

The Law in the Biblical-Theological Context

By A. Suh

Oh, how I love thy Torah! It is my meditation all day long (Ps119:97).

The law is one biblical topic which runs throughout the entire Bible. The question of the Decalogue (=Ten Commandments) and the Sermon on the Mount is consistently of central importance for the biblical interpretation and Christian life. There have been various attempts that sought to achieve an adequate theological understanding of the Decalogue and the Sermon on the Mount. We as a reformation church tend to take an approach to the law in the antithesis of gospel and law, which is a main theme of the Epistle to the Romans: The law always accuses, but the gospel liberates; the law brings death, but the gospel gives life. The rediscovery of this antithesis between law and gospel was Luther's tremendous contribution to the Christian Church and to theology. However, this reformation heritage was sometimes simplified and applied to biblical interpretation in a problematic way contrasting the Old Testament with the New Testament. It can affect our Bible interpretation in a negative way: OT=law, NT=gospel. I can definitely say that such confusion occurred because the antithesis between law and gospel in the Epistles was made our main entry to the law.

Here we must advance to an entire biblical-dogmatic position. That is what also concerns the Reformation of Luther and Calvin: Back to the origin of the church, back to the original witness of Scripture. The Reformation theology leads to the inevitable discussion of the biblical-theological reflection on the theme "law and gospel." For these reasons, I will show some exegetical and biblical guidelines for the understanding of the law, specifically Decalogue and the Sermon on the Mount, as they result from the biblical exegesis of modern times.

A. The Relationship of the Covenant and the Law

1. The Law as Commandment of the Covenant

In order to objectively speak of the importance of the Decalogue, we need to consider first the exegetical and biblical-theological results in the Old Testament scholarship. They provide the essential qualification for the systematic understanding of the Decalogue. The Old Testament refers to the inseparable relationship between covenant and commandment. We cannot understand the Decalogue apart from its preamble and the context of the covenant and commandments.¹

The tradition of Decalogue-interpretation partly ignored its Exodus-dimension in the Christian catechisms and held its preamble unimportant. However, the Exodus-dimension is essential to the understanding of the Decalogue. So we must point out that the biblical reference to the Decalogue is not "Ten Commandments", but "Ten Words"(Ex34:28; Dt4:13), where the preamble builds the first of the words, and this plays the critical role to understanding the Decalogue.² The preamble to the Decalogue proclaims: "I am the LORD, your God, who brought you out of Egypt, where you were slaves" (Exodus 20:2). In this first word of the ten words, God's attentive care is expressed which comes ahead of any action of the people of Israel, and

this care consists specifically in the liberation of the oppressed people from slavery. God's liberating presence, founded only in God's faithfulness to his promises, is crucial for the understanding of the whole Torah.³ If so, the preamble to the Decalogue or the first word of the ten words is the foundation, on which everything else is based. The receiving of commandments follows the election by the LORD (=YHWH).⁴ In the first word of the Decalogue, those are specifically addressed, who were freed from the house of slavery. The LORD declares himself "in the self-pronunciation as Israel's God - referring to the saving grace of the Exodus as the basic action of election."⁵ We can correctly understand the Decalogue therefore, only in the context of the covenant of God with Israel, as its preamble shows very clearly.

The preamble to the Decalogue expresses the factual context of the covenant and commandment in the way, that "with the proclamation of the Decalogue to Israel, the election of Israel is realized" (*von Rad*).⁶ That is why the revelation of the commandments to Israel was never a legalistic requirement, but "a saving event of the first order," because all commandments of Israel presuppose the covenant of grace existing between the LORD and the Israel community.⁷ The commandments are, therefore, the LORD's claim on Israel. The commandments are "like a net thrown over Israel" (*von Rad*).⁸ Because the LORD's declaration: "I am your God!" immediately corresponds to his claim: "You are my people," the purpose of subsequent commandments is to "firmly tie the people of God to the covenant of grace."⁹ So, the commandments were originally given to life (Deut 4.1 f).

We should be certain of the point that the obedience to the commandment was never a condition of salvation. Even though, with the hearing of the commandments, Israel was put also in the decision between life and death, the Old Testament has never made the covenant dependent on their obedience in a conditional sense. Rather, the order is always: the covenant and the commandment.¹⁰ Not the opposite.

From the inseparable nature of the covenant and commandments, it is necessary to object to some misunderstandings with regard to the Old Testament commandments. First, the law in the Old Testament must in no way be understood as legalistic. In the commandments, the boundaries are marked out, where the elect of the LORD are called to the confessing to him (*von Rad*).¹¹ Because of the close links of the covenant and commandments, we must reject another view, in which the Israel's history is characterized only as an example of the failure in the law of God. In such view, the meaning of the law consists in preparing Israel for the salvation in Christ by their failure in the law.¹² The OT scholar *Kraus* rightly criticizes the traditional dogmatic dealing with the biblical commandments in the schema of "law and gospel."¹³ The frame of the covenant, in which the Decalogue belongs, is beyond the narrow dogmatism of "law and gospel," in which the law primarily accuses sinners (*usus elenchticus*). Even though Israel eventually failed in the law of the Lord, the frame of the law is bigger than the antithesis of law and gospel.

