

THE LAW OF GOD.

"The law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good." – Rom. 7:12.

So says the Apostle Paul; and the Psalmist adds, "The law of the Lord is perfect;" and the Apostle James calls it "The perfect law of liberty."^{*} And again, the Psalmist breaks forth in an ecstasy of admiration, saying, "O how love I thy law! It is my meditation all the day."^{*}

Were these men mere religious enthusiasts when they thus praised the law of God? Let us look into it and see if it has the same inspiration for us. It says, Thou shalt have no other gods before me, nor make nor worship graven images; thou shalt honor thy father and mother, and shalt not kill, nor steal, nor bear false witness against thy neighbor, etc. Is there anything so very delightful and inspiring about these commands and prohibitions as to call forth such ejaculations of praise? To the casual reader it would seem not. Certainly no man feels specially flattered or edified either, on being told not to steal or kill or lie or cheat or bow down to worship senseless idols. And if we turn from the ten commandments to the ceremonial and provisional features of the law given to Israel, are the themes for meditation all the day any more inspiring? There we read articles for the regulation of slavery in Israel, and prohibitions against the enslavement of any Israelite (See Lev. 25:44-46; Exod. 21:20,21; Deut. 23:15,16); and of special provisions for the government of those who desired to take more than one wife, as to how they should still perform their obligations toward the wives they had already taken. (See Exod. 21:10; Deut. 21:15-17.) And again, there were commands that in cases of certain sins all Israel should take part in the execution of the criminal by stoning. Then there were all those features relating to the service of the Tabernacle, and the offering of sacrifices, and

the observance of sabbaths, and jubilees, and feast days, etc. Is there any thing so inspiring in all these things? Infidels say, No, and hold it all up to ridicule; but let us with the apostles and prophets look deeper, and doubtless we also shall find God's law a theme worthy of our meditation all the day, and one in which we may truly delight ourselves.

It was foretold by the Prophet Isaiah (42:21) that Christ would "magnify the law and make it honorable." And this is an intimation that in some way the divine law had been made to appear beneath its true dignity and grandeur, – which is true. In bringing it down to the comprehension of sinful men, God was obliged to state it in such a way as to meet the exigencies of their case; and so it abounds in commands and prohibitions – "thou shalt," and "thou shalt not." But hear the law as our Lord Jesus expressed it, when he said, On these two commandments hangs all the law, viz., "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind;" and "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." (Matt. 22:37-40.) And the Apostle Paul briefly sums it up in one word, saying, "**Love** is the fulfilling of the law." [R1462 : page 324]

It was thus also that the law of God was expressed to Adam and Eve in Eden. Love was the only law given there – love supreme, to God; and then love to each other as measured only by the love of self. Each was to love the other as much as self, and to love God even more. In this law every right-minded person can truly take delight. And those who thus delight themselves in the very central idea and spirit of God's law need no negative commands; for love's quick intuitions readily discover how to express its tenderest emotions toward God, and what would work good or ill to a neighbor.

To meditate on God's law is not, therefore, merely to ponder over the ten commandments – Thou shalt not kill, thou shalt not steal,

etc. – but rather to ponder over the spirit of that law of love and to study its outworkings in all the minutiae of life's affairs. And if this is the daily theme of our meditations, how truly may we delight ourselves therein. Happy indeed is that soul who can say, I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law of love is within my heart.

No parchment or tablet of stone can fairly represent the law of God. To be seen in its beauty and perfection, it must be viewed as engraven on the hearts of his intelligent creatures. The only clear and full illustrations we have yet had of it were Adam and Eve and our Lord Jesus. That written on the tablets of stone and given to Israel was a cruder manifestation of it to bring it down to the comprehension of fallen men.

This law of love works no ill to a neighbor and no ingratitude or irreverence to God, but is holy and just and good. Let us study it as it is written in the character and in the teachings of our Lord, as expressed by his own mouth and by the mouth of his holy apostles and prophets. In it we may profitably meditate all the day; and the more we meditate upon it the more we will realize its perfection and grandeur and see that it is indeed what James declares it to be – "the perfect law of liberty."

