, covenant theologians usually teach that the law comprises three parts: moral, ceremonial and civil. The first is binding on all men from creation to the end of time; the other two applied to Israel, and ended with the new covenant. As we have seen, Myers seems to be teaching something different: the law comprises two laws; namely, on the one hand, the law of God (the ten commandments) which contains some ceremonial and civil elements, which, apart from these ceremonial and civil elements, is permanent and applies to all men, and, on the other hand, the law of Moses, which is entirely ceremonial and civil, and applied only to Israel in the days of the old covenant.

*The law of God in the ten commandments written by God on the stone tablets* was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.

Or:

*The law of Moses, the book of the law written by Moses as distinct from the ten commandments,* was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.

Or:

*The entire law comprising both of its two separate laws (the law of God in the ten commandments written by God on the stone tablets, and the law of Moses written by Moses in the book of the law)* was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.

How are we to determine which of these possibilities John meant? Sometimes it may not matter; at other times, the consequences may be far-reaching. Who can tell? Who will let us know?

And so on.

Space forbids the setting out of similar treatment with passages such as Romans 2:12-27; 3:19-21; 6:14 – 8:7; 9:4,31-32; 10:4-5; 13:8-10. And that's only Romans! Having said that, I cannot resist quoting two other passages where these glosses will have a vital role to play:

My brothers, you also have died to *the law* through the body of Christ, so that you may belong to another, to him who has been raised from the dead, in order that we may bear fruit for God. For while we were living in the flesh, our sinful passions, aroused by *the law*, were at work in our members to bear fruit for death. But now we are released from *the law*, having died to that which held us captive, so that we serve in the new way of the Spirit and not in the old way of *the written code*... There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from *the law of sin and death*. For God has done what *the law*, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, in order that the righteous requirement of *the law* might be fulfilled in us,

who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit (Rom. 7:4-6; 8:1-4).

We know that a person is not justified by works of *the law* but through faith in Jesus Christ, so we also have believed in Christ Jesus, in order to be justified by faith in Christ and not by works of *the law*, because by works of *the law* no one will be justified... Through *the law* I died to *the law*, so that I might live to God (Gal. 2:16-19)

According to Myers' teaching, 'the moral law' (the ten commandments shorn of its ceremonial and civil elements) applies to all men, but Moses' law, 'the book of the law', (that is, the ceremonial and civil laws, rendered obsolete with the establishment of new covenant), applied only to Israel. So, who are the 'we' and 'us' in such extracts as the above? And which law is meant in each case?

Then again, what about the very frequently used phrase 'your law' or (AV) 'thy law'? Should we understand this to be restricted to the law of God – the ten commandments, written directly by God on the two stone tablets – or what?

There is more.

Why did no scriptural writer ever make the major point Myers has set out? Why did nobody draw Myers' conclusions from what happened at Sinai? No judge, no king, no prophet in the days of the old covenant ever did. Christ didn't; nor did any apostle. Why not? Seeing it must have been such a major point for Israel in the days of the old covenant, and no less for believers' understanding of Scripture in the days of the new covenant, why does Scripture itself not plainly – unequivocally – put the issue beyond doubt?<sup>13</sup>

Consider this account of the giving of the law. I quote it in full to give the sense:

The LORD said to Moses... The LORD descended in the cloud and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name of the LORD. The LORD passed before him and proclaimed... And he said:

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<sup>13</sup> As I have argued, even the Westminster Confession doesn't make Myers' point.



