

The SAINT and the LAW



HORATIUS BONAR (1808-1889)

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THE SAINT AND THE LAW

*“Blessed are the undefiled in the way,
who walk in the law of the LORD.”
—Psalm 119:1*

*“For I delight in the law of God after
the inner man.”—Romans 7:22*

“God imputeth righteousness without works,” says the Holy Spirit, speaking through Paul (Rom 4:6); and he who is in possession of this righteousness is a blessed man.

This righteousness is at once divine and human, “the righteousness of God” (Rom 1:17); the “righteousness of God and our Saviour” (2Pe 1:1); the righteousness of Him Whose name is “THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS” (Jer 23:6). It is “righteousness without the law” (Rom 3:21); yet righteousness which has all along been testified to by “the law and the prophets” (same verse) It is the “righteousness which is of faith” (that is, which is got by believing, Rom 10:6), “without the deeds of the law” (Rom 3:28), yet arising out of a fulfilled Law. It is the righteousness, not of the Father or of Godhead, but of the Son, the Christ of God, the God-man; of Him Who, by His obedient life and death, magnified the Law and made it honorable.

Thus, then, on believing the divine testimony concerning this righteousness, we are no longer “under the law, but under grace” (Rom 6:14); we are “dead to the law by the body [the crucifixion, or crucified body] of Christ” (Rom 7:4); we are “delivered from the law, that being dead [namely, the Law] wherein we were held” (Rom 7:6).

It appears, then, that the gospel does not change the Law itself, for it is holy, and just, and good; that grace does not abate¹ the claims, nor relax the penalties of Law. The Law remains the same perfect code, with all its old breadth about it, and all its eternal claims. For what is the purport² of the gospel, what is the significance of grace? Is it perfect obedience on our part to the perfect Law? That would be neither gospel nor grace. Is it perfect obedience to a relaxed, a less strict Law? That would be the ruin of Law on the one hand, and the exaction of an obedience on the other, which no sinner could render. Is it imperfect obedience to an unrelaxed, unmodified Law? That

¹ **abate** – nullify; moderate.

² **purport** – meaning; significance.

would be salvation by sin, not by righteousness. Or, lastly, is it imperfect obedience to a relaxed and imperfect Law? That would be the destruction of all government, the dishonor of all law; it would be setting up “the throne of iniquity...which frameth mischief by a law” (Psa 94:20). The demand of the Law is perfection. Between everything and nothing the Bible gives us our choice. If we are to be saved by the Law, it must be wholly by the Law; if not wholly by the Law, it must be wholly without the Law.

1. A New Relationship

But while it is clear that the Law is not changed, and cannot be changed either in itself or in its claims, it is as clear that our relation to the Law, and the Law’s relation to us, is altered upon our believing on Him Who is “the end [or fulfilling] of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth” (Rom 10:4). If, indeed, the effect of Christ’s death had been to make what is called “evangelical obedience to a milder law,” our justifying righteousness, then there would be a change in the Law itself, though not in our relation to it, which would in that case remain the same, only operating on a lower scale of duty. But if the end of Christ’s life and death be to substitute His obedience for ours entirely in the matter of justification, so that His doings meet every thing in Law that our doings should have met, then the relationship between us and Law is altered. We are placed upon a new footing in regard to it, while it remains unchanged and unrelaxed.

What, then, is this new relationship between us and the Law, which faith establishes?

There are some who speak as if in this matter there is the mere breaking up of the old relationship, the cancelling of the old covenant, without the substitution of anything new. They dwell on such texts as these: “Not under the law” (Gal 5:18), “delivered from the law,” “without the law,” affirming that a believing man has nothing more to do with Law at all. They call that “imperfect teaching” which urges obedience to Law in the carrying out of a holy life. They brand as bondage the regard to Law which those pay, who, studying Moses and the prophets, and specially the psalms of him who had tasted the blessedness of the man to whom the Lord imputeth righteousness without works (*see* Psa 32:1-2), are drinking into the spirit of David—or more truly, into the spirit of the Greater than David, the only Begotten of the Father, Who speaks, in no spirit of bondage, of the laws and statutes and judgments and commandments of the Father.

