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# An Interpretation of the Problem of Christian Liberty within the Realm of Law

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APPROVAL SHEET

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AN INTERPRETATION OF THE PROBLEM OF CHRISTIAN LIBERTY  
WITHIN THE REALM OF LAW

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A Thesis  
Presented to  
the Faculty of  
The Western Evangelical Seminary

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In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Bachelor of Divinity

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by  
Gerald Gardner

May 1952

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

One of the perennial problems of the Christian faith is the relationship between law and grace. This constant recurrence is an indication of its basic importance. Extreme positions are unchristian and result in an unholy presentation of the Christian faith.

#### I. THE PROBLEM

Statement of the problem. To the earnest Christian the problem of what to do and what not to do often becomes a serious one. Prior to the acceptance of Christ and His way, an individual's conduct is controlled by the socially accepted standards of his environment. The standards will vary in accordance with each given situation and the average person will feel obligated to adhere to the pattern. This motivation is not so much a moral responsibility in relationship with God, but is rather a selfish desire to maintain social acceptance. Thus, a degree of admirable conduct is often realized when social standards are governed by Christian principles. In fact, such high ideals in everyday life have often been erroneously accepted as true Christianity.

It is the Christian experience of conversion which brings man into vital conscious fellowship with God through

Jesus Christ and transforms the center of life from self to God. Conformity to society for personal social acceptance has been displaced by a deep sense of responsibility to conform to the standards of the Gospel for Divine acceptance. A religious community does not present a violation of this principle. A person within the structure of such a society will feel obligated to conform to that pattern for reasons of personal social acceptance. An individual is hesitant to transgress beyond the limits of accepted propriety whether the taboos be social or religious. Thus, all conscientious people, whether religious or non-religious, tend to justify or condemn their conduct on the basis of conformity to their society.

The Christian has turned to God and now feels obligated to live in accord with Him. Mere social acceptance is no longer adequate. His one consuming passion is to live a life with Divine approval--a life which will reflect God's image in loving service to mankind. Such a lofty ideal and holy purpose quickens the conscience and elevates all decisions to divine heights.

It is to such a sensitive spirit that the problem of conduct is often acute. He cannot obtain an answer from a prescribed set of rules, for Christianity has no such code. Whenever Christian groups have adopted certain regulations as to dress, social conduct, religious ritual, or church

polity with the purpose of universal propagation, they have failed. Righteousness does not come or is not maintained by conformity to a community but by a living union with the "Sun of Righteousness." This sounds very simple, and yet it is in reality the direct opposite. A child yearns for the time of maturity when parental control will be discarded. Yet with this freedom comes the responsibility of decision. This personal freedom implies a maturity capable of intelligent conduct. Also, this freedom is necessary for the development of personal character with strength and initiative. The Inca Indian Empire of Peru illustrates this weakness of character. They enjoyed a high state of development, yet their whole civilization collapsed before a relatively small Spanish invading force. This easy overthrow was indication of the weakness of the social order. They had developed a weak dependence upon the ruler rather than virility and strength of individual character. Thus a blow at the central government so weakened the order that the whole system collapsed.<sup>1</sup> The Christian life offers no promise of life as an effortless cruise, but it challenges the individual with the highest and holiest of objectives. A challenge which, when accepted, will build a human person

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<sup>1</sup> Robert H. Glover, The Progress of World-Wide Missions (New York: George G. Doran Company, 1925), p. 271.

into a giant of faith and a reflection of divine love and holiness.

The problem which each Christian faces is the responsibility of making decisions on the basis of principle instead of rule. These decisions must be a result of individual initiative yet governed by the law of love. They must reflect the spirit of Christian liberty, yet controlled by a consideration for others.<sup>2</sup> The objective in this study has been to arrive at the basic principles upon which Christian conduct is based. The problem then of this thesis is to make a study into the true moral law of God as revealed in Christ, including sufficient background to set forth Old Testament revelation, with the purpose to assist conscientious people in the attainment of true Christian liberty which is the light that guides and the salt that preserves.

Importance of the study. There are many contributing elements which add to the confusion of thought in Christian liberty. The Bible as progressive revelation presents the problem of interpretation. The Old Testament record with its ceremonial and national laws must be understood. To apply this record directly to Christian living is to revert back to externalism and legalism. It must be understood

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<sup>2</sup> Gal. 5:13.

within its historical framework. Unwise teaching of the Bible will not only confuse the person involved but this person will then in turn misrepresent the Christian life to others. Such faulty belief brings neither victory to the individual nor glory to God.

The impact of church tradition can have either a contributing or a detrimental influence in the lives of Christians. Church tradition becomes harmful when certain customs become so established that these become identified with the Christian life. Thus, new converts must often accept all the old traditions if they are to be truly Christian. Such additions can be harmful to healthy Christian expression. Paul exhorted the Galatian Christians to "stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage."<sup>3</sup> Paul's reference to the obligation of external rite as a yoke of bondage is indicative of the seriousness of such additions when imposed as requirements of salvation.