The inseparable correlation of the covenant and commandment makes the confusion of the Decalogue with the natural law impossible. Although there can be formal similarities between biblical commandments and the general moral law, those are not to be identified with the laws of nature, which man can know through nature. For "what is critical for biblical commandments, is the light source of the liberation for the elect, the radiation of which is then probably perceived and sensed also in the so-called 'natural law', even though its source location cannot be detected."

¹⁴ Without the preamble, the biblical commandments would be primarily understood as a moral law and applied to the common humanity and therefore to be understood as "power of oppression," which would mean a perversion of the meaning of the biblical law.¹⁵

The law is always the commandment of the covenant God. We must not confuse the biblical law with the general natural law which people could perceive with their reason. Therefore, we have to reject not only the isolation of the Decalogue from its preamble, but also its separation from the whole Torah. Such a traditional isolation of the Decalogue from the rest of the Torah is not acceptable because the Decalogue cannot be understood as the sum of God's will, which would replace or depreciate the entire Torah, but the Decalogue is the "prelude" to the entire Torah, by which the covenant God begins to talk to his people.¹⁶ So many necessary themes for life are not found in the Decalogue: for example, the law of king (Deut 17:14 ff) sabbatical year (Ex 23:10 f), the biblical social commandments, such as the social protection of the poor and the stranger (Leviticus 19:33 f), dealings with nature, animals and plants (e.g. Deut 22:6; 25:4).

2. The Covenant Commandments as Guiding to Freedom and Joy

The biblical commandments, which come from the covenant of grace, are primarily guidance to freedom: "As the deeds, so are the words and commandments of God the guidance to freedom and thus an ever-new, saving exodus from all bondage, captivity and slavery, into which the lives and social life have fallen"(Kraus).¹⁷ As the deeds of the LORD led in the liberation of the people, who were trapped under the bondage, so do the commandments of this liberator lead his own people to freedom. Thus, the receivers of the commandments are from the beginning those liberated, who are called, to perceive "the freedom, to which they are led, and to prove to live in it and to persevere."¹⁸ Therefore, it is not about the preservation of traditional moral values when we speak of the commandments, but it is about the "structuring and preserving of the gift of freedom".¹⁹ It's because they are grounded in the LORD's undeserving liberation. So the commandments are meant, from the beginning, for a guide and instruction to freedom. Therefore, when we consider the biblical context, it is not correct to allocate the commandments to the doctrinal debate of the third use of the law (cf. Calvin: three functions of the law: a. sin-restraining function for our society; b. sin-convincing function for sinners; c. instructing function for believers). But the biblical commandments are not only in the third step the instructions of God. Instead, from the beginning they are instruction for the people of God.

We have said that the Old Testament commandments are never "legalistic", but rather a guidance to freedom. This positive function of the commandments is well expressed especially when the Old Testament speaks of delight in the Torah. Ps 1, 19 and 119 are good examples. The OT scholar *Kraus* points out that "people in Israel are facing the Torah of their God, with love and delight."²⁰ In order to understand this relationship of Israel to the Torah, we should translate the word Torah with the proper word "instruction."²¹ The Torah is first a reason for joy, because it is the instruction of God liberating and leading in freedom, and therefore it can be fulfilled.²² This inseparable unity of the covenant and commandment on the one hand, and the joy of the Torah on the other hand, underlie the understanding of the law in the Old Testament, even in the post-exilic period.²³ We should not speak of a legalistic view of the law in the post-exilic period (contra *M. Noth*). *Kraus* noted that "also in the post-exilic period, the idea of the covenant was the driving force, without which we cannot understand the Torah."²⁴ We can comprehend the joy

of the Torah in the post-exilic period from the Torah anchored in the covenant, where not a rigid code stands in the center, but the living covenant God, who is speaking to his people. The post-exilic joy in the Torah is essentially an eschatological anticipation of the new covenant in Jer31: 31-34,²⁵ "toward which Israel moves and by virtue of which the Old Testament people of God live."²⁶

B. The Relationship of the Commandment and Curse

From the factual context of the covenant and commandment, there is now not only the positive aspect of the commandment as an instruction, but also the negative aspect of the commandment as judging law. So, the Reformation emphasis on the antithesis between judging law and liberating gospel finds its place within the covenant of God with Israel. This antithesis fits into the context of the history of the covenant. Here we must emphasize the connection between commandment and curse in the Torah and the Prophets (*W. Zimmerli*): The commandments in Israel were never seen without a qualified history; namely, from the beginning they were connected with YHWH's grace covenant with his people.²⁷ This covenant dimension of the commandment is especially true concerning the aspect of the curse. "Out of the covenant reality, the threat raises against the covenant partner, who has not kept the covenant order."²⁸ The covenant commandment is not only "the net", which means the LORD's claim over Israel; it is also "the source of the curse."²⁹

We can see this inseparable relation of the commandment and curse particularly in the curse Decalogue of Dt. 27:15-26. Here the so-called curse Decalogue addresses, "how the commandment is inseparably connected not only with the blessing, but also with the possibility of the curse." The very people, who stand in the covenant, are here addressed. They should know that curse can be realized in their midst. The commandment is not only the opportunity to confess to the LORD in questionable situations (*von Rad*); it can suddenly become the place, where the curse breaks out within the covenant."³⁰ The judgment, which is directed against the violation of the commandment, comes from within, that is, from the covenant itself.