Our old relationship to Law (so long as it continued) made justification by Law a necessity. The doing was indispensable to the living, so long as the Law’s claims over us personally were in force. We strove to obey, in order that we might live; for this is Law’s arrangement, the legal order of things; and so long as this order remained there was no hope. It was impossible for us to “obey and live”; and as the Law could not say to us, “live and obey,” it could do nothing for us. Only that which could reverse this

order in our case, which could give life in order to obedience, would be of any service to us. This the gospel steps in to do. Not first obedience and then life, but first life and then obedience.

This argues no weakness or imperfection in the Law. For if any “law could have given life” (Gal 3:21), this Law would have done it. But Law and life, in the case of the sinner, are incompatible. It is the very perfection of the Law that makes life impossible under it, unless in the case of entire and ceaseless obedience, without a flaw. “By the law is the knowledge of sin” (Rom 3:20); and where sin is, Law proclaims death, not life. [Note: This text, Romans 3:20, does not apply merely to the operation of Law upon the sinner’s conscience, convincing him of his guilt; it points also to the instruction which Law gives us regarding sin all the days of our life. We learn sin and its details from the Law; we learn the penalty elsewhere.]

So long, then, as the old relationship continued between us and Law; or, in the apostle’s words, so long as we were “under law,” there was nothing but condemnation and an evil conscience, and the fearful looking for of judgment. But with the change of relationship there came pardon and liberty and gladness. “Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us” (Gal 3:13); and so we are no longer under Law, but under grace. The Law is the same Law, but it has lost its hold of us, its power over us. It cannot cease to challenge perfect obedience from every being under heaven, but to us its threat and terror are gone. It can still say, “Obey,” but it cannot now say, “Disobey and perish.”

Our new relationship to the Law is that of Christ Himself to it. It is that of men who have met all its claims, exhausted its penalties, satisfied its demands, magnified it, and made it honorable. For our faith in God’s testimony to Christ’s obedience as a surety has made us one with Him. The relation of the Law to Him is its relation to us who believe in His name. His feelings toward the Law ought to be our feelings. The Law looks on us as it looks on Him; we look on the Law as He looks on it. And does not He say, “I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea thy law is within my heart” (Psa 40:8)?

Some speak as if the servant were greater than the Master, and the disciple above his Lord; as if the Lord Jesus honored the Law, and His people were to set it aside; as if He fulfilled it for us, that we might not need to fulfill it; as if He kept it, not that we might keep it, but that we might not keep it, but something else in its stead, they know not what.

The plain truth is, we must either keep it or break it. Which of these men ought to do, let those answer who speak of a believer having nothing more to do with Law. There is no middle way. If it be not a saint’s duty to keep the Law, he may break it at pleasure, and go on sinning because grace abounds.

The word duty is objected to as inconsistent with the liberty of forgiveness and sonship. Foolish and idle cavil!³ What is duty? It is the thing which is due by me to God; that line of conduct which I owe to God. And do these objectors mean to say that because God has redeemed us from the curse of the Law, therefore we owe Him nothing? We have no duty now to Him? Has not redemption rather made us doubly debtors? We owe Him more than ever; we owe His holy Law more than ever—more honor, more obedience. Duty has been doubled, not cancelled, by our being delivered from the Law; and he who says that duty has ceased, because deliverance has come, knows nothing of duty, or Law, or deliverance. The greatest of all debtors in the universe is the redeemed man, the man who can say, “The life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me” (Gal 2:20). What a strange sense of gratitude these men must have who suppose that because love has cancelled the penalties of Law, and turned away its wrath, therefore reverence and obedience to that Law are no longer due! Is terror, in their estimation, the only foundation of duty; and when love comes in and terror ceases, does duty become a bondage?

“No,” they may say; “but there is something higher than duty—there is privilege; it is that for which we contend.”