There is another source of confusion which arises from the minds of religious but unregenerate persons. Such religious enthusiasts sometimes gather followings which are almost Satanic in the sowing of confusion. These groups are often propagated under the guise of the Christian gospel.

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<sup>3</sup> Gal. 5:1.



Therefore additional perplexity is often heaped upon the sincere seeker of Christian truth. He may give up in despair or even accept the error and become a religious monstrosity to hinder the progress of true Christianity.

The importance of clarity regarding Christian conduct extends even beyond the bounds of mere confusion of mind and a misrepresentation of the gospel of Christ. An emphasis upon externals as essential elements of Christian faith leads to a loss of individual initiative. The lack of such initiative must necessarily be replaced by some form of coercion which kills the joy of Christian service. Such suppression of Christian liberty with its attending bondage, will kill all incentive for new inspiration which is needed to lift the vision unto the horizon of opportunity.

The importance of this problem is heightened by the frightful truth that religious observances can become the means of the most subtle and harmful of sins. It was against such sins that Jesus spoke with such vehemence. The Pharisaical sins of pride, self-righteousness, and censoriousness were condemned by Jesus so severely.<sup>4</sup> External observance of rules in accordance with one's personal convictions lead to such sins when these rules are made as essential to true Christian living. This is inevitable.

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<sup>4</sup> Matthew 23; Luke 11:37-54

One almost unconsciously supposes himself to be the norm and all who fail to conform become condemned. This in turn tends to exalt the pride of the one judging. To be guilty of such a spirit is a most serious offence which must receive its rightful denunciation. This does not mean that a Christian will not practice temperance. C. S. Lewis interprets Christian temperance as abstaining, for a good reason, from something which he likes to see other people enjoying.<sup>5</sup> He goes on to say that one of the marks of a certain type of bad man is that he can't give up a thing himself without wanting everyone else to give it up. An individual Christian may see fit to give up all sorts of things for special reasons, but, Mr. Lewis believes, the moment he starts saying the things are bad in themselves, or looking down his nose at other people who do use them, he has taken the wrong turning.<sup>6</sup> Certainly such an attitude will save one from the pitfall of Pharisaical piety.

The wide-spread confusion in the thinking of devout Christian people as to conduct and the tragic consequences to which extremes lead, is sufficient evidence to warrant a study of the principles of Christian liberty. A church

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<sup>5</sup> C. S. Lewis, Christian Behaviour (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1946), p. 9.

<sup>6</sup> Loc. cit.

without the true spirit of Christian liberty must resort to the principle of external emphasis. Such emphases are manifested in legalism, ritualism, cold orthodoxy, and in pure morality. On the other hand liberty without the restraining influence of the Spirit of God often leads to license, laxity, and indifference. Martin Luther's attack against the authority of the Catholic hierarchy of his day freed the peasants from the galling yoke of papal authority, but the revolt which followed revealed the lack of an inner dynamic of truth and righteousness to control their actions.

Along with these flagrant extremes are found foolish tangents within the sphere of evangelical Christianity which are also a source of difficulty. Young Christians are often confused by ill-advised counsel similar to that which the Antioch Christians received--that they must be circumcised and keep the law of Moses.<sup>7</sup>

There is no dearth of published material dealing with an interpretation of the Bible regarding God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. Volumes have been written on sin, salvation, grace, and faith. Bible students continue to speculate as to the events of the future. However, very little has been written to help the Christian in the working out of this faith in practical life. The deficit of work in

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<sup>7</sup> Acts 15:5.

this field plus the prime importance of its implications has led the writer of this thesis to make this investigation.

## II. DEFINITIONS OF TERMS USED

Law. Law can be simply defined as an established order. The usage of the word will depend upon the type of order to which it refers. Law can demand but it cannot accomplish. The Mosaic law was an added expedient to awaken the knowledge of sin and to prepare the way for the reception of the true law of the gospel. Moral law is that eternal order of righteousness within the limits of which God desires man to live. Christian law is the "order that pardons freely giving gratuitously and demands nothing more than faith, which gives God his honour by humbly renouncing the assertion of one's own will and trusting in God's grace and omnipotence. This faith being in Jesus Christ."<sup>8</sup> This law is known as the law of love.

Christian liberty. Christian liberty is that spirit which is directed by the constraining influence of love. Such a spirit is the manifestation of a relationship between God and man. Christian liberty is the freedom to exercise personal initiative in the expression of the law of love.

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<sup>8</sup> Samuel Macauley Jackson, Editor-in-Chief, The New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge (New York: Funk and Wagnalls Company, 1908), VI, 425.

Thus, this term refers to the practical living of daily Christian life.

### III. METHOD OF PROCEDURE

The primary source of material has been the Bible record. The writer has made no attempt to defend the Bible as revelation but has assumed its reliability on all matters upon which it deliberates. The Bible, when properly understood, is the revelation of Divine truth to man. This truth is adequate for all his needs in redemption and in practical guidance for daily living.

