

The Two Laws

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"THERE is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things." 1Cor.8:6. From him all beings derive their existence. He who creates and upholds has certainly the right to govern and control. Hence it is that he is represented in the Scriptures as the one Lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy. James 4:12. Existence being derived from the benevolence of the Creator, all intelligent creatures are amenable to his just government. Of all the creatures made by God to inhabit the earth, man alone is capable of learning the distinction of right and wrong, and he alone is placed under the control of moral law. Deriving his existence from a Being of infinite purity, he was himself once innocent, pure, and upright. He was the creature and the loyal subject of God, and God was the author of his existence, and his rightful Sovereign. But God did not anything toward man the position of saviour and redeemer; for man needed not pardon.

As a creature owing all to God, the author of his existence, it is self-evident that he was under the highest obligation to love him with all his heart. The existence of other human beings originates a second great obligation; viz., to love our neighbors as ourselves. This precept is also one of self-evident obligation; for others are equally the creatures of God with ourselves, and have the same right that we also have. These two precepts are the sum of all moral law. And they grow out of the fact that we owe all to God, and that others are the creatures of God as well as ourselves.

In rendering obedience to the first of these two precepts, man could have no other god before the Lord; nor could he worship idols; neither could he speak the name of God in an irreverent manner; nor could he neglect the hallowed rest-day of the Lord, which was set apart at creation in memory of the Creator's rest.

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Equally evident is it that our duty toward our fellow-men comprehends our duty to our parents, and the strictest regard to the life, chastity, property, character, and interests, of others.

The moral law thus divided into two parts, and drawn out and expressed in ten precepts, is of necessity unchangeable in its character. Its existence grows out of immutable relations which man sustains toward God and toward his fellow-man. It is God's great standard of right, and after man's rebellion, the great test by which sin is shown.

Where shall we look for the record of such a moral code as we have noticed? In the earliest possible place in the Bible, certainly. And yet the book of Genesis contains no moral code whatever. How can this mystery be explained? A few facts will remove the difficulty. The book of Genesis was not written until about 2500 years after the creation. As it was written long after the patriarchs were

dead, it could not have been a rule of life for them. It is a brief record of events that occurred during that period, and contains several allusions to an existing moral code. But the book of Exodus, which brings the narrative down to the author's own time, introduces this code under circumstances of the greatest solemnity. In this book is found the law of God as given by himself in person, and written with his own finger on stone. Indeed, the evidence indicates that no part of the Bible was written until after the ten commandments had been spoken and written by God, and consequently that code is the earliest writing in existence.

Such was the origin of the moral law, and such the character of its precepts. Its proclamation by God himself, prior to his causing any part of the Bible to be written, sufficiently attests the estimate which he placed upon it. From its very nature, it exists as early as the principles of morality; indeed, it is nothing but those principles expressed or written out. These principles do not owe their existence to the fall of man, but to relations which existed prior to the fall.

But there is a system of laws that does owe its origin to sin; a system that could have had no existence had not man become a transgressor. The violation of moral law was that

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which gave existence to the law of rites and ceremonies, the shadow of good things to come. There could be no sacrifices for sin until man became a sinner. In Eden, there could be no types and shadows pointing forward to future redemption through the death of Christ; for man in his uprightness needed no such redemption. Nor did God place upon man before his fall the obligation of carnal ordinances, which look forward to the time of reformation; for man was innocent and free from guile. That it was the violation of moral law that caused the fall of man, may be seen at a glance. The motive set before Eve by Satan was that they should become as gods if they ate of that tree, Gen.3; and as Adam was not deceived (1Tim.2:13), it is evident that he chose to follow his wife rather than to obey the Lord; an open violation of the first commandment in each case.

When man had thus become a sinner, and God had promised the means of his redemption, a second relation toward God was brought into existence. Man was a sinner, needing forgiveness; and God was a saviour, offering pardon. It is plain, therefore, that the typical law, pointing forward to redemption through Christ, owes its origin to man's rebellion, and to God's infinite benevolence. If man had not sinned, he would have needed no types of future redemption; and if God had not determined to give his Son to die, he would have instituted no typical system pointing forward to that great event. The existence of such a code, therefore, is in consequence of sin, its precepts are of a ceremonial nature, and its duration is necessarily limited by the great offering that could take away sin. From the fall of Adam till the time of Moses, the typical system was gradually developed and matured; and from Moses' time until the death of our Lord, it existed as the shadow of good things to come.

