

# *Anabaptists and the New Covenant*

## *A Figure Fulfilled: A Study of the Anabaptists' Conception of Mosaic Law in the New Covenant*

by David M. Moffitt

Among Baptists today a debate ranges over the place of the Mosaic law, particularly the Ten Commandments, in the life of the Christian. Some, usually called Reformed Baptists, uphold Covenant theology; and, seeing a continuity between Old Covenant Israel and the New Covenant Church, stress the validity of Mosaic law. On the other end of the theological spectrum lie those, usually called Dispensational, who argue that no continuity exists between Old Covenant Israel and the Church; and so, when consistent, hold that Mosaic law serves no function in the New Covenant, as it applies to the Church. This article will explore the position held on this issue by those to whom Baptists owe their theological heritage, the Anabaptists. We will see that the Anabaptists recognized in New Covenant believers, a spiritual fulfillment of the physical figure of the Old Covenant nation of Israel. Thus, the Christian's ethical guide lay not in the old, physical Mosaic law, but in the new, inner law of the indwelling Spirit, who manifests Himself in a morally upright life-style. Therefore, the Anabaptists, far from being "antinomian", held a view of the Mosaic law and its Decalogue which draws a mean between the continuity Covenant Theology posits, and the discontinuity Dispensationalism argues for.

Before continuing, some clarification of the term "Anabaptist" and our use of it here seems appropriate. Two important points deserve notice. First, we must not misconstrue the label of "Anabaptist" as representing a specific group which held to uniformity of belief on doctrinal and theological issues. In fact, the Reformers affixed the name to various groups, from various theological perspectives. Kurt Aland sums up the theological dynamics of those called "Anabaptist" when he writes, "nowhere in the age of the Reformation is the picture more complex; it is virtually impossible to encompass the myriad disparate movements, often contradictory to one another, in one whole."<sup>1</sup> The Zwickau Prophets stand as one group labeled "Anabaptist" which, as Aland says, contradicted much of what other Anabaptists believed.

This particular enclave, under the leadership of Nicholas Storch and Thomas Muntzer, worked to incite the Pleasants' War of 1525.<sup>2</sup> Interestingly, it appears that Storch never underwent adult baptism,<sup>3</sup> nor did Muntzer, who never made baptism an issue.<sup>4</sup> Thus, this sect labeled "Anabaptist" failed to observe the very mark that inspired the Reformers to tag certain groups as "Rebaptizers" or "Anabaptists."<sup>5</sup>

Second, the Anabaptist tradition does not flow out of a homogenous heritage. While Lutherans today may disagree among themselves on many theological issues, they still look to a common theological ancestor in Martin Luther. While this may be true for some individual Anabaptist denominations, no such heritage exists for Anabaptists in general. As Kenneth Scott Latourette points out, Anabaptist congregations "seemed to spring spontaneously out of contact with the New Testament and broke out in many different places."<sup>6</sup> This lack of definition and common heritage leads scholars like Cyril Charles Richardson to comment, "The Anabaptists can in no sense be regarded as a unified and cohesive movement."<sup>7</sup>

So then, our use of the term "Anabaptist" will not, indeed cannot, refer to all the various groups to whom the Reformers applied the title. This does not, however, eliminate all possibility of categorization, for as the movement grew it began to congeal along geographical lines. Thus, by 1550 three general groups of Anabaptists existed: the Swiss Brethren and Hutterites in south Germany, and the Mennonites in north Germany and the Netherlands.<sup>8</sup> This article will interact exclusively with the views of the Swiss Brethren and their theological relatives, the Mennonites, the two Anabaptist groups considered "evangelical."<sup>9</sup> To further clarify our use of the term "Anabaptist", it seems prudent to identify the Anabaptist leaders and thinkers who will be cited. They are as follows: Dirk Philips, Menno Simons, Leonhard Scheimer, Conrad Grebel and Jacob Hutter (although the Hutterites draw their name from Jacob Hutter, he was a Swiss Brethren minister).<sup>10</sup> Having set forth the parameters within which our discussion falls, we may now proceed with a brief narrative exploring the historical backgrounds, first of Swiss and south German Anabaptists, and then of the Mennonites.