I answer, the privilege of what? Of obeying the Law? That they cannot away with; for they say they are no longer under Law, but under grace. What privilege, then? Of imitating Christ? Be it so. But how can we imitate Him Whose life was one great Law-fulfilling, without keeping the Law? What privilege? Again we ask. Of doing the will of God? Be it so. And what is Law but the revealed will of God? And has our free forgiveness released us from the privilege of conformity to the revealed will of God?

But what do they mean by thus rejecting the word duty, and contending for that of privilege? Privilege is not something distinct from duty, nor at variance with duty, but it is duty and something more; it is duty influenced by higher motives, duty uncom-pelled by terror or suspense. In privilege the duty is all there; but there is something superadded in the shape of motive and relationship, which exalts and ennobles duty. It is my duty to obey government; it is my privilege to obey my parent. But in the latter case is duty gone, because privilege has come in? Or has not the loving relationship between parent and child only intensified the duty, by superadding the privilege, and sweetening the obedience by the mutual love? “The love of Christ constraineth” (2Co 5:14). That is something more than both duty and privilege added.

Let men who look but at one side of a subject say what they will, this is the truth of God: that we are liberated from the Law just in order that we may keep the Law. We get the “no condemnation” (Rom 8:1), in order that “the righteousness of the law may be fulfilled in us” (v. 4). We are delivered from the mind “of the flesh,” which is “enmity against God,” and not “subject to law of God” (vv. 5, 7), on purpose that we may be subject to His Law, that we may “delight in the law of God after the inward man” (Rom

³ **cavil** – trivial faultfinding; quibbling.

7:22)—nay, that we may “with the mind serve the law of God” (Rom 7:25); that we may be “a doer of the law” (Jam 4:11). These objectors may speak of obedience to the Law as bondage, or of the Law itself being abolished to believers. Here are the words of the Holy Ghost: the Law of God is “holy, and just, and good” (Rom 7:12); that very Law which David loved, and in which David’s Son delighted—it would be well for such men meekly and lovingly to learn what serving and delighting in it is.

“Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law” (Rom 3:31); that is, we set it on a firmer basis than ever. That Law, “holy, and just, and good,” thus doubly established, is now for us, not against us. Its aspect toward us is that of friendship and love, and so we have become “the servants of righteousness” (Rom 6:18), yielding our members “servants to righteousness” (v. 19). We are not men delivered from service, but delivered from one kind of service, and by that deliverance introduced into another, “that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter” (Rom 7:6), as “the Lord’s freeman,” yet “Christ’s servant” (1Co 7:22). Thus, obligation, duty, service and obedience still remain to the believing man, though no longer associated with bondage and terror, but with freedom, and gladness, and love. The Law’s former bearing on us is altered, and, with that, the nature and spirit of the service are altered, but the service itself remains, and the Law which regulates that service is confirmed, not annulled.

2. The Law of God: the Will of God

Some will tell us that it is not service they object to, but service regulated by Law. But will they tell us what it is to regulate service, if not Law? Love, they say. This is a pure fallacy. Love is not a rule, but a motive. Love does not tell me what to do; it tells me how to do it. Love constrains me to do the will of the Beloved One; but to know what the will is, I must go elsewhere. The Law of our God is the will of the Beloved One, and were that expression of His will withdrawn, love would be utterly in the dark; it would not know what to do. It might say, I love my Master, and I love His service, and I want to do His bidding, but I must know the rules of His house, that I may know how to serve Him. Love without Law to guide its impulses would be the parent of will-worship⁴ and confusion, as surely as terror and self-righteousness, unless upon the supposition of an inward miraculous illumination, as an equivalent for Law. Love goes to the Law to learn the divine will, and love delights in the Law, as the exponent of that will. And he who says that a believing man has nothing more to do with Law, save to shun it as an old enemy, might as well say that he has nothing to do with the will of God. For the divine Law and the divine will are substantially one, the former the outward manifestation of the latter. And it is “the will of my Father which is in heaven” (Mat 7:21) that we are to do; so proving by loving obedience what is that “good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God” (Rom 12:2). Yes, it is “he that doeth the will of God

⁴ **will-worship** – worship according to one’s own will or fancy.

abideth forever” (1Jo 2:17). It is “to the will of God” that we are to live (1Pe 4:2); made “perfect in every good work to do his will” (Heb 13:21). And “being fruitful in every good work” (Col 1:10) springs from being “filled with the knowledge of his will” (v. 9).

