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THREE SERMONS ON THE LAW

1798

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SERMONS

3

ON THE  
Original, Nature, Properties, and Use

OF THE  
LAW

AND

Its ESTABLISHMENT thro' FAITH.

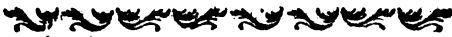
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“The LORD is well-pleas'd for his Righteousness Sake,  
He will magnify the LAW, and make it honour-  
able.” ISAIAH xlii. 21.

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## S E R M O N I.

The Original, Nature, Properties, and  
Use of the Law.



ROM. VII. 12.

“ Wherefore the Law is holy, and the Commandment  
holy, and just, and good.”

PERHAPS there are few subjects within the whole compass of religion, so little understood as this. The reader of this epistle is usually told, by *the Law*, St. Paul means the *Jewish Law*: And so apprehending himself to have no concern therewith, passes on without farther thought about it. Indeed some are not satisfied with this account: But observing the epistle is directed to the Romans, thence infer, that the apostle in the beginning of this chapter, alludes to the old *Roman Law*. But as they have no more concern with this, than with the *Ceremonial Law* of Moses, so they spend not much thought, on what they suppose is occasionally mentioned, barely to illustrate another thing.

2. But a careful observer of the Apostle's discourse will not be content with these slight explications of it, And the more he weighs the words, the more convinced he will be, that St. Paul by *the law* mentioned in this chapter, does not mean either the ancient law of Rome, or the ceremonial law of Moses. This will clearly appear to all who attentively consider the tenor of his discourse. He begins the chapter, “ Know ye not, Brethren, (for I speak to them that know the

Law, to them who have been instructed therein from their youth,) That the Law hath dominion over a man as long as he liveth?" ver. 1. What! the law of Rome only, or the Ceremonial law? No surely: but the Moral law, "For (to give a plain instance,) the woman that hath a husband is bound by the (moral) law to her husband as long as he liveth. But if her husband be dead, she is loosed from the law of her husband," ver. 2. "So then, if while her husband liveth, she be married to another man, she shall be called an Adulteress: But if her husband be dead, she is free from the law, so that she is no Adulteress, tho' she be married to another man." ver. 3. From this particular instance the Apostle proceeds to draw that general conclusion. "Wherefore my brethren, (by a plain parity of reason,) ye also are become dead to the law, (the whole Mosaic institution,) by the Body of Christ; (offered for you, and bringing you under a new dispensation; *That ye should (without any blame) be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead,* and hath thereby given proof of his authority to make the change, *that ye should bring forth fruit unto God;* ver. 4. And this we can do now, whereas before we could not: *For when we were in the flesh,* under the power of the flesh, that is, of corrupt nature, (which was necessarily the case till we knew the power of Christ's resurrection) *the motions of sin, which were by the law,* which are shewn and inflamed by the Mosaic law, not conquered, *did work in our members,* broke out various ways, *to bring forth fruit unto death,* ver. 5. *But now we are delivered from the Law,* from that whole moral as well as ceremonial economy; *that being dead whereby we were held:* that intire institution being now as it were dead, and having no more authority over us, than the husband when dead hath over his wife: *that we should serve him,* who died for us and rose again, *in newness of spirit,* in a new spiritual dispensation, *and not in the oldness of the letter,* ver. 6. with a bare outward service, according to the letter of the Mosaic institution.

3. The Apostle having gone thus far, in proving that the Christian had set aside the Jewish dispensation, and that the Moral Law itself, though it could never pass away, yet stood on a different foundation from what it did before, now stops to propose and answer an objection.

tion. *What shall we say then? Is the law sin? So some might infer from a misapprehension of those words, the motions of sin which were by the law. God forbid! saith the Apostle, that we should say so. Nay, the law is an irreconcilable enemy to sin; searching it out wherever it is. I had not known sin but by the law. I had not known lust, evil desire, to be sin, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet, ver. 7. After opening this farther in the four following verses, he subjoins this general conclusion, with regard more especially to the moral law, from which the preceding instance was taken: "Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good."*

4. In order to explain and enforce these deep words, so little regarded, because so little understood, I shall endeavour to shew, First, The Original of this law. Secondly, The Nature thereof. Thirdly, The Properties, that it is *holy, and just, and good.* And Fourthly, the Uses of it.

I. 1. I shall first endeavour to shew the Original of the Moral Law, often called *the Law*, by way of Eminence. Now this is not, as some may possibly have imagined, of so late an institution as the time of Moses. Noah declared it to men long before that time, and Enoch before him. But we may trace its Original higher still, even beyond the Foundation of the world, to that period, unknown indeed to men; but doubtless enrolled in the annals of Eternity, when *the morning Stars first sang together*, being newly called into existence. It pleased the great Creator to make these his first-born Sons, intelligent Beings, that they might know him that created them. For this end, he endued them with understanding, to discern truth from falsehood, good from evil: And as a necessary result of this, with liberty, a capacity of chusing the one, and refusing the other. By this they were likewise enabled to offer him a free and willing service; a service rewardable in itself, as well as most acceptable to their gracious Master.

2. To employ all the faculties which he had given them, particularly their understanding and liberty, he gave them a law, a compleat model of all truth, so far as was intelligible to a finite Being; and of all good, so far as angelic minds were capable of embracing it. It was also

also the design of their beneficent Governor herein, to make way for a continual increase of their happiness: Seeing every instance of obedience to that law, would both add to the perfection of their nature, and intitle them to a higher reward, which the righteous Judge would give in its season.

3. In like manner, when God in his appointed time, had created a new order of intelligent Beings, when he had raised man from the dust of the earth, breathed into him the breath of life, and caused him to become a living soul, endued with power to chuse good or evil: He gave to this free, intelligent creature, the same law as to his first-born children: Not wrote indeed upon tables of stone, or any corruptible substance, but engraven on his heart by the finger of God, wrote in the inmost Spirit both of men and angels: to the intent it might never be far off, never hard to be understood: but always at hand, and always shining with clear light, even as the Sun in the midst of Heaven.

4. Such was the Original of the law of God. With regard to man it was co-eval with his nature. But with regard to the elder Sons of God, it shone in its full splendor, *or ever the mountains were brought forth, or the Earth and the round world were made.* But it was not long before man rebelled against God, and by breaking this glorious law, well nigh effaced it out of his heart; *the eyes of his understanding being darkened, in the same measure as his soul was alienated from the Life of God.* And yet God did not despise the work of his own hands: But being reconciled to God thro' the Son, of his love, he in some measure re-inscribed his law, on the heart of his dark, sinful creature. *He again shewed thee, O man, what is good (altho' not as in the beginning) even to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God.*

5. And this he shewed not only to our first parents, but likewise to all their posterity, by *that true light which enlightens every man that cometh into the world.* But notwithstanding this light, all flesh had in process of time *corrupted their way before him:* till he chose out of mankind a peculiar people, to whom he gave a more perfect knowledge of his law. And the heads of this, because they were slow of understanding, he wrote on *two tables of stone;* which he commanded the fathers

to teach their children, through all succeeding generations.

6. And thus it is, that the law of God is now made known to them that know not God. They hear, with the hearing of the ear, the things that were written aforetime for our instruction. But this does not suffice. They cannot by this means comprehend the height, and depth, and length, and breadth thereof. God alone can reveal this by his Spirit. And so he does to all that truly believe, in consequence of that gracious promise, made to all the Israel of God: "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new Covenant with the house of Israel. And this shall be the Covenant that I will make, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people." Jer. xxxi. 31. &c.

II. 1. The nature of that law which was originally given to angels in heaven and man in Paradise, and which God has so mercifully promised to write afresh, in the hearts of all true believers, was the second thing I proposed to shew. In order to which I would first observe, That altho' *the Law and the Commandment* are sometimes indifferently taken, (the Commandment meaning but a part of the Law) yet in the text they are used as equivalent terms, implying one and the same thing: But we cannot understand here, either by one or the other, the ceremonial Law, 'Tis not the ceremonial Law; whereof the apostle says, in the words above-recited, *I had not known sin, but by the Law*: this is too plain to need a proof. Neither is it the ceremonial Law, which saith, in the words immediately subjoined, *Thou shalt not covet*. Therefore the ceremonial Law, has no place in the present question.

