

## THE SABBATH AND THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

The two tables of stone upon which the ten commandments were written by the finger of God, are respectively summarised in the first and second commandments, which contain the sum of all duties to God and man, stated under two heads. The first four injunctions corresponding presumably to the first table and first commandment, concern the Creator; while the next six statutes relate to the creature. They comprehend all the positive and negative enactments contained in the rest of the law. Both classes of injunction were necessary to secure the end proposed. The Bible is pre-eminently a book of what to do and what not to do. The ten commandments are all reproduced except one in a variety of ways in the New Testament institution. The one not reinstated is the one relating to the sabbath. This was no longer obligatory upon Jews who had embraced the truth; for being a matter concerning “times and seasons,” and not eternal principles, it was destined in due time to give place to the “body” of which it was the shadow; for so the apostle instructs us, for says he, “A feast day, or a new moon, or a sabbath day are a shadow of the things to come; but the body is Christ’s (Col. 2:16, 17, Rev. Ver.). The weekly sabbath was only one of a number of sabbaths, to observe which was a work of superogation. After the shadow had given place to the substance, upon which fell the meridian light of Heaven’s brightest revelation. The sabbath-rest of God’s purpose truly remains as something yet to be entered upon (Heb. 4:11), but the “light of the world” having appeared with the effect disestablishing the old shadowy covenant in favour of the new which he ratified by his own blood; there is no further place for the abolished thing (2 Cor. 3:13); the true foundation of all that is, and is to come having been laid in the hallowed life, the flesh-crucified death, and the thrice blessed resurrection of him who is “the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth” (Rom 10:4). He has, as it were, “ceased from his own works as God did from his,” as the firstfruit of an harvest of sons, all destined in due time, to share with him the joy of “that hallowed morn” which will usher in the sabbath of creation, and the attendant blessedness of all nations upon earth in Abraham and his victorious seed.

Whilst the outward form of the truth’s service has varied with each dispensation—patriarchal, Mosaic, Christian—the inner principles of the truth itself are the same from age to age. The outer form concerns Sabbaths, holy days, “divers washings,” circumcisions, bodily purifications, eating of meats, and all carnal ordinances, imposed only until the “times of reformation” inaugurated by Christ; but the inner principles concerns faith, worship, righteousness, hope, love, obedience, holiness, forgiveness, and perfection of conscience. Under the law these were associated with asperities, rigours, and servitude which made it, says Peter, “a yoke which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear.” In this particular things are changed, for, as John says, “the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.” We have, therefore, to do now with a “grace-abounding” institution in which the position of bond-servant is exchanged for the freedom and privileges of sonship. What this means, as compared with the service required by the law, is everywhere illustrated in the New Testament: for instance, take, first, what is called the beatitudes and the precepts accompanying them, then take the fraternal counsels which are so peculiar to the epistles. Under the law we have a nation of redeemed slaves; under grace we have the adoption of sons. There was a sense of course, in which Israel, after the flesh, were the children of God (Deut. 14:1), the same as there was a sense in which Adam was the son of God (Luke 3:38); but this was a mere present-life sense—a sense in which the existence received respectively as a man and a nation, was wholly due to divine

intervention. It went no further than was visible to the eye in the mortal aspects of the case. Unlike John's "sons of God," it had no "shall be" in it. "Ye are not come," saith the apostle, "to the mount that burned with fire, but to the general assembly and church of the firstborn"—no longer children of Jerusalem the bondmother, but sons of Jerusalem the free. (Gal 4:25, 26) In one word, "Ye are not," saith Paul, "under the law but under grace"—grace which has the promise of both the life that now is and of that which is yet to come; grace, however, in which the "carnal ordinances" of the law of Moses are swallowed up of the "law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus," for "the letter killeth but the spirit giveth life." This being so the apostle well represents the changed situation when he says, "but now have we been discharged from the law, having died to that wherein we were holden, so that we serve in newness of spirit and not in the oldness of the 'letter'" (Rev. ver.) The service is therefore as of those who have risen from the dead — a service no longer rendered under the influence of fear, but in the spirit of fraternal love. In the new institution the ten commandments stand thus:—

Commandments 1. 2. 5. 8. 9. 10. are retained.

