

A Review of:

**All Old Testament Laws Cancelled:
24 Reasons Why
All Old Testament Laws
Are Cancelled And
All New Testament Laws
Are For Our Obedience,
by Greg Gibson¹**

**presented by
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**to the
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¹(n.p.: JesusSaidFollowMe Publishing, 2009), 156 pp.

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I. First impressions

Parts I and II² are generally helpful.

Parts III and IV³ may be either troublesome or problematic.

Part V⁴ is needful and reassuring, although very brief, and the chart at the end is in need of a great deal of refining and explanation⁵.

II. Critique

The author, like the early dispensationalists, is a “chart person”. The book includes thirty-one charts, diagrams and lists,⁶ all but one of which are included in the first two parts of the book. When these are accurately done they can be a helpful teaching tool. Unfortunately, if care is not taken charts tend to be simplistic, and this reductionism is not helpful when it comes to complicated and controversial theological issues. Most troublesome may be his “Comparison Chart of Covenant Theology vs. The Word of God”⁷. The following deficiencies were noted in this chart:

- 1) Confusion of the theological term concerning the singular canon of Scripture with the limited contextual usage of the Greek term in Gal. 6:16⁸. This should not be a point of disagreement between Covenant Theology and New Covenant Theology.

²Gibson, op. cit., pp. 16-107.

³Gibson, op. cit., pp. 108-127.

⁴Gibson, op. cit., pp. 128-132.

⁵Gibson, op. cit., pp. 132-135.

⁶On the front cover of the book the author claims to have included “7 diagrams” and “20 charts”. However, four more may be found when the following pages are studied: 7, 9, 10, 14, 15, 22, 23, 25, 27, 28-29, 41, 44, 45, 46, 51, 52-54, 57, 58, 62, 63, 65, 68, 69, 72, 74, 76, 77, 92, 96-106, and 132-135. Perhaps the author did not intend for the bordered lists on pp. 7, 10, 15 and 26 to be included under “diagrams” and “charts”.

⁷Gibson, op. cit., pp. 96-106.

⁸Gibson, op. cit., pg. 96. See also pp. 94-95. The author picks up on Kline’s usage, which was neither the understanding nor the intent of the Westminster divines.

- 2) Misunderstanding concerning the Westminster Confession's teachings on the Covenant of Grace versus the Old Covenant administration of that Covenant of Grace⁹. In other words, in no sense did the Westminster divines, nor their modern counterparts, intend to teach that "the old covenant was the covenant of grace".
- 3) Failure to appreciate Covenant Theology's recognition of multiple Biblical covenants under the singular administration of the overarching Covenant of Grace¹⁰. This acknowledgment on the part of adherents to the Westminster Standards may be explained at least in part by the terms "the time of the law", "the time of the gospel", and "various dispensations"¹¹. O. Palmer Robertson's treatment in his The Christ of the Covenants¹² is a fine and not isolated example of how this works out in practice in covenantal circles.
- 4) Proposing disagreements where none may be cited, e.g., on "The Law of Christ"¹³, on "The Sign of the Old Covenant"¹⁴, and on "God's Eternal Sabbath Rest"¹⁵. Perhaps the author intends to focus on the silence of the Westminster Confession of Faith on these subjects by merely placing a question mark after the abbreviated title in that column, but that this is what is intended is neither indicated nor clear to the reader.

The book is uneven in its treatment of its two major premises. 77% of the body of the book (92 out of 120 pages) is devoted to the issue of the cancellation of all Old Testament laws. Only 17% of the body (20 out of 120 pages) is given to the premise concerning all New Testament laws being for our obedience. This uneven treatment is magnified when Part I is compared to the rest of the book. More pages are devoted to this initial part (64) than to the other four parts combined (56).

Overall, much of this work appears to this reviewer to be in a brief outline format without much explanation, documentation, definition or exegetical substantiation. There are exceptions, but this is a major weakness with the result that the author's desire to persuade will fall to the ground with those who are seeking convincing proof for the case he is making.

⁹Gibson, op. cit., pg. 97.