2. Neither can we understand by the Law mentioned in the text, the *Mosaic dispensation*, 'Tis true, the word is sometimes so understood: as when the Apostle says, speaking to the Galatians, (ch. iii. ver. 17.) *The covenant which was confirmed before* (namely with Abraham the father of the faithful) *the Law*, i. e. the *Mosaic Dispensation, which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul*. But it cannot be so understood in the text, for the Apostle never bestows so high commendations as these upon that imperfect and shadowy dispensation.

dispensation. He no where affirms, the Mosaic to be a *spiritual Law*: or, that it is *holy, and just, and good*. Neither is it true, that God will *write that Law in the hearts of them whose iniquities he remembers no more*. It remains, that the *Law*, eminently so termed, is no other than the moral Law.

3. Now this Law is an incorruptible picture of the high and holy One that inhabiteth eternity. It is He whom in his essence no man hath seen or can see, made visible to men and angels. It is the face of God unveiled: God manifested to his creatures as they are able to bear it: manifested to give and not to destroy life; that they may see God and live. It is the heart of God disclosed to man. Yea, in some sense we may apply to this Law, what the Apostle says of his Son, it is *απαυλασμα της δοξης, και χαρακτηρ της υπεροχεις αυτου*, *The streaming forth, or outbeaming of his Glory, the express image of his person*.

4. "If virtue, said the antient Heathen, could assume such a shape as that we could behold her with our eyes, what wonderful love would she excite in us!" If Virtue could do this! It is done already. The Law of God is all virtues in one, in such a shape, as to be beheld with open face, by all those whose eyes God hath enlightened. What is the Law, but divine virtue and wisdom, assuming a visible form? What is it but the original ideas of truth and good, which were lodged in the uncreated Mind from eternity, now drawn forth and clothed with such a vehicle, as to appear even to human understanding?

5. If we survey the Law of God in another point of view, it is supreme, unchangeable reason: it is unalterable rectitude: it is the everlasting fitness of all things that are or ever were created. I am sensible, what shortness, and even impropriety there is, in these and all other human expressions, when we endeavour by these faint pictures, to shadow out the deep things of God. Nevertheless, we have no better, indeed no other way, during this our infant state of existence. As we now know but *in part*, so we are constrained to *prophecy*, i. e. speak of the things of God, *in part* also. We cannot order our speech by reason of darkness, while we are in this house of clay. While I am a child I must speak as a child. But I shall soon put away *childish*



*childish things.* For when that which is perfect is come, that which is in part shall be done away.

6. But to return. The Law of God, (speaking after the manner of men) is a copy of the eternal Mind, a transcript of the divine Nature: yea, it is the fairest offspring of the everlasting Father, the brightest efflux of his essential Wisdom, the visible Beauty of the Most High. It is the Delight and Wonder of Cherubim and Seraphim and all the company of heaven, and the Glory and Joy of every wise believer, every well-instructed child of God upon earth.

III. 1. Such is the Nature of the ever blessed Law of God. I am, in the third place, to shew the Properties of it; Not all; for that would exceed the wisdom of an angel. But those only which are mentioned in the text. These are three: *It is holy, just, and good.* And first, *The Law is holy.*

2. In this expression the apostle does not appear to speak of its effects, but rather of its Nature: as St. James speaking of the same thing under another name, says, *The Wisdom from above* (which is no other than this Law written in our heart,) *is first pure*, ch. iii. 17. *αγνη, chaste, spotless, internally, and essentially holy.* And consequently, when it is transcribed into the Life, as well as the soul, (it is as the same apostle terms it) chap. i. 27, *ἁπλοῦς καὶ καθαρὸς καὶ ἀμείωτος, pure religion and undefiled;* or, the pure, clean, unpolluted worship of God.

3. It is indeed in the highest degree, pure, chaste, clean, holy. Otherwise it could not be the immediate offspring, and much less the express resemblance of God, who is essential Holiness. It is pure from all sin, clean, unspotted from any touch of evil. It is a chaste Virgin, incapable of any defilement, of any mixture with that which is unclean or unholy. It has no fellowship with sin of any kind. For *what communion hath light with darkness?* As Sin is in its very nature enmity to God, so his Law is enmity to Sin.

4. Therefore it is, that the apostle rejects with such abhorrence that blasphemous supposition, that *the Law of God is either Sin itself, or the Cause of Sin.* God forbid, that we should suppose it is the Cause of Sin, because it is the Discoverer of it: Because it detects the hidden things of darkness, and drags them out into

open

open day. 'Tis true, by this means, (as the apostle observes, verse 13) *Sin appears to be Sin*. All its disguises are torn away, and it appears in its native deformity. 'Tis true likewise, that *Sin by the commandment of God becomes exceeding sinful*. Being now committed against light and knowledge, being stript even of the poor plea of Ignorance, it loses its excuse as well as disguise, and becomes far more odious both to God and man. Yea, and it is true, that *Sin worketh death by that which is good*, which itself is pure and holy. When it is dragged out to light, it rages the more: When it is restrained, it bursts out with greater violence. Thus the apostle (speaking in the person of one, who was convinced of sin, but not yet delivered from it) *Sin taking occasion by the commandment*, detecting and endeavouring to restrain it, disdained the restraint, and so much the more wrought in me all manner of concupiscence, verse 8, all manner of foolish and hurtful desire, which that commandment sought to restrain. Thus when the commandment came, *Sin revived*, verse 8, it fretted and raged the more. But this is no stain on the commandment. Though it is abused it cannot be defiled. This only proves, that the heart of man is desperately wicked. But the Law of God is holy still.

5. And it is, Secondly, *just*. It renders to all their due. It prescribes exactly what is right, precisely what ought to be done, said, or thought, both with regard to the Author of our being, with regard to ourselves, and with regard to every creature which he has made. It is adapted in all respects to the nature of things, of the whole universe and every individual. It is suited to all the circumstances of each, and to all their mutual relations, whether such as have existed from the beginning, or such as commenced in any following period. It is exactly agreeable to the fitnesses of things, whether essential or accidental. It clashes with none of these in any degree; nor is ever unconnected with them. If the word be taken in that sense, there is nothing *arbitrary* in the Law of God. Altho' still the whole and every part thereof, is totally dependent upon his will: So that *thy will be done*, is the supreme, universal Law both in earth and heaven.

6. "But is the Will of God the Cause of his Law? Is his Will the Original of Right and Wrong? Is a thing

thing therefore right, because God wills it? Or does he will it, because it is right?"

I fear, this celebrated question is more curious than useful. And perhaps, in the manner it is usually treated of, it does not so well consist with the regard that is due from a Creature, to the Creator and Governor of all things. 'Tis hardly decent from Man, to call the supreme God, to give an account to him! Nevertheless, with awe and reverence we may speak a little: The Lord pardon us, if we speak amiss!

7. It seems then, that the whole difficulty arises, from considering God's will as distinct from God. Otherwise it vanishes away. For none can doubt, but God is the cause of the law of God. But the will of God is God himself. It is God considered as willing thus or thus. Consequently, to say, That the will of God, or that God himself is the cause of the law, is one and the same thing.

8. Again: If the law, the immutable rule of right and wrong, depends on the nature and fitnesses of things, and on their essential relations to each other: (I do not say their eternal relations; because the eternal relations of things existing in time, is little less than a Contradiction;) If, I say, this depends on the nature, and relations of things, then it must depend on God, or the will of God: Because those things themselves, with all their relations, are the work of his hands. By his will, *for his pleasure alone, they all are and were created.*

9. And yet it may be granted, (which is probably all that a considerate person would contend for,) that in every particular case, God wills this or this, (suppose that men should honour their parents,) because it is right, agreeable to the fitness of things, to the relation wherein they stand.

