

DR. LAURA AND THE 10 COMMANDMENTS THE LAW WITHOUT THE LORD

Popular radio psychologist "Dr. Laura" has recently released a book concerning the Ten Commandments, co-authored with Rabbi Stewart Vogel. Along with her husband and son, Dr. Laura converted to Orthodox Judaism in 1998. That conversion followed many years of religious questioning and confusion in her life. Dr. Laura now claims a "passion for the Bible" as the stimulus for her most recent publication.

At first glance, Christians might be delighted at the prospect of a *psychologist* using the Bible as a point of reference. Many (although not all) of Dr. Laura's specific applications of God's commandments would be agreeable to believers. Some of her comments about abortion, self-esteem, and "recovered memory" therapy are biblically on target. Unfortunately, there are still serious concerns to be raised by discerning readers. God's law is good and holy, and it is the infallible guide for our lives. It is not, however, the way of eternal *salvation*. The law leads us to Christ, exposing our desperate need for a Savior. Without the *Lord*, the *law* is inevitably a road to despair. We need God's grace, so that we can be assured of forgiveness for sins along with the power to lead a new life through the power of His Spirit.

Christianity and Dr. Laura. Dr. Laura's work has been supported by many Christians, as she notes in her book. She has appeared more than once as the television guest of Dr. Robert Schuller at the Crystal Cathedral. However, she lacks even a basic intellectual understanding of the Christian gospel, asserting that Christian salvation merely *adds* faith to obedience to God's law. While we certainly affirm that genuine faith is evidenced by the good works that God has prepared for us to do (Ephesians 2:10; James 2), obedience to the law is not at all the ground for our salvation (Ephesian 2:7-9). Dr. Laura's misunderstanding of this central issue renders her scheme "another gospel" (Galatians 1).

By what standard? Dr. Laura repeatedly affirms that universal moral standards must be grounded in the personal God of the Bible. But in spite of her professed allegiance to biblical standards, Dr. Laura is willing to cast moral considerations aside during "judgment-free" therapy sessions. This creates a double standard wherein people are *counseled* about real life situations without moral standards, then expected to obey God's law when they leave the counseling room and encounter those very situations. In addition, Dr. Laura is willing to compromise clear biblical principles when it is expedient to do so. For example, she claims that a homosexual couple is quite capable of providing a loving

home for a child and should be encouraged to adopt older, hard-to-place children.

An additional concern arises when we note Dr. Laura's frequent quotation of "Jewish tradition" or "rabbinic interpretation." Much like the Roman Catholic tradition, she has added the traditions of men to the Word of God and elevated these human interpretations to the level of Scripture.

Who is God? There are several important biblical truths in Dr. Laura's view of God. He is personal, not an impersonal force, and He is alone is God. He is transcendent and distinct from His creation. Dr. Laura thus rightly departs from the pantheism of New Age theology. Many of her comments about idolatry are biblically valid. She also correctly notes that God is the Lord of *all* nations, not merely the Jews or some other particular group.

Unlike those who would see God's grace as a license to sin, Dr. Laura upholds His righteousness and holiness. Unfortunately, she tips the balance too far in the opposite direction. God is holy, just, and righteous, but He is also merciful, gracious, kind, loving, and longsuffering toward His people. Dr. Laura holds a truncated view of God's character, upholding His law but obscuring His grace.

There are disturbing hints of religious pluralism in this book. Dr. Laura appears more concerned about an overarching set of moral standards than about any particular religion. She seems more concerned about outward behavior than underlying theology. It doesn't matter to her whether a person is a Jew, Christian, Mormon, Muslim, or whatever, so long as that person lives by the standards articulated in the Ten Commandments. Dr. Laura is on dangerous theological ground here, because what she espouses is essentially a works-righteousness salvation that excludes grace. True Christianity differs from all other religions in its emphasis on the Person and work of Christ. Salvation is by grace alone, through faith alone, *in Christ alone*. By failing to understand that crucial distinction, Dr. Laura merges all religious faiths based on alleged common standards for human behavior.

Who is man? Dr. Laura's earlier books had a distinctly evolutionary tone. In this latest writing, she appears at times to depart from that perspective by affirming man's creation in the image of God. However, suspicions are raised by her many comments using "animal" as an adjective to describe man. It is possible that she subscribes to some form of theistic evolution, a view that seriously compromises the biblical account of creation and blurs the anti-theistic truth about evolutionary theory. At the same time, Dr. Laura proposes a "spark of divinity" in man's nature. Her view of man's nature is highly confusing at best.

In discussions of sin, Dr. Laura denies man's original state of righteousness as affirmed in Genesis 1. Sin is an aberration

that entered when Adam disobeyed God's first command, but Dr. Laura makes God the author of sin by asserting that He created man with the *inclination* to sin. Further error occurs when she places her primary emphasis on outward holiness rather than the condition of the heart.

Conclusions. Dr. Laura's recurrent theme is good behavior, even godly behavior. Sometimes she hits the biblical target, but in general, her scheme is one of legalism. She offers us a "Jewish moralism" at a time when society is decadent and even Christians take God's grace for granted. But people need more than the law. People need the *Lord*. Bare law without the Lord leads only to despair and ultimately destruction.

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