¹⁰Gibson, op. cit., pp. 97-98.

¹¹The Westminster Standards: The Westminster Confession of Faith, The Larger Catechism, The Shorter Catechism – The doctrinal standards of The Orthodox Presbyterian Church and The Presbyterian Church in America (Philadelphia: Great Commission Publications, n.d.), pp. 10-11, s.v. "Westminster Confession of Faith", VII:5-6.

¹²(Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1980), 308 pp.

¹³Gibson, op. cit., pg. 102.

¹⁴Gibson, op. cit., pg. 106.

¹⁵Ibid.

Appendix I¹⁶ – The author is not afraid to tackle an explosive issue, although his reasoning is at times irrelevant¹⁷, argumentative¹⁸, unsupported¹⁹, and/or contradictory.²⁰ Documentation is lacking for his mention of “blogs and forums” including an apparent quotation from them, and for Greg Bahnsen as a primary source for the charge.²¹ The author significantly fails to mention or interact with Steve Lehrer²² on this controversial subject anywhere. Perhaps the major objections to this appendix will be:

- 1) The author’s dismissal of this issue as “irrelevant”²³, and his reduction of this issue to the status of “minor” and “peripheral”²⁴, and,
- 2) The author’s own unexamined assumption, or failure to demonstrate, that this “objection” is dependent upon the “2 unexamined assumptions”²⁵ he presents.

At the end of the day those not predisposed in his favor will probably find this brief presentation shallow and unconvincing.

Appendix II²⁶– This is a very helpful listing of how the New Testament directs us to use the Old Testament Scriptures. However, it is marred by the following two errors:

¹⁶Gibson, op. cit., pp. 136-139.

¹⁷Gibson, op. cit., pp. 136-138. Specifically irrelevant is the author’s list of “examples of so-called ‘moral sins’ that aren’t stated explicitly in the Old Testament”.

¹⁸Ibid. See esp. the two major objections to this Appendix on the next page of this review.

¹⁹Along with the documentation issues referred to in the following sentence in this review, at the end of the day the author’s final sentence in this Appendix, though sincerely believed to be true, stands as unsupported by anything in the author’s treatment of this issue. The final sentence is: “In conclusion, New Covenant Theology doesn’t allow bestiality and incest any more than the Old Covenant allowed abortion and porn.” Gibson, op. cit., pg. 139.

²⁰Ibid. See the discussion in this review of the author’s treatment of what he terms “God’s conscience laws” and “sin lists” under III. Pertinent Issues and Questions, 3.

²¹Gibson, op. cit., pg. 136.

²²New Covenant Theology: questions answered(n. p., 2006), pp. 153-155. Also available on <http://solochristo.com/theology/nct/NCTQA/NCTQA.pdf>, pp. 167-169 [accessed 4 JUL 2009].

²³Gibson, op. cit., pg. 137.

²⁴Gibson, op. cit., pg. 138.

²⁵Gibson, op. cit., pg. 137.

²⁶Gibson, op. cit., pp. 140-142.

- 1) The issue of the cancellation of the Old Testament law is more directly related to the charge of antinomianism²⁷ than it is to Marcionism.²⁸ Documentation of the very serious charge of Marcionism against New Covenant Theology by some “critics”²⁹ with the relevant contexts, plus a more accurate historical definition of Marcionism³⁰ would have been helpful, and may have prevented the perception of confusion of the two errors. Furthermore if the charge is recognized as serious, and is worth addressing, then it should be deserving of a more extensive response than the author provides.
- 2) The author appears to disconnect “teaching/faith” from “obedience”³¹ in his explanation for how we continue to “use the whole Old Testament today”³². He seems to believe that the simplistic reduction of the error of Marcionism based on this will resolve the problem. Such a “solution” actually creates more problems than it solves. This issue also appears earlier in the book where the author attempts to explain via a “simple answer” how there can be both continuity and discontinuity between the Testaments.³³ This “simple answer” presents a “complex problem” when the author’s answer involves a dichotomous view of practice and doctrine. To suggest that you can have discontinuity in practice while maintaining continuity in doctrine and faith opens at best “a can of worms”, and at worst, “Pandora’s box”!