It is the only law of liberty that could be made; for nothing else than Love can secure the fullest liberty for every individual without in the least infringing upon the liberties of any **[R1463 : page 324]** other individual. Love, founded on justice, is therefore the only principle that has any right to authority or rulership anywhere. Justice is generally understood to be the object of all rulership; but Justice can never be fully secured where Love does not reign. Only love to the neighbor as to one's self can rightly adjust the affairs of men, either now or in the future. If it were possible now for love to fully control all the marts of trade and the busy hives of manufacturing industry, what a renovation it would

make: How employers and employees would work together for the common welfare, and strikes and lockouts and boycotts would be things unknown; and both the brains of the employers and the hands of the employed would find restful relaxation when the day closes. How would all the inventions and discoveries, the improved machinery and the increased skill of hand and brain begin to bless the whole world. How soon would the toiling hands and brains find labor lightened, and hours shortened, and leisure gained for mental and spiritual culture and social enjoyment of all the good things which God has provided for the world's comfort and happiness. Could it so enter and control all legislative halls and executive departments and courts of justice, how quickly would the world's wrongs be righted and the cry of the oppressed cease. And in the Church, if fully exercised, what beauty and grace would be hers, and how brightly her light would shine out upon the world. And if in full control of the domestic circle, what a heavenly peace would pervade its precincts and send its hallowed influence abroad.

Think upon it: study it out in all its intricate and important bearings, and see what a paradise of beauty and joy will stand out before our mental vision – a paradise in the home, a paradise in the Church and a paradise in the world. O! what an inspiring and what a profitable theme for meditation all the day. As we thus consider this perfect law of God we find that it has indeed, as the Prophet affirms (Psa. 19:7), power to convert the soul; for we become so inspired with the glorious picture that we find ourselves, even here, under the present disadvantages, striving to approximate these **[R1463 : page 325]** happy conditions, which we confidently hope to realize in the future through Christ our Redeemer and Lord, who undertakes to establish this law of God in our hearts now, and who will by and by establish it in all the world.

Thus viewed, who will deny the Apostle's declaration that the law is holy and just and good; for it consists not in a merely passive refraining from evil, but goes further, in activity for good.

When we carefully consider the law of God, viewing it through the magnifying glasses of Christ's life and teaching, and see how honorable and good and glorious it appears – for he truly magnified it, brought out its fine points, and made it honorable – we see that in what is commonly called the law of Moses, or the law of God, there are two distinct parts, which some have distinguished as the moral and the ceremonial laws; but which we would distinguish as the moral and the provisional laws. The former consisted of the ten commandments written upon the two tables of stone, and the latter of all the remainder of the law, which was peculiarly adapted to the purposes of that dispensation and the circumstances of that age.

In considering the provisional law given to Israel, some features of which, as above noted, are pointed out by Infidels as below the moral status of to-day (as they are), we must bear in mind that God's purpose with Israel at that time was not restitution, but merely the regulation of that people to such an extent as to be able to use them to represent typically the various features of his plan; and, while so doing, to guard them as a nation against such moral deflections as would make them and him as their God a reproach among the other nations. Consequently, God did not set about rooting out all the evils that were in their midst, but, as it is written, "The times of this ignorance God winked at [tolerated, or avoided taking notice of], because he hath appointed a day" – a set time, the Millennial age, for that work. (Acts 17:30,31.) As to how Israel accomplished his purpose as types, see "*Tabernacle Shadows of Better Sacrifices.*"

Many in Israel, as well as in the world at large, had fallen into the evil of taking many wives and also of enslaving their fellow men.

These evils God was not attempting to correct, because the "appointed time" for the deliverance from sin and the restoration to purity and holiness had not yet come. He was leaving that work for the Millennial age. Yet, without fully undertaking the work of eradicating all evil and bringing about complete reformation then, God did give some directions for the regulation of Israel in these matters, as well as many wise and wholesome laws admirably suited to the conditions of that time and the purposes of that dispensation.

It is clearly manifest that God's original purpose was not a multiplicity of wives, nor the enslavement of any member of that race which he had created free and in his own image, and that he will not permit such things when his time has come for restoring all things according to his original purpose. Thus we see that the claim of Infidels against some features of the Mosaic law, as not being up to the ethical standard of to-day, does not hold good against the divine law, which Paul says is holy and just and good, which the Psalmist says is perfect, and which James calls "the perfect law of liberty;" for Love, which is the central idea of the ten commandments, is the very essence of the law of God, and is indeed the law of liberty; and, as we have seen, it is the only law which can give liberty. It is the law with which God's own nature is inscribed; for "God is love:" and it is the law which he inscribes upon the heart of every one of his intelligent creatures created in his own likeness, both angelic and human, and to the glorious liberty of which it is his purpose to restore our fallen race.