Commandment 3. is amended.

Commandment 4. is abolished.

Commandments 6. 7. are extended.

Christ possessed the necessary authority to retain, amend, extend, or abolish whatever he deemed necessary so to do, as is evidenced in his treatment of some of the "old-time" institutions in his discourse on the mount; and not less in the fact that he was "Lord of the Sabbath," and "a son," where Moses was only "a servant" (Heb 3:5, 6). The way the ten commandments stand now may be best illustrated by the kind of notice they severally receive in the New Testament, thus:—

I. (*retained*). "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve" (Matt. 4:10). "To us there is but one God, the Father" (1 Cor. 8:6). "One God and Father of all" (Eph 4:6).

II. (*retained*). "Worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator" (Rom. 1:25). "Flee from idolatry" (1 Cor. 10:14). "Keep yourselves from idols" (1 John 5:21). "What agreement hath the temple of God with idols" (2 Cor. 6:16).

III. (*amended*). "Swear not at all, neither by heaven, earth nor Jerusalem" (Matt. 5:34, 35). "Swear not neither by heaven, neither by the earth neither by any other oath" (James 5:12).

IV. (*abolished*). "A feast day, or a new moon, or a sabbath day: which are a shadow of the things to come; but the body is Christ's" (Col. 2:16. Rev. ver). "How turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements, whereunto ye desire again to be in bondage? Ye observe days, and months and times, and years. I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labour in vain" (Gal. 4:9, 10). "The sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath: therefore the Son of man is Lord also of the sabbath" (Mark 2:27, 28).

V. (*retained*). "Obey your parents in all things" (Col. 3:20). "Obey your parents in the Lord" (Eph. 6:1). "Disobedient to parents" (2 Tim. 3:2). "Let them learn to requite their parents" (1 Tim. 5:4). "Ye suffer him no more to do ought for his father or mother" (Matt. 15:5, 6) "Honour thy father and thy mother" (Matt. 15:4).

VI. (*extended*). "Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill: and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment: But I say unto you that whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause, shall be in danger of the judgment: and whosoever shall say to his brother Raca, shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool,

shall be in danger of Gehenna fire” (Matt. 5:21, 22). “Whoso hateth his brother is a murderer” (1 John 3:15).

VII. (*extended*). “Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery; but I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her, hath committed adultery with her already in his heart” (Matt. 5:27, 28). Moses, because of the hardness of your hearts suffered you to put away your wives; but from the beginning it was not so. And I say unto you, &c. (Matt. 19:8–9).

VIII. (*retained*). “Let him that stole steal no more.” (Eph. 4:28). “Thou that preachest a man should not steal, dost thou steal?” (Rom. 2:21). “Jesus said unto him . . . Thou knowest the commandments. Do not commit adultery, Do not kill, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Defraud not, Honour thy father and thy mother.” (Mark 10:18–19).

IX. (*retained*). “Neither accuse any falsely.” (Luke 3:14). “Even so must their wives be grave, not slanderers.” (1 Tim. 3:11). “As we be slanderously reported.” (Rom. 3:8). “Let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile.” (1 Peter 3:10). “Putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour.” (Eph. 4:25). “Let all evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice.” (Eph. 4:31). “Not false accusers.” (Tit. 2:3). “Truce breakers, false accusers.” (2 Tim. 3:3).

X. (*retained*). “Lovers of their own selves, covetous.” (2 Tim. 3:2). “Covetousness, which is idolatry.” (Col. 3:5). “Beware of covetousness.” (Luke 12:15). “Nor a cloak of covetousness.” (1 Thes. 2:5). “Covetousness, let it not be once named among you as becometh saints.” (Eph. 5:37).<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> (2001). *The Christadelphian*, 25(electronic ed.), 360–362.