

Principles and Precepts

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THE word “law” is derived from the same root as the words “lie” and “lay,” and primarily has the same meaning.

“A law is that which is laid, set, or fixed, like statute, constitution, from Lat. *Statuere*.” (Webster)

And in harmony with this, the same authority gives as the first definition of the word “law”:

“a rule of order or conduct established by authority.”

It is a favorite saying with those who would make void the law of God while professing allegiance to his word, that the ten commandments are good, but that they are adapted only to fallen beings, and hence cannot bind angels nor redeemed saints, nor even people in this world who have been converted. Let us see how such a theory agrees with the definition of law.

The case may be stated thus:

1. When there is no law there is anarchy and confusion; there can be nothing else.
2. Confusion cannot exist among God’s people, whether in Heaven or on earth.
3. Therefore, the people of God are always and everywhere subject to his law.

Says the beloved disciple:

1 John 5

³ This is the love of God, that we keep His commandments.

The first great commandment is,

Matthew 22

³⁷ You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.

So when we read this, we know that it means nothing more nor less than that it is our first and highest duty to keep, both in letter and in spirit, all those commandments which define our duty to God. In no other way can we show that we love Him.

Suppose for a moment that a man were placed here on earth with nothing to serve as a rule of life except the statement that he must love God supremely and his neighbor as himself. He sets out with a firm determination to do his whole duty. But ere long he is found doing something which God abhors. We will suppose that he is adoring the sun and moon. When reproved for this, he might well reply,

“I did not know that I was doing anything wrong; nothing was said to me about this matter. I had a feeling of love and gratitude to God, and did not know how to manifest it in any better way than by paying homage to the most glorious of His created works.”

By what law could the man be condemned? He could not justly be condemned, because the will of the Creator on that point had not been made known to him, and he could not reasonably be expected to know the will of God if it had not been revealed.

It will be seen by a very little consideration, that to put a man on the earth with nothing but a general command to love God, and at the same time to expect him to do nothing displeasing to God, would be to assume that the man had infinite wisdom. For God is infinite; and if a man, without being told, finds out what God requires, it can only be because he can comprehend infinity. But this is an impossibility.

Job 11

⁷ Can you by searching find out God? can you find out the

Almighty to perfection?

No indeed; the creature that could know the mind of God any further than it was directly revealed by Him, has never existed. Then since, as we have conclusively proved, there must be a law for all creatures, and since this law must be definitely expressed, and since, moreover, the whole duty of man is to love God above all things, and his neighbor as himself, we are shut up to the conclusion that the ten commandments always have been, and always will be, the rule of life for all created intelligences. In direct support of this, Solomon says,

Ecclesiastes 12

¹³ Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter; fear God, and keep His commandments; for this is the whole duty of man.

This settles the matter, at least for the present time. John also says that the love of God is to keep His commandments; but it will be our duty to love God to all eternity; therefore it will always be our duty to keep the commandments of God. And it makes it no less a duty because it becomes our highest pleasure.

To the natural man, duty is irksome; the object of making him a new creature in Christ, is that it may be a pleasure for him to do his duty.

Romans 8

³ God [sent] His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, [condemning] sin in the flesh:

⁴ That the righteousness [requirements] of the law might be fulfilled in us.

The object of the gospel is to make us like unto Christ, who said,

Psalms 40

⁸ I delight to do your will, O my God; yea, your law is within

my heart.

In addition to the above, we offer the words of the prayer which Christ has commanded us to pray to God:

Matthew 6

¹⁰ Your kingdom come. Your will be done in earth, as it is in Heaven.

Now the will of God is His law.

Psalm 40

⁸ I delight to do your will, O my God: yea, your law is within my heart.

We are taught by this prayer, then, that when the kingdom of God is established on this earth, God's law will be kept here even as it is now kept in Heaven. And David says by inspiration, that the angels that excel in strength...

Psalm 103

²⁰ ...do His commandments, hearkening unto the voice of His word.

That is, they are anxious and delighted to keep God's commandments. Duty is with them a pleasure.

And when God's kingdom comes, we also, if permitted to become subjects of it, will delight to do God's will, and will keep all His commandments, of which "every one" "endures forever."

We shall then do perfectly what we now are (or should be) striving to do in spite of the weakness of the flesh.