Christian liberty lies within a realm of freedom bound by the eternal moral law of God. The existence of this law of moral order does not act as a yoke of bondage to confine life, but rather enlightens man's vision as to the freedom of truth and righteousness. God's full revelation of truth as it is in Jesus Christ, His grace and mercy in forgiveness, and His power to transform lives, are all Divine works which bring "whosoever will" into harmony with true righteousness. Thus the Christian's life expresses the righteousness of God. Such a life is limited only as to unrighteousness and by self-imposed restraints. These voluntary abstinences are motivated by love for others and practiced for the well being of all.

It is therefore necessary to define this universal moral law of God. The writer has first endeavored to establish

this as a basic premise by a survey of Bible history and as revealed in the teachings and life of Jesus Christ. Upon this foundation an interpretation of Christian liberty within this law is set forth by references to the life of Christ and to Paul, the pattern Christian. The two extremes are presented to act as boundaries for the expression of this liberty. An interpretation of civil law as it relates to Christian liberty is included as essential to this thesis. All Scripture references used are from the King James version of the Bible. It is the hope of the writer that the conclusions reached by this study will prove helpful to Christian people and will bring glory to God by the victorious fruitful living of true Christian liberty.

## CHAPTER II

### GOD'S UNIVERSAL MORAL LAW

Central in importance to any problem which relates to personal conduct is the fact of law. It is impossible to establish any principles of ethics apart from an adequate foundation of law. Thus, unless such a foundation can be secured, any formulations of personal opinion will fail to impress the minds and hearts of people. Is there such a foundation? It is the conviction of the writer that such a law is inherent in the universe. This chapter shall attempt to substantiate this assumption.

The fact of law in the physical realm is widely recognized. Wide diversity of opinion exists as to the explanation of the presence of these laws, but their presence is almost beyond dispute. Modern science is built upon these immutable laws of the universe. Such laws are necessary to bind together and to control the inert physical bodies of the universe. Such established order must, of necessity, have been part of original creation. Law is thus an inherent part of the universe which maintains order and provides dependence.

A thorough-going materialist must reduce man to the structure of the universe. Man then would be another form of nature which is controlled by these same physical laws. A Christian view of man recognizes this relationship but must

include much more. Man bears the image of God and as such is a personal self-determining being with a moral nature capable of fellowship with God and his fellow-man.<sup>1</sup> The inadequacy of the laws of nature is obvious. Yet there must be included some foundational means of control to give direction, and to prescribe limitations. Only the presence of such laws operative in the moral and rational sphere could man receive direction and achieve his intended purpose. Bishop R. S. Foster ascribes God as sovereign ruler over all administering government according to the nature of the case. When He governs things it is by the law of a super-imposed necessity. Persons too are under law and administration but the methods will differ with the subjects.

The probability of an immediate announcement of law to a free mind is in every respect as great as the creation of light for the eye, or air for the lungs, or any of the provisions for the ordinary ongoing of things.<sup>2</sup>

This law has been rightly called God's moral government, and defined as "that declaration of God's will which directs and binds men, in every age and place, to their duty to him."<sup>3</sup> Such a law must be part of moral creation to maintain order and guard against chaos. This law also issues from the nature

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<sup>1</sup> Gen. 1:26.

<sup>2</sup> Randolph S. Foster, The Supernatural Book (New York: Eaton & Mains, 1889), p. 26.

<sup>3</sup> John M'Clintock and James Strong, Cyclopedia of Biblical, Theological, and Ecclesiastical Literature (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1895), V, 283.



of God and thus is denominated in Scripture as perfect, perpetual, holy, good, spiritual, and, exceeding broad. This law, as a transcript of the mind of God, must be the criterion of moral good and evil. Man, as a moral, rational, and spiritual being, is capable of recognizing this standard which then permits him to see his duty and to abstain from everything derogatory to the divine glory. This law affords the human race with the ideas of the holiness and purity of God.

Moral law, as a transcript of the divine mind, is eternal and unchangeable in its obligations and its sanctions. Therefore, the Bible is not the originator of moral law, but is rather confirmatory of this law. Its message deals with special revelation from God to a sinful race. Sin has necessitated special revelation to impress the demands of this holy law upon a degenerate race and to provide an adequate reconciliation. The gospel message is the good news of God's gracious dealing with way-ward mankind.<sup>4</sup>

It is in relation to this law that the progressive revelation of the Bible is understood as it deals with the redemption of man. It is also in relation to this law that the action of conscience in judgment either accuses or excuses conduct as the individual has understanding of this obligatory

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<sup>4</sup> John 3:16.

law. The moral sense of "oughtness" has come to be recognized as a universal experience of the human race. There is something in the very nature of man's being that is forced to recognize the moral obligation of truth when personally apprehended. Thus, rejection of this truth leads to guilt and condemnation. At the heart of the Bible message lie two central truths--the majesty of the law of God and sin as an offense against that law. Jesus Christ Himself made His appeal to the individual human heart on the basis of truth.<sup>5</sup> As He lived and taught the truth men were forced to give testimony that they could find no fault in Him.<sup>6</sup>

Supporting argument for the assumption of the existence of this moral law can be found in its evidences in human experience throughout the annals of man's history. God's revelation has been given to assist fallen man in this perception and to assure the transgressor of divine pardon and reconciliation. A simple division of history into pre-Mosaic, Mosaic, and Christian will serve to adequately illustrate this existence of moral order.