As to the oneness between divine will and divine Law, I need only quote the words of Him Who came to fulfill the Law, “Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me, I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart” (Psa 40:7-8).

If Law be not will, what is it? And if will has not uttered itself in Law, in what has it spoken? Truth is the utterance of the divine mind, but Law is the utterance of the divine will. When a father teaches his child, we see simply mind meeting mind; but when he commands or gives rules, we see will meeting will. When Parliament publishes reports of proceedings, or the like, there is simply the expression of its mind; when it passes an act, here is the declaration of its will.

I ask attention to this the real meaning of *law*, because it is the key to the solution of the question before us. That question is really not so much concerning the Law of God as concerning His will; and the theology which would deny the former would set aside the latter. Conformity to the will of God can only be carried out by observance of His Law, for we know His will only through His Law.

I do not see how a crooked will is to be straightened unless by being brought into contact with “the perfect will of God”; nor do I see how that will is to be brought to bear upon us, for the rectification of our will, unless by the medium of the revealed Law. Will must be brought to bear upon will, the divine upon the human will. And this must be through that part of revelation which embodies will, unless some miraculous power be put forth in us apart altogether from the truth of God; and he who affirms this may also affirm that peace is to be dropped into us apart from the gospel of peace. The divine volition, embodied in a force or power which we call gravitation, rules each motion of the unconscious planets, and this same divine volition or will, embodied in intelligible Law, is that which regulates the movements of our conscious wills, straightening them and keeping them straight, though without wrong done to their nature, or violation of their true freedom.

Should it be said that will and Law are now embodied in Christ; and that it is to this model that we are to look, I ask: What do we see in Christ? The Fulfiller of the Law. He is the embodiment and perfection of Law-fulfilling. We cannot look at Him without seeing the perfect Law. God has given us these two things in these last days, the Law and the living model; but was the living model meant to supersede the Law? Was it not to illustrate and enforce it? We see the Law now, not merely in the statute-book, but in the Person of the King Himself. But is the statute-book thereby annihilated, and its statutes made void? Were Christ’s expositions of the Law, in the fifth, sixth and seventh chapters of Matthew, intended to overrule or abrogate⁵ the Law itself? No; but to show its breadth and purity. And when He thus expounded the Law, did He say

⁵ **abrogate** – cancel; abolish; annul; repeal; revoke.

to His disciples, "But you have nothing to do with this Law; it is set aside for all that shall believe in my name"? Did He not liken to a wise man every one who should hear these sayings of His and do them (*see* Mat 7:24). Nay, did He not say, "Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill...Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven" (Mat 5:17, 19). Now one would think that this should settle the question. For the Lord is speaking of the Law and its commandments, lesser and greater, and He is speaking of it as binding on them who are heirs of the kingdom of heaven.

Should it be said that it is only exemption from obligation to the moral Law or Ten Commandments that is pleaded for, and not the Law or will of God in general, I answer, the Ten Commandments are the summary or synopsis of God's will as to the regulation of man's life; and every other part of the Bible is in harmony with this moral Law. So that exemption from compliance with any Bible statute, or from the obligation of submitting ourselves to any Bible truth, might be pleaded for as properly as exemption from the Law. For the Law cannot be cut out of the Bible and set aside by itself, while all else remains in force. Either all must go or none. [Note: Besides, the Ten Commandments were for redeemed Israel. The Sinaitic code began with redemption, "I am the Lord thy God, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt, and out of the house of bondage" (Exo 20:2). Israel was to keep them because they were redeemed; "the Lord thy God redeemed thee: therefore I command thee this thing to day" (Deu 15:15). Redemption forms a new obligation to Law-keeping, as well as puts us in a position for it. And was it not to Sinai and its burnings that the apostle referred when he said, "We receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear: for our God is a consuming fire" (Heb 12:28-29)? Some would, perhaps, call this legality and bondage, a motive unfit to be addressed to a saint.]