However, the judgment of the commandment is not its true destiny. It's because the commandment is from the beginning a positive instruction. The judgment dimension is, therefore, accidental. But the commandment reckons with the possibility of the curse, which represents a negative form of the positive covenant in the case of its violation. The Torah arrests the perpetrators doing the evil deed. We must see therefore the curse as a negative aspect of the Torah from the covenant reality.

This factual connection between the covenant and judgment is effective also for the judgment prophets: In terms of the radical judgment speech of YHWH to Israel in Amos 3:1f, we must say "that the entire judgment-threatening reality for Israel is to be understood by no other things, but by her relationship with her God."³¹ So, we should not speak of the "suspension of the covenant"³² in the judgment prophets. In the judgment words of the prophets, it is therefore not about the termination of the covenant to the covenant people, but it is about "the special measure of her responsibility," which corresponds "to a special closeness of Israel to her God."³³ The judgment prophecy occurs just from the covenant reality. The prophets come, therefore, after the Torah in the canonical order; they are its interpreter.³⁴

Moreover, we must keep in mind the striking designs of the books of Prophets: In each prophetic book, the hard judgment words are followed by the salvation oracles, "which hold valid permanent promises of God through and beyond the disaster."³⁵ Each prophetic book ends in its canonical final form³⁶ not with the judgment announcement, but with the promise of future salvation. The disaster proclamation of the prophets is thus placed into a larger context by the positive words of promise. So, we should see their judgment proclamation from the ultimate will of God over his people, "that the LORD stands for His promise and for His chosen people."³⁷

If the new covenant (Jeremiah 31) is promised because of Israel's actual failure in keeping God's commandments, this does not mean the end for Israel. Therefore, we should not speak of the new covenant in the sense of the radical separation between the old covenant at Sinai and the new covenant. It's because the addressee of the promise of the eschatological new covenant in Jeremiah 31:31 ff is and will remain Israel as the covenant people of the First Covenant.³⁸ Furthermore, we should point out the Old Testament fact that the covenant people of Israel, after her breach of the covenant, already lives in a renewed covenant (Ex 32-34). So we have to understand both the promise of God and his judgment threat from covenant reality and his covenant faithfulness.

From these exegetical results, it is questionable not only to apply the antithetical schema "law-gospel" to the Decalogue, but also it is problematic to radically separate the positive Torah and the judging law. For in the Old Testament context, we must comprehend both the Torah as instruction and the curse of the Torah from a single understanding of Torah, i.e. from the covenant reality.

C. The Relationship between Moses Torah and Christ

After studying the Old Testament background of the Torah, we must ask a canonical-biblical question about the New Testament context: How does the New Testament relate to the Torah of Moses? What does the Christ event bring for the understanding of the Torah? What is the relationship between the Torah of Moses and Christ?

1. Christ as the Obedient Fulfillment of the Torah

To answer the question of how Christ relates to the Old Testament Torah, we must simply listen to the synoptic testimonies. The Gospel of Matthew which is the first witness in the canonical order of the New Testament makes decisive statements in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7). It is seen as the Torah of the Messiah Jesus³⁹ in the New Testament context (Galatians 6:2). The understanding of the Torah depends on how we perceive its interpretation in the Sermon on the Mount. The New Testament scholar *O. Betz* pointed out the fundamental messianic-eschatological horizon of the Sermon on the Mount.⁴⁰ The Sermon on the Mount is "under the sign of announcing the coming Kingdom of God that is present and hidden in Jesus (Mt 4:17)."⁴¹ But what does this messianic-eschatological context mean for the position of Christ to the Moses Torah?

According to the Matthew's Gospel, the position of Christ to the Torah of Moses is determined by "fulfilling" (Matt. 5:17). Christ is the fulfillment of the Torah and the prophets. Here Christ reaffirms the Torah of Moses. This reaffirmation should be seen decisively by the "messianic-eschatological event of fulfillment."⁴² Jesus as the Messiah, as the Spirit-anointed one (Isaiah 61:1) fulfills the Torah. Jesus as the messianic Torah teacher objects to those who teach the Torah properly (so you should listen to them) but don't practice it (Mt 23.3); because what matters for the Torah interpretation in the Sermon, is, "that the Torah is fulfilled in the new, effective action."⁴³ In the active obedience of Jesus toward it, the Torah is thus messianically fulfilled. Then, in the Sermon on the Mount as the Torah of the Messiah, it is about God's redeeming righteousness (Isa. 56.1), which is fulfilled in the Messiah Jesus.⁴⁴ The Messiah not only teaches and calls, but he also fulfills the Torah and the prophets and thus he reveals God's helping righteousness.

Finally and decisively, the Torah interpretation in the Sermon on the Mount is determined by fulfilling the promise of the new covenant.⁴⁵ With the Messianic fulfillment of the Torah, the eschatological man is being realized who is promised in Jeremiah 31.31 ff (cf. Ez36:26 f). It is thus in Matthew 5:17 about eschatological fulfillment of the promise of the new man, in whose heart (Jer31) the Torah is written. The Sermon on the Mount is therefore the Torah interpretation of *the renewed and new covenant*.