The Swiss Reformation traces its inception to Einsiedeln when, in 1516, a Catholic Priest named Ulrich Zwingli preached a message attacking Church abuses.<sup>11</sup> However, Zwingli's impact on Swiss reform did not begin in earnest until after his election in 1518 to the chief pastorage of the Great Minister Church of Zurich.<sup>12</sup> In 1521, Zwingli met a young man named Conrad Grebel<sup>13</sup> who, by 1522, became a follower and proponent of Zwingli's reform effort.<sup>14</sup> Their mutual friendship and conviction did not last though, and, by the end of 1523, Grebel and Zwingli separated over the State's role in church reform<sup>15</sup> and the speed with which reform took place.<sup>16</sup> At this point, Grebel and a small following set off down a theological path different from Zwingli's. Thus, in 1523, what became the Anabaptist movement began to take form in Zurich.<sup>17</sup>

Grebel and an associate named Felix Manz soon found others who shared their convictions, and a fellowship formed known as the Swiss Brethren.<sup>18</sup> By the autumn of 1524 the Brethren concluded that they could not agree with the practice of baptizing infants<sup>19</sup> and on January 21, 1525, one of the Brethren, George Blaurock, persuaded Grebel to administer to him adult baptism.<sup>20</sup> This Grebel did and Blaurock, in turn, baptized all the Brethren present thereby initiating the Brethren's commitment to adult baptism and tangibly dating Anabaptism's birth in Switzerland and southern Germany.<sup>21</sup> The Swiss Brethren continued to grow and in February 24, 1527, they met at the village of Schlatten (or Schleithem) on the Randen river and adopted a confession.<sup>22</sup> Brethren pastor Michael Sattler composed most of the confession and those present approved it unanimously.<sup>23</sup> This *Schleithem Confession*, consisting of seven articles, outlined the defining characteristics of the Swiss Brethren and stated what Dr. Wilhelm Moeller calls their "clear ideal of a community."<sup>24</sup> Thus, with a clear statement of convictions and ideals to define them, the Swiss Brethren movement began to spread through southern Germany and Switzerland.

The Anabaptists known as Mennonites find their roots in a far more volatile group led by Melchior Hofmann. Hofmann established the Emden Baptist community and, with his radical millennial teaching, inspired the community of Munster which, in 1535, ended in catastrophe.<sup>25</sup> Obbe and Dirk Philips, two brothers initially members of Hofmann's following, realized their deception by "false prophets" and broke with the Melchiorite sect in 1534.<sup>26</sup> They then formed their own gathering dubbed "Obbenites" and, in 1536, a recently converted Catholic priest named Menno Simons joined them.<sup>27</sup> In 1537 Menno allowed the group to ordain him an elder, and when Obbe later recanted his convictions, Menno assumed leadership of the denomination which came to bear his name.<sup>28</sup> The rise and growth of this company of Anabaptists occurred independently of the Swiss Brethren.<sup>29</sup> However, the Mennonites entitled their first confession *The Seven Articles of Schleithem*, an indication of their theological concurrence with the older Swiss Brethren.<sup>30</sup> With this historical foundation laid and the theological link between the Swiss Brethren and the Mennonites established, we may begin to focus on the main argument.

The Anabaptists' interpretation of the relationship between the Old and New Covenants proves critical to understanding their concept of how the law and its Decalogue function in the believer's life. Their hermeneutical framework rests upon two key concepts, figure and fulfillment. James M. Stayer captures the ideas which we term figure and fulfillment when he states, "[For Anabaptists] the difference between the Testaments was as between 'shadows' and 'lights'."<sup>31</sup> Stayer means that the Anabaptists saw the Old Covenant as a "shadow", or "figure", of the "light", or "fulfillment", which came with the New Covenant. Furthermore, as will become evident, a "figure" consisted of a physical sign or manifestation, whereas its "fulfillment" consisted of a spiritual sign or manifestation.