3. Our Rule of Life

If the objection is to the use of the word "law" or "commandment," as implying bondage, I answer, obedience to law is true liberty; perfect obedience to perfect commandments is perfect liberty. And there must be some dislike of the Law's strictness where this dislike of obligation to it is felt; nay, there must be ignorance of gospel, as well as Law, in such a case, ignorance of that very redemption from the curse of the Law for which the objectors profess such zeal, ignorance of the complete "righteousness without the law" which we have in Christ. I am persuaded of this, that where there is this shrinking from the application of the Law as our rule of life, there is a shrinking from perfect conformity to the will of God. Nay, more, there is unbelief in the gospel, the want of a full consciousness of the perfect forgiveness which the belief of that gospel brings. For were there this full consciousness of pardon, there would be

no dread of Law, no shrinking from Sinai's thunders, no wish to be exempted from the broadest application of Sinai's statutes. In all Antinomianism,⁶ whether practical or theological, there is some mistake both as to Law and gospel.

But why object to such words as *law*, and *commandment*, and *obedience*? Does not the apostle speak of "the law of the Spirit of life" (Rom 8:2)? Does he not say, "This is his commandment, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ" (1Jo 3:23)? Is not "the new commandment" said to be only a repetition of "the old commandment...which ye have heard from the beginning" (1Jo 2:7)? Does he not speak of "obedience unto righteousness" (Rom 6:16), and of "obedience to the faith" (Rom 1:5)?

When the apostle is exhorting Christians in the 12th and 13th of the Romans, is he not giving precepts and laws? Nay, and does he not found his exhortations on the Ten Commandments? "For this...Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not covet; and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. Love worketh no ill to his neighbor: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law" (Rom 13:9-10). The Ten Commandments are here presented as our guide and rule, which guide and rule love enables us to follow; for the apostle does not say "love is an exemption from the Law, or love is the abrogation of the Law," but "love is the fulfilling of the law." Love does not supersede Law, nor release us from obedience to it; it enables us to obey. Love does not make stealing or coveting, or any such breach of Law, no sin in a Christian, which would seem to be the meaning which some attach to this passage. But it so penetrates and so constrains us that, not reluctantly or through fear, but right joyfully, we act toward our neighbor in all things, great and small, as the Law bids us do. Yes, Christ "hath redeemed us from the curse of the law" (Gal 3:13), but certainly not from the Law itself, for that would be to redeem us from a divine rule and guide; it would be to redeem us from that which is "holy and just and good."

In other epistles the same reference occurs to the Ten Commandments, as the basis of a true and righteous life. Thus, in speaking of the family relationship, the apostle introduces the moral Law as the foundation of obedience. "Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right. Honor thy father and mother; which is the first commandment with promise; That it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth" (Eph 6:1-3), where, writing to those who are in the Lord, and not Jews, but Gentiles, he demands obedience and honor, in the name of the fifth commandment. Yet surely, if any duty might have been left to the impulses of Christian love, without reference to Law, it would be that of a believing child to its parent. Was the apostle then a legalist when he referred the Ephesians to the moral Law as a rule of life? Did he not know that they were "not under the law, but under grace" (Rom 6:15)?

In the Epistle of James we find similar appeals to the moral Law as the rule of Christian life. That he is speaking of the Ten Commandments is evident, for he quotes

⁶ **Antinomianism** – the belief that God's moral Law is not binding in any sense upon believers.

two of them in 2:11, as specimens of what he calls the Law. This Law he bids his Christian brethren “look into” (1:25), “continue in” it (1:25), “fulfill” it (2:8), “keep” it (2:10), be “doers” of it (4:11). And this Law he calls “the law of liberty” (2:12); nay, “the perfect law of liberty” (1:25), carrying us back to the psalmist’s experience, “I will walk at liberty: for I seek thy precepts” (Psa 119:45); for Law is bondage only to the unforgiven. All true obedience is liberty, and all true liberty consists in obedience to Law. This Law, moreover, the apostle so delights in that he calls it “the royal law” (2:8), the “perfect law” (1:25), pronouncing blessed he who is “not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work” (1:25). Had this apostle forgotten that we were “not under the law, but under grace”? But he was writing to Jews, some say. Yes, but to believing Jews, just as Paul was, when writing to “the Hebrews” and when writing to “the Romans” also (*see* Rom 2:17-29). And do men mean to say that there is one gospel for the Jew and another for the Gentile; that the Jew is still under the Law, and not under grace; and that in Christ Jesus all nations of men are not entirely one? Read Ephesians 2:14-22, 1 Corinthians 12:12-13, and Galatians 3:28.