When Christ's fulfillment of the Torah (Matt. 5:17) is to be brought in connection with the eschatological promise of the new covenant, we also have to – according to H.W. Wolff – draw attention to the important facts: the Torah, which was given Israel as a gift in the Sinai covenant, is not questioned also in the new covenant, as the once chosen people remain the chosen people in the new covenant.⁴⁶

The new covenant was promised in the face of the failure of Israel in God's commandments. The new covenant is a confirmation and renewal of the covenant with Israel. In this new covenant, the fulfillment of which begins in the Messiah Jesus, it's not about the abolition of the Torah of Moses, as was claimed by the antithetical interpretation of the Sermon on the Mount to the Torah of Moses. The novelty of the promised new covenant in Jer31 is neither a new Torah, nor a new people, but the novelty of the new covenant aims at the anthropological dimension, that is, the renewal of the human heart by God. The basic requirement in the new covenant remains the same Torah, which was once given in the establishing of the Sinai Covenant. The Christ-event is, therefore, messianic-eschatological fulfillment.

Also the so-called antitheses of the Sermon on the Mount are to be addressed properly only from the messianic-eschatological fulfillment of the Torah and the prophets in Christ. Are they antithesis to the Torah itself or to Torah interpretation? The preamble to the law interpretation in the Sermon on the Mount confirms the Torah of Moses without any reservation (Matt. 5:18-19). And this is the "interpretive key to the anti-thesis series."⁴⁷ Based on this hermeneutic key, here we should not speak of the abolishment of the Torah or its replacement by a new Torah. Rather, Christ Jesus stands in continuity with the Exodus and Sinai traditions. Therefore, Christ agrees with the Torah of Moses. Accordingly, we must definitively reject the so-called antitheses, in which Christ confronts Moses antithetically.⁴⁸

The so-called antitheses of the Sermon on the Mount occurred in the context of the Torah interpretation of the then contemporary Judaism, according to which the Torah was updated by the constant interpretation practices (*Frankemöle*). In thematic as well as linguistic terms, the so-called antitheses of the Sermon on the Mount (Mt 5.21-47) are a critique of a certain Pharisee's or other Torah interpretation in the context of Judaism; thus we cannot see them as a criticism of the Torah or as its abolishment.⁴⁹ For example, the sixth antithesis criticizes a certain interpretation of the commandment (of Lev 19:18), which reads in Mt 5:43 b: "But you are allowed to hate your enemy."⁵⁰ In the messianic interpretation of Jesus, the Torah is not criticized, but fulfilled, and revealed in its "true meaning intended from the beginning."⁵¹

2. Christ and the Judgment Curse of the Torah

For understanding the Torah in the New Testament context, we started out from the Messianic fulfillment of the Torah in the Sermon on the Mount, which means first a confirming "Yes" to the Torah of Moses. If this Torah comes to its fulfillment in Christ's obedience toward it, then Christ and the instructing Torah are inseparable from each other. We have then seen that the covenant commandment can take also the form of the judging law in the face of human transgressions due to the covenant reality. The same now applies to the New Testament. Here, too, we have to speak of not only the fulfillment of the Torah through Christ, who was "obedient unto death on the cross" (Phil 2:8), but we also must speak of the relationship between Christ and the curse of the Torah. This connection between Christ and the judgment curse of the Torah is especially important when it comes to the biblical terms of the antithesis of "law and gospel." Paul gives a clear expression to the relationship between Christ and the curse of the Torah in Gal 3.13, which says: "Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us" This statement of Paul is significant for the relation between Christ and Torah curse.

First, Christ took the Torah curse in our place. Luther formulated Christ's taking of the Torah curse in his Galatians commentary to Gal 3:13 as following: "When the merciful God saw that we are thrown down by the law and held under a curse, and that we could by nothing free ourselves, there he sent his Son into the world and threw all our sins upon him, and said to him, you shall be Peter, that denier; you shall be Paul, that persecutor, blasphemer and a violent man; you shall be David, that adulterer; you shall be that sinner who ate the fruit of paradise; that robber on the cross; in summa: You shall be a person of all people and shall have done the sin of all people [...] And so falls the law on him and kills him."⁵² Luther expressed the relation of Christ and the Torah curse in an unsurpassable way. Christ has made our sin to be his and his righteousness to be ours. Following Luther's interpretation of Gal 3.13, *Iwand* said in regard to 2 Corinthians 5:21: "In the atonement of God in Jesus Christ, sin, death, and all the satanic powers lost the real ground of their existence."⁵³

While in the active fulfillment of Christ, the Torah is seen as a positive instruction of God based on the unity of the covenant, the antithesis between law and gospel comes to light in the passive dimension of the taking of the Torah curse in the cross of Christ. In view of this curse dimension of the Torah, we must speak of the radical antithesis of judging law and the liberating gospel. Here is the theological place of the dialectic of law and gospel, which Paul and Luther have pointed out. The Torah brings curse and death to the sinner, but we must immediately say that

the curse dimension of the Torah seeks something positive in its negative form: The curse occurs from covenant reality, by virtue of which God arrests the perpetrator, makes good, and reconciles.