The “Annotated Bibliography”³⁴ is a nice idea, but I can think of many other works I would like to have seen here. Also, many of the works listed do not appear to have any direct relevance to the subject matter of the book itself. The alternative would have been a more complete bibliography including at a minimum the authors cited throughout the body of the book and

²⁷Gibson, op. cit., pp. 9, 14, 108, 110, 117, 132-135. Note that the reference to this issue on pg. 117 is not listed in the “Subject Index”, Gibson, op. cit., pg. 153.

²⁸Gibson, op. cit., pp. 140-141.

²⁹Ibid.

³⁰The author does seem to have a reasonable understanding of the basic canonical error involved in historical Marcionism, which, however, falls far short of a complete definition of the error. Gibson, op. cit., pp. 49, 140. The author would have been on better historical ground, and would have perhaps been more persuasive on this point, if he had demonstrated from a complete historical definition of this error how New Covenant Theology is not guilty of any aspect of it.

³¹Gibson, op. cit., pp. 43, 141, cp. pg. 140. The quote from Loraine [the author misspells Dr. Boettner’s first name] Boettner on pg. 140 is printed as follows in the 3rd printing (April, 1979) of the work cited in Gibson’s footnote 27, “The Old Testament is our *history*book. It is *not* our *law* book.” Boettner makes other statements prior to the one quoted that would probably be rejected by many Covenant Theologians: “The New Testament, which alone is the authoritative document for the Christian church, should be called the New Covenant.” Op. cit., pg. 97. “Thus he showed that the Old Covenant had served its purpose and that it had been replaced by the New Covenant.” “The old order died when Christ died. No requirements from the Old Covenant are binding on the Christian except the moral principles that are repeated in the New Covenant.” Op. cit., pg. 98.

³²Ibid.

³³Gibson, op. cit., pg. 12.

³⁴Gibson, op. cit., pp. 143-147.

listed in the “Author Index”.³⁵ As it is the reader must page through the book from this index to the citations to build such a bibliography. Curiously, in this purported defense of New Covenant Theology, all of the authors from In-Depth Studies³⁶ are ignored, along with the authors on the faculty of Providence Theological Seminary³⁷! Also, the author’s criticism of John G. Reisinger’s Abraham’s Four Seeds³⁸ appears to suffer from:

- 1) failure to interact with the texts cited in support of four seeds as opposed to two, and
- 2) failure to comprehend the defense John G. Reisinger makes for a “unique” seed in Chapter 5³⁹, and a “special natural” seed in Chapter 7⁴⁰.

The author provides well done and helpful Scripture, subject and author indices⁴¹.

III. Pertinent Issues and Questions

1. **Cancelled or transferred?** If all of the Old Testament laws were cancelled, how can some of them at one and the same time by transferred into the New Testament⁴²? Were they cancelled, or were they transferred? How can both be true? The issue at stake in the answer to this question is central to the author’s main thesis concerning the cancellation of all Old Testament laws. It will continue to be a stumbling block to those not in the “choir” already unless a well thought out defense is offered for how both can be true. What he seems to be arguing for in his presentation is the cancellation of the Law as a covenant, that is, the Old Covenant, rather than the cancellation of all Old Testament laws. The issue of whether or not he intends to teach that the commands to Noah were cancelled, for example, is not addressed anywhere. Perhaps it would be helpful for those trying to argue in this fashion to carefully distinguish between the Old Testament and the Old Covenant, and between the Law and the laws or commandments. Also, seeing Jesus as “the New Law-Giver” might be developed by seeing him not as transferring Old Covenant commands, but as giving New Covenant commands that pick up where the Old Covenant commands left off as in the Sermon on the Mount. In any case, this issue of cancelled and/or transferred will not go away, and needs more thoughtful development.

³⁵Gibson, op. cit., pg. 155.