To comprehend more fully the implications of this "figurative" approach to interpreting Scripture, we need also to understand the relationship between figure and fulfillment. The two share a relationship something like a painter's idea of a painting and the finished product itself. The figure is like the idea in the painter's mind, the fulfillment like the finished work the painter produces. We must note also that the Anabaptists never understood the concepts of figure and fulfillment as distinct and separate. Thus, they never saw the Covenants as unrelated. Rather, the figure depends upon and, at the same time, points toward its coming fulfillment. On the other hand, the fulfillment is the reality of, and so the full explanation of, the figure. The figure is not reality, *only the fulfillment is*. In other words, the two entities, while related and even dependent upon one another, *do not hold equal status*. J.C. Wenger rightly notes "[T]he Anabaptist stress fell on the *fulfillment* of the Old Covenant by the New..."<sup>32</sup> [emphasis his] By this Wenger means the Anabaptists emphasized the New Covenant's fulfillment as superior to the Old Covenant's figures.

An excellent example of this interpretive principle exists in the writings of Dirk Philips. At one point in his *Enchiridion* he applies it to the Mosaic tabernacle writing,

[T]he tabernacle of Moses, built according to God's command, is a *figure and image of the true reality which is signified through it*. For it was not built in vain by Moses according to God's

command, but the Lord therewith wished to give us to know something in particular. Yes, the truth of the New Testament is therewith established.<sup>33</sup> [emphasis added]

The tabernacle stands for Philips as a figure, a physical sign by which God demonstrates a truth to "us", i.e., believers today. For Philips, the figure of the Mosaic tabernacle serves as an image. It contains truth, but is only a representation of truth and not the truth itself. An analogy might help us to understand better. We know a photograph contains a true representation of the object(s) it depicts. But, just as a photograph is not really the object(s) pictured within it, similarly the figure is not really the fulfillment it represents. Accordingly, Philips indicates that "true reality" is not in the physical tabernacle, but only signified through it. We also see in Philips' quote a paradox which breaks down the photograph analogy, for while the figure signifies the truth it represents, and yet is not that truth, it paradoxically serves to establish that truth as it appears in the New Covenant. In other words, the truth signified in the figure *depends upon* the fulfillment it represents; and yet, the actual truth itself, i.e., the New Covenant fulfillment, is *established by the figure*.

Philips provides another insightful example of the figure/fulfillment hermeneutic when he states concerning circumcision, "[T]he *literal command* of the Lord about *the circumcision of the flesh* has come to an end. Nevertheless, that command of the *spiritual circumcision* of the heart remains..."<sup>34</sup> [emphasis added] Here, literal, physical circumcision stands as the figure and spiritual circumcision its fulfillment. So we see the physical manifestation has ceased, and in its place remains its spiritual fulfillment. Philips puts it this way,

Therefore, all things are transformed in Christ, are clarified and made new through him; that is, out of the letter into the spirit, out of the flesh into true being, out of the old into the new, out of the figures into the abiding clear truth, and out of the perishable brought into the eternal and heavenly.<sup>35</sup>

Thus, for the Anabaptists, reality consists not in the physical Old Covenant figure, but in its spiritual New Covenant fulfillment. In effect, the Anabaptists' view inverts the common conception of reality. For them, the physical world is not mere chimera; however, it cannot properly be called reality either. The focus of reality, in their mind, does not rest on the physical but on the spiritual realm so, in the New Covenant reality has, at least in part, replaced the figures of the Old covenant. Creation is in a state of change. For the Anabaptists the transitory physical world was passing away and all things were becoming new. The shadows were disappearing and being replaced by the reality (a process attaining its ultimate completion upon Christ's return, at which time the body is raised imperishable and the old heavens and earth are replaced by the new).

Before we proceed in applying this figure/fulfillment hermeneutic to the Anabaptists' view of the law's role in the New Covenant, we need to summarize the salient points just discussed. First, the Anabaptists' basic interpretive principle concerning the relationship between the Old and New Covenants is one of figure and fulfillment. Second, a figure was physical while its fulfillment is spiritual. Third, a figure finds its meaning and truth in the fulfillment it points toward; but, paradoxically, it also forms the foundation upon which its fulfillment's truth rests. Fourth, a figure is not reality, only its fulfillment is. Thus, while the figure is temporally prior and physically manifested, its fulfillment holds a superior status. Fifthly, and finally, since the fulfillment is reality, it explains and replaces the figure which previously represented it. Thus, the shadow or figure comes first temporally; but, the light or reality of the fulfillment is the substance which enables the "shadow" to be cast. We have, then, a basic understanding of the principle with which the Anabaptists interpreted the relationship between the Old and New Covenants. Now we must seek to apprehend how they applied this hermeneutic to the Mosaic law.