In comparison to the judging law, Christ's taking of the curse in our place is the gospel that liberates us from the curse of the Torah. Through Christ's takeover of the curse, the law loses its judging and killing power. Therefore, we should not pit the reconciliation in Christ against the Torah curse in the Old Testament. For in the Sinai covenant, atonement and forgiveness were "an integral part of the Torah."⁵⁴

If Christ has delivered us from the curse of the Torah, we can under no circumstances identify the Torah as such with the curse. This cannot be said of Paul, not to mention the Old Testament. The Old Testament context of Torah and curse has made it clear that the judgment curse is a negative aspect of the instructing Torah. As for Paul, it would apply within Galatians. When he speaks of the curse of the Torah in Galatians 3:13, he can later depict love as a positive fulfillment of the Torah (Gal 5:14; 6:2).⁵⁵ We must also pay attention to Paul's positive statements on the Torah, where he speaks as a Pharisaic Jew within the tradition of Judaism: The Torah is holy, just, good (Romans 7:12) and spiritual (7:14). If man fails, the problem doesn't lie in the Torah as spiritual law (*lex spiritualis*), but it happens because of the sinful man who fails. Therefore, we also cannot simply say traditionally in terms of Romans 10:4 that Christ is "the end of the law." Instead we have to say, Torah-theologically and properly stated: Christ is the end of the judging law by taking the curse of the Torah upon himself. But He is the goal of the instructing Torah by setting it upright and fulfilling it in his obedience to the point of death on the cross.⁵⁶ In this sense Christ is both the goal of the instructing Torah and the end of the judging law.

We've seen above, that Jesus' relationship to the Torah is determined by the messianic-eschatological fulfillment. The Messiah Jesus fulfilled the Torah first by doing it in active obedience. By his active fulfillment of the Torah, Christ took over the Torah curse, which would kill the sinner. When Christ positively fulfilled the Torah and became a curse for our substitution, the question arises, what does Christ's instruction mean for the church community?

3. The Sermon on the Mount as an Eschatological Instruction for the Church and Society

The eschatological fulfilling of the Torah by Christ is the key condition, from which the Torah of Moses should be understood and put in force. As Christ claimed the Torah as a whole for himself and fulfilled it, so now the Torah as a whole is valid for his own, all of Israel and the disciples as the representatives of all Israel. The Torah that Christ deepened in interpretation and fulfilled as the new covenant is universally binding for all nations (Matt. 28:20).⁵⁷ Therefore, we have to say in view of the addressees of the Sermon on the Mount: "What is true of Israel is true for all peoples of the earth" (*K. Scharf*).⁵⁸ The instructions of the Sermon on the Mount "are rules not only for the inner-Christian and inner-church use, but they are God's offers for the life of nations with each other!"⁵⁹

But when the listeners of the Sermon on the Mount are called to an unconditional hearing and doing of the Torah (Matthew 5:18, 19) and affected by its fulfillment through Christ, then that

has nothing to do with a hard legalistic demand.⁶⁰ We must always interpret the Christ's teaching in the Sermon on the Mount rather from the "messianic event of the fulfillment, in which the listeners are directly drawn."⁶¹ The instruction in the Sermon on the Mount is the law of the Kingdom of God.⁶² This is understandable not only through the gospel of the Beatitudes, which stands at the beginning of all messages of the Sermon on the Mount, but also through the preceding action of the Messianic deliverance by Jesus as Immanuel"(Mt 4,17.23-25).⁶³ The Christ's Torah is, therefore, a result of salvation and "gift of the end times."⁶⁴ It is about "the gracious offer of closeness of God's reality and an action made possible thereby."⁶⁵ As with the Decalogue, here also goes the comforting word ahead of the claim.

The gospel of the fulfillment is superior to demands not only in terms of chronological order, but more importantly in its contents. In the teachings of the Sermon on the Mount it is about the relation between the preacher and his audience: "Jesus binds his listeners to himself and his fulfillment power, by referring them to the irrevocable Torah."⁶⁶ The audience of the Sermon on the Mount is therefore addressed by the one, who fulfills the Torah and now makes its fulfillment for his people valid. They are namely involved in this Messianic fulfillment of the Torah. Therefore, when listening to the Sermon on the Mount as an eschatological instruction, we should not think first of the sin-convicting law (*elencticus usus legis*), even though it might actually become one.⁶⁷ The talk of the "better righteousness" does not mean that the teaching of Christ would be better than the Torah of Moses. The disciples of Jesus are committed to a wholehearted Yes to the Torah of Moses in their discipleship. The better righteousness of the disciples owes itself rather to "the pneumatic fulfillment in the Messiah" and "the power of his love turning to the poor and powerless," on which they live.⁶⁸ Thus, the Sermon on the Mount is by no means a legalistic overload, rather it is the Messianic Torah in the presence of God; it describes "the prophetic vision of a brotherly world, which in principle enables a liberated life, even if the reality remains always far behind."⁶⁹

In Christ's Sermon on the Mount, it is not about beating the Torah of Moses, but about obeying the Torah, which begins in the messianic fulfillment. Therefore, the teaching of Christ is the messianic-eschatological instruction to life for His people. Despite large differences in emphasis, there is a substantive agreement between Matthew and Paul, when it comes to the fulfillment of the Torah: the fulfillment of the Torah is a "pneumatic action," and love is not the abolition, but the fulfillment of the Torah.⁷⁰ So, we must not pit Matthew and Paul against each other.⁷¹

The life of the Christian community is characterized not by lawlessness, but by the fulfillment of the Torah. For through the messianic fulfillment of the Torah in the history of Jesus Christ, the Torah clearly steps forward in its original instructing character (*primus usus legis spiritualis*). Because the Messiah Jesus "became obedient to the point of death on the cross" (*oboetientia activa*), God could make him the curse of the Torah (*oboedientia passiva*) in our place. And when Christ has actively fulfilled the Torah and endured its judgment passively, its instruction becomes the commandment of life for those who are drawn by Jesus Christ in the eschatological fulfillment.