At Mount Sinai, as we have seen, God proclaimed the moral law, speaking it with his own voice, and writing it with his own finger. By his direction, the two tables on which the law was written were placed in the ark of the covenant, which

was made on purpose to receive it. Ex.25:10-22; Deut.10:1-5. And this ark, containing the law of God, was placed in the second apartment of the earthly sanctuary -

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the most holy place. Ex.40; Heb.9. The top of the ark was called the mercy-seat, because that man who had broken the law contained in the ark beneath the mercy-seat could find pardon by the sprinkling of the blood of atonement upon this place. The whole system of ceremonial law was ordained to enable man to approach again to this broken law, and to typify the restitution of the pardoned to their inheritance, and the destruction of the impenitent.

The law within the ark was that which demanded an atonement; the ceremonial law, which ordained the Levitical priesthood and the sacrifices for sin, was that which taught men how the atonement could be made. The broken law was beneath the mercy-seat; the blood of sin-offering was sprinkled upon its top, and the pardon was extended to the penitent sinner. There was actual sin, and hence a real law which man had broken; but there was not a real atonement, and hence the need of the great antitype of the Levitical sacrifices. The real atonement, when it is made, must relate to the law respecting which an atonement had been shadowed forth. In other words, the shadowy atonement related to that law which was shut up in the ark, indicating that a real atonement was demanded by the law. It is necessary that the law which demands atonement in order that its transgressor may be spared, should itself be perfect, else the fault would in part, at least, rest on the Lawgiver, and not wholly with the sinner. Hence the atonement, when made, does not take away the broken law; for that is perfect, but is expressly designed to take away the guilt of the transgressor.

In the New Testament we find the great antitype of all the offerings and sacrifices - the real atonement, as contrasted with the Levitical one. The death of our Lord Jesus Christ, as the great sacrifice for sin, was the antitype of all the Levitical sacrifices. The priesthood of our Lord Jesus Christ in the heavenly sanctuary is the great antitype of the Levitical priesthood. Heb.8. The heavenly sanctuary itself is the great original after which the earthly one was patterned. Heb.9:23; Ex.25:6,9. And the ark of God's testament in the temple in Heaven, Rev.11:19, contains the great original of this law. And thus we see under the new dispensation

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a real atonement, instead of a shadowy one; a High Priest who needs not to offer for himself; a sacrifice which can avail before God; and that law, which was broken by man, magnified and made honorable at the same time that God pardons the penitent sinner.

We shall find the New Testament to abound with references to the essential difference between these two codes, and that the distinction in the New Testament is made as clear and obvious as it is made by the facts already noticed in the Old Testament.

Thus the one code is termed "the law of a carnal commandment," Heb.7:16; and of the other, it is affirmed, "We know that the law is spiritual." Rom.7:14. The

one code is termed "the handwriting of ordinances," "which was contrary to us," and which was nailed to the cross and taken out of the way, Col.2:14; the other code is "the royal law," which James affirms that it is a sin to transgress. Chap. 2:8-12.

The first is a code of which "there was made of necessity a change," Heb. 7:12; the second is that law of which Christ says, "Till heaven and earth pass; one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law till all be fulfilled." Matt. 5:18. The one law was a "shadow of good things to come," Heb.10:1, and was only imposed "until the time of reformation," Heb.9:10; but the other was a moral code, of which it said by John, "Whosoever committeth sin, transgresseth also the law; for sin is the transgression of the law." 1John 3:4. The one is a yoke not able to be borne, Acts 15:10; the other is that "law of liberty" by which we shall be judged. James 2:8-12. The one is that law which Christ abolished in his flesh. Eph.2:15; the other is that law which he did not come to destroy. Matt.5:17. The one is that law which he took out of the way at his death, Col.2:14; the other is that law which he came to magnify and make honorable. Isa.42:21. The one was a law which was disannulled "for the weakness and unprofitableness thereof," Heb.7:18; the other is a law respecting which he inquires, "Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid; yea, we establish the law." Rom.8:31. The one is that

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law which was the middle wall of partition between Jews and Gentiles. Eph.2:14; the other is that law, the work of which even the Gentiles are said to have written in their hearts, Rom.2:12-15, and to which all mankind are amenable. Rom.8:19.

The one is the law of commandments contained in ordinances, Eph.2:15; the other law is the commandments of God, which it is the whole duty of man to keep, Eccl.12:13, which are brought to view by the third angel, Rev.14:12, which the remnant of the seed of the woman were keeping when the dragon made war upon them, Rev.12:17, and which will insure, to those who observe them, access to the tree of life. Rev.22:14.

Surely, these two codes should not be confounded. The one was magnified, made honorable, established, and is holy, just, spiritual, good, royal; the other was carnal, shadowy, burdensome, and was abolished, broken down, taken out of the way, nailed to the cross, changed, and disannulled, on account of the weakness and unprofitableness thereof.