‘Behold, I am making a covenant. Before all your people I will do marvels, such as have not been created in all the earth or in any nation. And all the people among whom you are shall see the work of the LORD, for it is an awesome thing that I will do with you. Observe what I command you this day. Behold, I will drive out before you the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites. Take care, lest you make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land to which you go, lest it become a snare in your midst. You shall tear down their altars and break their pillars and cut down their Asherim (for you shall worship no other god, for the LORD, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God), lest you make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land, and when they whore after their gods and sacrifice to their gods and you are invited, you eat of his sacrifice, and you take of their daughters for your sons, and their daughters whore after their gods and make your sons whore after their gods. You shall not make for yourself any gods of cast metal. You shall keep the Feast of Unleavened Bread. Seven days you shall eat unleavened bread, as I commanded you, at the time appointed in the month Abib, for in the month Abib you came out from Egypt. All that open the womb are mine, all your male livestock, the firstborn of cow and sheep. The firstborn of a donkey you shall redeem with a lamb, or if you will not redeem it you shall break its neck. All the firstborn of your sons you shall redeem. And none shall appear before me empty-handed. Six days you shall work, but on the seventh day you shall rest. In ploughing time and in harvest you shall rest. You shall observe the Feast of Weeks, the firstfruits of wheat harvest, and the Feast of Ingathering at the year’s end. Three times in the year shall all your males appear before the LORD God, the God of Israel. For I will cast out nations before you and enlarge your borders; no one shall covet your land, when you go up to appear before the LORD your God three times in the year. You shall not offer the blood of my sacrifice with anything leavened, or let the sacrifice of the Feast of the Passover remain until the morning. The best of the firstfruits of your ground you shall bring to the house of the LORD your God. You shall not boil a young goat in its mother’s milk’.

And the LORD said to Moses: ‘Write these words, for in accordance with these words I have made a covenant with you and with Israel’. So he was there with the LORD forty days and forty nights. He neither ate bread nor drank water. And he wrote on the tablets the words of the covenant, the ten

commandments... He commanded them all that the LORD had spoken with him in Mount Sinai. And when Moses had finished speaking with them, he put a veil over his face (Ex. 34:1-36).

Clearly, the old covenant comprised all God's commandments, whether or not they appeared on the tablets of stone inscribed directly by God's finger, or in Moses' book written by his hand. Again, whether any commandment was moral, ceremonial, civil – allowing these terms for sake of argument – was irrelevant: all – all – formed one covenant. Did God give the merest whiff of a hint that he expected theologians – rabbis in Israel, or covenant theologians in the 16th and 17th centuries – to break this covenant into convenient bits?

How does any chopping up of the law – by whatever method (Myers' or any other Reformed system) – fit with such passages as these:

Every man who accepts circumcision... is obligated to keep the whole law (Gal. 5:3).

If you really fulfil the royal law according to the Scripture: 'You shall love your neighbour as yourself', you are doing well. But if you show partiality, you are committing sin and are convicted by the law as transgressors. For whoever keeps the whole law but fails in one point has become guilty of all of it [Does that mean guilty of breaking the ten commandments or breaking the entire law? – DG]. For he who said: 'Do not commit adultery', also said: 'Do not murder'. If you do not commit adultery but do murder, you have become a transgressor of the law (Jas. 2:8-11).

To those under the law I became as one under the law (though not being myself under the law) that I might win those under the law. To those outside the law I became as one outside the law (not being outside the law of God but under the law of Christ) that I might win those outside the law (1 Cor. 9:20-21).

Note that while covenant theologians like to say that the ten commandments are the moral law, in contrast, Scripture states that the ten commandments and the old covenant are one:

[God] wrote on the tablets the words of the covenant, the ten commandments (Ex. 34:28).

Again:

The LORD spoke to you... and he declared to you his covenant, which he commanded you to perform, that is, the ten commandments, and he wrote them on two tablets of stone (Deut. 4:12-13).

In trying to gather all this together, let me ask and answer an important question: What is the scriptural connection between the ten commandments, Moses' book, and the old covenant? My own view is that the ten commandments were a summary of the entire law, but the entire law (with the ten commandments as its summary) formed the old covenant. As the writer to the Hebrews explained, the old covenant, the priesthood and the law were intimately connected:

The Levitical priesthood (...under it the people received *the law*)... When there is a change in the priesthood, there is necessarily a change in *the law* as well (Heb. 7:11-12).

There is more.