10. The law then is right and just concerning all things. And it is *good* as well as just. This we may easily infer from the fountain whence it flowed. For what was this, but the goodness of God? What but goodness alone inclined him to impart that divine copy of himself to the holy angels? To what else can we impute his bestowing upon man the same transcript of his own nature? And what but tender love constrained him afresh to manifest his will to fallen man? Either

to Adam, or any of his seed, who like him were *come short of the glory of God*? Was it not mere love that moved him to publish his law, after the understandings of men were darkened? And to send his prophets to declare that law to the blind, thoughtless children of men? Doubtless his goodness it was which raised up Enoch and Noah, to be preachers of righteousness; which caused Abraham his friend, and Isaac and Jacob, to bear witness to his truth. It was his goodness alone which when *darkness had covered the earth, and thick darkness the people*, gave a written law to Moses, and through him to the nation whom he had chosen. It was his love which explained these living oracles by David and all the prophets that followed. Until, when the fulness of time was come, he sent his only-begotten Son, *not to destroy the law but to fulfil*, to confirm every jot and tittle thereof, till having wrote it in the hearts of all his children, and put all his enemies under his feet, *he shall deliver up his mediatorial kingdom to the Father, that God may be all in all.*

11. And this law which the goodness of God gave at first, and has preserved thro' all ages, is, like the fountain from whence it springs, full of goodness and benignity: It is mild and kind; it is (as the Psalmist expresses it) *sweeter than honey and the honey-comb*. It is winning and amiable. It includes *whatsoever things are lovely or of good report*. If there be any virtue, if there be any praise before God and his holy angels, they are all comprised in this: Wherein are hid all the treasures of the divine wisdom and knowledge and love.

12. And it is good in its effects, as well as in its nature. As the tree is, so are its fruits. The fruits of the law of God written in the heart, are *righteousness and peace and assurance for ever*. Or rather the law itself is righteousness, filling the soul with a peace that passeth all understanding, and causing us to rejoice evermore, in the testimony of a good conscience toward God. It is not so properly a pledge, as an *earnest of our inheritance*, being a part of the purchased possession. It is God made manifest in our flesh, and bringing with him eternal life; assuring us by that pure and perfect love, that we are *sealed unto the day of redemption*; that he will *spare us as a man spareth his own son that serveth him, in the day when he maketh up his jewels,*  
and

and that there remaineth for us *a crown of glory which fadeth not away.*

IV. 1. It remains only, To shew, in the fourth and last place, the uses of the law. And the first use of it without question is, to convince the world of Sin. This is indeed the peculiar work of the Holy Ghost; who can work it without any means at all, or by what ever means it pleaseth him, however insufficient in themselves, or even improper to produce such an effect. And accordingly some there are whose hearts have been broken in pieces in a moment, either in sickness or in health, without any visible cause, or any outward means whatever. And others (one in an age) have been awakened to a sense of the *wrath of God abiding on them, by hearing, That God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself.* But it is the ordinary method of the Spirit of God to convict sinners by the law. It is this, which being set home on the conscience, generally breaketh the rocks in pieces. It is more especially this part of *the word of God, which is quick and powerful, full of life and energy, and sharper than any two-edged sword.* This in the hand of God and of those whom he hath sent, *pierces through all the folds of a deceitful heart, and divides asunder even the soul and spirit, yea, as it were, the very joints and marrow.* By this is the sinner discovered to himself. All his Fig-leaves are torn away, and he sees that he is *wretched, and poor, and miserable, and blind, and naked.* The law flashes conviction on every side. He feels himself a mere sinner. He has nothing to pay. His *mouth is stopt,* and he stands *guilty before God.*

2. To slay the sinner is then the first use of the law; to destroy the life and strength wherein he trusts, and convince him that he is dead while he liveth; not only under sentence of death, but actually dead unto God, void of all spiritual life, *dead in trespasses and sins.* The second use of it is, to bring him unto life, unto Christ, that he may live. 'Tis true, in performing both these offices, it acts the part of a severe schoolmaster. It drives us by force, rather than draws us by love. And yet love is the spring of all. It is the spirit of love, which by this painful means, tears away our confidence in the flesh, which leaves us no broken reed whereon to trust, and so constrains the sinner stript of all, to cry

out in the bitterness of his soul, or groan in the depth of his heart,

“ I give up every plea beside,

“ Lord, I am damn'd—But thou hast died.”

3. The third use of the law is, to keep us alive. It is the grand means whereby the blessed Spirit prepares the believer for larger communications of the life of God.

I am afraid this great and important truth is little understood, not only by the world, but even by many whom God hath taken out of the world, who are real children of God by faith. Many of these lay it down as an unquestioned truth, that when we come to Christ, we have done with the law; and that in *this* sense, *Christ is the end of the law, to every one that believeth, “ The end of the law ! ”* So he is, *for righteousness, for justification to every one that believeth.* Herein the law is at an end. It justifies none; but only brings them to Christ. Who is also in another respect, *the end or scope of the law*, the point at which it continually aims. But when it has brought us to him, it has yet a farther office, namely, To keep us with him. For it is continually exciting all believers, the more they see of its height, and depth, and length, and breadth, to exhort one another so much the more,

“ Closer and closer let us cleave

To his belov'd embrace :

Expect his fulness to receive,

And grace to answer grace.”

4. Allowing then that every believer has done with the law, as it means the Jewish ceremonial law, or the entire Mosaic dispensation (for these *Christ hath taken out of the way,*) Yea, allowing we have done with the moral law, as a means of procuring our justification, (for we are *justified freely by his grace, thro' the redemption that is in Jesus.*) Yet in another sense, we have not done with this law. For it is still of unspeakable use, First, in convincing us of the sin that yet remains both in our hearts and lives, and thereby keeping us close to Christ that his blood may cleanse us every moment: Secondly, in deriving strength from our head into his living members, whereby he impowers them to do what his law commands: and, Thirdly, in confirming

firming our hope of whatsoever it commands, and we have not yet attained, of receiving grace upon grace, till we are in actual possession of the fulness of his promises.

5. How clearly does this agree with the experience of every true believer! While he cries out, *O what love have I unto thy law! all the day long is my study in it:* He sees daily in that divine mirror, more and more of his own sinfulness. He sees more and more clearly, that he is still a sinner in all things; that neither his heart nor his ways, are right before God. And that every moment sends him to Christ. This shews him the meaning of what is written, "Thou shalt make a place of pure gold, and grave upon it, Holiness to the Lord. And it shall be upon Aaron's forehead, (the type of our great High Priest) that Aaron may bear the iniquities of the holy things, which the children of Israel shall hallow, in all their holy gifts: (so far are our prayers or holy things from atoning for the rest of our sins!) And it shall be always upon his forehead, that they may be accepted before the Lord." Exodus xxviii. 36. 38.

6. To explain this by a single instance. The law says, *Thou shalt not kill*, and hereby (as our Lord teaches) forbids not only outward acts, but every unkind word or thought. Now the more I look into this perfect law, the more I feel how far I come short of it; and the more I feel this, the more I feel my need of his blood to atone for all my sin: and of his spirit to purify my heart, and make me *perfect and entire, lacking nothing.*

7. Therefore, I cannot spare the law one moment, no more than I can spare Christ; seeing I now want it as much, to keep me to Christ, as ever I wanted it to bring me to him. Otherwise, this *evil heart of unbelief*, would immediately *depart from the living God.* Indeed each is continually sending me to the other, the law to Christ, and Christ to the law. On the one hand, the height and depth of the law constrain me to fly to the love of God in Christ. On the other, the love of God in Christ, endears the law to me *above gold or precious stones:* Seeing I know every part of it is a gracious promise, which my Lord will fulfil in its season.