It is the law which shone out so beautifully in the character and teaching of our Lord Jesus, and which he thus magnified and made honorable. It is the law which produced the bliss of Paradise before sin entered, and which will restore it again in the sweet by and by. Glorious law! Well may we exclaim with the Psalmist, "O how love I thy law! It is my meditation all the day."

But this law will not be fully established in the world until the end of the Millennial reign [R1463 : page 326] of Christ; and since the object of that reign is to bring men gradually up to the conditions and requirements of that law, there must of necessity be provisional laws during the Millennium adapted to the conditions and purposes of that age, just as there were provisional laws adapted to the conditions and purposes of the Jewish age, while the perfect law of Love will be held up before all as the goal of their aspirations. And when the end of the Millennium is reached, these provisional laws, which will make allowance for imperfections and shortcomings during the appointed times of restitution or reconstruction, will be removed; and then, every man must come up to the full standard of the perfect law of Love. Any who then, with the ability acquired under, the special arrangements of the provisional laws, show themselves unwilling to be actuated by the high-toned principles of the eternal law of Love, will be counted unworthy of life, and will die the second death.

During the Gospel age this same law of Love is held up as the ultimatum of the Church's aspirations for holiness and purity. And yet, as there will be during the Millennial age, so there is now, a provisional law of life under which the Church is placed, whose conditions take cognizance both of our infirmities (and make due allowance for them) and also of God's purposes for our discipline and development. This law the Apostle Paul (Rom. 8:2) calls "the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus," whereby all who submit themselves fully to it are "made free [reckonedly] from the law of sin and death." Under the blessed provisions of this law, so admirably adapted to our present conditions, all in Christ are now permitted to work out their eternal salvation, while God works in them to will and to do his good pleasure.

THE PROPER ATTITUDE TOWARD GOD'S LAW.

Complete happiness and unalloyed bliss can never be secured to any one except by entire harmony with the perfect law of love – supreme love to God and love to the neighbor as to one's self. This law is the full expression of God's will and purpose concerning his creatures. His will is our happiness and peace and joy, and is essential to our fitness to live forever in the possession of his favors. The proper attitude, therefore, of every loyal child of God is not only that of submission to this law to the fullest extent of ability, but also of grateful and joyful harmony with it, and delight in obedience to it and in contemplation of it.

This law of love, whose foundation is justice, is the only law which seeks the highest good of its subjects, and it is the only law which will ultimately be permitted to rule anywhere in God's clean and sinless universe. Now, however, the case is different: Satan is permitted to interfere largely in the affairs of men, and for a time men are permitted to take their own course subject to Satan's interference and unhindered by divine interposition. And in the midst of this state of affairs the Lord's children, who constitute the embryo Kingdom of God, grow up and develop. They find themselves under human laws sometimes approximating the perfect law of God, and sometimes far from doing so. What should we do about these laws **[R1464 : page 326]** wherein they fall short of the perfect law of God? – resist them? or submit to them?

To resist all such laws would be to array one's self in violent and fruitless opposition to the whole present order of things, and we must remember that even this present order of things is ordained of God (Rom. 13:1); for he decreed that the time of Gentile rule should continue until the appointed time for Christ to reign in righteousness. Consequently the children of God are counseled to be subject to the powers that be, because the powers that be, although imperfect, are ordained of God to continue for a time. It

is therefore his will rather that we should suffer injustice than that we should spend our strength in fruitless efforts to interrupt the present order of things. And so the kingdom of heaven suffers violence now, but such will not always be the case; for the time of her deliverance is at hand.

While such necessity is laid upon the Church in its relationship to the world, however, there should be no such state of things among themselves. In the Church every member should be a careful student of the perfect law of love, and her society should be, so far as possible, a **[R1464 : page 327]** model exemplification of this glorious law. There should be no tyranny of one member of the body of Christ over another; for, says the Apostle, "All ye are brethren, and one is your master, even Christ."

Of necessity the present order of things often places one member of the body of Christ in a measure of temporary subjection to another member of the same body, as, for instance, in the relationship of master or mistress and servant, of parent and child, or of husband and wife; and in all these relationships there is an opportunity to let the graces of the spirit adorn and beautify the character and exemplify before the world the outworking of the perfect law of love. And it is thus, by our daily walk and conversation in all the little things of life, that we are to let our light shine before men, as the Lord commanded. – Matt. 5:16.