Myers argues that 'the book of the law' and 'the law of God' are distinct and separate; Scripture says they are one and the same. Take the ministry of Ezra and Nehemiah at the time of the return of the Jews from exile in Babylon – an exile brought about by their stubborn and prolonged breaking of the covenant (the entire covenant which included the stone tablets and Moses' book) (Lev. 26:14-46; Deut. 4:25-31; 8:19-20; 28:15-68; 2 Chron. 36:11-20; Isa. 6:8-13; Jer. 1:13-16; 5:14-31; 6:1-30; 7:1 – 11:17; 12:14-17; 13:15-27; 17:1-4; 20:4-6; 32:23; Ezek. 7:1-27; 16:1-63; 44:5-13; Mic. 4:9-10, for instance). The books of Ezra and Nehemiah make no distinction whatever between moral, ceremonial and civil commandments; they never distinguish between the law of God and the law of Moses. Indeed, they quote (with equal weight) from all parts of the entire covenant:

Ezra... was a scribe skilled in *the law of Moses that the LORD, the God of Israel, had given*... Ezra had set his heart to study *the law of the LORD*, and to do it and to teach *his statutes and rules* in Israel... Ezra the priest, the scribe, a man learned in matters of *the commandments of the LORD and his statutes for Israel*... Ezra

the priest, the scribe of *the law of the God of heaven*... You are sent by the king and his seven counsellors to make inquiries about Judah and Jerusalem according to *the law of your God*, which is in your hand... Ezra the priest, the scribe of *the law of the God of heaven*... Whatever is *decreed by the God of heaven*, let it be done in full for the house of the God of heaven... Ezra, according to the wisdom of your God that is in your hand, appoint magistrates and judges... all such as know *the laws of your God*. And those who do not know them, you shall teach. Whoever will not obey *the law of your God*... (Ez. 7:1-28).

And when Ezra heard that the Jews were, yet again, breaking the covenant, even after their return from Babylon:

Then all who trembled at *the words of the God of Israel*, because of the faithlessness of the returned exiles, gathered around me while I sat appalled until the evening sacrifice (Ez. 9:4).

And Ezra, making Israel reform over their intermarriage with pagans (something forbidden in the covenant – see Deuteronomy 7:3 and Joshua 23:12, for instance) said:

Let us make a covenant with our God to put away all these wives and their children, according to the counsel... of those who tremble at *the commandment of our God*, and let it be done according to *the law* (Ez. 10:3).

Then, Nehemiah's prayer:

O LORD God of heaven, the great and awesome God who keeps covenant and steadfast love with those who love him and keep *his commandments*... We have acted very corruptly against you and have not kept *the commandments, the statutes, and the rules that you commanded your servant Moses*. Remember *the word that you commanded your servant Moses* (Neh. 1:5-8).

Again:

All the people gathered as one man into the square before the Water Gate. And they told Ezra the scribe to bring *the book of the law of Moses that the LORD had commanded Israel*. So Ezra the priest brought *the law* before the assembly... And the ears of all the people were attentive to *the book of the law*... And Ezra opened *the book* in the sight of all the people... [Various men] helped the people to understand *the law*... They read from *the*

*book, from the law of God... All the people wept as they heard the words of the law...*

On the second day the heads of fathers' houses of all the people, with the priests and the Levites, came together to Ezra the scribe in order to study the words of *the law*. And they found it written in *the law that the LORD had commanded by Moses* that the people of Israel should dwell in booths during the feast of the seventh month... And day by day, from the first day to the last day, he read from *the book of the law of God*. They kept the feast seven days, and on the eighth day there was a solemn assembly, according to *the rule* (Neh. 8:1-18).

And so it went on:

The Israelites separated themselves from all foreigners and stood and confessed their sins and the iniquities of their fathers. And they stood up in their place and read from *the book of the law of the LORD their God...* [Addressing God, they said:] 'You came down on Mount Sinai and spoke with them from heaven and gave them *right rules and true laws, good statutes and commandments, and you made known to them your holy sabbath and commanded them commandments and statutes and a law by Moses your servant.*

But they and our fathers acted presumptuously and stiffened their neck and did not obey *your commandments...*

They were disobedient and rebelled against you and cast *your law* behind their back and killed your prophets, who had warned them in order to turn them back to you, and they committed great blasphemies... You warned them in order to turn them back to *your law*. Yet they acted presumptuously and did not obey *your commandments*, but sinned against *your rules...*

Our kings, our princes, our priests, and our fathers have not kept *your law* or paid attention to *your commandments* and your warnings that you gave them... (Neh. 9:1-34).

