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Do Christians need to keep the same Sabbath that Jews do?

Do Christians still have to avoid work on a weekly Sabbath? Is it on Saturday or Sunday? So here's the central text on this subject, which is the Fourth Commandment:

(Exodus 20:8-10, NKJV): "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the LORD your God. In it you shall do no work: you, nor your son, nor your daughter,

nor your male servant, nor your female servant, nor your cattle, nor your stranger who is within your gates [cities].” So then, how do we get out of this? That's the first thought that comes to many people's minds. They want it shifted to the first day of the week (Sunday) or simply obliterated. So then, can we honestly do that? The case will be made here that Christians should still keep a weekly Sabbath and that it is on Saturday, from sunset Friday to sunset Saturday, not on Sunday.

The “judo argument” for Sabbath observance

First of all, most of the arguments used to say that the weekly Sabbath and the Holy Days are abolished would also toss into the theological trash can the moral law of the Old Testament. Let's illustrate how this works: "It is going back to Moses to keep the Sabbath." "Is it 'going back to Moses' to avoid adultery also?" "The end of the old covenant ended the need to keep the Sabbath and holy days." "Did the end of the old covenant end the need to keep the laws against adultery and thievery?" "Christ fulfilled the law." "Did His fulfilling the law against murder abolish the law against murder?" Simply substitute the Saturday Sabbath or the holy days for almost any moral law of the Old Testament in these kinds of arguments, and they stand refuted as using a theological shotgun when a rifle is needed instead. I have called this kind of argumentation “the judo argument,” since it uses the strength of the opponents of the Sabbath back against them.

Second, silence abolishes nothing when the burden of proof is on those who think these laws were ended by Jesus' death and resurrection. That is, the Old Testament teaches that these laws should be obeyed. So then, the Sabbatarian doesn't need to find reconfirmations of these laws in the New Testament or Paul's Letters to assert that they should be obeyed still. Instead, the burden of proof is on those who think they are gone by citing clear texts that do the job. God doesn't have to repeat Himself for a law to still be in force. Since the death and resurrection of Jesus didn't abolish at least nine of the 10 Commandments, it's necessary to explain why only the fourth was ended, and not the other nine by the same event.

God has jurisdiction over everyone, unlike human laws, so this kind of reasoning that says the Old Testament law only had jurisdiction over the Jews manifests poor reasoning. Let's use the "judo argument" to illustrate the error here. "The church isn't under the law of Moses, therefore, the Sabbath command doesn't apply to Christians." In response, to illustrate the mistake here, "The church isn't under the law of Moses, therefore, the law against murder doesn't apply to Christians." "I'm not under the law, therefore, the law commanding the Sabbath doesn't apply to me." In response, "I'm not under the law, therefore, the law commanding Christians to avoid adultery doesn't apply to me."

Let's use the "judo argument" to explain the errors in reasoning here once again. "Christ didn't command us to obey Moses' law, therefore, the Sabbath is abolished." In response, "Christ didn't command us to obey Moses' law, therefore the law against adultery is abolished." "The new covenant abolished the Sabbath as part of the Old Testament law." In response, "The new covenant abolished the law against bearing false witness as part of the Old Testament law." So now having illustrated this principle a number of times, it's necessary to come up with an argument that I can't falsify by using the same reasoning that substitutes in part of the Old Testament's law that is still in force in place of the law that one is trying to get rid of.

Problems with extreme dispensationalism

Now, let's survey briefly some of the problems with extreme dispensationalism, which maintains God works with human beings very differently in different time periods in his master plan for humanity. This is a key theological construct for those who believe that the Sabbath and the annual Holy Days were abolished. This view draws sharp distinctions drawn between the Old and New Testaments, and says God worked with the Jews from the time of the giving of the law very differently from how He works with Christians today since the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus. The Old Testament is seen as a period dominated by law, obedience, and (in some versions) salvation by works, while the New Testament is

characterized by grace, love, and faith. Hence, this doctrine sees a radical discontinuity between Judaism and Christianity, with the latter said to be very different from the former. Based upon these premises, the argument of silence becomes very powerful: It maintains that unless an Old Testament command is repeated in the New Testament (or, especially, Paul's letters), it is no longer in force. This school of Biblical interpretation assumes that all Old Testament commands are abolished, unless specifically repeated in the New. Because the evangelical/fundamentalist Protestant Christian world's theology oozes with these kinds of notions, and the world as a whole is not set up to obey God's Old Testament commands, mentally resisting against this school of thought is very difficult.

While this is not the place for a lengthy, full-fledged attack on the teachings of extreme dispensationalism, an alternative school of biblical interpretation actually makes more sense. Here it shall be maintained the differences between the two Testaments have been exaggerated, that God has always saved people in the same way in both periods, and that Christianity grew out of Judaism. Even supposedly "anti-law" Paul felt the need to engage in purification rituals because he had to accommodate many in the early church who had believed were "all zealous for the Law" (Acts 21:20). The early church was almost entirely Jewish, up until after Cornelius and his gentile family were converted to Christianity (Acts 10). Hence, traditional Christianity, whether Catholic, Orthodox, or Protestant, came to accept Sunday and Easter as replacements for the Sabbath and Passover, the former two plainly coming out of the paganism of the of the Roman empire. The Quartodeciman controversy of the second century, in which Christians under the leadership of Polycarp and later Polycrates in the second century argued for the observation of Passover instead of Easter, shows that at least one of these days were still being kept by Christians long after the death of the original apostles. Naturally enough, the gentiles who came to increasingly make up the bulk of the membership of the church found the replacement customs of Easter and Sunday worship easy to accept. After all, when the Roman government came looking for those practicing the Sabbath, the Passover, etc. to punish them, not keeping them was an asset: "We aren't Jews! We're Christians!" The dispensationalist school of Biblical interpretation's largely unacknowledged foundation is to explain, accept,

and justify such an Biblically unauthorized substitution of pagan customs for Old Testament observances. It uses a preconceived interpretation of Paul's letters to interpret the Gospels, and the New Testament to interpret the Old Testament, while denying any significant feedback interpretation going the opposite way.

If indeed the New Testament writers were making such a drastic break with their Jewish past, why is the New Testament so full of Old Testament citations and allusions, which are made to justify Christian theology, especially the identification of Jesus of Nazareth as the Messiah? Why does not Jesus hardly hint at such a radical change soon to come concerning the Old Testament law during His public ministry? Instead, he specifically denied an anti-Old Testament law interpretation of his ministry in Matt. 5:17-19: "Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish, but to fulfill. For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass away from the Law, until all is accomplished. Whoever then annuls one of the least of these commandments, and so teaches others, shall be called ["]least["] in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever keeps and teaches them, he shall be called ["]great["] in the kingdom of heaven."

Why should he tell the disciples to "Go and make disciples of all the nations . . . teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you" when most of what he had spoken was irrelevant because the old covenant was still in force while he was in the flesh? Turning to Paul, the clear implication of his citation of Genesis 15:6 and Hab. 2:4 (such as in Gal. 3:6, 11) is that humans are saved the same way under both the Old Covenant and the New. He noted that "David also speaks of the blessing upon the man to whom God reckons righteousness apart from works" (Rom. 4:6) before citing from Psalms 32, which implies the salvation theology (soteriology) of the Old Testament was like that of the New Testament. The role of the law or obedience relative to salvation or justification was the same for the Jews before the crucifixion as it is for Christians today in God's sight, even if Jewish tradition and the oral law saw it otherwise. Consider that when Paul wrote this to Timothy that parts of the New Testament did not yet exist, or at least had not been likely all gathered together: "All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for

teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness . . ." (II Timothy 3:16). Having made in the preceding verses a reference to Timothy being raised a believer in the true God through the "sacred writings," Paul obviously primarily had the Old Testament in mind when he wrote this. If the Old Testament is so largely irrelevant to Christians, why would Paul say this, after citing the Exodus and Israel wandering in the wilderness: "Now these things happened to them as an example, and they were written for our instruction, upon whom the ends of the ages have come" (I Cor. 10:11; compare I Cor. 10:6 and Rom. 4:23-24). Of course, citing such points in rebuttal against extreme dispensationalism and its offspring, a presupposed radical discontinuity between Judaism and Christianity, hardly scratches the surface of such a vast subject. However, such points show how the "new covenant" teachings of many hard-antinomians presupposes a fundamentally flawed general school of Biblical interpretation which should be rejected at its foundation.

More examples of the "judo argument" for Sabbath observance

Let's now demonstrate how the "judo argument" still works effectively against much of the argumentation against the Old Testament law's continuity validity and/or the literal need to keep the seventh-day Sabbath when it inconsistently uses an argument that also would abolish the moral law simultaneously. For example, how do we know, based on specific texts of the New Testament, that the law of Christ includes the two Great Commandments but not the Sabbath or the clean/unclean meat distinction? Likewise, I agree that the bible is a document of progressive revelation and that God has indeed varied His commands over the centuries in various dispensations, but discussing humanity's need to have fidelity to God's will doesn't prove any specific laws have been abolished without citing specific texts as evidence for this viewpoint. Likewise, it's not clear why the principle of love or the spirit of the law abolishes the literal letter of the need to obey the Sabbath, but doesn't end the literal requirement to avoid adultery, theft, and murder. Why does the principle of "subsuming" the law or "comprehending" the law or "fulfilling" the law wipe out the literal command to tithe or keep it from being in force, but not the literal command to avoid idolatry? If Christ is the "end"

or termination of the law (Romans 10:4), how does that end the Sabbath, but not the law against murder? If it's reasoned that no one needs to keep Sabbath and Holy Days because no one is under the jurisdiction of the Old Testament's law anymore, does that also mean that no one needs to keep the laws against idolatry and coveting either? If we are delivered from the Old Testament law (Romans 7:6), how does that get rid of the requirement to tithe, but not the requirement to not covet? Actually, Romans 7:6 is about being released from the penalty of sin for breaking the law and then obeying it with the power of the Holy Spirit (Galatians 3:3, 5, 14; 5:5); it's not about changing what laws have to obey. How do Paul's statements concerning the spiritual error of becoming circumcised (Galatians 2:3-4; 5:1-2, 12-13) prove that the end of the old covenant also ended the law against committing adultery literally? After all, if we believe that God's perfect standard of righteousness, and His moral or even ceremonial law (the Sabbath and tithing, for example) had existed before the Sinaitic code, it wouldn't have ended when the old covenant ended at Christ's death. If Christ's revelation of a higher level of righteousness for Christians to follow abolishes clean/unclean meat distinction, why doesn't that also mean that taking God's name in vain is now permitted? How does command to love other people (Romans 13:8-10) abolish any specific directives of the literal letter of God's law, especially when the Ten Commandments are being directly quoted from, but keeps laws which are deemed to be still be in force? Doesn't "fulfill" mean "obey," not "abolish" here? Notice that this text, although it does mention in passing "and if there is any other commandment," doesn't specifically cite any of the first four Commandments nor discuss how to love God, so does that mean there's no need to love God or to avoid idolatry after this "fulfilling" has occurred? How is it that ending the command to be circumcised and to keep the law of Moses (Acts 15:5) abolished the Holy Days but not the two Great Commandments? When the Church in Acts 15:28-29 enumerated four laws for the gentiles to keep, at least three of them can be deemed to be ritualistic/ceremonial; the council didn't mention the law of Christ, nor the Two Great Commandments, nor even any of the Ten Commandments. They obviously weren't thinking like a dispensationalist Protestant concerned with humanity's need to have fidelity to God's moral will when coming up with this list of these four laws. (Actually, the best explanation to verse 5 is that this is a periphrastic construction, the term "the law of Moses" just being another way to

refer to the law of circumcision by using different words, rather than to an entire set of laws, which include the four that gentiles were told to keep). To reason that we follow Jesus instead of Moses can't prove that tithing was abolished unless one will jettison the law against homosexual sex that's also found in Leviticus. It's said that the letter of the law isn't applicable to Christians today, but it's not clear how that principle by itself eliminated the literal need to keep the Sabbath while preserving the two Great Commandments (Deuteronomy 6:5; Leviticus 19:18) out of the requirement to have fidelity to God.