In any discussion of the Mosaic law the question as to what the term "law" means necessarily arises. Does it refer to the Decalogue exclusively, or to the entire order which the Old Covenant established to define the nation of Israel? The Anabaptists considered these questions inseparable. Their concept of Mosaic law included both the Decalogue, and the other commandments God gave Israel. Dirk Philips states, "The law is that commanded Word of God given through Moses on mount Sinai, with such a terrible voice, with such a storm, thunder and lightning, Exod. 19:16-20...that the children of Israel could not bear it..."<sup>36</sup> Philips' use of "law" here obviously refers to the Ten Commandments. We see this particularly in light of his proof text, Exodus 19:16-20, the very passage describing the setting in which God gave the Ten Commandments. At another point, though, Philips' use of "law" indicates a far broader concept than simply the Decalogue. He writes,

[T]he tabernacle of Moses, built according to God's command, is a figure and image of the true reality which is signified through it. For it was not built in vain by Moses according to God's

command, but the Lord therewith wished to give us to know something in particular. Yes, the truth of the New Testament is therewith established. And this is then a firm and immovable ground, *whenever the shadows and sayings of the law* come together and are in agreement with the truth of the gospel.<sup>37</sup> [emphasis added]

Here Philips includes in his idea of Mosaic law what he calls "shadows and sayings", one of which he identifies as the Mosaic tabernacle. We see, then, the Anabaptists conceived of the law as a unit. So, when they spoke of "law" they meant the entire Mosaic order, i.e., the Old Covenant. We also find in the preceding quote that they saw the law as "shadows and sayings", or, to put it in terms of their hermeneutic, figurative. In fact, Philips himself labels the law in precisely these terms. He writes, "Christ Jesus is the spirit and truth of all figures which have gone before, the end and the fulfillment of the figurative law, but the beginning of the true being and eternal perfection...."<sup>38</sup>

We may find it tempting to interpret Philips' phrase "figurative law" as making a distinction in the law similar to the one made in Covenant Theology, i.e., that the law consisted of three parts: moral, civil and ceremonial. However, the Anabaptists did not make this distinction. We must take Philips' phrase as *applying to the entire Mosaic law* and not simply to one or two aspects of it. Menno Simons illustrates this point, for he interpreted the commands of the Decalogue as figures. He makes this evident when, in a response to Gellius Faber, he comments on the fourth commandment,

[The Anabaptists] keep and sanctify the Lord's Sabbath (which is now no longer literal, but spiritual, and never terminating with the true Christians) not by wearing fine clothes...as the unthinking world does on its external Sabbath...but by the fear of God, by a clear conscience and unblamable life, in love to God and their neighbors (which is true religion) keeping and sanctifying it to the Lord eternally.<sup>39</sup> [emphasis added]

Like Philips, Simons obviously uses figure/fulfillment language. Furthermore, he uses it in relation to a command of the Decalogue. Thus, the Anabaptists did not mean by the phrase "figurative law" one part of the law exclusive of the Decalogue. Thus, the Anabaptists did not mean by the phrase "figurative law" one part of the law exclusive of the Decalogue. Rather, as Simons' discussion of the fourth commandment indicates, they applied their figurative understanding to the entire law.

We see, then, the Anabaptists considered the entire law to be figurative. So, what did they consider took its place or fulfilled it in the New Covenant? They answer, the gospel of Jesus Christ. Philips states this clearly writing,

[T]he law has the shadow of the coming good things, but the gospel has the being of these things themselves... The law has many figures and ceremonies which are all fulfilled in Christ, but the gospel has the clear steadfast truth which abides in eternity. The law is the letter which kills, but the gospel is the Spirit which makes alive.... Therefore the gospel and the law are divided so far as the figures, shadows, and letter of the law are concerned or involve, which are all removed through the gospel.<sup>40</sup>