Pre-Mosaic Era. It is well to recognize that the formal declaration of "The Law" was not until more than one-half of the world's history had run its course. Millions of

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<sup>5</sup> John 18:37.

<sup>6</sup> John 19:4.

people had lived and died before Moses ascended the smoking, quaking Sinai to receive the Divinely inscribed tablets of stone. Yet who would be so foolish to suppose that law began at Sinai. Certainly God's judgment of the generation at the time of Noah could only be just as this civilization stood condemned on the basis of broken laws. Paul spans the centuries of man's history with a verdict that all have sinned,<sup>7</sup> and bases this verdict upon a universal principle of moral government. "Sin is not imputed when there is no law," he said.<sup>8</sup>

It is necessary to consider man's original state prior to the fall. In what respect did it possess the character of revelation? An understanding of man's created state and his fall with its resultant effects are basic before the truth of revelation is appreciated. Thus a brief statement as to origin is necessary. To state that the fundamental elements of moral obligation must have been in the very constitution of man may appear as groundless supposition. Yet this is not vain "beating-in-the-air" but a conclusion of rational logic which is clearly affirmed by Scripture. The statement that man is a being created in the image and likeness of God<sup>9</sup> is pregnant with meaning. Man's place of dominion denotes the

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<sup>7</sup> Rom. 5:12.

<sup>8</sup> Rom. 5:13.

<sup>9</sup> Gen. 1:26.

fact of intellectual ability of a free moral being. The command to subdue the earth assumes the ability to search into and to know the truth of things. Man was in the likeness of his Creator in that he was a free rational being. Man was capable of distinguishing right and wrong and thus was morally responsible in conduct. He was free to choose the good in the light of reason to direct to the good, but was under no constraining force to obey the direction. However, a pure moral nature would prompt the will to choose the good. Surely a blessed and an immortal life would have been man's portion if he would have continued to realize the true idea of his being.

On these grounds, partly derived from the testimony of Scripture, partly from the reflection on the nature and constitution of the human soul, we are fully warranted to conclude, that in man's creation-state there was implanted the grounds of moral obligation--the elements of a law inwrought into the very framework of his being, which called him perpetually to aim at conformity to the will and character of God.<sup>10</sup>

Adam was thus in law rather than under law, for the law was written on his heart in creation. It was in Adam's very nature to think and act in accordance with the principles of Divine character and government, but at the same time also his imperative obligation. It is as the Scripture says, "To him that knoweth to do good and doeth it not, to him it is sin."<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Patrick Fairbairn, The Revelation of Law in Scripture (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1868), p. 44.

<sup>11</sup> James 4:17.

Adam must conduct himself as the representative and steward of God in the fulfilling of his benevolent design. It is also well to realize that in the first pair, humanity itself was on trial. It is not within the scope of this paper to attempt an exhaustive study of the temptation and fall of man. It is sufficient to merely note that this moral test imposed no burden, but required only the exercise of a measure of personal restraint in respect to the authority of God. History is a commentary of the effects of man's failure. Doubt as to God's goodness, disbelief of His testimony, and the making self-gratification the paramount consideration all violated the principle of love. Disaffection must assume the attitude of contrariety to this Divine ordinance and discover itself in a disposition to eat of the tree.

Death entered as the stern, yet sublime proof, that in Divine government of the world the moral must carry over into the natural; that conformity to the principles of righteousness is the indispensable condition of blessing; and that even if grace should interpose to rectify the evil that had emerged, and place the hopes of mankind on a better footing than that of nature, this grace must reign through righteousness, and overcome death by overcoming the sin which caused it.<sup>12</sup>

Transgression changed man's relation to God and to His law. The law's first aim was to teach and command. It becomes a judging authority only after violation. Such a witness of condemnation has always been met by Divine grace for the penitent and the believing.

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<sup>12</sup> Fairbairn, op. cit., p. 59.

Abel's acceptable sacrifice unto God<sup>13</sup> stands as a memorial of God's grace in behalf of the penitent sinner. The brief outline of the succeeding generations as recorded in the first eleven chapters of Genesis reveals man still as a morally responsible person. The law has been retained though imperfectly. The sense of "oughtness" persists. Man continued to feel morally obligated to do the best he knew. Longevity of life would naturally tend to preserve this moral truth. However, with self ruling instead of God, increasing multitudes following the rebellious way of Cain must seek their own end. Such progression leads to greater and greater darkness with the corresponding increase of sinful expressions of conduct. Such men as Abel, Seth, Enoch, and Noah must have been a continual goad to the conscience of those bent on wickedness. Surely they were without excuse as they continued to live contrary to the law written in their hearts. A consciousness of this law must have been quickened by the living of these righteous men. Noah must have done all within his ability to influence a reformation as he has been called a preacher of righteousness.<sup>14</sup> Yes, God's judgment is according to truth against them that commit such things.<sup>15</sup> With

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<sup>13</sup> Gen. 4:4.

<sup>14</sup> 2 Pet. 2:5.

