

(3) There was grace before Christ came, as witnessed by the provision of sacrifice for sinners (Ex. 20:24-26; Lev. 5:17-18; 17:11). The difference between the former age and the present age, therefore, is not a matter of no grace and some grace, but rather that today grace reigns (Rom. 5:21), in the sense that the only Being who has a right to judge sinners (Jn. 5:22) is now seated upon a throne of grace (Heb. 4:14-16), not imputing unto the world their trespasses (II Cor. 5:19)."

Both Dispensational Theology and Covenant Theology affirm an absolute difference between Law and Grace as principles, and a relative difference between Law and Grace as dispensations.

However, something further must be said. When we speak of law and grace as principles (i.e., descriptions of the way things operate), we are thinking of them as principles of salvation i.e., as ways in which men are saved. The Law Principle says, "Obey the preceptive will of God and you will merit the reward of righteousness and life!" The Grace Principle, on the other hand, says, "Trust in God's redemptive provision for sinners through Christ, and you will receive the gifts of forgiveness, righteousness, life, and enablement to do the revealed will of God!"

But there is another important meaning of law: that of an objective standard of righteousness addressed to man's obedience. The meaning of law has two quite distinct uses: the law as an expression of the standard of righteousness required for justification (including a title to eternal life), and the law as an expression of the standard of righteousness needed as a pattern for the kind of righteous living that will both please God and achieve man's highest well-being and potential for good. This latter use of this meaning of law is what the authors of the Formula of Concord (1584) referred to in Article VI, when they spoke of "the Third Use of the Law."

It is in this area--the use of the unchangeable will of God addressed to man's obedience as a rule of life--that we find both continuing controversy and development. On the one hand we find statements like the following by C. I. Scofield (which many Dispensationalists still affirm):

"it was reserved to modern nomolaters to wrench these holy and just but deathful tables from underneath the mercy-seat and the atoning blood, and erect them in Christian churches as the rule of Christian life."

-- C. I. Scofield, *Rightly Dividing the Word of Truth*
(New York: Loizeaux Brothers, Inc., 1896), p. 42.

On the other hand we find statements like the following by Ray L. Aldrich:

"For the sake of simplicity we shall use the term moral law to describe the eternal principles of righteousness which are a reflection of the character of God. This law has always existed and is the essence of the will of God for every dispensation When so many commentators and theologians say that the Ten Commandments have never been repealed or abrogated they really mean that the moral law of God is eternal. This conclusion no one would question. . . . all people in every dispensation are under the moral law of God"