

THE HEIGHTS AND DEPTHS OF DIVINE LAW

"Whosoever therefore shall break one of the least of these commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the Kingdom of Heaven; but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the Kingdom of Heaven."
– MATTHEW 5:19.

THERE is prevalent amongst Christian people quite an erroneous view respecting the Divine Law. It is generally considered that, because the Apostle said that we are not under the Law, but under grace, he meant that the Law is done away with. We believe that this thought is incorrect. Our Lord said that till Heaven and earth pass away, not one jot or tittle of the Law should pass away till all be fulfilled. All written therein shall be accomplished.

The Divine Law has always been in existence. It was plainly expressed in Adam; the various parts of his organism were expressions of the Divine law. The Law of God was written in his heart. He was in full harmony with the Divine *Mind*, and therefore in full harmony with the Divine *Law*. But when sin came in, the Divine Law in his being was measurably obliterated. There is still *some* of the Divine Law in all who are appreciative of right and wrong, but not *sufficient* to make right living possible.

In God's dealing with the nation of Israel He gave them a Law. This Law, written in the Ten Commandments, is a brief summary of man's obligations – a text, as it were, from which many lessons might be drawn. In our knowledge of the Ten Commandments, we are still aware of what is God's Law. God never abrogated that Law. It is still in force upon the Jews, as also is the Law Covenant. But *Gentiles* never were under the Law Covenant.

God offered the Jews everlasting life if they would keep the Law. They were bound by the Law; hence the Apostle points out that they would need first to *die* to the Law Covenant before they could come into Christ, the Life-Giver. (Rom. 7:4.) This did not mean that they must die to the *Law of God*, but merely to the *Law Covenant*. It would mean to give up all hope of attaining everlasting life through keeping the Law Covenant.

The new hope into which Gentile Christians entered does not abrogate God's Law, nor does it release them from the obligations of His Law. But God has made a provision that notwithstanding our imperfection, our inability to keep the Law perfectly, He will accept us in Christ, our imperfections being covered by Christ's merit. Of these the Apostle said, "The righteousness of the Law is fulfilled in us, who walk, not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." We must needs be perfect beings to live up to the spirit of the Divine Law, it being the requirement for a *perfect* man.

PERFECTION THE CHRISTIAN'S STANDARD

This thought, then, is the key to our Lord's words in the text under consideration. He who would violate this Law of God, and teach others to do so, either by example or precept, should be considered as the least. And he that would keep the Law of God, and by example or precept help others to keep this Law, should be called greatest in the Church, the incipient Kingdom, the embryotic Kingdom. Those who would be of this Kingdom class must forsake father and mother and all things to take up their cross and follow Christ. In other words, Christ must be *first*. Amongst these followers of His there would be differences. Some through weaknesses of heredity, or what not, would be less faithful – others would be more faithful. Those who would keep the Divine Law most perfectly in heart and life would be most nearly copies of God's dear Son.

And so it is with us today. We esteem highly those most diligent in service, those most zealous. Those who walk somewhat disorderly, who are vacillating, we esteem less. We take notice of ignorance and weaknesses in the Church. We must *sympathize* with these; nevertheless, one who would not overcome his weaknesses would not be so highly esteemed in the Kingdom class as one who *could*, and who *would*, walk more closely in the Master's footsteps. In other words, we understand the Master to be teaching that the Gospel is not out of sympathy with the Jewish Law. He said, "Be ye perfect, even as your Father which is in Heaven is perfect." There is no lower standard than that of *perfection*. It would not do for the Lord to say, Be ye slightly like the Father, or, Be ye nearly like Him. He must present the *perfect* standard.

The Jew is striving for perfection, striving to get everlasting life. The Christian is striving for perfection, and expecting to get eternal life – not by perfectly keeping the Law, which he cannot do, but through the merit of Christ, which makes up for his deficiencies – covers his blemishes.

THE OUTER SHELL OF DEEPER SENTIMENTS

The Divine Law is briefly summed up, not only in the Old Testament, but also by our Lord Himself in the words, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength. And thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." (Deut. 6:5; Lev. 19:18; Matt. 22:37-39.) This is still more briefly summed up by the Apostle Paul: "Love is the fulfilling of the Law." (Rom. 13:10.) Love to God would lead us to do all those things which are inculcated in His Word; and love for our neighbor would lead us to fulfil all our obligations toward them, as inculcated.

If we come to apply the commands of the Law to ourselves as Christians, we can easily amplify them all. For instance, our Lord's

definition of *adultery* is much more searching than the statement as contained in the tables of the Law. The New Testament definition of *murder* is much deeper than that commonly accepted. The Apostle John declared that to *hate* a brother is *murder*. God could see that there was murder in the heart of the hater of a brother. The All-Seeing Eye perceives if there is disloyalty present in any degree – or anything contrary to the Divine will. From this standpoint, then, we see that the Ten Commandments are but the *outer shell*, as it were, of deeper sentiments.

It was the custom of the Jews to do nothing whatsoever [R5360 : page 361] on the seventh day of the week. We presume that the significance of this commandment is, to the New Creature in Christ, that the rest of the seventh day typifies the perfect rest into which he has entered through Christ.

All New Creatures in Christ are to keep *Sabbath* every day. And so the Apostle says, "We who have believed do enter into rest" – have entered into rest. It is not that our muscles or our brains are necessarily resting, but that we have the rest of heart, the rest of mind, the peace of God which passeth all understanding. It is important that we maintain this peace at all times, and do not let anything come in which would interfere with it and take us out of harmony with God. If it does, we should consider that we have broken the Sabbath command.

The New Creature could not *kill*. It has no weapon except the Sword of the Spirit. Whoever hates his brother is a *murderer*. To cultivate a spirit of hatred would be a *very serious matter*. One who would do so should not be considered a true brother or sister in the Body of Christ, which is the Church.

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