The rest of the people, the priests, the Levites, the gatekeepers, the singers, the temple servants, and all who have separated themselves from the peoples of the lands to *the law of God*, their wives, their sons, their daughters, all who have knowledge and understanding, join with their brothers, their nobles, and enter into a curse and an oath to walk in *God's law that was given by Moses the servant of God*, and to observe and do all *the commandments of the LORD* our Lord and *his rules and his statutes...* (Neh. 10:28-29).

Then follows precise details of their commitment to the law, including the rejection of marriage with pagans, keeping the sabbath, leaving fields fallow, feasts, tithing, material support for the temple, sacrifices, the priesthood, and so on, ‘as it is written in *the law*’.

And:

Men were appointed over the storerooms, the contributions, the firstfruits, and the tithes, to gather into them the portions required by *the law* for the priests and for the Levites according to the fields of the towns, for Judah rejoiced over the priests and the Levites who ministered (Neh. 12:44).

And so to the final reforms:

On that day they read from *the book of Moses* in the hearing of the people... As soon as the people heard *the law*, they separated from Israel all those of foreign descent (Neh. 13:1,3).

Nehemiah brought his work to a close by praying against those who had transgressed the covenant:

Remember them, O my God, because they have desecrated the priesthood and the covenant of the priesthood and the Levites (Neh. 13:29).

Does Myers think that in all this, Ezra and Nehemiah had with them the two stone tablets and the book of the law of Moses, and that they repeatedly switched from one to the other and back again? Did anybody distinguish between the ten commandments, the book of Moses, the law and the covenant?

Consider this from Daniel:

To the LORD our God belong mercy and forgiveness, for we have rebelled against him and have not obeyed *the voice of the LORD our God by walking in his laws, which he set before us by his servants the prophets*. All Israel has transgressed *your law [that is the law of God]* and turned aside, refusing to obey your voice. And the curse and oath that are written in *the law of Moses* the servant of God have been poured out upon us, because we have sinned against him. He has confirmed his words, which he spoke against us and against our rulers who ruled us, by bringing upon us a great calamity. For under the whole heaven there has

not been done anything like what has been done against Jerusalem. As it is written in *the law of Moses*, all this calamity has come upon us (Dan. 9:10-13).

What about the New Testament? We read:

When the time came for their purification according to *the law of Moses*, they [Joseph and Mary] brought him [Jesus] up to Jerusalem to present him to the LORD (as it is written in *the law of the Lord*: ‘Every male who first opens the womb shall be called holy to the Lord’) and to offer a sacrifice according to what is said in *the law of the Lord*: ‘A pair of turtledoves, or two young pigeons’ (Luke 2:22-24).

Consider:

‘Teacher, which is the great commandment in the law?’ And [Christ] said to [the lawyer]: ‘You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbour as yourself. On these two commandments depend all the law and the prophets’ (Matt. 22:36-40).

Where do we find these two great commands? Not in the ten commandments – which Myers defines as the abiding law written by God (that is, the law of God) – but in the law which was written by Moses, and which, as Myers acknowledges, was temporary, and applied only to Israel. I refer, of course, to Leviticus 19:18 and Deuteronomy 6:5.

Why are there countless passages of Scripture where various commandments from all parts of the law are jumbled together, with never a hint that this matters in the slightest?

Here are some lightly-edited words from my *Christ is All*:

At the end of Leviticus, after God had given Israel a whole host of laws on all sorts of matters, including idolatry, adultery, disrespect for parents, the weekly sabbath, harvest, resting the land every seven years, the year of jubilee with all its regulations for redemption, and so on, Moses recorded: ‘These are the statutes and judgments and laws which the LORD made between himself and the children of Israel on Mount Sinai by the hand of Moses... These are the commandments which the LORD

commanded Moses for the children of Israel on Mount Sinai' (Lev. 26:46; 27:34). It did not matter whether or not any particular law was found in the ten commandments or the regulations for the tabernacle or the statutes for the ordering of Jewish society. No Jew ever asked which part of the law any commandment came from. It simply would not have crossed his mind. It was all the law of God, all the law of God given for Israel on Sinai. Compare Exodus 20 – 23. Note how the later 'laws' amplify what is given in the ten commandments. These passages demonstrate that the giving of the laws and commandments at Sinai is all of a piece. Together, they form 'the law'.