Thus, for the Anabaptists the gospel of Christ's New Covenant fulfilled and replaced the figurative law. They did not mean by this that the law and the gospel, or Old and New Covenants, stood completely distinct from each other. Rather, the Old Covenant's figures established the basis for the New Covenant's reality. Philips himself never taught that the two Covenants lacked continuity and stood opposed to one another. In fact, the completion of the previously cited quotation demonstrates that Philips believed just the opposite. He continues,

But it is because of this [division between the law's figures and the gospel's reality] that one observes the spirit of the law, (for the law is also spiritual, as Paul says)... So we discover that the meaning, content, and actual understanding of the law accords with the gospel in every way and corresponds with it, yes, is one truth. [...] But the letter (in which the truth is hidden), will indeed come to an end. [...] Yes, thus have all the figures of the law...come to an end so far as the letter is concerned. Nevertheless, the genuine and essential significance of these same figures remains and harmonizes with the gospel.<sup>41</sup>

Philips argues here that with the advent of the gospel came the understanding of the complete, indeed real, meaning of the law. Because of the figure's fulfillment, we see its true meaning. Because of the gospel's revelation the law's true intention comes to light. Specifically, that all the law's physical shadows pointed



toward, or symbolized, the fullness and reality which God brought about spiritually through Jesus Christ. The Old does not oppose the New, it stands as the physical shadow of the spiritual reality. A discontinuity exists in that the physical figure falls away; but, a continuity also holds for the fulfillment rests on, and makes known the true intention of, the figure.

We have already seen that the figure/fulfillment principle includes the concept of the fulfillment's superiority over the figure. It follows from this that the Anabaptists counted the Covenant of gospel as superior to the Covenant of law. Scholar George Huntston Williams properly points out, "[T]he Anabaptists continually distinguished between the covenant of servitude and that of sonship."<sup>42</sup> He means by this that the Anabaptists saw the Old Covenant as the inferior covenant. Under the Old Covenant God bound His people to physical shadows which, not being reality, could not make good the glories they foreshadowed. Furthermore, the law, rather than justifying Israel, only highlighted their failures. God's people under the law lived, as Paul says in Galatians 4:1, as children and slaves. However, since Christ fulfilled the law and established in its place the reality of the Spirit, God's people no longer hold the position of slaves, but of sons and heirs, Galatians 5:7. The Anabaptists thought, in the words of David C. Steinmetz, "The new deed of God in Christ...made the old deeds through...Moses obsolescent."<sup>43</sup> Anabaptist Leonard Scheimer exemplifies this position when he says,

The first light has been our schoolmaster until the other, that is Christ came, who is the light of the world. When His spirit enters me I am no longer under the schoolmaster but under grace. There the law of works, sin, death, and members ceases, and the law of the Spirit, faith, life, and the heart commences.<sup>44</sup>

Implicit in Scheimer's statement lies the idea that the Christian, far from being without law, falls under the "law of the Spirit." In addition, his shift in emphasis from outward "members" to inward "heart" indicates that he sees this "law of the Spirit" as the fulfillment of the figurative law.

However, the believer's current position, being under the New Covenant and thus in the fulfillment of the Mosaic law, does not mean he or she becomes lawless. Instead, the figurative law finds its fulfillment by transformation from external and physical to internal and spiritual. Conrad Grebel illustrates this in a letter to Thomas Muntzer. He wrote,

[W]e learned with sorrow that you have set up tablets, for which we can find neither text nor examples in the New Testament. In the Old, [the law] was of course to be written outwardly, but now in the New it is to be written inwardly on the fleshy tablets of the heart, as a comparison of the two Testaments show, as we are taught by Paul...<sup>45</sup>

This writing of the law upon the heart of spiritual, inward emphasis that Grebel mentions, other Anabaptists dubbed "the law of love" or the "law of the Spirit."<sup>46</sup> Jacob Hutter described it like this,

All those who live and walk in the spirit do not fulfill the lusts of the flesh. [...] *For they no longer serve God in the old manner of the letter but in the new manner of the spirit.* Thus, the godly have sin but they do not consent to it nor do they carry out its bidding. [...] It is a source of pain to them and they resist it with all their might. They restrain it and force it down through the power of the spirit.<sup>47</sup>