The argument from silence against the Sabbath examined

Anti-Sabbatarians commonly use the argument from silence when reasoning that the Sabbath (and some other aspect of the Old Testament law deemed to be ritualistic) aren't in force anymore. The argument from silence is a logical fallacy because it argues from a lack of evidence, not from evidence. To say that because some law isn't mentioned here or there when the critic a priori expects it to be mentioned here or there for some reason is an argument from a lack of evidence. A sound argument needs to have correct premises with a valid form (organization), which requires that it contains some positive evidence for its assertion. An argument from silence builds upon non-existent (an absence of) evidence. For example, it's said that there's no record that Adam and Eve were given the Sabbath, despite Genesis 2:1-3 describes the creation of the Sabbath by God's resting on the day after He created them. It is assumed that no other laws existed for humanity besides the command not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, but these were merely not yet revealed since God's moral essence is the same over time, such as in the time just before the great flood in Noah's time. Similarly, to say that the Sabbath wasn't mentioned between Genesis 2 and Exodus 16 is seen as proof that it didn't exist as a law, but when other texts cite or allude to Genesis 2:2-3 when discussing the Sabbath as a command of God, this argument collapses. It's maintained that the bible doesn't reveal if Abraham received certain enumerated laws and commandments, which is used to cast doubt on His obeying

any other laws besides circumcision. It's said that Israel's lack of familiarity with the Sabbath in Exodus 16 is proof that the law hadn't existed before, when the same people had such a lack of knowledge of the meaning of the first two of the Ten Commandments that they worshipped the golden calf (i.e., the Egyptian god Apis) while Moses spent 40 days with God on Mount Sinai. It's said that because Christ didn't publicly reinforce or affirm the mistaken legalistic traditions of the Pharisees concerning Sabbath keeping, that He intended to abolish it after His death. It's asserted that because Paul never mentioned tithing when making the case that the laity should help to support the ministry financially, therefore, this law didn't apply to Christians, which is remains still an argument from silence. Consider the reasoning about Paul's Letters by one of the authors of the excellent set of articles dealing with tithing in the November/December 1999 Good News (p. E9): "Why Doesn't Paul mention tithing in his letters? Realizing that all Scripture was inspired by God and profitable for doctrine (2 Timothy 3:16-17) and that the only Scripture available at the time were the books we know as the Old Testament, Paul did not consider it necessary to repeat all of God's laws in his letters. His letters contain answers to specific issues and were not written as a new set of laws to replace God's instruction found in the earlier books of the Bible." It's an argument from silence to say that because there is no command in the New Testament (or at least Paul's letters) to keep the holy days listed in Leviticus 23, therefore they are abolished. In principle, this argument isn't any different than a skeptic who argues that the records of ancient Egypt (apparently) never mention the Exodus, therefore, it didn't happen despite the events so described were so spectacular, awesome, devastating, and deadly to millions of Egyptians. There isn't really "silence" in these cases, since the reasoning behind the argument of silence hits the hard rock of the burden of proof from what is clearly commanded in Scripture in certain places, which favors the Sabbatharians' position; it's not necessary for God to keep repeating Himself to know if this or that law is still in force.

Sabbatarians can readily maintain that the argument from silence is overturned by the clear texts that do exist for their position, since the burden of proof isn't on Sabbatharians to find reconfirmations of God's will in laws in other time periods after God makes a clear revelation of His requirements for humanity's moral

conduct, such as at Sinai. Instead, the burden of proof is on anti-Sabbatarians to find clear texts that favors the abolition of these laws. Church tradition, which is what is being used when anti-Sabbatarians assert that only a few relatively small churches believe that the Saturday Sabbath is still in force for Christians, shouldn't be used by Sunday-keeping Protestants to "prove" their position. This kind of reasoning denies the principle of the Reformation that doctrines should be based on the authority Scripture alone, which intrinsically is the correct position since the opinions of men shouldn't override the words of God. Jesus warned His listeners against relying on Jewish tradition to determine correct teaching; Catholic tradition is no more reliable or inspired than Jewish tradition, so to cite such texts in this context is still reasonable in principle (Matthew 15:1-3, NKJV): "Then the scribes and Pharisees who were from Jerusalem came to Jesus, saying, "Why do Your disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? For they do not wash their hands when they eat bread." He answered and said to them, "Why do you also transgress the commandment of God because of your tradition?" Those who keep Sunday instead of Saturday are committing the same error as the Pharisees did, by letting human tradition override Scripture's commands.

Is the majority always right?

It's always problematic to assert that the majority should be presumed be right under all circumstances. This is known as the bandwagon fallacy or the "argumentum ad populum." For example, most people before the time of Galileo believed that the earth was the center of the solar system and of the universe, which obviously wasn't true. The other problem is the "optimistic" view of Church history implied when an anti-Sabbatarian argues that the doctrinal beliefs of great majority of professing Christians are right. A treatise could be written on this subject, but here's a quick summary of reasons to believe, based on what the New Testament says, that the majority would be deceived doctrinally (Revelation 12:9). Christ, in the Olivet Prophecy, immediately warns His disciples against deception committed by those speaking in His name or by His authority (Matthew 24:4-6, 9-11). This first part of Christ's prophecy corresponds to the first horseman of the apocalypse, an interpretation that Billy Graham happened to agree with Herbert W. Armstrong about (Revelation 6:1-2). Paul said that wolves would

attack the flock and that some of the elders at Miletus would fall away (Acts 20:28-31). Jude told his readers to contend for the faith once delivered and that certain men had come into the church who were turning the grace of God into licentiousness (verses 4-5). John had to deal with an apostate who kept the faithful brethren from going to church (3 John 9-10). The book of Revelation's comparison of the small flock with the great false church, given the historical school of prophecy's interpretation of Revelation 12-13, 18-19, supports a pessimistic view of church history. The great false prophet or man of sin appears out of great apostasy (II Thess. 2:3-12), who is also the leader of the second beast described in Revelation 13. The great false church will think to change times and laws (Daniel 7:25), which in retrospect includes the Sabbath and the Holy Days. Now to deal with some presumed standard counter-arguments, Matthew 16:18 isn't proof for an "optimistic" view of church history, except against the Mormons' view that all churches had fallen into total apostasy, since it just affirms that there will be a true church somewhere; it need not represent the majority's viewpoint. Nor is Mark 13:31 effective in this regard, since it simply assures us that Jesus' words would be preserved (i.e., that the text of Scripture would be accurately preserved and that the canon of Scripture is correct, cf. Romans 3:2-4); it doesn't ensure that the correct interpretation and teaching about His words would be upheld by the majority down through the centuries. So there's no good reason to assume that the Catholic Church, even in the period before Constantine when its believers were violently persecuted, upheld the correct interpretation of Scripture and then passed it down correctly since the first century. Instead it's necessary to prove that Catholic tradition is reliably true historically, not to assume it is, which is what Sunday-keepers do when they turn to arguments outside of Scripture from other ancient Christian writers as decisive evidence for their position.

Of course, those who write history, to allude to George Orwell's "1984," get to use the past to control the future. The winners get to write the history books, right? In the case of the outlawed Sabbatarian minority (i.e., their view was pronounced "anathema" at the Council of Laodicea in 365 A.D., which incidentally implies some were still keeping the Sabbath), only their doctrinal enemies were allowed to write and to have their writings preserved down through the centuries before the invention of moveable type and printing by Gutenberg. It's an intrinsic limitation

of the historical method that historians, including church historians, are stuck with the primary sources that they have; they can't properly write about what they think actually happened without having documentation for their assertions. Otherwise, it's just unprovable speculation. Even in this modern age when there's freedom of religion unlike in Medieval period, if people only looked at what the enemies of the old Worldwide Church of God wrote about its doctrines without reading directly what Herbert W. and Garner Ted Armstrong said themselves, they would get a dreadfully distorted view of what they actually taught.

Vague rhetoric and dubious assumptions used to overturn Sabbath observance

Another problem with arguments against the continuing existence of the Sabbath concerns the use of unwarranted assumptions and vague rhetoric that aren't found in the bible's literal text. It's necessary to avoid eisegesis and using nice sounding phrases and interpretative concepts that actually aren't rooted in any clear text of Scripture. Sentimental or nebulous phrases don't prove any laws of the Old Testament are clearly abolished. For example, it is assumed that Adam and Eve had no need for them to observe the Sabbath despite they were going to work in the Garden of Eden (Genesis 2:15): "Then the Lord God took the man and put him into the garden of Eden to cultivate it and keep it." Work became much harder after the fall as a punishment for sin (Genesis 3:17-19), but humanity was intended to work before sin entered the world. There still would be a need for physical rest and for directing a theoretically unfallen humanity's attention to the Creator as a coordinated community to think of His purposes more forcibly. Similarly, how is Jesus' life the standard, except as a personal example for us to follow (I Peter 2:21), as opposed to the words that He spoke as well? That is, to say that Jesus Himself is the standard is a hazy claim not well founded in Scripture, since it confuses a Person with an expression of God's will (or general demand for fidelity) in verbal form. Likewise, to say Jesus IS the spiritual rest to which the Sabbath points confuses a Person with what that Person provides to believers. In Matthew 11:28, Jesus says that He provides rest to believers, but that doesn't mean He IS rest (or that God IS rest) or that here He abolished the Sabbath, since it isn't mentioned here. Colossians 2:17 doesn't prove it either, since the literal words, best rendered by the KJV, helps to make it easier to understand that it "the body of

Christ,” which is the church (cf. the context of the prior chapter in 1:24), as the judge instead of what believers are doing of which (pagan or proto-Gnostic) outsiders are critical.