The Apostle Paul calls our attention to this, and lest we should be slow to gather from our meditations on the perfect law of God the exact line of conduct to be followed in these various relationships, he clearly points it out for us. He counsels those in authority to remember that they have a Master in heaven, and that there is no respect of person with him; that he regards no distinctions of Jew or Greek, bond or free, male or female, because we are all one in Christ. And therefore he counsels magnanimous and generous conduct, saying, Give unto your servants that which is just and

equal, forbear threatening, and "do the same things unto them that they are counseled to do unto you" – *i.e.*, serve them with kindness and compensation, and do it with good will as unto the Lord. – Eph. 6:9; Gal. 3:28; Col. 4:1.

Then to those who serve he says, "Let as many as are under the yoke count their own masters worthy of all honor [treat them with respect and Christian courtesy], that the name of God and his doctrine be not blasphemed. And they that have believing masters, let them not despise them, but rather do them service, because they are faithful and beloved, partakers of the benefit." With singleness of heart they should render service as unto the Lord, not as men-pleasers, but as the servants of Christ doing the will of God from the heart, knowing that it will be accepted of the Lord and rewarded. (1 Tim. 6:1,2; Eph. 6:5-8.) There is no servility in such service, however humble the task may be. Service rendered in such a spirit is always dignified and ennobling; and a recognition of such nobility on the part of the master or mistress is also a beautiful exemplification of the spirit of Christ.

Children are taught to obey their parents (Eph. 6:1), because their youth and inexperience stands in need of parental guidance and control. There comes a time, however, when parental authority must cease to control – when the child has come to maturity and is able to guide himself or herself. Otherwise the wheels of progress could never roll on in the world, but would be continually dragged back by the withering hand of infirmity. The rule applies to children during their minority only, though the duty of honor and reverence to parents may never be relinquished, but should the rather increase as age advances.

Wives are counseled to submit themselves unto their own husbands as unto the Lord. Aye, respond many voices, there is at least one blot of injustice upon the sacred page. Yes, chime in many Infidel voices, the Bible institutes domestic slavery and

therefore it is a bad book. And there is a strong undertone of similar sentiment even among Christians. At least there is considerable perplexity on the part of many as to the exact line of duty in emergencies arising out of this relationship, and therefore the subject requires here something more than a passing notice.

While the Scriptures represent the husband as the head of the wife, and counsel a deferential attitude on her part toward him, the instruction to the husband is such that, if it is carried out, such an attitude on the part of the wife is the most natural and agreeable thing. A true woman, however marked her intellectual and spiritual attainments, is naturally worshipful. She looks up to God and Christ with supreme reverence, and to the earthly image of God – if such her husband be – (See Eph. 5:33 – *Diaglott*) with something akin to the same feeling; especially when she considers that such a **[R1464 : page 328]** one, so worthy of esteem and reverence and love, has indicated his preference for her above all others of womankind to be his life-companion and an heir together with himself of the grace of life. If he is truly noble and good and pure and of sound judgment, and yet modest in asserting his prerogatives, as well as humbly mindful that he is short of perfection, and therefore reasonable and considerate when judgments differ, it is so natural for a true wife to defer to such a one that she is rather in danger of exercising her own thought and judgment too little, and needs to guard against such lethargy. – 1 Pet. 3:7.

Such husbands are those who love their wives as their own bodies, and "as Christ also loved the Church and ***gave himself for it***" (Eph. 5:25-29); and who, forsaking all others, cleave only unto her as the beloved and cherished companion. And no woman, however cultured or refined or possessed of true dignity and worth of character, is in the least degree humiliated by her deferential attitude toward such a husband. Her love and respect will dictate such an attitude, while his love and true nobility will call it forth.

The law of love, whose foundation is justice, is the only law that ought to rule in the home; and that law should be written in the heart of each member of it. If it is not written there, the walls of the home may be covered with rules and regulations, it may be thundered forth from angry voices, and emphasized with frowns and hard sayings, and yet, notwithstanding all this, anarchy will reign supreme – there will be no "home."

Thus viewed, the Bible does not institute domestic slavery; but, on the contrary, it points the way to the most perfect bliss that earth can know.

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