Hutter means that the Spirit's presence in the New Covenant believer's life allows him or her to serve God in a new way. No longer does the figure of the law bind the believer, its reality has come. In the believer an inward transformation occurs enabling him or her to do real battle with sin. No longer does the believer's concern focus on not committing adultery, now the concern lies in not lusting. Thus, this "law of the Spirit" brings true transformation. It shifts the emphasis off the flesh onto the real problem, the spirit, i.e., off the outward onto the inward. They did not, then, allow or justify adultery. Rather, they saw the real fight against sin as spiritual; and, if conquered inwardly, adultery would not be committed outwardly. As Hutter says, "All those who live and walk in the spirit do not fulfill the lusts of the flesh."<sup>48</sup> This "law of the Spirit" ruled the outward actions, *but not by specifying what outward actions could or could not take place.* Instead, it ruled them by dealing with the heart. It changed the outward actions by virtue of the fact that it changed the inward motivations. So, in place of the many strictly regulated actions prescribed and required by the Mosaic law; there now exists general character traits, against which no law stands. In the New Covenant, love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control permeate the lives of God's people.

Thus, we see the Anabaptists were not a people adrift without ethical standards. Rather, in keeping with their figure/fulfillment principle, they held to standards, in some ways, more stringent than those specified in the figurative law. As David Steinmetz puts it, they saw the "moral standards of the New Testament [as] higher than those of the Old..."<sup>49</sup> J.C. Wenger, while commenting on their interpretation of the Sermon on the Mount, notes the effect the law's fulfillment had on their ethical standards. He indicates, they thought Jesus "built upon the essential moral principles of the Old Testament and made those principles more penetrating and extensive than they had been in the Law."<sup>50</sup> Thus, they looked not to the Old Covenant law for their moral standard; but, as Sjouke Voolstra comments, to the gospel, both for forgiveness of sins and "at the same time the only guideline for the new life, that is to say gift and task in one."<sup>51</sup>

Finally, the Anabaptists thought the law's fulfillment (the law of the Spirit) defined God's people, the same function that the figurative law performed in the Old Covenant. God states to Israel in Exodus 19:5-6a, "Now if you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all nations you will be my treasured possession. Although the whole earth is mine, you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation." (NIV) We see, then, that the Old Covenant served as the definitive mark which established the figurative nation of Israel as God's special people. In addition, since the Anabaptists saw the Covenant as a unified whole, to accept any one part of it necessitated accepting all of it. Menno indicates this when he writes,

If you want to appeal to the literal understanding and transactions of Moses and the prophets, then must you also become Jews, accept circumcision, possess the land of Canaan literally, erect the Jewish kingdom again, build the city and the temple, and offer sacrifices and perform the ritual as required in the law. And you must declare that Christ the promised Savior has not yet come. He who has changed the literal and sensual ceremonies into the new spiritual and abiding realities.<sup>52</sup>

All the things Menno mentions distinguished the physical people of God from all other nations. They set Israel apart from all other peoples and made them a special nation. It follows therefore, from the Anabaptist figure/fulfillment hermeneutic, that they considered the "law of the Spirit" to serve the same function. Thus, the "law of the Spirit" written upon the heart defined God's true people, the spiritual, New Covenant nation of Israel. Menno clearly held this conviction for he writes of New Covenant believers,

They are the flesh of Christ's flesh and bone of His bone, the spiritual house of Israel, the spiritual city Jerusalem, the spiritual temple and mount Zion, the spiritual ark of the Lord in which is hidden the true bread of heaven, Christ Jesus and His blessed Word...*and the spiritual tables of stone with the commandments of the Lord written on them.* They are the spiritual seed of Abraham, children of the promise, in covenant with God and partakers of the heavenly blessing.<sup>53</sup> [emphasis added]

We now see the full significance of the figure/fulfillment principle in relation to the role of the law in the New Covenant believer's life. The figurative law defined figurative Israel. Its fulfillment, the spiritual law, defines spiritual Israel. In the light of Jacob Hutter's quote, we comprehend the full impact of this statement. Hutter clearly indicated that the spiritual law directly impacted life and living when he said, "All those who live and walk in the spirit do not fulfill the lusts of the flesh." Therefore, the New Covenant fulfillment of the Mosaic law establishes the real nation, writing within them the real law. Because of this, they will live in a morally upright manner and not seek to satisfy the lusts of the flesh. For the Anabaptists the inward "law of the Spirit" necessarily worked its way out so that, as Christ Himself said of His people, "By their fruit you will recognize them."