What exactly is “the law of Christ”?

Likewise, what exactly is the law of Christ according to the bible itself? What are the texts that use this term and then also specifically define its provisions or what it specifies humanity to believe and do? After all, if Christ is God (John 1:1-3, 14), then God’s law and Christ’s law would be the same. Then if God inspired Moses of write the law of Moses (cf. Hebrews 1:1), then Moses’s law is God’s law and thus Christ’s law, especially since Christ was the God of the Old Testament (compare John 1:18; 5:37 to Exodus 20:1, 18-19; 24:9-11). It’s now necessary for the anti-Sabbatarian to cite the texts that use this term “the law of Christ” and then distinguish it and its contents from “the Law of God” and/or “the law of Moses.” There are presumably two candidates available to carry this doctrinal load, but they utterly fail to haul this heavy burden successfully. When Paul writes in Romans 8:2, “the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and death,” this means that Jesus’ death, resurrection, and making available the Holy Spirit to Christians has set them free from the penalty of breaking the law. It doesn’t provide any specific guidance as how to obey (or have fidelity) to God. It’s also not clear if “the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus” is exactly the same thing as what an anti-Sabbatarian believes “the law of Christ” to be anyway, given all the extra words Paul uses here, which must have some kind of meaning to them or else they wouldn’t have been written. Notice that the goal of being freed from sin then enables Christians to obey God literally the requirement of the law, which isn’t being distinguished from the Old Testament’s law (Romans 8:4): “that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.” To say verse 4’s “law” somehow excludes any of the 613 laws that aren’t liked by anti-Sabbatarians is to read that meaning into the verse without evidence, since no specific provisions are enumerated or specified here. A law is in force if it is still necessary to obey its letter and its spirit in ways that affect how believers actually live and think. To go beyond the letter of the law to attain a higher level of (imparted) righteousness,

such as described in Matthew 5, doesn't negate the crude requirement to still obey the letter of the law. To "subsume" a law or to claim the principle of love "fulfills" the law in order to get rid of its specific commands and their practical effects is a huge exercise in eisegesis here. It's also a complicated way, violating the general guidance of Occam's razor, to say that the law is in force but not in force; that is, it really is a contradiction. The correct logic here, to refer to a Venn diagram in illustration, is that the spirit of the law is a much larger circle that surrounds a smaller circle that contains the letter of the law, but it doesn't exclude the latter's guidance at all. The righteousness of Christ indeed exceeds that of the Old Testament law, but that truth doesn't necessarily prove that all of what God revealed through Moses was abolished, subsumed, fulfilled, superseded, made of no effect, etc. The other, presumably better candidate, since it lacks all these extra words, appears in I Corinthians 9:21 (NKJV) as Paul describes his method of finding common ground with gentiles whom he is working to evangelize: "to those who are without law [i.e., the gentiles], as [being] without law (not being without law toward God, but under law toward Christ), that I might win those who are without law." The NASB has "under the law of Christ" for the phrase in the spotlight here. However, this brief statement says nothing about how the law of Christ differs from the law of God, since "not being without" is really just a complicated way of saying "with." Nothing is said about what the law of Christ contains as its specific provisions or how it differs in its guidance for human moral actions from the law of God or even the law of Moses. As far as these two texts reveal, "the law of Christ" could include literal Sabbath-keeping, literal holy day observance, literal tithing, and the literal avoidance of eating unclean meat. It's necessary to turn to other texts to try to eliminate these as continuing obligations for Christians to observe. Fundamentally, such a concept as "the law of Christ" is being used as a way to say that the law still in force but not in force, and somehow amidst all the verbal contortions, the letter of the law of the Fourth Commandment somehow drops out in the process but the other laws remain in force.

The next problem with saying that "the law of Christ" is different from "the law of God" or even "the law of Moses," stems from texts that say a new commandment is the same as the one given in the beginning. Christ did say on the night before He was crucified (John 13:34, NKJV): "A new commandment I give to you, that

you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another.” The Apostle John presumably refers to this commandment in I John 3:23; another version of it appears in Jesus’ discourse on the night of the Passover in John 15:12-13. However, is this really new, except for presumably being one Jesus hadn’t directly applied before to the relationships among His disciples during his three-year ministry? After all, in principle it’s the same as the second great commandment (Leviticus 19:18). The Apostle John writes, rather paradoxically that the old commandment his readers had long known, to which he wasn’t adding, but he also had a new commandment as well (I John 2:7-8): “Brethren, I write no new commandment to you, but an old commandment which you have had from the beginning. The old commandment is the word which you heard from the beginning. Again, a new commandment I write to you, which thing is true in Him and in you, because the darkness is passing away, and the true light is already shining.” In verses 9-11, he mentions that he who hates his brother remains in darkness, but he who loves his brother abides in the light. So what’s old is really new and what’s new is really old, which fits the Sabbatarian’s “continuity” thesis as opposed to the anti-Sabbatarian’s “radical discontinuity” thesis. G.K. Chesterton presumably enjoyed this paradox that’s directly found in Scripture.

Is literal obedience to the law bad?

It's worth considering, when examining how well founded certain anti-Sabbatarian concepts are in the direct words of Scripture, how the term “literal” became such a problem, even evil, when it concerns obedience to God’s law, which indeed does produce fidelity to His general will for humanity. However, let’s make the case that it’s fine and dandy to be “literal” and to obey the “letter of the law” when God still wants Christians to do so; it’s only a problem when He doesn’t. According to The American Heritage Dictionary, “literal” means “Being in accordance with, conforming to, or upholding the exact or primary meaning of a word or words . . . Avoiding exaggeration, metaphor, or embellishment; factual; prosaic.” So now, is this really such a spiritual problem, if it is what God also wants of us? Obedience to the spiritual overall purpose of God’s law, such as Jesus describes in the Sermon on the Mount, doesn’t wipe out the need to literally obey it also. Sure, His main purpose was to point His listeners to greater spiritual responsibilities than the

literal letter entailed, but He didn't wipe out the requirement to obey the literal letter of the law in the process. Hence, men shouldn't lust after women in their hearts (Matthew 5:28), but they should also still literally avoid committing adultery, before and after the end of the old covenant, since the seventh commandment is still in force. People shouldn't murder each other literally, but they shouldn't hate others also (Matthew 5:21-26). There are no clear verses or set of verses that say the literal need to obey this law was eliminated through being "subsumed" or being "superseded" or being "fulfilled" by some other principle of love such that the literal meaning was destroyed in the process. It's still wrong to literally commit adultery, theft, murder, and idolatry for Christians as well. Love is still being defined by the law at the base, minimalistic level in this regard, through the letter of the law, by being its guardrails (or dare I say, "hedge") to define its meaning. The anti-Sabbatarian position has an overly optimistic view of human nature's goodness, by thinking that people will do more than they are told, when often they will only do the barest minimum. For example, when the Worldwide Church of God proclaimed in 1995 that the principle of tithing was no longer a requirement, by mistakenly reasoning that somehow setting a "floor" on giving placed a limit (or "ceiling") on giving, it quickly saw its income collapse sharply downwards. This is what happens when there are no specific downward limits on (dis)obedience; most people, even many Christians, in the real world, are aiming to just merely get by, even though they should be aiming for the sky in principle instead, such as by following what Jesus taught in the Sermon on the Mount, James in his letter, and Paul in such passages as I Corinthians 13 and Romans 12. That is, the principle of a "put option" is needed when we interpret man's duties to God's will. The literal meaning may not define full Godly righteousness, but it indeed can help Christians to avoid falling too low in their personal standards of literal or imparted righteousness. After all, down through history of the general church of any denomination, how many professing Christians have been literally guilty of idolatry, murder, taking God's name in vain, theft, adultery, bearing false witness, dishonoring their parents, and/or covetousness? It's not a useless operation to tell even Christians to obey the letter of the law, not just its spirit, given this general record.

Another example of the anti-Sabbatarian use of fustian rhetoric or grandiloquence to get around a specific text arises when interpreting Genesis 26:5, which in context was explaining why God would bless Abraham's descendants (NKJV): "because Abraham obeyed My voice and kept My charge, My commandments, My statutes, and My laws." This verse has been labeled an "encomium" and a "prolepsis" in order to avoid admitting that it demonstrates that Abraham obeyed a set of laws, which obviously were more than keeping physical circumcision alone, since that's just one law. Taken literally and historically, it shows that God's law as a set of provisions existed long before the children of Israel reached Mount Sinai. Sure, this text is indeed an expression of (Merriam-Webster's) "glowing and warmly enthusiastic praise" for Abraham's faithful obedience. However, since it wasn't dishonest flattery, that doesn't prove it wasn't literally true also. The other vocabulary stretcher that has been deployed here to try to avoid this verse's literal meaning is even more impressive, since it's said to be a "prolepsis" is (Merriam-Webster's) "the representation or assumption of a future act or development as if presently existing or accomplished." The chief problem with this kind of explanation of verse 5 is that it denies the historicity of the bible in the spirit of a higher critic. It maintains that what is written here wasn't actually true, but simply a case of a (mistaken) belief that something that actually arose much later had existed at earlier time. Did Moses blunder by writing incorrectly that a legal code or at least a set of laws somewhat like what Israel received at Sinai already existed in Abraham's time? In principle, this error is like what can be found often in the Talmud, in which a later development is projected backwards in time to have existed centuries earlier. Although writing in the context of describing the rise of the Jewish scribal class, Alfred Edersheim in "The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah," 1:94, notes the basic problem in using traditional Talmudic sources to draw historical conclusions, even though here the basic outline of this institution's development could still be traced: "From the utter confusion of historical notices in Rabbinic writings and their constant practice of antedating events, it is impossible to furnish satisfactory details." I don't believe that Moses committed this historical error here in Genesis 26:5 if we are to believe that the entire bible, in its original autographs, is the inerrant, infallible word of God (II Timothy 3:16).