Take Numbers 15. The stoning of the man for transgressing the law of the sabbath (Num. 15:32-36) is sandwiched between – on the one hand, the laws of sacrifice and offering for sin (Num. 15:1-31) – and on the other, the sewing of tassels on the corners of garments (Num. 15:37-40), this last to remind the Israelites to 'remember all the commandments of the LORD and do them' (Num. 15:39-40). And the chapter concludes with words remarkably similar to the preface to the ten commandments (Num. 15:41; Ex. 20:2; Deut. 5:6). My point is that *it is impossible to detect any biblical difference in the designation of any of these laws*. Sacrifices, offerings, sabbath and tassels all – all – come under the one umbrella: 'Ordinance... law... custom... all these commandments... all that the LORD has commanded you by the hand of Moses... the LORD gave commandment... law... the word of the LORD... his commandment... So, as the LORD commanded Moses, all the congregation [obeyed]... Remember all the commandments of the LORD and do them... remember and do all my commandments' (Num. 15:15-16,22-23,29,31,36,39-40). Similar biblical evidence is abundant. Take Deuteronomy 4 – 6; 26 – 30, and so on...

Centuries later, Jehoshaphat did not seem to be fazed by Myers' notion. He felt free to instruct the judges to deal faithfully with all cases which came before them, 'whether of bloodshed or offences against law or commandment, against statutes or ordinances', including murder – the sixth commandment (2 Chron. 19:8-11). Once again, the laws, commandments, regulations, ordinances and statutes constituted one law, the law of God given to Israel through Moses. The Jews never divided the law into two laws or three parts. Never!

Nor did Christ! And neither did Paul. If he had introduced such a root-and-branch change to the meaning of 'the law', such a



radical break-up of ‘the law’, it is unthinkable that he would not have spelled it out, giving his reasons very fully. It is such an important issue. At a stroke, the tripartite division of the law virtually solves the New Testament conundrum over the law, and breaks its tension. The apostle’s silence speaks volumes. The thought never entered his mind. The tripartite division is neat; it is convenient; but it is wrong.

Indeed, as for ‘the law’ in the New Testament, its very frequent use is almost indiscriminate... Reformed teachers might like to have everything neatly sewn up into three little packets (Myers might want two distinct laws) so that they can dispose of awkward verses and passages, but when Paul uses the word ‘law’, he overwhelmingly means the entire Jewish law, the law given to Israel by God through Moses, as recorded in the first five books of the Bible.<sup>14</sup>

Let us turn to the new covenant.

We know that Christ set up the new covenant at the last supper with the disciples before his death:

This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood (Luke 22:20).

This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me (1 Cor. 11:25).

We know, further, that God, by bringing in this new covenant, replaced, superseded the old covenant, making it obsolete:

A former commandment is set aside because of its weakness and uselessness (for the law made nothing perfect); but on the other hand, a better hope is introduced, through which we draw near to God... This makes Jesus the guarantor of a better covenant (Heb. 7:18-22).

Christ has obtained a ministry that is as much more excellent than the old as the covenant he mediates is better, since it is enacted on better promises. For if that first covenant had been faultless, there would have been no occasion to look for a second... In speaking of a new covenant, [God] makes the first one obsolete.

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<sup>14</sup> See my *Christ* pp101-103.

And what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away (Heb. 8:6-13).<sup>15</sup>

Indeed, the letter to the Hebrews is entirely taken up with the contrast between the old and new covenants.

And Paul's dogmatic assertions about this contrast should remove any lingering doubt:

Our sufficiency is from God, who has made us sufficient to be ministers of a new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit. For the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life. Now if the ministry of death, carved in letters on stone, came with such glory that the Israelites could not gaze at Moses' face because of its glory, which was being brought to an end, will not the ministry of the Spirit have even more glory? For if there was glory in the ministry of condemnation, the ministry of righteousness must far exceed it in glory. Indeed, in this case, what once had glory has come to have no glory at all, because of the glory that surpasses it. For if what was being brought to an end came with glory, much more will what is permanent have glory... To this day, when [the Israelites] read the old covenant, that same veil remains un-lifted, because only through Christ is it taken away. Yes, to this day whenever Moses is read a veil lies over their hearts (2 Cor. 3:5-15).