<sup>15</sup> Rom. 2:2.

divine testimony regarding the exceeding wickedness prevalent at the time of Noah, who would question the wisdom of God for using such a catastrophic judgment. As humanity had a new beginning with Noah and his family, this vivid lesson should have acted as a mighty restraint against disobedience and as a strong incentive for righteousness.

The memory of this great deluge has been incorporated into the literature of the ages, yet its moral lesson was soon forgotten. By the time of Abram, the human race was again deep in idolatry with its attending vices. The construction of a high tower in the land of Shinar represented organized rebellion against God but He interfered in the confusion of languages and the unfinished project remained as another mute testimony that "righteousness exalteth a nation but sin is a reproach to any people." The name Babel, meaning confusion, as this place came to be called, was illustrative of the result of disobedience. Terah, Abram's father, was also a worshipper of other gods<sup>16</sup> and it seems as though Abram stood almost alone as a man of faith.

This moral law is a necessity by virtue of the God-man relation. Man is to live in a divinely appointed sphere and that within the bounds of moral law. This law is a revelation of the nature of God stamped upon man created in

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<sup>16</sup> Joshua 24:2.

His likeness and image. The fact of sin with its consequences is a result of man's violation of this principle. The entire Bible record attests the validity of this principle. Abram was no doubt mindful of the great flood of past history, but the smoking ruins of the cities of the plains<sup>17</sup> must have impressed its moral truth indelibly upon his heart. Abram had interceded to God in behalf of these wicked cities. He had received confirmation from God that if peradventure ten righteous people would be found in the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, they would be spared.<sup>18</sup> As the father of the Hebrew nation looked out across the plain that next morning and beheld smoke ascending as from a furnace, surely the awful truth of the fact of sin as rebellious transgression against God's righteousness must have impressed itself upon his mind.

It is needless to multiply the evidence to illustrate this basic truth. A study into the lives of the nations as recorded in the Bible would add volumes to corroborate this already given. The tribes of Canaan, the Egyptians, Assyrians, Babylonians, and the Philistines were all judged on the basis of their relationship to truth as it had been realized by them. It is upon this foundation that the Mosaic

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<sup>17</sup> Gen. 19:28.

<sup>18</sup> Gen. 18:32.



law as well as all special revelation becomes more understandable.

Mosaic period. The distinctive characteristic of this period was as it related to the Decalogue. However this distinction must necessarily be regarded only as progression in God's moral government. Nothing new was republished on Sinai but the moral enactments of this "Law" were rather God's objectification of the changeless law which had always been. This law which had been written on the table of men's heart was now to challenge their waning moral zeal by God's direct, "Thou shalt not." All revelation is a disclosure of divine truth which manifests the nature of God. This revelation is given to a lost race with the invitation to return on the basis of redemption provided. God has attested His revelation with such objective authentication as was necessary to gain acceptance in the minds of men. Miracles were used only in cases of extreme darkness to add a stamp of authority to the messenger. Usually God's appeal has been made only on the basis of doing the right. The plagues experienced in Egypt were attested by Pharaoh's magicians to have been caused by the finger of God.<sup>19</sup> The Scripture testifies that these signs were to witness unto God.<sup>20</sup> These

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<sup>19</sup> Ex. 8:19.

<sup>20</sup> Ex. 8:10; 9:14, 29.

plus the great deliverance at the Red Sea,<sup>21</sup> and the fearful physical manifestations at Sinai<sup>22</sup> must both confirm the desperate state of the people and add divine attestation to His law. Fairbairn has stated it thus:

Not till the centuries of antediluvian times had passed away, the centuries more after a new state of things had commenced its course did God see meet to manifest Himself to the world in the formal character of Lawgiver, and confront men's waywardness and impiety with a code of objective commands and prohibitions, in the peremptory tone, Thou shalt do this, and Thou shalt not do that:-- A proof, manifestly of God's unwillingness to assume this more severe aspect in respect to beings He had made in His own image, and press upon them, in the form of specific enactments, His just claims of their homage and obedience. He would rather--unspeakably rather--that they should know Him in the riches of His fatherly goodness, and should be moved, not so much by fear, as by forbearance and tenderness, to act toward Him a faithful and becoming part. Hence He delayed as long as possible the stringent and imperative revelation of law, which by the time alone of its appearance is virtually acknowledged to have been a kind of painful necessity, and in its very form is a 'reflection upon man's inconstancy of homage and love'.<sup>23</sup>

Thus it is evident that this revelation of law marked a fresh stage in the history of Divine dispensations, but one in which the same objects were in view. Both the ground of a sinner's confidence toward God, and the nature of the obligation growing out of it, remained essentially as they were.

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<sup>21</sup> Ex. 14:31.

<sup>22</sup> Ex. 19:16-18.

<sup>23</sup> Fairbairn, op. cit., p. 75.