³⁶Including, by not limited to, Geoff Volker, Michael W. Adams and Steve Lehrer. <http://www.ids.org> [accessed 4 JUL 2009].

³⁷Most significantly Dr. Gary Long. <http://www.ptsco.org/index.htm> [accessed 4 JUL 2009].

³⁸Gibson, op. cit., pg. 145.

³⁹John G. Reisinger, Abraham’s Four Seeds (Frederick, MD: New Covenant Media, 1998), pp. 35-49.

⁴⁰Reisinger, op. cit., pp. 69-76.

⁴¹Gibson, op. cit., pp. 148-155.

⁴²e.g., Gibson, op. cit., pp. 76-78 128, 134.

2. **Law vs. Grace in John 1:17**⁴³ - The author posits a contrast between law and grace in John 1:17⁴⁴. This is a common error, but one that consistently ignores the presence of the word “truth” coupled with grace. The fact of the matter is that grace does not stand alone here. The exegete is obligated to contrast both terms in the couplet, not just one, if that is the perceived relationship. If one is not willing to contrast “the law” with “truth”, then consistency demands that none be posited between “the law” and “grace” in this place. It is not to be denied that there is a contrast in this verse, but it is to be found in the verbs that characterized the nature of the mediation by Moses and Christ respectively, rather than in the characterization of the respective covenants. We should be able to affirm that the law is both gracious and truthful, while recognizing that the administration characterized by law is still not the same as the administration characterized by grace as taught in the other passage the author cites here, Romans 6:14-15. Even in this passage the difference lies not in any inherent opposition to grace or gracelessness in the law, but in its limitation due to sin, and in its inability to deliver from the dominion of sin. Grace may be seen in the law in several aspects: 1) its source – God graciously gave this revelation of His will, 2) its content - graciously revealing the character of God, 3) its provision for sin – not all sin is seen as a capital offense by God’s grace, 4) its function - as a tutor revealing our sin, our need of a Savior, and graciously leading us to Christ, and 5) its symbolism – the gracious revelation of the nature of the Savior and His work in the beauties of the Temple and the solemnity and mystery of its ordinances. To be fair to the author, he does seem to grasp this on the very next page⁴⁵, but the recognition here would appear to fly in the face of the contrast he introduced on the previous page.
3. **Universal Laws of Conscience** - In what appears to be a major inconsistency in this work the author makes the following statements: “All Christians agree that humans have consciences convicting them of certain “sins.” But, God never explicitly defines those sins for us in Scripture.”⁴⁶ This is a startling admission from one who insists that without such external legal definition you cannot know whether something is a sin or not!⁴⁷ The author makes much of what he calls “God’s conscience law”⁴⁸, and “sin lists”⁴⁹ which seems to contradict his denial of explicit Scriptural definition of these sins. One may

⁴³In two places on pg. 109 the author mistakenly refers to this verse as “Jn. 1:16”, and “John 1:16”, respectively. In the first instance, due to the fact that the author quotes verse 16 along with verse 17 the reference should read “Jn. 1:16-17”. In the second instance the correct reference is “John 1:17”. The reviewer is indebted to David Herring who pointed this error out to me while at the “Think Tank” (July 27-30, 2009 at Evans, NY) where this review was presented on July 27, 2009.

⁴⁴Gibson, op. cit., pg. 109.

⁴⁵Gibson, op. cit., pg. 110.

⁴⁶Gibson, op. cit., pg. 137.

⁴⁷Gibson, op. cit., pp. 112, 114.

⁴⁸Other terms used to describe this concept by the author may be found under point 11 below.

⁴⁹Gibson, op. cit., pp. 14-15, 17-20, 25, 36-37, 40, 132, 137-138.

grant that the “lists” are not necessarily exhaustive, while insisting that they are yet explicit and Scriptural. On the other hand, if, for the sake of argument, one grants this statement by the author as true, then the author appears to be inconsistent or contradictory when he objects to the sufficiency of the “law in the heart” or the indwelling Spirit for direction. If “God’s law of conscience” is sufficient to reveal sin to all and sundry, and is ultimately seen as a sufficient basis for judgment, then they are not absolutely “without law”, and neither is the New Covenant recipient! The author’s teachings on these issues communicate somewhat in the manner of give it with one hand, and take it away with the other. Simply put, his teaching concerning the “universal laws of conscience” severely undermines his opposition to the sufficiency of the “law written on the heart” under the New Covenant.