If Christians should believe that various laws are now abolished at least for the current dispensation before Jesus' return, then specific texts should be cited to justify the conclusion. For example, one category of laws, or (often) parts of laws, that are all abrogated for Christians in this age are those tied to ancient Israel being both a church and state united together under God as a theocracy where God directly ruled Israel. Today, God has authorized no human government to be His representative on earth, even if they may enforce laws that properly protect people (Rom. 13:1-7). Our citizenship is in heaven, and so our first loyalty is to God, not our country (Phil. 3:20). Jesus said his kingdom was not of this world (John 18:36). He refused to allow humans to make Him their king while He was in the flesh (John 6:15). Hence, all the death penalties scattered throughout the Torah certainly should not be enforced by Christians today, such as the one for defiantly breaking any law of God, like the Sabbath (Num. 15:30-36). One cannot argue, to deploy the judo argument yet again, that because the Sabbath was tied to a death penalty that has been abolished, it is gone also, without correspondingly admitting that adultery (Deut. 22:22), fornication (Deut. 22:20-21), rape (Deut. 22:25), sorcery (Ex. 22:18), bestiality (Ex. 22:18), and homosexual sex (Lev. 20:13) would be similarly legalized (as far as God's revelation reveals, not natural law's guidance) based on the same reasoning. Similarly, the laws regarding Israel's army don't apply to Christians today (such as Deut. 24:5), because we are to love our enemies, which simply can't be expressed by killing them on the battlefield, regardless of how much we may wish to twist Jesus' words so we can be patriotic during wartime (Matt. 5:38-47; 26:51-53). Again, since no nation is a theocracy directly authorized by God, no nation's army is permitted by God to kill others for any reason, except perhaps criminals in situations of martial law (re: Romans 13:1-7 again). Even in those situations true Christians should not be involved by acting as police. Hence, all the aspects of laws that are tied to the state inflicting penalties on criminals and other violators of the law are abolished at least for the present time before Christ returns, even if the law itself may still be a sin to violate a part of God's moral law, because no human government today is authorized by God to represent and enforce His will on earth, as ancient Israel's was, such as by killing idolaters and by destroying their graven images. The prohibitions stated in civil laws of Israel aren't necessarily abolished even when the penalties have been. The end of the old covenant (Hebrews 8:13) and its jurisdiction over Israel didn't

end for Christians all the laws that Israel had agreed to obey (the 613 separate laws by traditional Jewish reckoning) unless further clear evidence can be found to support such a conclusion, which indeed does exist for circumcision (Galatians 5) and the temple's ritualistic/sacrificial system (Hebrews 7, 9-10).

Was the law only given to Israel?

The concept that the entire old covenant law was only given to Israel is a general concept that has no good roots in Scripture when many of the laws are moral in nature and/or there's evidence of even civil or ceremonial laws that existed before the old covenant began or after it ended, including the Sabbath, the holy days, tithing, and the clean/unclean meat distinction. As can be readily shown, many of the Old Testament's laws were also for gentiles if they chose to join Israel or they were imposed on them after the millennium began (Zech. 14:16-19; Ex. 12:48-49; 20:10; 23:12; Deut. 1:16; 5:14; 16:11, 14, 29; Lev. 17:8-10, 15; 18:24-26; 19:10; 22:18; 23:22; 24:19-22; 25:3-6; 26:12; Num. 9:14, 15:14-16, 26-31; 19:10; 35:15; Joshua 20:9; Ruth 1:15-16; Isaiah 56:3, 6-7).

When did the Sabbath begin?

Let's make the case that Genesis 2:1-3 was the beginning of the Sabbath as an institution, instead of being a one-off action by God with no further significance for guiding human conduct (NKJV): "Thus the heavens and the earth, and all the host of them, were finished. And on the seventh day God ended His work which He had done, and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done. Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because in it He rested from all His work which God had created and made." If this text was never alluded to again in Scripture, it might make some sense that God's action of resting on the seventh day didn't create an example intended for humanity to follow. However, since Genesis is a primarily historical text about origins and how things began, the significance of the Sabbath's creation during this time remains significant for its continuing validity when other texts affirm this, directly or indirectly. If the Sabbath hadn't existed since the (re)creation week, then why does it appear fully formed in Exodus 16 before Israel had agreed to become God's

chosen people under the old covenant? Why does God make an analogy between the regular week and the creation week in the Fourth Commandment in Exodus 20:8-9, 11 (NKJV) if it hadn't been created on the seventh day and hadn't had a continuing existence since then?: "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the LORD your God. . . . For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it." For if something has been made "holy," how does it become "unholy" again? Where does it clearly say that God specifically made the seventh day unholy, in either the Old or New Testaments? Humans don't have the intrinsic authority something holy, but they can choose, like Moses during his encounter with God at the burning bush, take actions to preserve the holiness of something (in his case, by taking off his shoes, Exodus 3:4-5). Jesus' assertion in Mark 2:27-28 simply established His authority over the Sabbath, so that His interpretations of how to keep it in his debate with the Pharisees are determinative for His disciples then and Christians, not their traditions about it. They weren't trying to spend a full day harvesting standing wheat or barley with sickles, but simply were getting some casual snacks on the run, so the Pharisees' criticism of them was much too legalistic. The great majority of Christ's debates about the Sabbath with His critics concerned healing people miraculously on the Sabbath who weren't at risk of immediately dying. It's also worth remembering in this context, in the original Hebrew to which this verse alludes, that the name "Adam" means "man." Therefore, one could also substitute "Adam" for "man" in this context and say that the Sabbath was made for "Adam" as well instead of "Adam" being made for the Sabbath. Although the bible commentator Matthew Henry is plainly a believer in Sunday observance, he still perceives the direct connection between Christ's claim (in verse 28) to be the Lord of the Sabbath as also being its Creator as well (p. 1782, italics removed): "Note, The Sabbath days are days of the Son of man; he is Lord of the day, and to his honour it must be observed; by him God made the worlds, and so it was by him that the Sabbath was first instituted; by Him God gave the law at mount Sinai, and so the fourth commandment was his law . . ." Finally, the author of Hebrews places the origin of the Sabbath in Genesis as well (Hebrews 4:4): "For He has thus said somewhere concerning the seventh day, 'And God rested on the seventh

day from all His works.” Although he is primarily making a spiritual, even allegorical point about the need to enter God’s rest for the people of God, this doesn’t eliminate the literal Sabbath in the process, which is what gives his metaphor meaning. Most importantly, there’s an interesting shift in the vocabulary concerning the words translated “rest” in this passage. In verse 9, the term translated “rest” in the NKJV is instead “Sabbath rest” in the NASB: “There remains therefore a Sabbath rest for the people of God.” The term translated “rest” or “Sabbath rest” here is “sabbatismos,” not the word for “rest” found in the rest of the passage, which is “kakatapausis.” Vine’s (p. 539) says “sabbatismos” means “a Sabbath-keeping” and the Bauer-Arndt-Gingrich Greek-English lexicon (p. 739) says it means “Sabbath rest, Sabbath observance.” Unlike what the author of Hebrews says in Hebrews 7, 9-10 concerning the priesthood and the sacrificial system, which he maintains have ended as having spiritual validity in God’s sight, he doesn’t say this about the Sabbath or specifically about tithing (in chapter 7) despite having ample opportunity to do so. We shouldn’t think there’s no literal aspect to his statements in Hebrews 4:10-11, especially given this interesting vocabulary switch in verse 9: “For he who has entered His rest has himself also ceased from his works as God did from His. Let us therefore be diligent to enter that rest, lest anyone fall according to the same example of disobedience.” After all, God literally rested on the seventh day in Genesis 2:1-3, so the author of Hebrews believes the Sabbath as an institution began at that time. The literal observance of the Sabbath isn’t eliminated as a meaning of the author despite his focus is on the metaphorical need for God’s people to enter a state of rest from sin. So these passages in Mark 2, Hebrews 4, and Exodus 20 serve as excellent evidence that the “beer can” (i.e., single use) theory of the Sabbath’s origin isn’t true.

Did Christ end the law?

Of course, Paul did write, “For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes” (Rom. 10:4). However, wouldn’t Paul be contradicting himself if Christians interpret this text as ending the need for imparted righteousness even when that doesn’t earn salvation? Why would he write such as text as this one, if didn’t believe that good actions had nothing to do with

developing the actual habits of obedience (sanctification) or imparted righteousness (Romans 2:6-8, NKJV): “who ‘will render to each one according to his deeds’: eternal life to those who by patient continuance in doing good seek for glory, honor, and immortality; but to those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness--indignation and wrath.” He wrote many “pro-law” texts that show that the law is still in force long after the crucifixion had occurred. They demonstrate that Christians are still under the jurisdiction of the law, but not its penalty of death since they accepted Jesus’ sacrifice. After all, aren’t Christians under the authority of the two Great Commandments since they still have to obey them? It doesn’t make sense to insert “old covenant” into the following texts instead, if one believes that the old covenant and the Ten Commandments (or the law) are the same, which apparently was the argument of Ratzlaff in “Sabbath in Crisis” and Brinsmead in the “Verdict” articles, which would limit its jurisdiction to the time before the cross to Israel: “Do we then nullify the law through faith? May it never be! On the contrary, we establish the law” (Rom. 3:31). “Sin is not imputed when there is no law” (Rom. 5:13). “In order that the requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit” (Rom. 8:4). (Notice that “fulfill” here means to obey; there’s no case of an anti-type fulfilling a ritualistic type here). “So then, the law is holy, and the commandment is holy and righteous and good” (Rom. 7:12). “I agree with the law, confessing that it is good” (Rom. 7:16). “For I joyfully concur with the law of God in the inner man” (Rom. 7:22). “Because the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able to do so” (Rom. 8:7). “For not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law will be justified” (Rom. 2:13). Obviously, the Old Testament law has some kind of general continuity validity as a guide to human conduct (James 1:22-25); its reach isn’t limited jurisdictionally to Israel alone. Although such laws in their bare words don’t define the fully righteous standards that Christians should aspire to obeying, such as found in the Sermon on the Mount, their literal letter remains in force as a “floor” that clearly prohibits especially bad conduct by Christians. We shouldn’t naively believe that Christians would never give in to their evil human nature and would never engage in violations of the literal letter of the law (i.e., the punishment of a Christian engaged in literal adultery found in I Corinthians 5:1-2, 13). I’ve

heard about cases of adultery and fornication among those who at least nominally were Christians in the Church of God at some point, not just in other churches. There's still a need for the letter of the law to be preached even to Christians as well in order to guide their actual conduct, not just the spirit of the law.

What is the "royal law" and the "law of liberty"?