8. Who art thou then, O man, that *judgest the law, and speakest evil of the law*? Thou rankest it with sin, Satan, and death, and sendest them all to hell together! The Apostle James esteemed *judging or speaking evil of the law*, so enormous a piece of wickedness, that he knew nothing to aggravate the guilt of judging our brethren, more than by shewing it included this. So now, says he, *thou art not a doer of the law, but a judge!* A judge of that which God hath ordained to judge thee. So thou hast set up thyself in the judgment-seat of Christ, and cast down the rule whereby he will judge the world! O take knowledge what advantage Satan hath gained over thee! And for the time to come never think or speak lightly of, much less dress up as a Scare-crow, this blessed instrument of the grace of God. Yea, love and value it for the sake of him from whom it came, and of him to whom it leads. Let it be thy glory and joy, next to the cross of Christ: Declare its praise, and make it honourable before all men.

9. And if thou art thoroughly convinced, that it is the offspring of God, that it is the copy of all his imitable perfections, and that *it is holy, and just, and good*, but especially to them that believe: Then instead of casting it away as a polluted thing, see that thou cleave to it more and more. Never let the law of mercy and truth, of love to God and man, of lowliness, meekness, and purity forsake thee. "Bind it about thy neck: Write it on the table of thy heart." Keep close to the law, if thou wilt keep close to Christ: Hold it fast: Let it not go. Let this continually lead thee to the atoning blood, continually confirm thy hope, till *all the righteousness of the law is fulfilled in thee*, and thou art *filled with all the fulness of God*.

10. And if thy Lord hath already fulfilled his word, if he hath already *written his law in thy heart*, then stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made thee free. Thou art not only made free from Jewish ceremonies, from the guilt of sin and the fear of hell: (These are so far from being the whole, that they are the least and lowest part of christian liberty: but what is infinitely more, from the power of sin, from serving the devil, from offending God. O stand fast in this liberty, in comparison of which, all the rest is not even worthy



worthy to be named. Stand fast in loving God with all thy heart, and serving him with all thy strength. This is perfect freedom; thus to keep his law, and to walk in all his commandments blameless. "Be not intangled again with the yoke of bondage." I do not mean of Jewish bondage: nor yet of bondage to the fear of hell: These, I trust, are far from thee. But beware of being intangled again with the yoke of sin, of any inward or outward transgression of the law. Abhor sin far more than death or hell; abhor sin itself; far more than the punishment of it. Beware of the bondage of pride, of desire, of anger; and of every evil temper, or word, or work. *Look unto Jesus, and in order thereto, look more and more into the perfect law, the law of liberty. And continue therein: So shalt thou daily grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.*



## SERMON II.

### The LAW Established through Faith.



ROM. III. 31.

"Do we then make void the Law thro' Faith? God forbid! Yea, we establish the Law."

1. **S**AINTE Paul having in the beginning of this epistle, laid down his general proposition, namely, That "the Gospel of Christ is the Power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth:" the powerful means, whereby God makes every believer a partaker of present and eternal Salvation, goes on to shew, that there is no other way under heaven, whereby men can be saved. He speaks particularly of salvation from the guilt of sin, which he commonly terms justification. And that all men stood in need of this, that

† SERMON II. On the LAW.

none could plead their own innocence, he proves at large by various arguments, addressed to the Jews as well as the Heathens. Hence he infers (in the 19th verse of this chapter) that *every mouth, whether Jew or Heathen, must be stopt, from excusing or justifying himself, and all the world become guilty before God. Therefore, saith he, by his own obedience, by the works of the Law, shall no flesh be justified in his sight, verse 20. But now the righteousness of God without the Law, without our previous obedience thereto, is manifested, ver. 21. "Even the righteousness of God, which is by faith of Jesus Christ, unto all and upon all that believe," verse 22. For there is no difference, as to their need of Justification, or the manner wherein they attain it. For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God, (v. 23.) the glorious image of God wherein they were created: And all (who attain) are justified freely by his grace, thro' the redemption that is in Jesus Christ: verse 24. Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation, thro' faith in his blood,—ver. 25. That he might be just, and yet the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus; verse 26, that without any impeachment to his Justice, he might shew him mercy, for the sake of that propitiation. Therefore we conclude, (which was the grand position he had undertaken to establish,) That a man is justified by Faith, without the works of the Law, verse 28.*

2. It was easy to foresee an objection which might be made, and which has in fact been made in all ages; namely, That to say *we are justified without the works of the Law*, is to abolish the Law. The apostle without entering into a formal dispute, simply denies the charge. "Do we then, says he, make void the Law through Faith? God forbid! Yea, we establish the Law."

3. The strange imagination of some, that St. Paul, when he says, *A man is justified without the works of the Law*, means only the Ceremonial Law, is abundantly confuted by these very words. For did St. Paul *establish* the Ceremonial Law? It is evident he did not. He did *make void* that Law through Faith, and openly avowed his doing so. It was the Moral Law only of which he might truly say, *We do not make void but establish this through Faith.*

4. But all men are not herein of his mind. Many there are who will not agree to this, Many in all ages

ages of the church, even among those who bore the name of Christians, have contended, That *the faith once delivered to the saints*, was designed to make void the whole Law. They would no more spare the moral than the ceremonial Law, but were for hewing, as it were, *both in pieces before the Lord*: vehemently maintaining, "If you establish any Law, *Christ shall profit you nothing; Christ is become of no effect to you: Ye are fallen from grace.*"

5. But is the zeal of these men according to knowledge? Have they observed the connexion between the Law and Faith? and that considering that close connexion between them, to destroy one is indeed to destroy both? That to abolish the moral Law is in truth to abolish Faith and the Law together? As leaving no proper means, either of bringing us to Faith, or of *stirring up that gift of God* in our soul.

6. It therefore behoves all who desire either to come to Christ, or to *walk in Him whom they have received*, to take heed how they *make void the Law through Faith*. To secure us effectually against which, let us inquire, First, Which are the most usual ways of *making void the Law through Faith*, and Secondly, How we may follow the apostle, and by Faith *establish the Law*.

I. 1. Let us, First inquire, Which are the most usual ways of *making void the Law through Faith*. Now the way for a preacher to make it all void at a stroke, is, Not to preach it at all. This is just the same thing, as to blot it out of the oracles of God. More especially when it is done with design; when it is made a rule, "Not to preach the Law:" And the very phrase, "A Preacher of the Law," is used as a term of Reproach, as though it meant little less than, an Enemy of the Gospel."

2. All this proceeds from the deepest ignorance of the Nature, Properties, and Use of the law; and proves that those who act thus, either know not Christ, are utter strangers to the living faith; or at least, that they are but Babes in Christ, and as such *unskilled in the Word of Righteousness*.

3. Their grand plea is this: "That preaching the gospel (that is, according to their judgment, the speaking of nothing but the sufferings and merits of Christ) answers all the ends of the law." But this we utterly deny.

deny. It does not answer the very first end of the law namely, The convincing men of sin, the awakening those who are still asleep on the brink of hell. There may have been here and there an exempt case. One in a thousand may have been awakened by the gospel. But this is no general rule. The ordinary method of God is, to convict sinners by the law, and that only. The gospel is not the means which God hath ordained, or which our Lord himself used, for this end. We have no authority in scripture for applying it thus, nor any ground to think it will prove effectual. Nor have we any more ground to expect this, from the nature of the thing. *They that be whole, as our Lord himself observes, need not a physician, but they that be sick.* It is absurd therefore to offer a physician to them that are whole, or that at least imagine themselves so to be. You are first, to convince them, that they are sick. Otherwise they will not thank you for your labour. It is equally absurd to offer Christ to them, whose heart is whole, having never yet been broken. It is in the proper sense, *casting pearls before swine.* Doubtless *they will trample them under foot.* And it is no more than you have reason to expect, if they also *turn again and rent you.*

4. "But altho' there is no command in scripture, to offer Christ to the careless sinner, yet are there not scriptural precedents for it?" I think not: I know not any. I believe you cannot produce one, either from the four evangelists, or the *Acts of the Apostles.* Neither can you prove this to have been the practice of any of the Apostles, from any passage in all their writings.