If the objection to the believer’s use of the Law be of any weight, it must apply to everything in the form of precept; for the reasons given against our having anything to do with the moral Law are founded upon its preceptive or commanding character. The Law, in itself, is admitted to be good, and breaches of it are sin, as when a man steals or lies; but then, the form in which it comes, of do or do not, makes it quite unsuitable for a redeemed man! Had it merely said “stealing is wrong,” it might have been suitable enough; but when it issues its precept, “Thou shalt not steal,” it becomes unmeet; and one who is “not under the law, but under grace,” must close his ears against it, as an intruder and a tyrant!

Of angels this is said to be the highest felicity,⁷ that they “do His commandments, hearkening unto the voice of his word” (Psa 103:20); just as of those from whom the Lord has removed transgression “as far as the east is from the west” (v. 12), it is said that they “remember his commandments to do them” (v. 18). But if this theory of the total disjunction of the Law from believers be true, then angels must be in bondage, and they also to whom Paul refers as specimens of the blessed men whose transgressions are forgiven by the imputation of “righteousness without works” (Rom 4:6). To unforgiven men Law is bondage; but is it so to the forgiven? Do pardoned men hate or love it? Do they dread it or delight in it? Do they disobey it or obey it? Do they dismiss it from their thoughts and consciences, or do they make it their “meditation all the day”? Yet there are men who speak of Law as abrogated to a believer, who look with no favor on those who listen to it, but pity them as ill-taught, ill-informed men, who, if in Christ at all, are only Christians of the lowest grade, the least in the kingdom of heaven.

⁷ **felicity** – source of happiness.

And this is said to be the proper result of a believed gospel! This is called an essential part of higher Christianity; and is reckoned indispensable to the right appreciation of a saint's standing before God. The realizing of it is a proof of true spirituality, and the denial of it an evidence of imperfect knowledge and a cramped theology!

We can find no such spirituality, no such Christianity in the Bible. This is license, not liberty. It is freedom to sin, not freedom from sin. It may be spiritual sentimentalism, but it is not spirituality. It is sickly religionism, which, while professing a higher standard than mere law, is departing from that healthy and authentic conformity to the will of God which results from the love and study of His statutes. It is framing a new and human standard, in supplement, if not in contradiction, of the old and the divine. [Note: "Not being without law to God," says the apostle; nay, "under the law to Christ" (1Co 9:21), and yet he understood well enough what it is to be "not under the law, but under grace."]

This dislike of the Law as a rule of life, and a guide to our knowledge, both of what is right and what is wrong, bodes nothing good. It bears no resemblance to the apostle's delight in the Law of God after the inner man, but looks like dread of its purity and searching light. Nay, it looks more like the spirit of antichrist than of Christ: the spirit of him whose characteristic is lawlessness (*anomia*, "without law") than that of Him Who, as the obedient Son, ever did the Father's will, in accordance with the holy Law. "I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart" (Psa 40:8). It is granted that "the law worketh wrath" (Rom 4:15), and yet that to a believing man legal threats of condemnation have no terror. It is granted that in the matter of forgiveness and acceptance Law is to him nothing save as seen fulfilled in his Surety.