4. **The Law of Christ** - The author’s treatment of “The law of Christ”⁵⁰ is quite confusing. In one place the author admits, “What exactly is the law of Christ? Scripture doesn’t tell us.”⁵¹ Yet fourteen pages later the author is found answering the question, “What is the law of Christ?” with these words, “The law of Christ is all commands and teaching by Christ & His apostles, located in the N.T. (the N.C. canon).”⁵² If Scripture doesn’t tell us, then where did this information come from? Is it authoritative? Is it trustworthy? Is it the final word on this issue? The problem for this reviewer is that the author seems quite insistent that we must have law *qualaw* under the New Covenant, albeit not the Mosaic law, but law nevertheless. The author seems to rule out sanctification and obedience as impossibilities without the existence of law as a list of commandments. And then the author titles his conclusion, “Sanctification Is Christ-Centered, Not Law-Centered”⁵³. Well, perhaps, the author really believes this, but his emphasis comes across at best as “the law of Christ centered”.
5. **Decalogue Evangelism** - The author exhibits an apparent compromise or inconsistency on the subject of “Decalogue evangelism”.⁵⁴ Why does it remain appropriate only for Jewish evangelism once the New Covenant has been implemented? Is the Mosaic Covenant still in force for them now as it was during the time prior to the Crucifixion? The example of Christ in the Gospels⁵⁵ is prior to the abolition of the Mosaic Covenant. Also, contrast the very clear statement by the author about the Christ-centeredness of apostolic evangelism on page 40!
6. **The Newness of the New Covenant** - This author, like others, makes statements that should leave the reader wondering wherein lies the “Newness” of the New Covenant? For

⁵⁰Gibson, op. cit., pp. 11-12, 14, 25, 37, 56, 63-64, 68, 76, 88, 90, 103-104, 110, 117-118, 120-122, 135.

⁵¹Gibson, op. cit., pg. 121.

⁵²Gibson, op. cit., pg. 135.

⁵³Gibson, op. cit., pg. 128.

⁵⁴Gibson, op. cit., pp. 36-37.

⁵⁵Gibson, op. cit., pg. 39.

example, "...the Old Covenant saints probably already had all 7 New Covenant blessings from Jer. 31:31-34, including the law written both in their hearts and the Old Testament."⁵⁶ That being the case, why may not an argument be made against seeing discontinuity between the two covenants by Covenant Theologians based on the "flat lining" of the covenantal blessings? This total identification reduces the promises of the New Covenant to Old Covenant promises, and the very "newness" of the New Covenant to nothing more than a renewed "Old" Covenant. This concession is certainly not something one expects to read from an author professing to represent New Covenant Theology!

7. **Physical Laws and Spiritual Symbolism** - Is this really a "solution"? "The Old Testament physical laws are cancelled, but their spiritual symbolism is fulfilled eternally in Christ."⁵⁷ If it is, it appears to require a great deal of explanation and particularly where definition is needed concerning what is meant by "physical laws", and "spiritual symbolism".
8. **The Motivation for Obedience** - This reviewer found the following statement troublesome: "Our obedience is often motivated by truths about Christ."⁵⁸ The motivation for the New Covenant believer's obedience is always Christ. Period. End of statement. It is always Christ, His Person, His Finished Work, but always Christ and Christ alone that is presented in the New Testament as our Author and our Finisher. Any obedience that does not begin and end with Christ is not worthy of the name under the New Covenant.
9. **Spirit and Law** - The author warns us to "Beware of false dichotomies between the Spirit and the law of Christ. The New Testament contrasts between the Spirit and the law refer to the law of Moses for the unregenerate, not the law of Christ for the regenerate (cf. Rom. 7:6; 2 Cor. 3:6; Gal. 5:18)."⁵⁹ One is left wondering why the author felt that the qualification "for the unregenerate" was necessary when no such qualification is to be found in the texts cited. One is left wondering if the author would object to someone teaching that there is no contrast between the Spirit and the law of Moses for the regenerate. It appears that the author has not factored in the teaching of these passages in their respective contexts concerning law *qua* law, i.e., law as an external law code.
10. **Sanctification by Works** - The author's suggestion that "the likely reason" why the Old Covenant is called "law", while the New Covenant is called "grace" is that, "Old Covenant sanctification blessings were based on law (works), while New Covenant blessings are based on promise (grace)."⁶⁰ That being the case, there was no possibility

