

Question 107 (Partial): The New Law As Compared with the Old

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By Thomas Aquinas

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The New Law As Compared with the Old

1. [OMITTED] Is the New Law distinct from the Old Law?
2. [Does the New Law fulfil the Old?](#)
3. [Is the New Law contained in the Old?](#)
4. [Which is the more burdensome, the New or the Old Law?](#)

Article 2. Whether the New Law fulfils the Old?

[Objections and On the contrary omitted]

I answer that, As stated above ([Article 1](#)), the New Law is compared to the Old as the perfect to the imperfect. Now everything perfect fulfils that which is lacking in the imperfect. And accordingly the New Law fulfils the Old by supplying that which was lacking in the Old Law.

Now in the Old Law two things can be considered: its end and the precepts contained in the Law.

Now the end of any law is to make men righteous and virtuous, as was stated above ([Question 92, Article 1](#)): and consequently the end of the Old Law was the justification of men. The Law, however, could not accomplish this: but foreshadowed it by certain ceremonial actions, and promised it in words. And in this respect, the New Law fulfils the Old by justifying men through the power of Christ's Passion. . .

Now Christ fulfilled the precepts of the Old Law both in His works and in His doctrine. . . . In His doctrine He fulfilled the precepts of the Law in three ways. First, by explaining the true sense of the Law. . . . Secondly, Our Lord fulfilled the precepts of the Law by prescribing the safest way of complying with the

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statutes of the Old Law. . . . Thirdly, Our Lord fulfilled the precepts of the Law, by adding some counsels of perfection: this is clearly seen in Matthew 19:21, where Our Lord said to the man who affirmed that he had kept all the precepts of the Old Law: "One thing is wanting to thee: If thou wilt be perfect, go, sell whatsoever thou hast," etc. [Aquinas combines Matthew 19:21 with Mark 10:21].

[Replies omitted]

Article 3. Whether the New Law is contained in the Old?

[Objections and On the contrary omitted]

I answer that, One thing may be contained in another in two ways. First, actually; as a located thing is in a place. Secondly, virtually; as an effect in its cause, or as the complement in that which is incomplete; thus a genus contains its species, and a seed contains the whole tree, virtually. It is in this way that the New Law is contained in the Old: for it has been stated (1) that the New Law is compared to the Old as perfect to imperfect. Hence [Pseudo-]Chrysostom, expounding Mark 4:28, "The earth of itself bringeth forth fruit, first the blade, then the ear, afterwards the full corn in the ear," expresses himself as follows: "He brought forth first the blade, i.e. the Law of Nature; then the ear, i.e. the Law of Moses; lastly, the full corn, i.e. the Law of the Gospel." Hence then the New Law is in the Old as the corn in the ear.

[Replies omitted]

Article 4. Whether the New Law is more burdensome than the Old?

[Objections and On the contrary omitted]

I answer that, A twofold difficulty may attach to works of virtue with which the precepts of the Law are concerned. One is on the part of the outward works, which of themselves are, in a way, difficult and burdensome. And in this respect the Old Law is a much heavier burden than the New: since the Old Law by its numerous ceremonies prescribed many more outward acts than the New Law, which, in the teaching of Christ and the apostles, added very few precepts to those of the natural law; although afterwards some were added, through being instituted by the holy Fathers. Even in these Augustine says that moderation should be observed, lest good conduct should become a burden to the faithful. . . .

[Replies omitted]

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