That Law has no claim upon him which should break his peace, or trouble his conscience, or bring him into bondage; that Law can only touch him and deal with him in the person of his Substitute; that the righteousness in which he stands before God is a "righteousness without the law," and "without the deeds of the law"; that the sin which still remains in him does not give the Law any hold over him, or any right to enforce its old claims or threats. It is granted that it is in grace alone that he stands, and rejoices in hope of the glory of God, in a condition at all times to take up the challenge, "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?" (Rom 8:33). "Who is he that condemneth?" (v. 34). But admitting fully all of this, we ask, What is there in this to disjoin him from the Law, or exempt him from obedience to it? Are not all these things done to him for the purpose of setting him in a position wherein he may love and keep the blessed Law which Jesus kept? And should he not feel and cry, as did the redeemed men of other days? "O that my ways were directed to keep thy statutes!" (Psa 119:5). "O let me not wander from thy commandments" (v 10). "I have rejoiced in the way of thy testimonies" (v 14) "My soul breaketh for the longing that it hath unto thy judgments" (v 20). "Make me to understand the way of thy precepts" (v 27). "I will run the way of thy commandments, when thou shalt enlarge my heart" (v 32). [Note: The 19th and 119th Psalms must be very uncomfortable reading to those who think that a saint has

nothing to do with the Law. Will it be said that such legal Psalms were only for Old Testament saints?]

4. Free to Obey the Law

Should any one say that it is not to service, but to bondage, they object, I answer, no one contends for bondage. It is in the spirit of adoption and filial love that we obey the Law, even as the Son of God obeyed it. But it is somewhat remarkable that the word which the apostle uses, in reference to his connection with law, is not that for priestly service or ministration, but for menial offices; “that we should serve [*douleuo*, be a slave] in newness of spirit” (Rom 7:6); “with the mind I myself serve the law of God” (v 25); “yield your members servants to righteousness” (Rom 6:19); so that, as the strictest conformity to the Law was that in which he delighted, so it is that in which he calls on us to delight.

When he speaks of not being “under the law,” but “delivered from the law,” his meaning is so obvious that it is somewhat difficult to misunderstand him. His whole argument is to show how the Law affected a sinner’s standing before God, either in condemning or in justifying. He shows that it cannot do the latter, but only the former; and that, for justification, we must go to something else than Law; for “by the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified.” In everything relating to our justification, everything connected with pardon or the giving of a “good conscience,” we are not under Law. But does this release us from conformity to the Law? Does this make it less a duty to walk according to its precepts, or make our breaches of Law no longer sin? Does our being, in this sense, “delivered from the law” cancel the necessity of loving God and man? The summing up of the law is, “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart...and thy neighbor as thyself” (Luk 10:27). Is a saint not under obligation so to love? Would the fulfillment of this be bondage, and inconsistent with the spirit of adoption? Is liberty claimed for a Christian either to love or not to love, as he pleases? If he does not love, is he not sinning? Or does his not being under Law, but under grace, make the want of love no crime? Is obedience a matter of option, not of obligation? If it is answered, No; we will love God with all our heart, but not because the Law enjoins; I answer, this looks very like the spirit of a froward⁸ child, who says to a parent, I will do such and such a thing because I please, but not because you bid me.

As the common objections to the observance of the Sabbath take for granted that that day is a curse and not a blessing—bondage, not liberty; so the usual objections to the keeping of the Law assume that it is in itself an evil, not a good—an enemy, and not a friend.

Say what men will, obedience to Law is liberty, compliance with Law is harmony, not discord. The force of Law does not need always to be felt, but its object, whether felt or unfelt, is to keep everything in its proper place, and moving in its proper course;

⁸ **froward** – stubbornly contrary and disobedient.

so that one man's liberty may not interfere with another man's, but each have the greatest amount of actual freedom which creaturehood is capable of, without harm to itself or others. Law does not interfere with true liberty, but only with that which is untrue, promoting and directing the former, discouraging only the latter.

As with the orbs of heaven, so with us. Obedience to their ordered courses is not simply a necessity of their being, but of their liberty. Let them snap their cords, and choose for themselves the unfettered range of space; then not only is order gone, and harmony gone, and beauty gone, but liberty is gone; for that which keeps them in freedom is obedience to the forces of their constitution, and non-departure from their appointed orbits. Disobedience to these, departure from these, would bring about immediate collision of star with star, the stoppage of their happy motions, the extinction of their joyful light, havoc and death, star heaped on star in universal wreck.