5. "Nay, does not the Apostle Paul say, in his former epistle to the Corinthians, *we preach Christ crucified?* ch. i. ver. 23. And in his latter, *We preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord?* ch. v. ver. 4."

We consent to rest the cause on this issue: to tread in his steps, to follow his example. Only preach you, just as St. Paul preached, and the dispute is at an end.

For although we are certain he *preached Christ*, in as perfect a manner as the very chief of the apostles, yet who *preached the Law* more than St. Paul? therefore he did not think the gospel answered the same end.

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6. The very first sermon of St. Paul, which is recorded, concludes in these words. "By him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the Law of Moses. Beware therefore, lest that come upon you which is spoken of in the Prophets, Behold, ye despisers, and wonder, and perish. For I work a work in your days, a work which you will in no wise believe, though a man declare it unto you, Acts xiii. 49. &c: Now it is manifest, all this is *preaching the Law*, in the sense wherein you understand the term; even although great part of, if not all his hearers, were either *Jews or religious Profelytes*, ver. 43, and therefore probably many of them, in some degree at least, convinced of sin already. He first reminds them, that they could not be justified by the Law of Moses, but only by faith in Christ: and then severely threatens them with the judgments of God, which is in the strongest sense *preaching the Law*.

7. In his next discourse, that to the Heathens at Lystra, (ch. xiv. ver. 15, &c.) we do not find so much as the name of Christ. The whole purport of it is; that they should *turn from those vain Idols, unto the living God*. Now, confess the truth: Do not you think, if you had been there, you could have preached much better than he? I should not wonder, if you thought too, that his *preaching so ill*, occasioned his being *so ill treated*: And that his being *stoned*, was a just judgment upon him, for not *preaching Christ*!

8. To the Jailor indeed, when he *sprang in, and came trembling, and fell down before Paul and Silas, and said, Sirs, What must I do to be saved*, he immediately *said, Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ*, (ch. xvi. ver. 29, &c.) And in the case of one so deeply convinced of sin, who would not have said the same? but to the men of Athens you find him speaking in a quite different manner, reproving their superstition, ignorance and idolatry; and strongly moving them to repent, from the consideration of a future judgment, and of the resurrection from the dead, (ch. xvii. ver. 24—31.) Likewise when Felix sent for Paul, on purpose that he might hear him concerning the faith in Christ; instead of preaching Christ in your sense (which would probably have caused the governor either to mock, or to contradict and blaspheme) he reasoned of *righteousness, temperance*

rance and judgment to come, till Felix (hardened as he was) trembled, ch. xxiv. ver. 24—29. Go thou and tread in his steps. Preach Christ to the careless sinner, by reasoning of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come!

9. If you say, "But he preached Christ in a different manner in his Epistles:" I answer, He did not there preach at all: not in that sense wherein we speak; for *preaching* in our present question, means, speaking before a congregation. But waving this, I answer, 2. His Epistles are directed, not to unbelievers, such as those we are now speaking of, but to the saints of God in Rome, Corinth, Philippi, and other places. Now unquestionably he would speak more of Christ to these than to those who were without God in the world. And yet 3. Every one of these is full of the law, even the Epistles to the Romans, and the Galatians; in both of which he does what you term preaching the Law, and that to Believers as well as Unbelievers.

10. From hence it is plain, you know not what it is, to *preach Christ*, in the sense of the Apostle. For doubtless St. Paul judged himself to be *preaching Christ*, both to Felix, and at Antioch, Lystra, and Athens. From whose example every thinking man must infer, That not only the declaring the love of Christ to sinners, but also the declaring that he will come from Heaven in flaming fire, is, in the Apostle's sense, *preaching Christ*: yea in the full scriptural meaning of the word. To *preach Christ*, is, To preach what he hath revealed, either in the old or new Testament: So that you are then as really preaching Christ, when you are saying, "The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the people that forget God;" as when you are saying, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world!"

11. Consider this well: That to *preach Christ*, is to preach all things that Christ hath spoken; all his promises, all his threatenings and commands; all that is written in his book. And then you will know how to preach Christ, without making void the law.

12. "But does not the greatest blessing attend those discourses, wherein we peculiarly preach the merits and sufferings of Christ?"

Probably, when we preach to a congregation of mourners, or of believers, these will be attended with  
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the greatest blessing; because such discourses are peculiarly suited to their state. At least these will usually convey the most comfort. But this is not always the greatest blessing. I may sometimes receive a far greater by a discourse that cuts me to the heart and humbles me to the dust. Neither should I receive that comfort if I were to preach or to hear no discourses but on the sufferings of Christ. These by constant repetition would lose their force, and grow more and more flat and dead: Till at length they would become a dull round of words, without any spirit, or life, or virtue. So that thus to *preach Christ*, must in process of time, make void the gospel as well as the law.

II. 1 A second way of *making void the law through faith*, is, the teaching that faith supercedes the necessity of holiness. This divides itself into a thousand smaller paths: and many there are, that walk therein. Indeed there are few that wholly escape it: few who are convinced, we *are saved by faith*, but are sooner or later, more or less, drawn aside into this bye-way.

2. All those are drawn into this bye-way, who if it be not their settled judgment, that faith in Christ entirely sets aside the necessity of keeping his law, yet suppose either, 1. That holiness is less necessary now than it was before Christ: or 2. That a less degree of it is necessary; or, 3. That it is less necessary to believers, than to others. Yea, and so are all those who altho' their judgment be right in the general, yet think they may take more liberty in particular cases, than they could have done before they believed. Indeed the using the term *Liberty*, in such a manner, for "liberty from obedience, or holiness," shews at once, that their judgment is perverted, and that they are guilty of what they imagined to be far from them, namely, of *making void the law thro' faith*, by supposing faith to supercede holiness.

3. The first plea of those who teach this expressly is, that "we are now under the covenant of grace, not works: And therefore we are no longer under the necessity of performing the works of the law."

And who ever was under the covenant of works? None but Adam before the fall. He was fully and properly under that covenant, which required perfect, universal obedience, as the one condition of acceptance; and

and left no place for pardon, under the very least transgression. But no man else was ever under this, neither Jew nor Gentile, neither before Christ nor since. All his sons were and are under the covenant of grace; the manner of their acceptance is this: The free grace of God through the merits of Christ, gives pardon to them that believe, that believe with such a faith as working by love, produce all obedience and holiness.

4. The case is not therefore as you suppose, that men were *once* more obliged to obey God, or to work the works of his law than they are *now*. This is a supposition you cannot make good. But, we should have been obliged, if we had been under the covenant of works, to have done those works antecedent to our acceptance. Whereas now all good works, tho' as necessary as ever, are not antecedent to our acceptance, but consequent upon it. Therefore the nature of the covenant of grace, gives you no ground or encouragement at all, to set aside any instance or degree of obedience, any part or measure of holiness.

5. "But are we not *justified by faith without the works of the law?*" Undoubtedly we are, without the works of either the ceremonial or the moral law. And would to God all men were convinced of this. It would prevent innumerable evils. Antinomianism, in particular; for generally speaking, they are the pharisees who make the antinomians. Running into an extreme so palpably contrary to scripture, they occasion others to run into the opposite one. These seeking to be justified by works, affright those from allowing any place for them.

6. But the truth lies between both. We are doubtless *justified by faith*. This is the corner-stone of the whole christian building. We are *justified without the works of the law*, as any previous condition of justification. But they are an immediate fruit of that faith, whereby we are justified. So that if good works do not follow our faith, even all inward and outward holiness, it is plain our faith is nothing worth: We are yet in our sins. Therefore, that *we are justified by faith*, even by *faith without works*, is no ground for *making void the law through faith*: or for imagining that faith is a dispensation, from any kind or degree of holiness.

7. "Nay,



7. "Nay, but does not St. Paul expressly say, "Unto him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness?" And does it not follow from hence, That faith is to a believer in the room, in the place of righteousness? But if faith is in the room of righteousness or holiness, what need is there of this too?