We see, in conclusion, the Anabaptists examined here did not in any way hold an "antinomian" position. They never stood against or opposed to the law. A more accurate description might be "postnomian" since they understood that the figurative law had a function and it served this function well. However, now its fulfillment had come. Where before there stood only a physical shadow, there now stands reality. Thus, they did not proclaim the abolishment of the law, but simply its fulfillment. This means the spiritual nation of Israel lives by moral standards which far exceed those prescribed in the figurative law. New Covenant Israelites possess the "law of the Spirit" written upon their hearts, therefore they battle and defeat sin inwardly, before it has a chance to manifest itself outwardly. Furthermore, they manifest the presence of the spiritual reality within them not through clearly defined and required actions; but, through the general qualities, or spiritual fruits, which characterize their life.

- 1 Kurt Aland, *A History of Christianity: From the Reformation to the Present*, vol. 2, trans. James L. Schaa (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986), 24. [RETURN](#)
- 2 Fredric Palmer, *Heretics, Saints and Martyrs* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1925), 8. [RETURN](#)
- 3 John Christian Wenger, *Glimpses of Mennonite History and Doctrine* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1949), 7. [RETURN](#)
- 4 Palmer, 15. [RETURN](#)
- 5 Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, vol. 7, *Modern Christianity: The Swiss Reformation* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1910), 76. [RETURN](#)
- 6 Kenneth Scott Latourette, *A History of the Expansion of Christianity*, vol. 3, *Three Centuries of Advance: A.D. 1500-A.D. 1800* (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1939), 437. [RETURN](#)
- 7 Cyril Charles Richardson, *The Church Through the Centuries* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1938), 177. [RETURN](#)
- 8 Aland, 27. [RETURN](#)
- 9 Williston Walker, Richard A. Norris, David W. Lotz and Robert T. Handy, *A History of the Christian Church*, 4th ed. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1985), 459. [RETURN](#)
- 10 Wenger, 59. [RETURN](#)
- 11 Schaff, 32. [RETURN](#)
- 12 Ibid. [RETURN](#)
- 13 Wenger, 11 [RETURN](#)
- 14 Ibid., 19. [RETURN](#)
- 15 Kenneth Scott Latourette, *A History of Christianity Volume II: A.D. 1500-A.D. 1975* (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1975), 780. [RETURN](#)
- 16 Wenger, 19. [RETURN](#)
- 17 Schaff, 73. [RETURN](#)
- 18 Latourette, *A History of Christianity*, 780. [RETURN](#)
- 19 Ibid. [RETURN](#)
- 20 Palmer, 14-15. [RETURN](#)
- 21 Ibid., 15. [RETURN](#)
- 22 Wilhelm Moeller, *History of the Christian Church: A.D. 1517-1649*, vol. 3, *Reformation and Counter-Reformation*, ed. G. Kawerau, trans. J.H. Freese (London: George Allen & Company), 89. [RETURN](#)
- 23 Wenger, 33. [RETURN](#)
- 24 Moeller, 89. [RETURN](#)
- 25 Ibid., 93-94. [RETURN](#)
- 26 Wenger, 73. [RETURN](#)
- 27 Ibid., 75. [RETURN](#)

28 Ibid., 77-78. RETURN

29 Ibid., 82. RETURN

30 Ibid., 133. RETURN

31 James M. Stayer, *Anabaptists and the Sword* (Lawrence, KS: Coronado Press, 1972), 128. RETURN

32 Wenger, 164. RETURN

33 Dirk Philips, *The Writings of Dirk Philips*, trans. and ed. Cornelius J. Dyck, William E. Keeney, Alvin J. Beachey (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1992), 266-67. RETURN

34 Ibid., 268. RETURN

35 Ibid., 318. RETURN

36 Ibid., 358. RETURN

37 Ibid., 266-67 RETURN

38 Ibid., 317. RETURN

39 Menno Simons, *The Complete Writings of Menno Simons*, trans. Leonard Verduin, ed. John Christian Wenger (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1956), 680. RETURN

40 Philips, 268. RETURN

41 Ibid. RETURN

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