When the context of the terms "royal law" and "law of liberty" are examined in James 2:8-12 they are describing at least some part or aspect of the Old Testament's law. They shouldn't be treated as nebulous terms into which any desired interpretations can be poured into them that aren't moored to the context of specific scriptures. The royal law and the law of liberty aren't identified here or referred also as being the law of Christ the king. There's nothing here that says that the Ten Commandment's specific provisions (or literal letter) are "subsumed" and thus obliterated. In this case, the term "royal law" refers directly to the second great commandment, which appears in Leviticus 19:18, which James directly quotes in James 2:8. He also believes that this law is still in force, since violations of it are currently, after the crucifixion, "sin" and Christians then are "convicted by the law as transgressors." The term "law of liberty" appears right after James quotes three separate laws from the Old Testament, two of which come from the Ten Commandments. Why should we believe that they refer to some other law instead, such as "the law of Christ," which isn't here mentioned? Wouldn't that be an exercise in eisegesis instead of exegesis? Here's the passage again that shows that at least some of the Old Testament's specific laws are still literally in force, since James isn't talking about the past before the crucifixion, since these laws are still assessing sin against believers who break them (James 2:8-12, NKJV): "If you really fulfill the royal law according to the Scripture, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself," you do well; but if you show partiality, you commit sin, and are convicted by the law as transgressors. For whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one point, he is guilty of all. For He who said, "Do not commit adultery," also said, "Do not murder." Now if you do not commit adultery, but you do murder, you have become a transgressor of the law. So speak and so do as those who will be judged by the law of liberty." Notice that the word "fulfill" here means to obey it literally; Christ's obedience to any of the laws of the Old

Testament, or to the three cited in this passage, didn't end the requirement of believers to obey them also. This passage refers to laws that are part of the moral law, but it doesn't clearly say what is excluded either. This passage can't be used to say the Sabbath, the Holy Days of Leviticus 23, tithing, and the clean/unclean meat distinction were abolished or left out since it says nothing about laws that aren't included as part of the royal law or the law of liberty. In order to declare that any Old Testament laws aren't in force for Christians, it would be necessary to cite (say) verses in Hebrews 7, 9-10 concerning much of the ritualistic/ceremonial law instead.

The other use of the term "law of liberty" to some degree agrees with the concept of man's general requirement to comply with God's will, or to show fidelity to Him, since it starts with the concept of doing God's word, but then turns to the law (not even to Jesus or to His personal example) as a means of knowing how to live correctly in God's sight (James 1:23-25 NKJV): "For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man observing his natural face in a mirror; for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was. But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does." In this case, the text doesn't say exactly what law it is referring to. However, since in the next chapter a few verses away the law of liberty is a concept plainly related to several of the Old Testament's laws quoted in the prior verses, it would be a good hermeneutical principle to apply the principle of using the bible to interpret itself. The law of liberty is the law of the Old Testament, presumably concerning the at least primarily provisions that have a moral rather than ceremonial or ritualistic nature.

The Old Testament law did prohibit evil mental states also

Notice that the Torah does indeed directly command helping others, in the same way that the good Samaritan in Christ's parable (cf. Luke 10:30-37) helped the stranger who had been robbed, beaten, and left by the side of the road (Deuteronomy 15:7-8, 11 NKJV): "If there is among you a poor man of your brethren, within any of the gates in your land which the LORD your God is giving you, you shall not harden your heart nor shut your hand from your poor brother,

but you shall open your hand wide to him and willingly lend him sufficient for his need, whatever he needs. . . . For the poor will never cease from the land; therefore I command you, saying, 'You shall open your hand wide to your brother, to your poor and your needy, in your land.'" Similarly this text says that the needy should be helped (Leviticus 25:35 NKJV): "If one of your brethren becomes poor, and falls into poverty among you, then you shall help him, like a stranger or a sojourner, that he may live with you." The Torah did indeed command believers to not exploit others who are poor, such as by charging them interest (or usurious interest) (Exodus 22:25 NKJV): "If you lend money to any of My people who are poor among you, you shall not be like a moneylender to him; you shall not charge him interest." Notice also that the Torah prohibits hate before it announces the second great commandment (Leviticus 19:17-18 NKJV): "*You shall not hate your brother in your heart.* You shall surely rebuke your neighbor, and not bear sin because of him. 'You shall not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the children of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the LORD.'" Keep in mind also that the Tenth commandment, which prohibits coveting, deals with type of mental state, not actual actions of the body. Does the "law of Christ," the "royal law," and "the law of liberty" still include the letter, not just the spirit, of these specific directives?

Did Paul contradict Himself about whether the law was good and/or abolished?

The basic solution to resolving Paul's initially seemingly contradictory views on the law is to note that Paul condemns the use of the law as a means to gain imputed righteousness, justification, or salvation, but approves of it as a guide to conduct and moral actions. Hence, he tells the Romans, "we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from works of the law" (Rom. 3:28). He condemned the Galatians for "seeking to be justified by faith; you have fallen from grace" (Gal. 5:4) when they sought to be circumcised, a rite in Judaism analogous to baptism for Christians, that marks the initial stage of the conversion/salvation process. So when we turn to Rom. 10:4, obviously enough it doesn't say the "law ended" per se, but that the law ended "for righteousness," a state of being judged innocent of sin. So even given the "termination" interpretation of Rom. 10:4, it can't prove that a given law ended, but rather it ended a dispensation in which people (the

Jews) sought to be righteous by obeying the law. But did God ever intend that His people, in any time or place, ever to have the ability to justify themselves, to make themselves free from guilt (i.e., attain a state of justification) for violating the law, by obeying the law? Even this interpretation goes astray, since the Greek word translated “end,” which is “telos,” can also mean “goal,” as the NASB margin for this verse reminds its readers. Hence, since the law can’t make us righteous (free from guilt for violating the law), it makes us turn to Christ for a solution to our existential dilemma. Only through faith in Jesus’ sacrifice can our sins be taken off us (i.e., justified), and only through the Holy Spirit being placed in us can we ultimately be given eternal life. Belief in Jesus’ sacrifice is the solution for sin, which is what the law produces whenever we violate it. Notice that “righteousness” can be both (1) actual, a sanctified state in which we have developed the habits of obeying God’s law, and (2) imputed, a justified state in which God has arbitrarily (by our faith in Jesus) judged us innocent of sin, although we’re really guilty intrinsically. On the one hand, Paul wrote about actual righteousness in Rom. 6:16: “Do you not know that when you present yourselves to someone as slaves for obedience, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin resulting in death, or of **obedience resulting in righteousness.**” Hence, Rom. 10:4 couldn’t mean that Christ ended a dispensation in which people obeyed the law in order to become actually righteous, which was always impossible anyway since all have sinned (Romans 3:23), or else Paul contradicted himself. However, Paul clearly believed in imputed righteousness as well: “If you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved; for with the heart man believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation” (Rom. 10:9-10). Plainly enough, Paul wasn’t contradicting himself about how righteousness is gained, but rather is describing two kinds of righteousness, one of which is imputed, one of which is actual or imparted. Hence, Romans 10:4 doesn’t mean that the law ceased to exist, which then would legalize adultery and murder, not just Sabbath-breaking (so far as the correct interpretation of God’s revelation reveals; natural law reasoning is a separate concern), nor does it mean that Christ’s sacrifice ended a dispensation during which *all* people (the Jews) were actually commanded by God to gain righteousness (an innocent, guilt-free, justified state)

by their own efforts (which obviously wasn't true of Abraham (Romans 4:1-13), who was justified by faith, not works).

Christians can be legalistic about moral laws that are still in force

Even Christians can easily be legalistic about laws that anti-Sabbatarians would believe to be in force, such as concerning adultery, not merely only about laws that the anti-Sabbatarian thinks are abolished, such as concerning how to keep the holy days or Sabbath. For example, what books, TV, movies, videos, music, Web sites, etc., should Christians avoid if they don't wish to be tempted or encouraged to sexually sin in their minds (cf. Matthew 5:28)? Given this general worldly, even evil media environment, how do we exactly bring every thought into the captivity of Christ (II Corinthians 10:5)? Joshua Harris's book, "Not Even a Hint: Guarding Your Heart Against Lust" serves as an excellent example of this, despite he even says he tries to avoid being legalistic while his book describes all sorts of highly specific ways to avoid sexual sin. I don't regard his detailed discussions of such issues to be a waste of time, but instead they impart highly useful information about how to follow Jesus by obeying the seventh commandment's overarching spiritual purpose, not just its literal letter.

Was the law prohibiting the eating of unclean meat abolished?

The problem with citing Matthew 15:11 and Mark 7:18-19 (the latter verses are better rendered in the KJV/NKJV because they use the Received/Byzantine text type) to conclude that the clean/unclean meat distinction was abolished stems from the context. We shouldn't interpret the word "nothing" (Mark 7:15) to be a complete absolute, but rather its meaning is delineated by the context. Radical discontinuity needs to be proven, not assumed and then read into texts. There's no discussion here that the enjoyments of eating the flesh of pigs and/or bottom-feeding shrimp wouldn't defile people anymore. Instead, the dispute is over the oral law, not the written law, in which the tradition of the elders stated that Jews should wash their hands before eating (Mark 7:3-5). To mobilize these texts to contradict the food prohibitions of Deuteronomy 14 and Leviticus 11 is simply an exercise in eisegesis. We can also know that the mentions of their being clean

and/or unclean animals before the flood (Genesis 7:2), and before Jesus' return (Revelation 18:2; 66:16-17) shows that this distinction wasn't necessarily tied to the jurisdiction of the old covenant's system of laws for Israel. The assertion that these laws in a prophetic context shouldn't be taken literally falls flat because they aren't like visions of Daniel in which (clearly unclean) animals come out of the sea (chapter 7). They aren't symbols that stand for something else. Just because most people haven't commonly eaten mice and rats, except during sieges and periods of famines, doesn't mean God approves. (For a fictional portrayal of this, Cyrano de Bergerac's soldiers find and roast a rat while being besieged in Arras in the movie version of Rostand's play that stars Gerard Depardieu). Furthermore, in some parts of the world, people do commonly eat rats. Many years ago, I remember seeing a picture in National Geographic magazine of a man in (I believe) the Philippines carrying a large number of dead rats by their tails in one of his hands, which he intended to cook and eat, after he got home. Sure, rats aren't the same as mice, but they're mighty similar.

Did Paul abolish the law about not eating unclean meat in Romans 14?