This, it must be acknowledged, comes home to the point, and is indeed the main pillar of antinomianism. And yet it needs not a long or laboured answer. We allow, 1. That God *justifies the ungodly*, him that till that hour is totally ungodly, full of all evil, void of all good. 2. That he *justifies the ungodly that worketh not*, that till that moment worketh no good work: neither can he; for an evil tree cannot bring forth good fruit. 3. That he justifies him *by faith alone*, without any goodness or righteousness preceding; and 4. That *faith is then counted to him for righteousness*, namely, for *preceding righteousness*: i. e. God, thro' the merits of Christ, accepts him that believes, as if he had already fulfilled all righteousness. But what is all this to your point? The Apostle does not say, either here or elsewhere, That this faith is counted to him for *subsequent righteousness*. He does teach, That there is no righteousness *before* Faith. But where does he teach, That there is none *after* it? He does assert, Holiness cannot *precede* justification: But not, That it need not *follow* it. St. Paul therefore gives you no colour for *making void the law*, by teaching, that faith supercedes the necessity of holiness.

III. 1. There is yet another way of *making void the law thro' faith*, which is more common than either of the former. And that is, The doing it practically: The making it void in *Fact*, tho' not in *Principle*: The *living*, as if faith was designed to excuse us from holiness.

How earnestly does the apostle guard us against this, in those well known words: "What then? Shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid!" Rom. vi. 15. A caution which it is needful throughly to consider, because it is of the last importance.

2. The being *under the law* may here mean, 1. The being obliged to observe the ceremonial law. 2. The being

being obliged to conform to the whole Mosaic institution. 3. The being obliged to keep the whole moral law, as the condition of our acceptance with God: and, 4. The being under the wrath and curse of God, under sentence of eternal death; under a sense of guilt, and condemnation, full of horror, and slavish fear.

3. Now altho' a Believer is *not without Law to God, but under the Law to Christ*, yet from the moment he believes, he is *not under the Law*, in any of the preceding senses. On the contrary, he is *under Grace*, under a more benign, gracious dispensation. As he is no longer under the ceremonial Law, nor even under the Mosaic institution; as he is not obliged to keep even the Moral Law, as the condition of his acceptance: So he is delivered from the wrath and curse of God, from all sense of guilt and condemnation, and from all that horror and fear of death and hell, whereby he was *all his life before subject to bondage*. And he now performs (which while *under the Law* he could not do) a willing and universal obedience. He obeys not from the motive of slavish fear, but on a nobler principle, namely, The Grace of God ruling in his heart, and causing all his works to be wrought in love.

5. What then? Shall this Evangelical Principle of Action, be less powerful than the Legal? Shall we be less obedient to God from filial Love, than we were from servile Fear?

'Tis well, if this is not a common case; if this practical antinomianism, this unobserved way of *making void the Law through Faith*, has not infected thousands of Believers.

Has it not infected you? Examine yourself honestly and closely. Do you not now do, what you durst not have done when you was *under the Law*, or (as we commonly call it *under Conviction*)? For instance. You durst not then indulge yourself in food. You took just what was needful, and that of the cheapest kind. Do you not allow yourself more latitude now? Do you not indulge yourself a little more than you did? O beware, lest you *sin, because you are not under the Law, but under Grace!*

5. When you was under conviction, you durst not indulge the lust of the eye in any degree. You would not do any thing, great or small, merely to gratify your

your curiosity. You regarded only cleanliness and necessity, or at most very moderate convenience, either in furniture or apparel; superfluity and finery of whatever kind, as well as fashionable elegance, were both a terror and an abomination to you.

Are they so still? Is your conscience as tender now in these things as it was then? Do you still follow the same rule both in furniture and apparel, trampling all finery, all superfluity, every thing useless, every thing merely ornamental, however fashionable, under foot? Rather, Have you not resumed what you had once laid aside, and what you could not then use without wounding your conscience? And have you not learned to say, "O, I am not *so scrupulous* now." I would to God you were! Then you would not *sin* thus, *because you are not under the Law but under Grace.*

6. You was once scrupulous too of commending any to their face, and still more, of suffering any to commend *you*. It was a stab to your heart: you could not bear it: you sought the honour that cometh of God only. You could not endure such conversation: nor any conversation which was not good, to the use of edifying. All idle talk, all trifling discourse you abhorred: you hated as well as feared it; being deeply sensible of the value of Time, of every precious, fleeting moment. In like manner you dreaded and abhorred idle expence; valuing your money only less than your time, and trembling lest you should be found an unfaithful steward even of the mammon of unrighteousness.

Do you now look upon Praise as deadly poison, which you can neither give nor receive but at the peril of your Soul? Do you still dread and abhor all conversation, which does not tend to the use of edifying; and labour to improve every moment, that it may not pass without leaving you better than it found you? Are not you less careful as to the expence both of Money and Time? Cannot you now lay out either, as you could not have done once? Alas! How has that *which should have been for your health, proved to you an occasion of falling?* How have you *sinned, because you was not under the Law, but under Grace!*

7. God forbid you should any longer continue thus to *turn the grace of God into lasciviousness!* O remember, how clear and strong a conviction you once had,

concerning all these things. And at the same time you was fully satisfied, from whom that conviction came. The world told you, you was in a delusion: but you knew it was the voice of God. In these things you was not *too scrupulous* then; but you are not now *scrupulous enough*. God kept you longer in that painful school, that you might learn those great lessons the more perfectly. And have you forgot them already? O recollect them, before it is too late! Have you suffered so many things in vain? I trust, it is not yet in vain. Now use the conviction without the pain: Practice the Lesson without the Rod. Let not the Mercy of God weigh less with you now, than his fiery indignation did before. Is Love a less powerful motive than Fear? If not, let it be an invariable rule, "I will do nothing now I am *under grace*, which I durst not have done when *under the Law*."

8. I cannot conclude this head, without exhorting you to examine yourself likewise touching Sins of Omission. Are you as clear of these, now *you are under grace*, as you was when *under the law*? How diligent was you, then in hearing the word of God? Did you neglect any opportunity? Did you not attend thereon day and night? Would a small hindrance have kept you away? A little Business? A Visitant? A slight indisposition? A soft Bed? A dark or cold morning?—Did not you then fast often? Or use Abstinence to the uttermost of your power? Was not you much in prayer, (cold and heavy as you was) while you was hanging over the mouth of Hell? Did you not speak and not spare, even for an unknown God? Did you not boldly plead his Cause? Reprove sinners? And vow the Truth before an adulterous generation?—And are you now a Believer in Christ? Have you the *Faith that overcometh the world*? What! and are you less zealous for your Master now, than you was when you knew him not? Less diligent in Fasting, in Prayer, in hearing his word, in calling Sinners to God? O Repent! See and feel your grievous loss! Remember from whence you are fallen! Bewail your unfaithfulness! Now be zealous and do the first Works? lest if you continue to *make void the law through Faith*, God cut you off, and *appoint you your Portion with the Unbelievers*!

SERMON

## S E R M O N III.

## The LAW Established through Faith.

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R O M. iii. 31.

“Do we then make void the Law thro’ Faith? God forbid! Yea, we establish the Law.”

1. **I**T has been shewn in the preceding discourse, which are the most usual ways of *making void the Law thro’ Faith*: namely, First, The not preaching it at all, which effectually makes it all void at a stroke; and this under colour of *preaching Christ* and magnifying the gospel, tho’ it be in truth destroying both the one and the other; Secondly, The teaching (whether directly or indirectly) that Faith supersedes the necessity of holiness: that this is less necessary now, or a less degree of it necessary, than before Christ came; that it is less necessary to us, because we believe, than otherwise it would have been: or, that christian liberty is a liberty from any kind or degree of holiness: (so perverting those great truths, that we are now *under the covenant of grace* and not of works: that *a man is justified by faith, without the works of the Law*; and that *to him that worketh not but believeth, his faith is counted for righteousness*:) or, Thirdly, The doing this practically; the making void the Law in practice tho’ not in principle: the living or acting, as if faith was designed to excuse us from holiness: the allowing ourselves in sin, *because we are not under the Law, but under Grace*. It remains to inquire how we may follow a better pattern, how we may be able to say with the Apostle, “Do we then make void the law thro’ Faith? God forbid! Yea, we establish the Law.”