⁵⁶Gibson, op. cit., pg. 117.

⁵⁷Gibson, op. cit., pg. 27.

⁵⁸Gibson, op. cit., pg. 8, 128, 130.

⁵⁹Gibson, op. cit., pg. 114.

⁶⁰Gibson, op. cit., pg. 111.

of genuine sanctification under the law, and the author's statements on the previous page about the existence of grace "during the time of law"⁶¹ come up for question. Was justification by works under the law? Can the basis for justification be divorced from the basis of sanctification, i.e., can one be by grace while the other is by works?

11. **Theological terminology** - The following statement might resonate favorably with some, but cannot, and will not stand up to challenge and scrutiny: "When talking about the Ten Commandments, if you have to *rely* on words uninspired by the Holy Spirit (like "moral law") to explain your theology, then you probably have a different theology than the Holy Spirit."⁶² Such a statement usually is countered by questions concerning the legitimacy of other theological terms such as "Trinity". In any case, the author is inconsistent in this regard when he posits similar terms, e.g., "eternal unchanging law"⁶³, "God's conscience law"⁶⁴, "conscience law"⁶⁵, "the law of conscience"⁶⁶, "universal law"⁶⁷, "universal laws of conscience"⁶⁸, etc. As the saying goes, "A rose by any other name..." (is still not a Holy Spirit inspired term!).
12. **The Law Written on the Heart** - While the following statement may be understandable, it does not appear to do justice to the intercovenantal issues raised in the Pauline epistles: "...God writing His laws on our hearts has nothing to do with content or location..."⁶⁹. The issues related to what is "written on the heart" in fulfillment of the New Covenant promise, and the contrast between the internal versus the external writing may not be so cavalierly dismissed.

Conclusion

⁶¹Gibson, op. cit., pg. 110. Note: The citation from Gen. 6:8 concerning Noah on this page is not apropos as this was prior to the giving of the law.

⁶²Gibson, op. cit., pg. 24.

⁶³Gibson, op. cit., pp. 17, 20. On pg. 14 the author terms it "The eternal, unchanging moral law" without any "so-called" qualifier!

⁶⁴Gibson, op. cit., pg. 138.

⁶⁵Gibson, op. cit., pp. 15, 17-18.

⁶⁶Gibson, op. cit., pp. 14-15, 18, 137-138.

⁶⁷Gibson, op. cit., pg. 15.

⁶⁸Gibson, op. cit., pg. 25.

⁶⁹Gibson, op. cit., pg. 117.

For someone who claims to have “researched God’s law for 29 years”⁷⁰ this work fails to accurately reflect the fruits of such extensive research in its interaction with the sources it does cite, in its lack of interaction with many other significant sources, in its unfair presentation of opposing viewpoints, and in its failure to provide convincing exegetical bases for many of its premises. As a teaching outline to “the choir”, i.e., those already convinced of this viewpoint, it may be useful in reinforcing the views presented. However, the author’s intent in dedicating this work to “...all who base their practice on O.T. laws, including Reformed, Covenant Theologians; Seventh-Day Adventists; other Sabbath-Keepers; and Roman Catholics”⁷¹ must be assessed as presumptuous, as, in this reviewer’s opinion, it will be ultimately unpersuasive to this audience.

⁷⁰Gibson, op. cit., back cover.

⁷¹Gibson, op. cit., front cover.