Clearly, the ten commandments, 'carved in letters on stone' was 'the ministry of death', 'the ministry of condemnation', and it was 'brought to an end', having been replaced or superseded by the 'new covenant', 'the ministry of the Spirit', 'the ministry of righteousness'.

How can Myers claim, therefore, that the ten commandments are not only permanent, but they form the law written on the heart in the new covenant, as promised through Jeremiah? As he does:

I will begin by defending the uniqueness and permanence of the moral law (*a.k.a* the ten commandments)... In the new covenant, God would write the words of this moral law, not upon tablets of stone, but upon the heart (Jer. 31:33).

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<sup>15</sup> 'What is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away' is a general principle: when something is rendered obsolete, it is obsolete.

Is Myers right? Are we to understand that the ten commandments, ‘carved in letters on stone’, which was ‘the ministry of death’, ‘the ministry of condemnation’, and which has been ‘brought to an end’ by Christ in establishing the new covenant, is the very law written on every believer’s heart by the Spirit? Could we be shown proof? Scriptural proof I mean, not mere assertion based on a Confession! Did the writer to the Hebrews (Heb. 8:6-13) understand the law written on the heart in that way?

Ezekiel also predicted the new covenant:

I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules [or just decrees] (Ezek. 36:26-27).

Are the ‘statutes... [and] rules [or just decrees]’ of the Mosaic covenant written on the believer’s heart?

What confusion! Is it not much more likely – to put it no stronger – that the law of the new covenant, written on the heart of every believer, must be a new law – the law of Christ (1 Cor. 9:20-21; Gal 6:2)? All the shadows of the old covenant – including sabbath, passover, priesthood, sacrifice, temple – are replaced, superseded by, fulfilled in and through Christ in the new covenant (Col. 2:16-17; Hebrews *passim*). The parable of the wineskins (Matt. 9:15-17) absolutely rules out any attempt to mix the old and new covenants. Surely a new covenant – *kainos*, freshly-made, new quality, of a different nature to the old – by definition absolutely demands a new law!

I leave it there. In my opinion, Myers has only added further confusion to the long-standing confusion caused by Reformed attempts to force Scripture into the template of covenant theology. Christ told us plainly that the new wine cannot be forced into the old covenant. When will the Reformed give up their vain efforts to force it into the mould of the Westminster Confession?

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In conclusion, I take up the way in which Myers opened his article: ‘The law of God has fallen on hard times. Perhaps more accurately, it has fallen on hard hearts’.<sup>16</sup>

I hope this is not true of me. I know ‘the law is holy, and the commandment is holy and righteous and good’ (Rom. 7:12). I hope that ‘I delight in the law of God’ (Rom. 7:22), that I love and meditate in God’s law, precepts, statutes, word day and night (Ps. 1:2; 119:15,48,78,97,148,159).

But this does not mean that the ten commandments are my heart’s love, nor are they the sum and horizon of my perpetual mediation. Living, as I do, as a believer during the days of the new covenant, it is the entire word of God from the first verse of Genesis to the closing verse of Revelation, including the entire law written on the stone tablets and in Moses’ book, all of it read in the light of the new covenant, which is God’s word, God’s law, statutes, precepts and judgments for me. Above all, it is Christ himself, the one who is to be found in all the Scriptures (Luke 24:27,44-45), the one who is the very word of God (John 1:1,14-18). As John said: ‘The law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ’ (John 1:17). And as Paul put it: ‘Christ is all’ (Col. 3:11).

This, in short, is what I understand by the law of Christ, the law under which (1 Cor. 9:20-21; Gal. 6:2) I seek to obey the apostolic command (yet another vital part of Christ’s law) to ‘grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ’ in order that the apostolic end might be reached: ‘To [Christ] be the glory both now and to the day of eternity. Amen’ (2 Pet. 3:18).

Finally, I suspect that this is not only true of me but, despite what they teach and write when defending and advocating their system, it is the underlying reality for most Reformed teachers – Myers included. Does Myers confine his love, study, obedience and preaching to the ten commandments?<sup>17</sup> I doubt it!

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<sup>16</sup> Myers p4.

<sup>17</sup> I admit that covenant theologians are adept at reading the rest of Scripture into the ten commandments, and then reading it out – usually

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with many subdivisions. But why do it? Why not let all Scripture speak in its context?