The principal problem with citing any of Romans 14 to show that the Old Testament law was abolished is that it never mentions any of it. The disputes over which days to fast on or over whether to eat meat or not fits much better the discussion found in the first-century Christian document the Didache (perhaps c. 70 A.D., not long after Paul wrote Romans), which describes Wednesdays and Fridays as the days of the week to fast in contradiction to the Jews, who would fast on Mondays and Thursdays instead. The problem with citing Romans 14:20 to prove that the law regulating clean and unclean meats was abolished stems from this general context, which limits what it possibly refers to. When Paul writes, "All things are indeed clean, but they are evil for the man who eats and gives offense," it resembles where Paul threw out this broad generalization, "All things are lawful unto me" (I Corinthians 6:12), which simply can't be taken literally or else it contradicts the rest of Scripture. Similarly, the words "every day" appear in Exodus 16:4, but the context of the chapter shows that the Sabbath is excluded. Broad, universal terms may have their meaning restricted by the immediate or even general context in which they appear. Paul's writings in Romans 14 may be

dealing with in part the same issue that arises in I Corinthians 8 concerning “weak” and “strong” believers eating or not eating meat offered to idols. When explaining Romans 14:14, the SDA Commentary makes a perfectly reasonable interpretation that’s within the bounds of what’s actually mentioned in the chapter (Vol. 6, p. 639): “Paul is not here sweeping away all distinctions between foods. The interpretation must be limited to the particular foods under discussion and to the specific problem with which the apostle is dealing, namely, the sympathetic treatment of those whose partly-enlightened consciences prevent their eating certain foods. . . . The uncleanness does not lie in the nature of the food but in believer’s view of it.” The word translated “unclean” in this chapter, “koinos,” is clearly a “weaker” word in the level of spiritual defilement to which it refers compared to the “stronger” term “akathartos,” which is often used in the Synoptic gospels to refer to “unclean spirits,” i.e., demons. To share things or hold them in “common” is a frequent use for “koinos” elsewhere in the New Testament and other ancient Greek writings. It’s fine to observe that the Septuagint isn’t very precise in its translations of Hebrew words from the Old Testament when using “koinos” and “akathartos.” Let’s here make analogy to words in English with different connotations but the same basic meaning, like stronger term “stingy” and the weaker term “thrifty” have to each other in English concerning the saving of money, perhaps the Greek words referring to different levels of unholiness were being used somewhat indiscriminately. However, in order to determine the precise meaning of these two words that Peter used when told to kill and eat unclean animals in his vision (Acts 10:14), it’s necessary to find sources in the ancient Koine (i.e., common) Greek that explain the use of these two words with some kind of precision. Since Peter used both words, there should be some kind of clear difference between the two in their shades of meaning, just like being “stingy” is stronger and more negative than being “thrifty,” but that can’t be clearly known by citing how the translators of the Septuagint somewhat confoundedly used “koinos” and “akathartos” for many different things. For example, it may be that everything “akathartos” is also “koinos,” but not everything “koinos” is “akathartos.” The Hebrew word(s) in question may have had a broader meaning than the more precise Greek words did, thus causing overlapping, imprecise translations by translators who individually or collectively weren’t consistent in their translation of the Hebrew Old Testament into Greek. The meanings may well have overlapped,

so the logic of a Venn diagram can be applied to the situation. Unfortunately, there doesn't appear to be some kind of way to know if the food prohibition against eating what is "common" concerned meat from clean animals that was mishandled (such as through being offered to idols) or was of (biblically clean) animals that died of themselves, so their blood hadn't been drained from them. Therefore, that possible explanation remains a speculation, which awaits the discovery of some kind of document of the same general ancient time period to determine its truth or falsity by elucidating the related but different meanings of these two words.

Is the command to tithe tied to the need to financially support the Levitical priesthood?

Much like the clean/unclean animal distinction existed before and after the time the old covenant was in force, this is also true of tithing. The author of Hebrews 7 clearly said that the law that required the priesthood's members to be of the tribe of Levi had to be changed and was no longer in force, but he didn't make this case against tithing, which isn't necessarily coupled to the financial support of the tribe of Levi since Abraham gave tithes to Melchizedek (Hebrews 7:4-10). Abraham is described as giving a tithe in Genesis 14:20 and Jacob promised to give a tenth in Genesis 28:22. Tithes also were used to keep the annual festivals and to support the poor, so the tithing system need not end when the Levitical priesthood ended since it had other functions. So when Jesus told believers that they should still tithe (Matthew 23:23), that wasn't necessarily because it was necessary to support the Levites up to the day He was crucified. Furthermore, if that kind of reasoning is valid, that Jesus couldn't actually abolish laws before His death, that undermines the claim that Jesus made all foods clean in His debate with the Pharisees over the requirement of the oral law for Jews to wash their hands before eating. He didn't have the authority to do that either then, right? But was tithing's only purpose the support of the Levites? What was the purpose of the second tithe? "You shall eat in the presence of the Lord your God at the place where He choose to establish His name" (Deut. 14:23). So long as the Feast of Tabernacles is in force, so is the second tithe. What was the purpose of the third tithe?: "The alien, the orphan and the widow who are in your town, shall come and eat and be satisfied" (Deut. 14:29). So long as poor people exist, the third tithe is in force. (Notice that, by

deduction, the different functions and different groups that received a tithe indicates more than one tithe existed). Therefore, what should we make of the argument that because the Levitical priesthood has ended, therefore, the first tithe went with it? If the second and third tithes still have a spiritual function, wouldn't the first still have it as well? As the author of "Why Tithe in Today's World?" (Good News, November/December 1999, p. E5) reasons: "Thus members of the Church today continue to tithe even though the Levitical priesthood has ended, just as Abraham tithed to Melchizedek before the priesthood of Levi was established." The ministry today, even with all of its imperfections, represents a part of Christ's government on earth today as the Levites did, and so is entitled to support. As Paul noted: "So also the Lord directed ['commanded,' NKJV] those who proclaim the gospel to get their living from the gospel" (I Cor. 9:14). If it is "commanded" to support the ministry, if it asks for help (unlike Paul in II Cor. 11:9), could tithing possibly be voluntary?

Colossians 2:16 isn't about Christians who are judging others, but rather about (apparent) proto-Gnostic outsiders who are judging Christians who are enjoying themselves too much physically (Colossians 2:16 NKJV): "So let no one judge you in food or in drink, or regarding a festival or a new moon or sabbaths." The "you" refers to Christians, the "no one" implicitly refers to those who are outside "the body of Christ," i.e., the church (cf. Colossians 1:24). These outsiders were ascetics who said, "Do not handle, do not taste, do not touch!" (Colossians 2:21). Pagan outsiders with this kind of perspective would be naturally critical of Christians who celebrated God's holy days and Sabbaths by worshipping God and by having meals together.

Are the Holy Days without any symbolic meaning for Christians today?

The prime mistake an anti-Sabbatarian can make about the Holy Days is to deem them to be merely the agricultural celebrations of ancient Israel, which correspondingly no longer need to be kept or learned about after the Crucifixion. It assumes that there are no dual or typical meanings that can be learned (or still learned) from them. Such an interpretation, however, doesn't fit the observation of the Feast of Tabernacles by gentiles in the millennium (Zechariah 14:16-19), which shows that the end of the old covenant didn't end the observance of the Holy Days.

There are also cases in which the New Testament church had to have been observing these days or else there would have been no need to mention them (Acts 2:1; 18:21(KJV, NKJV), 20:7, 16; 27:9; I Cor. 16:8). However, much like the animal sacrifices had a deeper meaning in being typologically foreshadowing the sacrifice of the Messiah to come, the Holy Days pointed to deeper spiritual lessons, many of which could only become clear after Jesus' death and resurrection. Paul's teaching that the Passover points to Christ's sacrifice (I Corinthians 5:6-8) shows that the Passover wasn't only about Israel's deliverance from slavery in Egypt. Notice that the Corinthians, who had numerous serious spiritual problems, were said to be "*in fact* unleavened" (NASB, words in italics added by translators). It's hard to conclude that they were spiritually unleavened (or that Paul would want to point that out in this context that they still were because they had the Holy Spirit), given all of their sins, so this means that they were literally unleavened (i.e., had cleaned out their homes of leavening). In this case, the spiritual meaning of the day doesn't preclude or abolish its continued observance; the shadow or type became a memorial, which also explains in principle Paul's accommodating attitude towards observing a temple ritual that he surely didn't believe was still required of Christian believers anymore (Acts 21:20-26), which "Torah observant" Christians mistakenly cite as evidence that Paul still believed in performing literal circumcisions for spiritual reasons. This process of changing types into memorials also is the best explanation of the animal sacrifices that will be restored during the millennium of Christ's rule (Eze. 43:18-27). The physical harvests of Israel, as dramatized by some of the holy days (mainly Pentecost and the Feast of Tabernacles; the other Holy Days aren't so clearly about planting and harvesting) help teach us about the great spiritual harvest of humanity for God's kingdom. The key spiritual point behind the chronologically-ordered system of the meanings of the Holy Days is to teach about God's great plan of salvation for the human race, especially that the great harvest will be after Jesus' return, which means that uncalled people can be saved after they die. By upholding this conception, the Church of God in the tradition of the teachings of Herbert W. Armstrong has a solution to the standard questions of aggressive atheists and skeptics, who maintain it is unjust for God to torture billions of people in hell forever who never had the ability to choose to be saved since they were born in places in which the message of salvation through Christ has been never taught or just a little. Strict Calvinists

just make the problems of forming a convincing theodicy in response even harder, by saying God predestined all of these ignorant people to eternal hellfire. Several of these days point to Jesus' central role in the plan to redeem the human race, especially the Passover and the Day of Atonement, which concerns His sacrifice, the Feast of Trumpets, which concerns His return, and the Feast of Tabernacles, which concerns His rule over the earth. Even the ritual of the wavesheath offering on Pentecost, in type refers to Jesus' resurrection from the dead and ascension to heaven (Leviticus 23:11). Just because some unbalanced preaching about the Day of Atonement's meaning had occurred historically in the WCG, in which the representation of the punishment of Satan as the goat released into the wilderness was overemphasized concerning the overall meaning of the day, doesn't mean it doesn't refer primarily to Christ's role as providing atonement by His sacrifice to the human race.

How to know that the moral law and the ceremonial law are different

We can know that the ritualistic law, such as concerning the animal sacrifices and circumcision, and the moral law (the Ten Commandments, Lev. 19:18; Deut. 6:5) are different because the New Testament would be self-contradictory otherwise. On the one hand, we know something got abolished concerning God's law in the following verses: Eph. 2:15: "by abolishing in His flesh the enmity, which is the Law of commandments contained in ordinances." Heb. 9:9-10: "Accordingly both gifts and sacrifices are offered which cannot make the worshiper perfect in conscience, since they relate only to food and drink and various washings, regulations for the body imposed until a time of reformation." (Compare Heb. 10:8-9). Heb. 7:12, 18-19: "For when the priesthood is changed, of necessity there takes place a change of law also. . . . For, on the one hand, there is a setting aside of a former commandment because of its weakness and uselessness (for the Law made nothing perfect), and on the other hand there is a bringing in of a better hope, through which we draw near to God." On the other hand, other verses show the law is still in force: Rom. 3:31: "Do we nullify the Law through faith? May it never be! On the contrary, we establish the Law." James 2:10-12: For whoever keeps the whole law (compare Gal. 3:10) and yet stumbles in one point, he has become guilty of all. For He who said, 'Do not commit adultery,' also said, 'Do not commit

murder.' Now if you do not commit adultery, but do commit murder, you have become a transgressor of the law. So speak and so act, as those who are to be judged by the law of liberty." Rom. 7:16, 22, 25: "But if I do the very thing I do not wish to do, I agree with the Law, confessing that it is good. . . . For I joyfully concur with the law of God in the inner man [with a yoke of bondage?] . . . So then, on the one hand I myself with my mind am serving the law of God, but on the other, with my flesh the law of sin" [i.e., his evil human nature]. The two laws both get mentioned in I Cor. 7:19, with one being kept and the other abolished: "Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing, but what matters is the keeping of the commandments of God." The moral nature of particular laws is a sufficient reason to believe that a law continues to be in force, but other laws deemed to be ceremonial may also continue to be in force, should there be evidence for their continuance. Unlike the case for the Sabbath, there are clear texts for abolishing the requirement for literal circumcision, so the biblical evidence concerning these laws' continuance aren't equivalent. So, it's obvious that extreme antinomians are wrong in saying God's law is completely done away.