A recognition of the character of God as true, holy, pure, and unchanging is adequate to substantiate this claim. To argue that this Mosaic law ushered in a new moral principle would reflect upon the being of God. All truth must be in harmony whether written in the heart of man, set forth in the Decalogue, expounded by the prophets, or as revealed by Christ Himself. If this be not so, we have no standard at all and our moral universe is one of flux. All truth is in harmony and as such points to the basic reality of divine moral law. It is interesting to note that back of the Law is the unchanging and the eternal "I AM".<sup>24</sup> The foundation of this law is love coming from God expressed in the character of their most gracious and faithful Redeemer as well as their righteous Lord. Such an objective statement of God's moral demands must of necessity assume an imperative character--yet the governing principle is love. Moses presented a proper exposition of this law when he said, "Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord: And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might."<sup>25</sup> Jesus too stated that this was the first and great commandment, and the second, "Thou shalt love thy

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<sup>24</sup> Ex. 20:2.

<sup>25</sup> Dt. 6:4,5.

neighbor as thyself,"<sup>26</sup> is like unto it.

A brief commentary on the Decalogue will suffice to reveal this basic truth. Morality of course is grounded in religion and therefore a right relation with God tends to insure right relation with others. Certainly all must recognize the close relationship between these two. Thus the first three commandments are definitely related to love of God. He alone is to be worshipped and that in spirit and in holiness.<sup>27</sup> The fourth and fifth too are related to love of God as one day is designed for worship and parents are to be loved as God's earthly representatives.<sup>28</sup> The other tablet prescribes commandments of love to neighbors. Proper regard for life, chastity and honour, property, character and position, and motives are commanded.<sup>29</sup> The great principle of love has been enshrined in this revelation of God.

God has always been merciful in extending grace to those whose penitence is godly sorrow and who have come to Him for mercy with faith in His promise. The Scriptures give evidence of this from Adam to Christ. This revelation of the law did not exclude grace. In fact, the history of

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<sup>26</sup> Matt. 22:37-39.

<sup>27</sup> Ex. 20:3-7.

<sup>28</sup> Ex. 20:8-12.

<sup>29</sup> Ex. 20:13-17.

Israel knows nothing of law except in connection with promise and blessing. It was God as the Redeemer of Israel that spoke--"I am the Lord thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt."<sup>30</sup> Grace took precedence of law.

The covenant of law, assuming and rooting itself in the prior covenant of grace, only came to shut the heirs of promise up to that course of dutiful obedience toward God, and brotherly kindness to each other, by which alone they could accomplish the higher ends of their calling. In form only was there anything new in this, not in principle. . . . An advance was made by the entrance of the law over such preceding calls and appointments, and it was this--the obligation to rectitude of life resting upon the heirs of promise was now thrown into a categorical and imperative form, embracing the entire round of moral and religious duty.<sup>31</sup>

True, they could not of themselves keep the precepts of the law and constant backsliding revealed their lack of perception of the true law and their lack of moral strength. It was but gradually that this truth worked its way into their minds. However God's mercy and lovingkindness was not wanting and the transgressors had access to God through the divinely appointed means. Surely the law was as a schoolmaster to lead to Christ and had Israel at the time of Christ understood the truth of their law they would have recognized Christ who was the living embodiment of it.

A discussion of the Mosaic period as it gives evidence to the universal moral law would hardly be complete without

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<sup>30</sup> Ex. 20:2.

<sup>31</sup> Fairbairn, op. cit., p. 161.

some reference to the ministry of the prophets. Modern scholars have again reflected upon the character of God as a transient thing by interpreting the message of the prophets as containing something superior to the law of Moses. This is of course in harmony with the evolutionary naturalistic philosophy. The message of the prophets must be explanatory of the basic truth of the law as applied to existing conditions. This does not mean that there was not a progression of revelation and an unfolding of the will of God as well as a prophetic disclosure of Messianic truth. As they called people to repentance it was on the same basis of the changeless law of God as revealed in the law of Moses. It was rather the formal rite devoid of the spirit of faith that concerned the prophets. In reality, it was the prophets who had a proper understanding of the law. They upheld the eternal principles of righteousness, justice, and mercy. Isaiah deplored the sinful living of his people, preached the worthlessness of ritual as meritorious, and then pled with them to put away the evil of their doings. The grace of God, as always, was standing ready to forgive and Isaiah gave the Divine invitation, "Come now, and let us reason together. Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow."<sup>32</sup> The appeal of the prophets was always on

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<sup>32</sup> Isaiah 1:18.

the basis of the standard of the law--a law of true righteousness.

Jeremiah seeking to avert national disaster caused by moral bankruptcy appealed to the standard of righteousness. He too deplored the external as an end in itself and strove for a true revival among his people.<sup>33</sup> The prophets were not a priestly group, but rather men from all walks of life who acted as preachers of righteousness in their day proclaiming a message of repentance.

The ministry of the prophets was really twofold. They were striving for reform through religious revival, and they re-iterated the promises of ultimate triumph for the faithful. Their ministry included both Jew and Gentile nations and as such was a progression in God's redemptive revelation for the world and preparatory for the consummation of promise in the person of the Messiah.

The third period of history, namely the Christian era, will be the subject of the following chapter. As such, it will also add much evidence to the proposition of this chapter. The objective has been to establish moral law as a universal necessity as a basis for a personal holy God to govern mankind as a creation made in His own image. The writer feels that this objective has been sufficiently substantiated.