2. We do not indeed establish the old ceremonial Law: we know that this is abolished for ever. Much less do we establish the whole Mosaic dispensation. This we know, our Lord has *nailed to his cross*. Nor

yet do we so establish the moral Law, which it is to be feared, too many do) as if the fulfilling it, the keeping of all the commandments, were the condition of our justification.

If it were so, surely *in his fight, should no man living be justified.* But all this being allowed, we still in the Apostle's sense, *establish the Law,* the moral Law.

I. 1. *We establish the Law,* First, By our doctrine: by endeavouring to preach it in its whole extent, to explain and enforce every part of it, in the same manner as our great Teacher did, while upon earth. We establish it, by following St. Peter's advice, "If any man speak let him speak as the oracles of God;" as the holy men of old moved by the Holy Ghost, spoke and wrote for our instruction, and as the Apostles of our blessed Lord by the direction of the same Spirit. We establish it whenever we speak in his name, by keeping back nothing from them that hear; by declaring to them without any limitation or reserve, the whole counsel of God. And in order the more effectually to establish it, we use herein great plainness of speech. *We are not as many that corrupt the word of God, καπηλευσοι* (as artful men their bad wines) we do not cauponize, mix, adulterate, or soften it, to make it suit the taste of the hearers. *But as of sincerity, but as of God, in the fight of God, speak we in Christ:* as having no other aim, than *by manifestation of the truth, to commend ourselves to every man's conscience in the fight of God.*

2. We then by our doctrine establish the Law, when we thus openly declare it to all men; and that, in the fulness wherein it is delivered by our blessed Lord and his Apostles: when we publish it in the height, and depth, and length, and breadth thereof. We then establish the Law, when we declare every part of it, every commandment contained therein, not only in its full literal sense, but likewise in its spiritual meaning: not only with regard to the outward actions, which it either forbids or enjoins; but also with respect to the inward principle, to the thoughts, desires, and intents of the heart.

3. And indeed this we do more diligently, not only because it is of the deepest importance; inasmuch as all the fruit, every word and work, must be only  
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evil continually, if the tree be evil, if the dispositions and tempers of the heart, be not right before God: But likewise, because as important as these things are, they are little considered or understood. So little, that we may truly say of the Law too, when taken in its full spiritual meaning, it is *a mystery which was hid from ages and generations since the world began*. It was utterly hid from the heathen world. They, with all their boasted wisdom, neither *found out God*, nor the Law of GOD, not in the letter, much less in the spirit of it: *Their foolish hearts were more and more darkened: while professing themselves wise, they became fools*. And it was almost equally hid, as to its spiritual meaning, from the bulk of the Jewish nation. Even these who were so ready to declare concerning others, *this people that know not the Law, is accursed*, pronounced their own sentence therein, as being under the same curse, the same dreadful ignorance. Witness our Lord's continual reproof of the wisest among them, for their gross misinterpretations of it. Witness the supposition almost universally received among them, that they needed only to make clean the outside of the cup: that the paying tythe of Mint, Anise and Cummin, outward exactness, would atone for inward unholiness; for the total neglect both of justice and mercy, of faith and the love of God. Yea, so absolutely was the spiritual meaning of the Law hidden from the wisest of them, that one of their most eminent Rabbi's comments thus, on those words of the Psalmist, "If I incline unto iniquity with my heart, the Lord will not hear me:" that is, saith he, if it be only in my heart, if I do not commit outward wickedness, the Lord will not regard it: he will not punish me, unless I proceed to the outward act!

4. But alas! the Law of God, as to its inward spiritual meaning, is not hid from the Jews or Heathens only, but even from what is called the Christian World; at least, from a vast majority of them. The spiritual sense of the commandments of GOD, is still a mystery to these also. Nor is this observable only in those lands, which are overspread with Romish darkness and ignorance. But this is too sure, that the far greater part, even of those, who are called *reformed Christians*, are utter strangers at this day to the Law of Christ, in the purity and spirituality of it.

5. Hence it is that to this day the *Scribes and Pharisees*, the men who have the Form but not the Power of Religion, and who are generally wise in their own eyes, and righteous in their own conceits; *hearing these things are offended*: Are deeply offended, when we speak of the Religion of the heart, and particularly when we shew, that without this, were we to *give all our goods to feed the poor*, it would profit us nothing. But offended they must be: for we cannot but speak the truth as it is in Jesus. It is our part, whether they will hear or whether they will forbear, to deliver our own soul. All that is written in the book of God we are to declare, not as pleasing men, but the Lord. We are to declare not only all the promises, but all the threatenings too which

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we find therein. At the same time that we proclaim all the blessings and privileges, which God had prepared for his Children, we are likewise to *teach all the things whatsoever he hath commanded*. And we know that all these have their use; either for the awakening those that sleep, the instructing the ignorant, the comforting the feeble-minded; or the building up and perfecting of the Saints. We know that *all Scripture given by inspiration of God, is profitable either for Doctrine, or for Reproof, either for correction or for instruction in righteousness*: And that the Man of God, in the process of the Work of God in his Soul, has need of every part thereof, that he may at length be perfect, *thoroughly furnished unto all good works*.

6. It is our part thus to *preach Christ*, by preaching all things whatsoever he hath revealed: We may indeed without blame, yea, and with a peculiar blessing from God, declare the Love of our Lord Jesus Christ. We may speak, in a more especial manner, *of the Lord our Righteousness*. We may expatiate upon the *Grace of God in Christ reconciling the world unto himself*. We may, at proper opportunities, dwell upon his praise, as bearing *the iniquities of us all, as wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities, that by his stripes we might be healed*. But still we should not *preach Christ* according to his word, if we were wholly to confine ourselves to this. We are not ourselves clear before God, unless we proclaim him in all his offices. To *preach Christ*, as a Workman that needeth not to be ashamed, is to preach him not only as our great *High-Priest, taken from among Men, and ordained for man in things pertaining to God*; as such, *reconciling us to God by his blood, and ever living to make intercession for us*: But likewise as the Prophet of the Lord, *who of God is made unto us wisdom*. Who by his word, and his Spirit, *is with us always, guiding us into all truth*: Yea, and as remaining a *King for ever*; as giving Laws to all whom he has bought with his blood: As restoring those to the Image of God, whom he had first re-instated in his favour: as reigning in all believing hearts, until he has *subdued all things to himself*; until he hath utterly cast out all Sin and brought in *everlasting righteousness*.

II. 1. *We establish the law*, Secondly, when we so preach faith in Christ, as not to supersede, but produce holiness: To produce all manner of holiness, negative and positive, of the heart and of the life.

In order to this, we continually declare (what should be frequently and deeply considered, by all who would not *make void the law through faith*) that faith itself, even christian faith, the faith of God's elect, the faith of the operation of God, still is only the handmaid of love. As glorious and honourable as it is, it is not the end of the commandment. God hath given this honour to love alone: Love is the end of all the commandments of God. Love is the end, the sole end of every dispensation of God, from the beginning of the world to the consummation of all things. And *it will endure when heaven and earth shall flee away! for love alone*

never



*never faileth.* Faith will totally fail: It will be swallowed up in sight, in the everlasting vision of God. But even then love

“ Its nature and its office still the same,  
 Lasting its lump, and unconsum'd its flame,  
 In deathless triumph shall for ever live,  
 And endless good diffuse, and endless praise receive.”