Jesus' thematic statements in Matthew 5:17-19 that He didn't come to abolish the law but fulfill them remain an obstacle to anti-Sabbatarians' case against the Sabbath. Depending on the law in question, the term "fulfill" can have different meanings. If the (usually ritualistic) law from the Old Testament has a typical meaning, in which it represented Christ's actions and sacrifice in advance, it indeed can be "fulfilled" by the one-time ultimate action of the Creator of the law to whom it pointed originally. For these types of laws, the analogy to a set of instructions for assembling IKEA furniture or a recipe for making a cake is reasonable, since they obliquely represented the actions of God's death on the cross for the sins of humanity, which was done once for all. By contrast, the moral laws of the Old Testament, such as concerning their prohibitions on idolatry, murder, theft, adultery, covetousness, etc., can't be disposed of by this kind of explanation. By their very nature, being non-typical, but ones of continuing moral obligations for the entire lives of all humans everywhere, these laws can't be fulfilled by Christ's and then abolished. After all, God still wants to us avoid idolatry, murder, theft, bearing false witness, etc., in both the letter and in their broader spiritual

meanings (such as described in the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5) for our entire lives in order to demonstrate our faith and continued fidelity to Him. To turn to a related subject, we can know that certain laws that seem to be ceremonial/ritualistic (although the Sabbath certainly has moral aspect also to it, as John Calvin and Thomas Aquinas readily acknowledged), such as the Sabbath, the Holy Days, tithing, and the law concerning clean and unclean meats, based upon texts that show that the New Testament church continued to observe them, that they existed before the old covenant was ratified by nation of Israel (Genesis 2:1-3; Exodus 16:5, 23-29), that the Gospels and/or Christ's teaching mention them (Matthew 24:20), are mentioned in Paul's letters (I Corinthians 16:8) and/or will exist in the millennium (Isaiah 66:23, which can't be disposed by saying it is only "spiritual" in an Old Testament passage that the inspired author would have intended to have a literal meaning). Of course, this set of arguments is subjected to limitations since there are laws that aren't in force are still mentioned as being in force in these five general situations.

Who has the burden of proof?

Furthermore, the burden of proof isn't on the Sabbatarian to prove these laws are still in force when the Old Testament clearly commands them, but on the anti-Sabbatarians who believe that they are gone, who have to find texts that get rid of them. Because God proclaimed the Ten Commandments by His own voice to Israel and wrote them on tablets of stone using His own finger, there's a special status given to these laws, which includes Fourth Commandment, which by extension as a spiritual principle includes the holy days (Leviticus 23:2-4). The eighth commandment, by spiritual extension, can be seen as including the principle of tithing, about which it is said to be stealing from God when it isn't paid (Malachi 3:8-10). So a Sabbatarian can avoid also the problem of "picking and choosing" arbitrarily from the 613 laws of the Torah by citing cases in which various laws of the Old Testament law were clearly abolished, such as Paul's strictures against becoming physically circumcised and the author of Hebrews' statements that laws related to the Levitical priesthood and the general sacrificial system of the Old Testament had ended. It's also reasonable to believe that the laws commanding animal sacrifices were ended because of the relationship they

have between the type and the fulfilling anti-type and to infer that from the practical reality that God evidently punished Judah through using the Roman legions to destroy the temple and its associated sacrificial system in Jerusalem in 70 A.D. God ended that system because it wasn't needed anymore; unlike the case with the Maccabees, it wasn't re-established after a brief interregnum. Nor did the Jews set up a tabernacle in the wilderness, like Moses had, as a replacement for what the Romans had destroyed. As a result, the great majority of Jews don't sacrifice any kind of animals any more than Christians do. It should be noted, however, that traditional Christians, who aren't antinomians, are still "picking and choosing" also, but simply choose four fewer laws than the Church of God (in the tradition of the teachings of Herbert W. Armstrong) does. That is, they would believe in the continuing validity of the two Great Commandments, at least nine of the Ten Commandments, and various laws of the Old Testament that can be directly related as more detailed explanations of the Ten Commandments, such as those related to sexual morality. Conservative Christians will often quote these two texts as evidence that homosexuality is still a sin (Leviticus 18:22): "You shall not lie with a male as one lies with a female; it is an abomination" and (Leviticus 20:13): "If there is a man who lies with a male as those who lie with a woman, both of them have committed a detestable act; they shall surely be put to death. Their bloodguiltiness is upon them." Liberal critics of such conservative Christians will often say that they are "picking and choosing" by saying that they believe that it's allowable to eat shrimp and pigs. However, those who argue that the Old Testament law shouldn't be used to condemn homosexual sex are confusing the moral and ceremonial laws. The moral law is still binding on Christians, such as the Ten Commandments, which in spiritual principle condemns homosexual sex through the seventh commandment's prohibition of adultery, but much of the ceremonial law isn't. The laws related to sexual morality hardly changed in substance between the testaments anyway, other than concerning the permissibility of polygamy (or more precisely, polygyny).

Are these four laws in dispute relatively important or unimportant among the 613 laws of the Torah?

It's reasoned that to uphold these four additional laws (the Sabbath, the Holy Days, tithing, and the avoidance of unclean meat) out of the 613 still amounts to a great deal of "radical discontinuity," since hundreds of them would be deemed to not be in force by the teachings of the Church of God. However, not all of the 613 laws have equal impact on average believers' lives. For example, physical circumcision is only done once per lifetime and never affects half of the human race. Perhaps a good majority of these laws were mainly laws regulating the priesthood and the sacrificial system at the temple (or tabernacle), which most Jewish believers rarely dealt with even when they were conscientious. This reality is a major reason why Judaism as a religion, based on the scattered synagogues of the diaspora, survived the destruction of the temple by the Roman legions, since its rituals didn't affect most Jews on a routine basis. By contrast, the Sabbath affects 1/7th of our lives. Tithing takes at least 10% of our income (or perhaps 23% of people's income, when including 10% for festival observance and 2.8% on an annualized basis (two years out of seven) for support of the poor). The law regulating clean and unclean meat can affect nearly every meal believers eat. The Holy Days, by explaining God's plan of salvation for the human race in type, have a meaning for humanity's deliverance that goes past those about different types of animal sacrifices. So it's a mistake to say getting rid of these four major laws, in terms of their practical effects on people, without any clear revelation that they are necessarily tied to the end of the old covenant as already explained above, isn't "radical discontinuity."

The law defines sin

Since the revealed law of God tells humanity God's will about how to have fidelity to Him through faith expressed by obedience, it tells us how to live correctly morally. If a law isn't revealed, there still can be sin assessed for breaking it, since the law defines sin (Romans 5:12; 3:20; 4:15; I John 3:15). Romans 5:13 doesn't contradict this teaching, since it concerns whether the law has been revealed and has made people more responsible and more guilty when they break it: For until the law sin was in the world, but sin is not imputed when there is no law. Otherwise, that interpretation contradicts Romans 3:20; 4:15; 7:8; I Corinthians 15:56; and the rest of Romans 5:13 itself. People can be assessed for sin even when they don't know the law of God. That is, ignorance of the law is

only a partial excuse in God's sight (John 9:41; 15:22; Luke 12:47-48). For example, God sadly looked upon the world in decades and centuries before the great flood and assessed sin against them (Genesis 6:5-7 NKJV): "Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And the LORD was sorry that He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart. So the LORD said, "I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth, both man and beast, creeping thing and birds of the air, for I am sorry that I have made them." Therefore, sin existed and was assessed before the law was revealed, but that doesn't mean that there was no moral law in motion for ignorant people outside of Israel or before Sinai. After all, Joseph knew adultery was a sin (Genesis 39:9), right? Perhaps Abraham had learned about this specific law (Genesis 26:5) and knowledge of it was passed down through Abraham's family through the generations.

Natural law reasoning about morality can't be used to determine if the Sabbath is still in force

The purpose of using the judo argument concerning the continuing validity of the moral law of the Old Testament and its severability from the sacrificial laws isn't to prove that there is no other way human beings could know that murder, theft, and adultery are wrong. Sure, through the natural law implanted in human psychology (Romans 2:14-15), people can know separately from the bible that many actions are wrong. (C.S. Lewis in "The Abolition of Man" makes a detailed case against moral relativism/subjectivism by citing fundamental moral laws found in many different cultures). Instead, its purpose is to show that God's word continues to provide to humanity in general detailed moral guidance through the laws given to Israel and that it's absurd to say that this or that moral law or even ceremonial law ended because this or that sacrificial law ended as part of a general package of laws given to Israel. It's a confusion about the point that this argument is making in this context to say it claims that there is no other way to know right

from wrong, such as from human reasoning about moral rules, when it's instead refuting only claims that the moral law, which include at least nine of the Ten Commandments, given to Israel was abolished when the old covenant ended. The moral law of God exists independently of any covenant; the provisions of God's law that are still applicable to Christians anti-Sabbatarian critics may deem to be "ceremonial," such as the Sabbath, but they are in force nonetheless. Just because the Sabbath is a sign for the people of God doesn't mean that it is gone; one could argue that the sign provision was eliminated, but the rest established in Genesis 2:1-3 continues without it; one need not be coupled to the other.