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<sup>33</sup> Jer. 7:1-14.

Naturally this presentation has been limited, nevertheless, argument is unnecessary beyond that necessary to establish its proposition.



## CHAPTER III

### CHRIST AND THE LAW

The doctrine of the deity of Christ is the central pillar of the Christian faith. The Scripture states that grace and truth came by Him.<sup>1</sup> Jesus Christ was thus the living embodiment of the great principles of the law of God. That which had been objectified on Sinai was now personalized in the living Christ. All revelation from the great "I AM" regardless of form must express His changeless nature. Jesus then did not come to abrogate law, but rather to bring to light the truth about the law. Geikie recognized this relationship when he stated that "Jesus stripped the obsolete wrappings from the Law and proclaimed it in its divine ideal as binding forever."<sup>2</sup> A study of the life of Christ furnishes ample evidence to establish this vital truth.

It is important to recognize that the law could not make righteous. This holy revelation could but arouse condemnation in the hearts of an unholy people. Such people can only plead for God's mercy in forgiveness. It is also important to recognize that the Levitical worship with its priesthood, rites, and sacrifices must point toward a

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<sup>1</sup> John 1:17.

<sup>2</sup> Cunningham Geikie, The Life and Words of Christ (New York: John B. Alden, 1889), p. 426.

fulfillment in a perfect priest and a perfect sacrifice. Thus in God's progressive revelation these things were preparatory and divinely ordained to prepare a people for the coming of the Redeemer. The essential element of Old Testament religion was moral. Failure and misapprehension of the people must be recognized by all who read Hebrew history. What they sorely lacked was the ability to be what their law demanded.

At the time of Christ there had developed a state of general expectancy for the coming of a Redeemer. It is true that even the most devout lacked full discernment as to the nature of this deliverance, yet their longing for redemption on the strength of their own Scriptures must prepare the way for God's Messiah. Expectation must have been heightened as John the Baptist began his unusual ministry. His message of "Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand,"<sup>3</sup> drew people from far and near and many were baptized confessing their sins. Jesus clearly identified Himself with the past when he said, "Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill."<sup>4</sup> Christ fulfilled the law by perfect obedience and by bringing out its true spirituality as a law of love. He did what the law required.

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<sup>3</sup> Matt. 3:2.

<sup>4</sup> Matt. 5:17.

Jesus of Nazareth did what all others were unable not only to accomplish, but even adequately to conceive, because He was Emmanuel, God with us. So in spite of the lack of human advantage, and the fierce opposition of powerful foes, He fulfilled the task with which expectation had been so long travailing in birth, and left the mysterious problem concerning the future of the Divine kingdom among men written out in the facts of His marvelous history, and the rich dowry of grace and blessing He brought in for His redeemed.<sup>5</sup>

Two aspects of law need clarification at this point. The Jewish interpretation of the law and the prophets at the time of Christ was a perversion overlaid with many self-imposed traditions; and, the New Testament use of law--referring to the Decalogue, to the ceremonial, to the civil, as well as to the eternal law of love. Lack of understanding regarding this will naturally confuse one's thinking.

These perversions will be dealt with at length in a later chapter. It will suffice now to refer to Jesus and His relation to the existing religious parties of the day. Jesus must move in independence with regard to these parties, yet He should exercise a close dependence upon the religion which they professed in common to maintain. He entered, as a matter of course, into the heritage of all preceding revelations, and therefore could introduce nothing absolutely new but could only exhibit the proper growth and development of the old.

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<sup>5</sup> Patrick Fairbairn, The Revelation of Law in Scripture (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1868), p. 213.

Jesus embraced the Judaism of the law and the prophets and took it for His special calling to unfold the germs of holy principle which were contained in the past revelations of God and by word and deed ripen them into a system of truth and duty adapted to the mature stage which had now been reached of the Divine dispensation.<sup>6</sup>

It is important to distinguish between the symbolical or ritual things of the Old Covenant and its strictly moral precepts. Jesus made this distinction very clear in His ministry. He regarded these ceremonial rules as provisional substitutes for better things to come which had no inherent value in themselves and were to give way before the great realities they fore-shadowed. He expressly repudiated the idea of washing having in itself any power to cleanse from spiritual defilement, or of true purification at all depending upon the kind of food that might be partaken of.<sup>7</sup> The functions of prophet, priest, and king were combined in Himself, yet He received no outward anointing in the traditional manner of the Jews. Jesus attended the temple when it was safe and practical to do so, yet there is no intimation that offerings were made either by Him or His disciples. Certainly His ministry spelled death to the old ceremonialism.

It bespoke a speedy removing of the old external fabric of Judaism, yet such a removing as would leave greatly more than it took--instead of the imperfect and temporary shadow, the eternal substance. And if one might still

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid., p. 215.