Those who rightly divide the word of truth will never confound these essentially different codes, nor will they apply to God's royal law the language employed respecting the handwriting of ordinances.

That the ten commandments are a perfect code of themselves, appears from several facts: 1. God spake them with his own voice, and it is said, "He added no more," Deut.5:22, as evincing that he had given a complete code. 2. He wrote them alone on two tables with his own finger, another incidental proof that this was a complete moral code. 3. He caused these alone to be placed under the mercy-seat, an evident proof that this was the code that made an atonement necessary. 4. He expressly calls what he thus wrote on the tables of stone, a law and commandments. Ex.24:12.

The precepts of this law are variously interspersed through the books of Moses, and mingled with the precepts of the ceremonial law. And the sum of the first table is given in Deut.6:5; and that of the second, in Lev.19:18; but there is only one place in which the moral law is drawn out in particulars,

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and given by itself with no ceremonial law mixed with it, and that is in the ten commandments.

An examination of the royal law in James 2, and of the handwriting of ordinances in Col.2, will further illustrate this subject; the one is in force in every respect, while the other is abolished.

"If ye fulfill the royal law according to the scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself, ye do well; but if ye have respect to persons, ye commit sin, and are convinced of the law as transgressors. For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all. For he that said, Do not commit adultery, said also, Do not kill. Now if thou commit no adultery, yet if thou kill, thou art become a transgressor of the law. So speak ye, and so do, as they that shall be judged by the law of liberty." James 2:8-12.

1. The law here brought to view is an unabolished law; for it convinces men of sin who transgress it. 2. It is an Old-Testament law - it is taken from the Scriptures. 3. The second division of the law is quoted because he was reproofing sin committed toward our fellow-men; and hence he takes the second of the two great commandments, the sum of the second table, Matt.23:36,40; Rom.13:9, and cites his illustration from the second table of stone. 4. His language shows that the ten commandments are the precepts of the royal law; for he cites them in illustrating the statement that he who violates one precept, becomes guilty of all. This is a most solemn warning against the violation of any one of the ten commandments. 5. He testifies that whoever violates one of the precepts of this code, becomes guilty of breaking the whole code. 6. And, last of all, he testifies that this law of liberty shall be the rule in the Judgment. The unabolished law of James is therefore that code which God gave in person, and wrote with his own finger.

"Blotting out the hand-writing of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross." "Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holy day, or of the new moon, or of the Sabbath days, which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ." Col.2:14,16,17. If this handwriting of ordinances is the same as the royal law of James, then Paul and James directly contradict each other. But they wrote by inspiration, and each wrote

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the truth of God. We have seen that James' unabolished law refers directly to the ten commandments. Hence it is certain that the law which Paul shows to be abolished, does not refer to that which was written with the finger of God. It is to be noticed that the code which is done away, was a shadow extending only to the death of Christ. But we have already seen that the law shut up in the ark was not a shadow, but the very code that made it necessary that the Saviour should die. Not one of the things abolished in this chapter can be claimed as referring to the

ten commandments, except the term Sabbaths; for the term holy day is, literally, feast day (Gr.), and there were three feasts appointed by God in each year. Ex. 23:14. The term Sabbath is plural in the original. To refer this to the Sabbath of the fourth commandment, is to make Paul contradict James. What are the facts in the case?

1. The ceremonial law did ordain at least four annual Sabbaths; viz. the 1st, 10th, 16th, and 23rd days of the seventh month. These were besides the Sabbath of the Lord, and were associated with the new moons and feast days. Lev.23:23-39. These exactly assure Paul's language. Hence it is not necessary to make Paul contradict James.

2. But the Sabbath of the Lord was "set apart to a holy use" (this being the literal meaning of sanctify) in Eden. It was "made for man" before he had fallen. Hence it is not one of the things against him and contrary to him, taken out of the way at Christ's death.

3. It was not a shadow pointing forward to the death of Christ; for it was ordained before the fall. On the contrary, it stands as a memorial pointing backward to creation, and not as a shadow pointing forward to redemption.

It is plain, therefore, that the abrogation of the hand-writing of ordinances leaves in full force every precept of the royal law, and also that the law of shadows pointing forward to the death of Christ, must expire when that event should occur. But the moral law was that which caused the Saviour to lay down his life for us. And its sacredness may be judged of by the fact that God gave his only Son to take its curse upon himself, and to die for our transgressions.

Reader, are you in rebellion against the law of God? If so, I beseech you to lay down your arms, and seek pardon in the blood of Jesus, before the curse of the law falls upon you.