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- ¹ Vgl. *H.-J. Kraus*, Predigtmeditation, 194.
- ² Vgl. *F. Crüsemann*, Maßstab: Tora, 57.
- ³ A.a.O., 44.
- ⁴ Vgl. *G. von Rad*, Theologie des AT Bd. II, 417.
- ⁵ *H.-J. Kraus*, Predigtmeditation, 194.
- ⁶ *G. von Rad*, Theologie des AT Bd. I, 205.
- ⁷ A.a.O., 207; von Rad weist auf einen merkwürdigen Tatbestand hin, dass es im Alten Testament kein Gesetz, „das die Herstellung dieser sakralen Ordnung regelt“ gibt. Sondern diese sakrale Ordnung galt schon als vollzogen. „Zur Diskussion nur noch die Frage der Gestaltung des Lebens derer, die sich in einer neuen Situation vorfinden.“ (a.a.O., 207).
- ⁸ A.a.O., 205.
- ⁹ *H.-J. Kraus*, Predigtmeditation, 194; Vom Zusammenhang von Bunde und Geboten ist mit *Crüsemann* zu sagen: „Nicht nur ist die befreiende Nähe Gottes Voraussetzung für die Tora, sondern *sie selbst ist ein Ausdruck dieser Zuwendung*.“ (*F. Crüsemann*, a.a.O., 44; kursiv von mir).
- ¹⁰ Vgl. *G. von Rad*, Theologie des AT Bd. I, 207.
- ¹¹ A.a.O., 208.
- ¹² Vgl. *G. von Rad*, Theologie des AT Bd. II, 432; er übt Kritiken an *E. Hirsch* und *R. Bultmann* (Weissagung und Erfüllung, ZThK 1950, 360ff; Israels Geschichte als „in ihrem Widerspruch, in ihrem Scheitern“); auch *W. Joest* teilt die Meinung, die Geschichte Israels mit Gott sei „Geschichte seines Scheiterns an diesem Gott“ (vgl. Dogmatik Bd. I, 117f) – U.a. *Zimmerli* wehrt leidenschaftlich mit den sachlichen Kritiken dem Versuch, das Alte Testament unter den Begriff „Gesetz“ zu subsumieren (*W. Zimmerli*, Das Gesetz und die Propheten; Die Weltlichkeit des Alten Testaments).
- ¹³ *H.-J. Kraus*, Systematische Theologie, 159.
- ¹⁴ A.a.O., 160; dabei kann *Kraus* bezüglich *Luther* positiv darauf hinweisen, dass er den Dekalog in den Katechismen durchaus von erstem Gebot her versteht.
- ¹⁵ *F. Crüsemann*, Maßstab: Tora, 58; vgl. auch seine Kritik an der traditionellen Identifizierung der biblischen Gebote mit dem Naturgesetz, 29ff.
- ¹⁶ Vgl. *F. Crüsemann*, a.a.O., 63ff; 32ff. *Crüsemann* wendet sich gegen die Versuche, die die ganze Tora durch Prinzipien zu erfassen und sie dadurch zu ersetzen. Deshalb bietet für ihn auch der Vorschlag von *K. Müller*, der sich an die Tora in der Gestalt der noachidischen Weisung orientiert, keine Lösung, denn das Neue Testament lässt die ganze Tora gelten (Mt 5,17ff). Als hermeneutischen Zugang zur Israel-Tora weist *Crüsemann* vielmehr auf „das Staunen der Völker“ über die Tora hin, was die Tora Dtn 4,6-8 (vgl. Jes 2 u. Mi 4) belegt (vgl. *Crüsemann*, a.a.O., 20ff). „Dieser Ansatzpunkt an der Tora, aber als einer nicht uns gegebenen bzw. nicht universal formulierten Weisung Gottes, ein solcher Ansatzpunkt, der zugleich ein Bezug auf Israel und auf die Gerechtigkeit ist, stellt ... eine Grundlage christlicher Ethik dar.“ (a.a.O., 27). Vgl. dazu auch *F. Crüsemann*, Die Tora. Theologie und Sozialgeschichte des alttestamentlichen Gesetzes.
- ¹⁷ *H.-J. Kraus*, Systematische Theologie, 159 (kursiv von mir).
- ¹⁸ *H.-J. Kraus*, Predigtmeditation, 195.
- ¹⁹ *F. Crüsemann*, a.a.O., 43.; vgl. auch *K. H. Miskotte*, dem zufolge die alttestamentlichen Gebote die Einweisung in die Freiheit sind: „Das Gebot ist eine Anweisung, wie man zur Freiheit geführt werden und selbst in Freiheit stehen kann. Den Sinn der Gebote könnte man folgendermaßen zusammenfassen: Bleibe bei deinem Befreier, realisiere deine eigene Erwählung...“ (Wenn die Götter schweigen, 1963, 162; vgl. auch 231ff; vgl. auch sein Buch Biblisches ABC, 1976, 133).
- ²⁰ *H.-J. Kraus*, Theologie der Psalmen, 202 (kursiv im Original).
- ²¹ Auf der sachlichen Übersetzung der Tora mit Weisung oder Wegweisung bestehen die Alttestamentler u.a. *Kraus* (vgl. Freude an Gottes Gesetz, 338f; Theologie der Psalmen, 202) und *Miskotte* (vgl. Wenn die Götter schweigen, 231), und zwar mit Berufung auf *M. Buber*.
- ²² Vgl. *H.-J. Kraus*, Systematische Theologie, 160f; vgl. *G. von Rad*, Theologie des AT Bd. I, 209.