2. Very excellent things are spoken of faith, and whosoever is a partaker thereof, may well say with the apostle, *Thanks be to God for his unspeakable gift.* Yet still it loses all its excellence, when brought into a comparison with love. What St. Paul observes concerning the superior glory of the gospel, above that of the law, may with great propriety be spoken of the superior glory of love, above that of faith. “ Even that which was made glorious, hath no glory in this respect, by reason of the glory that excelleth. For if that which is done away is glorious, much more doth that which remaineth exceed in glory.” Yea, all the glory of faith before it is done away, arises hence, That it ministers to love. It is the great temporary means which God has ordained to promote that eternal end.

3. Let those who magnify faith beyond all proportion, so as to swallow up all things else; and who so totally misapprehend the nature of it, as to imagine it stands in the place of love, consider farther, That as love will exist after faith, so it did exist long before it. The angels, who from the moment of their creation, beheld the face of their father that is in heaven, had no occasion for faith, in its general notion, as it is the evidence of things not seen. Neither had they need of faith in its more particular acceptation, faith in the blood of Jesus: for he took not upon him the nature of angels, but only the seed of Abraham. There was therefore no place before the foundation of the world, for faith either in the general or particular sense. But there was for love. Love existed from eternity, in God, the great ocean of love. Love had a place in all the children of God, from the moment of their creation. They received at once from their gracious Creator, to exist, and to love.

4. Nor is it certain (as ingeniously and plausibly as many have descanted upon this,) That faith, even in the general sense of the word, had any place in paradise. It is highly probable, from that short and uncircumstantial account which we have in Holy Writ, That Adam before he rebelled against God, walked with him by sight and not by faith.

“ For then his reason's eye was strong and clear,  
 And as an eagle can behold the sun,  
 Might have beheld his Master's face as near,  
 As the' intellectual angels could have done.”

He was then able to talk with Him face to face, whose face we cannot now see and live. And consequently had no need of that faith, whose office it is to supply the want of sight.

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5. On the other hand, it is absolutely certain, faith in its particular sense had then no place. For in that it necessarily presupposes sin, and the wrath of God declared against the sinner: Without which there is no need of an atonement for sin, in order to the sinner's reconciliation with God. Consequently as there was no need of an atonement before the fall, so there was no place for faith in that atonement: Man being then pure from every stain of sin, holy as God is holy. But love even then filled his heart. It reigned in him without a rival. And it was only when love was lost by sin, that faith was added, not for its own sake, nor with any design, that it should exist any longer, than until it had answered the end for which it was ordained, namely, To restore man, to the love from which he was fallen. At the fall therefore was added this evidence of things unseen, which before was utterly needless: This confidence in redeeming love, which could not possibly have any place, till the promise was made, that the Seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head.

6. Faith then was originally designed of God, to re-establish the law of love. Therefore in speaking thus, we are not undervaluing it, or robbing it of its due praise: But on the contrary shewing its real worth, exalting it in its just proportion, and giving it that very place which the wisdom of God assigned it from the beginning. It is the grand means of restoring that holy love wherein man was originally created. It follows, that altho' faith is of no value in itself (as neither is any other means whatsoever, yet as it leads to that end, the establishing anew the law of love in our hearts, and as, in the present state of things, it is the only means under heaven for effecting it: It is, on that account, an unspeakable blessing to man, and of unspeakable value before God.

III. 1. And this naturally brings us to observe, Thirdly, The most important way of *establishing the law*: Namely, The establishing it in our own hearts and lives. Indeed without this, what would all the rest avail? We might establish it by our doctrine; we might preach it in its whole extent, might explain and enforce every part of it. We might open it in its most spiritual meaning, and declare the mysteries of the kingdom: We might preach Christ in all his offices, and faith in Christ as opening all the treasures of his love, -And yet all this time, if the law we preached, were not established in our hearts, we should be of no more account before God, than *sounding brass or tinkling cymbals*. All our preaching would be so far from profiting ourselves, that it would increase our damnation.

2. This is therefore the main point to be considered, How may we establish the Law in our own hearts, so that it may have its full influence on our lives? And this can only be done by Faith.

Faith alone it is, which effectually answers this end, as we learn from daily experience. For so long as we walk by faith not by sight, we go swiftly on in the way of holiness. While we steadily look, not at the things which are seen, but at those which are not seen, we are more and more crucified to the world, and the world crucified

crucified to us. Let but the eye of the soul be constantly fixed; not on the things which are temporal, but on those which are eternal, and our affections are more and more loosened from earth, and fixed on things above. So that faith in general is the most direct and effectual means of promoting all righteousness and true Holiness: of establishing the holy and spiritual Law, in the hearts of them that believe.

4. And by Faith, taken in its more particular meaning, for a confidence in a pardoning God, we establish his Law in our own hearts, in a still more effectual manner. For there is no motive which so powerfully inclines us to love God, as the sense of the love of God in Christ. Nothing enables us like a piercing conviction of this, to give our hearts to Him who was given for us. And from this principle of grateful Love to God arises love to our Brother also. Neither can we avoid loving our Neighbour, if we truly believe the love wherewith God hath loved us. Now this love to Man grounded on Faith and love to God, *worketh no ill to our neighbour*. Consequently it is (as the apostle observes) *the fulfilling of the whole negative law*. "For this, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet. And if there be any other Commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." Neither is love content with barely working no evil to our neighbour. It continually incites us to all good: as we have time and opportunity, to do good in every possible kind, and in every possible degree to all men. It is therefore the fulfilling of the positive likewise, as well as of the negative Law of God.

4. Nor does faith fulfil either the negative or positive law, as to the external part only: But it works inwardly by love, to the purifying of the heart, the cleansing it from all vile affections. *Every one that hath this faith in himself, purifieth himself even as he is pure*: purifieth himself from every earthly, sensual desire, from all vile and inordinate affections: Yea, from the whole of that carnal mind, which is enmity against God. At the same time, if it have its perfect work, it fills him with goodness, righteousness, and truth. It brings all heaven into his soul, and causes him to walk in the light even as God is in the light.

5. Let us then endeavour to establish the law in ourselves: Not sinning *because we are under grace*, but rather using all the power we receive thereby, *to fulfil all righteousness*. Calling to mind what light we received from God, while the Spirit was convincing us of Sin, let us beware we do not put out that light; what we had then attained let us hold fast. Let nothing induce us to build again what we have destroyed; to resume any thing, small or great which we then clearly saw was not for the glory of God, or the profit of our own soul: or to neglect any thing, small or great, which we could not then neglect, without a check from our own conscience. To increase and perfect the light which we had before,

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let us now add the light of Faith. Confirm we the former gift of God, by a deeper sense of whatever he had then shewn us: by a greater tenderness of conscience, and a more exquisite sensibility of sin. Walking now with joy and not with fear, in a clear, steady sight of Things Eternal, we shall look on pleasure, wealth, praise all the things on earth, as on bubbles upon the water: counting nothing important, nothing desirable, nothing worth a deliberate thought, but only what is *within the veil*, where *Jesus sitteth at the right hand of God*

6. Can you say, *Thou art merciful to my unrighteousness: My sins thou rememberest no more?* Then for the time to come, see that you fly from sin, as from the face of a serpent. For how exceeding sinful does it appear to you now? How heinous above all expression? On the other hand, in how amiable a light do you now see the holy and perfect Will of God? Now therefore labour that it may be fulfilled, both in you, by you, and upon you. Now watch and pray that you may sin no more, that you may see and shun the least transgression of his law. You see the motes which you could not see before, when the sun shines into a dark place. In like manner, you see the sins which you could not see before, now the Sun of Righteousness shines in your heart. Now then do all diligence to walk in every respect, according to the Light you have received. Now be zealous to receive more light daily, more of the knowledge and Love of God, more of the Spirit of Christ, more of his Life, and of the power of his Resurrection. Now use all the Knowledge, and Love, and Life, you have already attained. So shall you continually go on from Faith to Faith. So shall you daily increase in holy Love, 'till Faith is swallowed up in sight, and the Law of Love is established to all eternity.

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