God's intrinsic moral essence has been manifested and put into motion for humanity through His commands and the moral essence that He built into human psychology as part of humanity's neurological nature, which is "natural (moral) law." C.S. Lewis, in "The Problem of Pain," makes the case that God's commands have an intrinsic basis in His essence and aren't arbitrary. That is, God commands what is intrinsically good for humanity to do; it's not that His laws become good only because He commands them. For example, God couldn't have commanded, "Thou shalt steal," as easily as He could have commanded, "Thou shalt not steal." However, as Lewis notes, there are theologians and others who have upheld the divine command theory of (arbitrary) morality, but they are wrong. So then, the controversy between the Sabbatarian and non-Sabbatarian concerns mainly disputes over specific manifestations of God's will for humanity, their timing, their permanence, and for whom they are intended, but not over whether God has an intrinsic morally good essence that He wishes to have humanity comply with because He wishes to make them become more like Him in thinking and actions.

It's a major mistake to use natural law reasoning, which scripture does indeed mention (Romans 2:14-15), to determine which laws of the Old Testament are still in force and which ones aren't. Human reasoning shouldn't be used independently, of supernatural revelation itself, to determine the criteria of what is still God's general will for guiding human conduct. This means that laws that we humans deem to be "ceremonial" or "ritualistic" God may still want us to obey, separately from any requirement for the nation of Israel to obey them under the old covenant. In principle, this kind of error resembles those of liberal Christians who use

Darwin's theory of evolution in biology and Lyell's theory of uniformitarianism in geology to determine that the days of Genesis 1 weren't literal and that the deluge in Noah's time (Genesis 6-9) was only a local flood affecting some area in the Middle East. Liberal Christians who are feminists commit another version of this kind of error when they deny that Paul's writings about women's having to obey men in marriage or his restrictions on women's being in the ministry that don't match current human reasoning about the nature and rights of men and women. This kind of reasoning historically has appeared concerning the Sabbath among those who believed, like Thomas Aquinas and John Calvin, that the rest function isn't obsolete since humans do benefit from taking days off from work and from spiritually focusing on God more through organized worship services, but that the connection of the Sabbath to the seventh day of the week was typical or ceremonial, thus allowing its obligations and blessings to be transferred to the first day of the week. Calvinists, Catholics, and others who uphold the general continuing validity of the moral law clearly aren't antinomians. John Calvin, who wasn't exactly a slouch when it came to defending salvation by grace through faith alone, denies that the whole law was abolished ("Institutes of the Christian Religion," trans. Henry Beveridge (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1989), 1:310 : "Some unskillful [sic] persons, from not attending to this, boldly discard the whole law of Moses, and do away with both its Tables, imagining it unchristian to adhere to a doctrine which contains the ministration of death. Far from our thoughts be this profane notion." So Sabbatarians, in order to avoid setting up and knocking down straw men, should acknowledge when their opponents uphold continuing validity of the moral law of the Old Testament, instead of painting all of them as antinomians. However, such sincere Christians still are "picking and choosing" what commands they will obey out of what's available of the 613 laws of the Torah (i.e., aren't any different in principle from those in the COG who add four more laws to which they may object to the observance of), but make the mistake of limiting their choices often to what they can prove independently through human reason alone (i.e., the philosophy of "metaethics.")

Another version of mistaken natural law reasoning that's used against the Sabbath is to reason that because obedience to its literal letter may conflict with other laws,

therefore, it is abolished. The New Testament never states such a principle; there's no reason to believe that ceremonial laws are automatically abolished when they weren't sacrificial in nature or were kept in force for other reasons. For example, the priests in the temple service would work on the Sabbath in killing and cutting up animals (Matthew 12:5), which certainly would be the same kind of work that a butcher would engage in, but it had a different spiritual purpose. Similarly, in order to circumcise a male baby on the eighth day, it would be necessary to do this minor surgery on the Sabbath, depending on the day of the baby's birth (John 7:22-23). However, as the case of Rahab's lie to protect the spies of Israel who came to visit Jericho illustrates (Joshua 2:3-7), such conflicts can come up with other laws as well. In the case of Rahab's lie, it could be argued that the spiritual principle of the Ninth Commandment contradicts the spiritual principle of the Sixth Commandment. Skeptical philosophers who don't believe in the bible or in moral absolutes have used similar reasoning to deny that there are moral absolutes (or more moral absolutes besides one of them). For example, during World War II, if someone were protecting Jews from a search of his home or boat by the SS or Gestapo, would it be wrong to lie to the Germans in order to keep the Jews from being taken to their likely deaths in a concentration camp? However, such a conflict between laws would be purely theoretical and would only be a problem rarely if ever faced by almost all Christians. Second, since God won't try Christians beyond their strength (I Cor. 10:13), God may make a way of escape available to faithful, obedient Christians who actually are faced with such rare, extreme problems through direct miraculous intervention.

Does the New Testament clearly command Sunday observance?

There are many honest Protestants who admit that the bible teaches the observance of Saturday and/or that the observance of Sunday can't be proven from the bible. The three texts commonly cited (Revelation 1:10; Acts 20:7; I Cor. 16:2) are much too vague to accomplish this job, since one of them doesn't even mention the first day of the week, another is probably about a church service held on Saturday night, and the third is about gathering food for a charitable activity at believers' homes. None of them say that the first day of the week is holy, none of them say to not work on Sunday, and none of them command church services to be performed on

the day of the Sun. Here's a Catholic author who'll ironically make this point for Sabbatarians: "Question. Does the Scripture anywhere command the Sunday to be kept for the Sabbath? "Answer. The Scripture commands us to hear the church (St.Matt.18:17; St. Luke 10:16), and to hold fast the traditions of the apostles. 2 Thess 2:15. But the Scripture does not in particular mention this change of the Sabbath. St. John speaks of the Lord's day (Rev 1:10) but he does not tell us what day of the week that was, much less does he tell us what day was to take the place of the Sabbath ordained in the commandments. St. Luke speaks of the disciples meeting together to break bread on the first day of the week. Acts 20:7. And St. Paul (1 Cor.16:2) orders that on the first day of the week the Corinthians should lay in store what they designated to bestow in charity on the faithful in Judea: but neither the one or the other tells us that this first day of the week was to be henceforth a day of worship, and the Christian Sabbath; so that truly the best authority we have for this ancient custom is the testimony of the church. And therefore those who pretend to be such religious observers of Sunday, whilst they take no notice of other festivals ordained by the same church authority, show that they act more by humor, than by religion; since Sundays and holidays all stand upon the same foundation, namely the ordinance of the (Roman Catholic) church." Catholic Christian Instructed, 17th edition, p. 272-273. So then, will anti-Sabbatarians start keeping the Feast of the Immaculate Conception, Lent, etc., which all have the same level of spiritual authority to them as Sunday observance does?

More concessions like these by Hiscox by Protestants could be dredged up: "There was and is a command to keep holy the Sabbath day, but that Sabbath was not Sunday. It will however be readily said, and with some show of triumph, that the Sabbath was transferred from the seventh to the first day of the week, with all its duties, privileges and sanctions. Earnestly desiring information on this subject, which I have studied for many years, I ask, where can the record of such a transaction be found: Not in the New Testament— absolutely not. There is no scriptural evidence of the change of the Sabbath institution from the seventh to the first day of the week." Dr. E. T. Hiscox, author of the "Baptist Manual."

This same Baptist also made this particularly striking admission about the origins

of Sunday worship: "To me it seems unaccountable that Jesus, during three years' discussion with His disciples, often conversing with them upon the Sabbath question, discussing it in some of its various aspects, freeing it from its false [traditional Jewish] glosses, never alluded to any transference of the day; also, that during the forty days of His resurrection life, no such thing was intimated. Nor, so far as we know, did the Spirit, which was given to bring to their remembrance all things whatsoever that He had said unto them, deal with this question. Nor yet did the inspired apostles, in preaching the gospel, founding churches, counseling and instructing those founded, discuss or approach the subject. Of course I quite well know that Sunday did come into use in early Christian history as a religious day as we learn from the Christian Fathers and other sources. But what a pity that it comes branded with the mark of Paganism, and christened with the name of the sun-god, then adopted and sanctified by the Papal apostasy, and bequeathed as a sacred legacy to Protestantism." Dr. E. T. Hiscox, report of his sermon at the Baptist Minister's Convention, in "New York Examiner," November 16, 1893.

Authors like Hiscox are far more honest than those who think that these three texts are decisive evidence that the obligations of the Saturday Sabbath were transferred intact to Sunday, such as the requirement to literally not work, which many Protestants have believed in, although you, of course, don't. It's a dreadful exercise in eisegesis, or reading in desired meanings, to claim otherwise. By contrast, consider how clear (and numerous) Paul's condemnations of circumcision for (gentile) Christians are by comparison with the (few) texts used to justify Sunday Observance.

Above a general case for the Christian observance of the seventh-day or Saturday Sabbath has been made. Many of the arguments used against it by anti-Sabbatarians don't hold up upon closer examination, especially when they contradict themselves about whether other (moral) laws of the Old Testament are still in force. It's obvious that those who believe that only the bible should be the source of authority among Christians should be keeping the Saturday Sabbath, not the Sunday Sabbath, which is based on church tradition, not Scripture. The burden of proof isn't on Sabbatarians to find texts to back their position, since the Old

Testament clearly does, but rather upon the anti-Sabbatarians to find clear verses in the New Testament that the Sabbath has been abolished. The law plainly wasn't intended for Israel alone under the old covenant, since a number of laws from the Old Testament are clearly still in force after Jesus' death and resurrection. Christians will indeed spiritually and physically benefit from obeying God's Sabbath on the right day.

For further reading on the subject of which Sabbath Christians should obey:

http://www.anym.org/pdf/from_Sabbath_to_Sunday_samuele_bacchiocchi.pdf

<https://discovertruth.ie/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/THE-SABBATH-IN-THE-NEW-TESTAMENT.pdf>

Click here to access essays that defend Christianity: </apologetics.html>

Click here to access essays that explain Christian teachings: </doctrinal.html>

Click here to access notes for sermonettes: </sermonettes.html>

Why does God Allow Evil? Click here: </Apologeticshtml/Why Does God Allow Evil 0908.htm>

May Christians work on Saturdays? Click here: </doctrinalhtml/Protestant Rhetoric vs Sabbath Refuted.htm>

Should Christians obey the Old Testament law? </doctrinalhtml/Does the New Covenant Abolish the OT Law.htm>

Do you have an immortal soul? Click here: </doctrinalhtml/Here and Hereafter.htm>

Does the ministry have authority? Click here: </doctrinalhtml/Is There an Ordained Ministry vs Edwards.htm>

Is the United States the Beast? Click here: </doctrinalhtml/Are We the Beast vs Collins.htm>

Should you give 10% of your income to your church? Click here: </doctrinalhtml/Does the Argument from Silence Abolish the Old Testament Law of Tithing 0205 Mocarow rebuttal.htm>

Is Jesus God? Click here: </doctrinalhtml/Is Jesus God.htm>

Will there be a third resurrection? Click here: </doctrinalhtml/Will There Be a Third Resurrection.htm>

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