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- ²³ H.-J. Kraus, Freude an Gottes Gesetz, S. 337-351; vgl. auch ders., Theologie der Psalmen, 202ff; Auch W. Zimmerli wendet sich gegen die Meinung, dass das Gesetzes in der nachexilischen Zeit zu einer ganz von der Wirklichkeit des Bundes gelösten Größe geworden ist (vgl. Das Gesetz und die Propheten, 77f).
- ²⁴ H.-J. Kraus, Freude an Gottes Gesetz, 341.
- ²⁵ H.-J. Kraus, a.a.O., 348: „Die Freude an Gottes Gesetz ist ein Zeichen der eschatologischen Existenz, die bereits im Alten Testament ihr Bekenntnis spricht. Der Lobpreis des Gesetzes ist darum nicht ein Zeugnis für den allgemeinen Nomismus spätyüdischer Frömmigkeit, sondern ein Signal, durch welches das Kommen des ‘neuen Menschen’ angekündigt wird – jenes Menschen, der die Torah Gottes in seinem Herzen trägt.“
- ²⁶ A.a.O., 351.
- ²⁷ Vgl. W. Zimmerli, Das Gesetz und die Propheten, 81.
- ²⁸ A.a.O., 83 (kursiv von mir).
- ²⁹ Ebd.; auch B. Childs teilt gegen von Rad die exegetische Einsicht Zimmerlis im Hinblick auf den zusammenhängenden Sachverhalt von Tora und Fluch (Die Theologie der einen Bibel Bd. I, 209ff; Bd. II, 226; Seitenangabe nach der deutschen Ausgabe).
- ³⁰ A.a.O., 87 (kursiv von mir).
- ³¹ W. Zimmerli, a.a.O., 102f (kursiv von mir).
- ³² vgl. G. von Rad, Theologie des AT Bd. II, 421 Anm. 12.
- ³³ W. Zimmerli, Grundriß der alttestamentlichen Theologie, 163.
- ³⁴ Vgl. F. Crüsemann, Maßstab: Tora, 23.
- ³⁵ W. Zimmerli, Vom Prophetenwort zum Prophetenbuch, 491.
- ³⁶ Vgl. B. Childs, Die Theologie der einen Bibel, besonders Teil 1, 76ff. vgl. weiter Childs’ Beitrag „Die Beziehung von Altem und Neuem Testament aus kanonischer Sicht“.
- ³⁷ W. Zimmerli, a.a.O.; Auf der anderen Seite will Zimmerli das Alte Testament nicht pauschal als „Buch der frohen Botschaft“ bezeichnen und für das Alte Testament von dem „Charakter des noch offenen Zuvor“ im Vergleich zu dem eindeutig durch das Evangelium bestimmten Neuen Testament sprechen (Die Weltlichkeit des Alten Testaments, 149f; Das Gesetz und die Propheten).
- ³⁸ Vgl. H.W. Wolff, Bibelarbeit: Gegenüber der traditionellen Antithese von dem „alten“ und dem „neuen“ Bund, wobei der letztere der Kirche zugeschrieben wird, macht Wolff zuerst darauf aufmerksam, dass „gerade das Wort vom neuen Bund zunächst Israel und dann Juda [!] zugesprochen worden ist“.D.h. mit dem Adressaten des neuen Bundes ist zunächst nicht die Kirche gemeint. Darum ist im Hinblick auf den Adressaten der Verheißung (Jer 31,31ff) festzuhalten, dass „Israel nicht nur das Volk des alten Bundes ist, sondern daß auch der neue Bund zunächst nur ihm zugesprochen wurde“ (46).
- ³⁹ Vgl. O. Betz, Bergpredigt und Sinaitradition, 377: Die Bergpredigt ist „die Tora des messianischen Menschensohnes, der seine Vollmacht dazu einsetzt, das Gottesvolk der Heiligen der letzten Zeit zu sammeln und auf das nahe Kommen Gottes auszurichten“; nach Kraus ist die Bergpredigt die „kompakteste und konzentrierteste Gestalt der Botschaft des Christus“ (Kraus, 396).
- ⁴⁰ O. Betz, Bergpredigt und Sinaitradition.
- ⁴¹ H.-J. Kraus, Systematische Theologie, 396.
- ⁴² A.a.O., 398.
- ⁴³ A.a.O., 399 (kursiv im Original).
- ⁴⁴ Vgl. O. Betz, a.a.O., 340ff.
- ⁴⁵ Vgl. So O. Betz’s einleuchtende These; vgl. Kraus, a.a.O., 399.
- ⁴⁶ Vgl. H.W. Wolff, a.a.O., 48ff; Wolff nennt als Identitätspunkte zwischen Altem und Neuem Testament: a) die Initiative Gottes; b) die Basis des neuen Bundes d.h. die Tora und c) als das Ziel des einen Bundes im NT wie im AT die feste Verbindung von Bundesherr und Bundesvolk: „Sie sollen mein Volk sein und ich will ihr Gott sein.“ (S. 44 - 55).
- ⁴⁷ J. Roloff, Neues Testament, 153; vgl. H. Frankemölle, Matthäus I, 217ff.

⁴⁸ Vgl. *H. Frankemölle*, a.a.O., 229; *U. Luz* spricht von der Antithese der Worte Jesu zum Alten Testament (Matthäus I, 249; Bergpredigt, 49f). *H. Hübner* versteht Jesus als das Ende der Mose-Tora (Ex WbNT, 1165f).

⁴⁹ Vgl. *H. Frankemölle*, a.a.O., 224ff; „Gerade die bibelkundigen ersten Leser des MtEv konnten nie und nimmer aufgrund der zitierten Schriftstellen in 5,21-47 die Deutung der Tora durch den matthäischen Jesus als Aufhebung interpretieren.“ (a.a.O., 227).

⁵⁰ Die Tora-Auslegung, gegen die die sechste Antithese gerichtet ist, ist literarisch für uns heute in Qumran belegt (vgl. *H. Frankemölle*, a.a.O., 229).

⁵¹ *O. Betz*, a.a.O., 377.

⁵² *Luther*, Galaterkommentar 1531 (WA 40 I, 437f; Deutsch nach Göttinger Ausgabe Bd. IV, ed. von *H. Kleinknecht*).

⁵³ *H.J. Iwand*, PM I, 549.

⁵⁴ *F. Crisemann*, a.a.O., 44, nennt das Sühneopfer (Lev 4) und den Versöhnungstag (Lev 16).

⁵⁵ Gal 5,14: „Denn das ganze Gebot ist in einem Wort erfüllt, in dem ‚Liebe deinen Nächsten wie dich selbst!‘; Gal 6,2: ‚Einer trage des andern Last, so werdet ihr die Weisung Christi erfüllen.‘; vgl. auch Röm 13,10.

⁵⁶ Vgl. *K. Haacker*, Römer, 206ff.

⁵⁷ Vgl. *O. Betz*, a.a.O., 335.

⁵⁸ Vgl. *O. Betz*, a.a.O., 335.

⁵⁹ Ebd.; vgl. auch *H. Gollwitzer*, Bergpredigt, 99ff.

⁶⁰ Nach *J. Roloff* sind die traditionellen Bergpredigtauslegungen in vier Typen einzuordnen (a.a.O., 160f): 1. *Relativierende* Deutungen: a. „Relativierung durch Einschränkung des Geltungsbereiches“: die Gebote der Bergpredigt seien evangelische Räte (*consilia evangelica*); b. „Relativierung durch eschatologische Begrenzung“: Die Gebote der Bergpredigt konstituierten eine „Interimsethik“ (bei A. Schweizer); c. „Relativierung durch Reduktion auf ein Prinzip“ (neuprotestantische Gesinnungsethik); 2. *Radikalisierende* Deutungen: a. „Radikalisierung durch Verneinung von Kultur und gesellschaftlicher Ordnung“ (z.B. bei Leo Tolstoi) b. „Radikalisierung durch Einbeziehung der Forderung in ein Programm der gesellschaftlichen Revolution“ (marxistische Interpretation z. B. bei Ernst Bloch); 3. *Privatisierende* Deutung: die Radikalismen der Bergpredigt gälten nur für den einzelnen Christen (Luthers Zwei-Reiche-Lehre); 4. *Christologische* Deutung: Die Radikalismen seien dazu da, als Sündenspiegel der Menschen zu Christus hinzuführen (*usus elenchticus*); *U. Luz* problematisiert die protestantische Reduktion der Bergpredigt auf die Verinnerlichung und das Individuum. Die protestantische Auslegungsgeschichte der Bergpredigt ist als „eine Geschichte ihrer Verinnerlichung und der Verdrängung ihrer Forderungen, die die Liebe nur noch innerhalb der Rahmenbedingungen, die die Welt ihr stellte, zum Zuge kommen ließ“ zu charakterisieren (Bergpredigt, 66). Vgl. *H.-J. Kraus*, a.a.O., 396.

⁶¹ *H.-J. Kraus*, a.a.O., 400.

⁶² Vgl. *J. Jeremias*, Neutestamentliche Theologie I, 204ff.

⁶³ Vgl. *H. Frankemölle*, a.a.O., 214f.

⁶⁴ *J. Roloff*, a.a.O., 154.

⁶⁵ *H. Frankemölle*, a.a.O., 234.

⁶⁶ *H.-J. Kraus*, a.a.O., 400.

⁶⁷ Vgl. *U. Luz*, Bergpredigt, 58: „Der Gedanke an die Unerfüllbarkeit des Gesetzes ist von Matthäus her, der vom bleibenden Beistand des erhöhten Herrn gerade beim Gehorsam gegenüber Gottes Willen so viel schreibt, weit entfernt.“

⁶⁸ *H.-J. Kraus*, a.a.O., 400.

⁶⁹ *H. Frankemölle*, a.a.O., 234.

⁷⁰ Vgl. *H.-J. Kraus*, a.a.O., 400; *O. Betz*, a.a.O., 375.

⁷¹ Vgl. *J. Roloff*, a.a.O., 154: „Die Alternative: entweder Christus oder das Gesetz, vor der Paulus stand, liegt außerhalb des Horizontes des Matthäus.“