<sup>7</sup> Matt. 15:1-20.

speaking in the hallowed language of the sanctuary, of a temple, and a sacrifice, and a daily ministration, and a sanctity to be preserved and a pollution to be shunned, it must be as bound to no specific localities, or stereotyped forms, but as connected with the proper freedom and enlargement of God's true children.<sup>8</sup>

Regarding the moral law the Lord acted in a different manner. Instead of doing away with these precepts, He rather greatly heightened them by His exemplary living and personal emphasis. The truthfulness of the revelation of Sinai became understood through His teaching and with fresh sanctions was enforced as the essential rule of righteousness in God's kingdom.<sup>9</sup>

Jesus summed up the essence of the Mosaic revelation in an answer to an inquiring Pharisee who came questioning Him as to the greatest commandment. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind," said Jesus, for "This is the first and great commandment." He continued by saying that the second was like unto it, namely, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." Jesus then added, "On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets."<sup>10</sup> Thus Christ Himself has stated that the basic principle of the moral law is love. This principle has been made understandable through the life, teaching, and

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<sup>8</sup> Fairbairn, op. cit., p. 218.

<sup>9</sup> Matt. 5:17-19.

<sup>10</sup> Matt. 22:36-40.

death of Jesus Christ.

Love to God. It is difficult to separate true love into these two distinct phases of love to God and love to man for they are so closely related. True love to God issues in love to man--yet there are great differences. Love to God is heavenward, while love to man is earthward. Love to God is foundational for a proper love to man. A consideration of Christ and His relationship with the Father will clarify this fact.

The most direct witness as to this relationship must come from Christ Himself in personal testimony. Jesus did not, however, spend much time in telling people of His love for the Father. His life was rather a demonstration of that fact. Yet sufficient personal statements were made by Him during His teaching ministry to make such a direct witness possible. It is only natural to expect that the law, "Honour thy father and thy mother," would be clearly exemplified by Christ. Thus honour which He pays to His heavenly Father will both exemplify His love to the Father and illuminate the earthly relationship of parents and children.

Jesus almost always referred to God as "My Father" and thus revealed the intimate relationship which existed between the incarnate Son and the eternal Father. Jesus sought to bring praise to God both through personal testimony and

and through works. During a conflict with the Pharisees, Jesus testified, "I honour my Father."<sup>11</sup> What a living witness of the Old Testament promise that "them that honour me I will honour," for Jesus later testified, "It is my Father that honoureth me."<sup>12</sup> Jesus honoured His Father by constantly reminding listeners that His works and teachings were because of the Father. The Jews were infuriated when Jesus stated that His work was the work of the Father, but He hastened to say, "The Son can do nothing of himself."<sup>13</sup> Jesus also said, "My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me."<sup>14</sup> Such statements as, "I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father;<sup>15</sup> I came not to do mine own will;<sup>16</sup> I do always those things that please him;<sup>17</sup> and, I know him and keep his sayings,"<sup>18</sup> are additional testimonies which the Lord made in loving tribute to His Father. Prior to the great manifestation of divine power in the raising of

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<sup>11</sup> John 8:49.

<sup>12</sup> John 8:54.

<sup>13</sup> John 5:19.

<sup>14</sup> John 7:16.

<sup>15</sup> John 5:30.

<sup>16</sup> John 6:38.

<sup>17</sup> John 8:29.

<sup>18</sup> John 8:55.

Lazarus, Jesus testified that this work was to be for the glory of God. Standing before the open tomb Jesus prayed, "Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me. And I knew that thou hearest me always: but because of the people which stand by I said it that they may believe that thou hast sent me."<sup>19</sup> Such exaltation of the Father must have characterized His entire ministry for always the people "glorified God" for the works He wrought. Yes, the Son truly loved the Father and sought by every means to honour Him. This great spirit is climaxed at the close of the Lord's earthly ministry in His high-priestly prayer in which He prayed, "I have glorified thee on the earth."<sup>20</sup> Truly, this statement described the Lord's ministry as He sought in every way to glorify His Father. Jesus loved God with all His heart, mind, and strength. This love is further revealed by a consideration of His obedience.

Love of a son for his father manifests itself in obedience to the will of the father in a desire to please him. It is obvious that Jesus' supreme purpose was to do His Father's will regardless of the personal cost. The glory of God and the fulfilling of His divine mission on behalf of mankind was the passion of His soul. This Jesus accomplished

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<sup>19</sup> John 11:42.

<sup>20</sup> John 17:4.



at the cost of criticism, self-sacrifice, suffering, and death.

Jesus entered into His public ministry as Messiah with His heavenly Father's affirmation, "Thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."<sup>21</sup> The incarnate Son was soon in the midst of an intense period of testing. All that transpired in the heart and soul of Christ during that forty day period spent in the wilderness has not been recorded. Yet one thing is certain, His loyalty to the Father was severely tested. Would Jesus commit Himself in complete obedience to the Father, or would He yield to self-assertion. Truly, He was tested at all points. Physically weak from hunger, the Son of God must repel any decision which would show lack of faith in God. He must trust His Father implicitly. Failure would reveal unbelief which must issue in rebellion or the setting up of self in the place of God. As temptations were hurled against every door of His soul with subtle suggestions to assert His own will to have, or to be, or to do, Jesus maintained implicit trust in His Father and emerged a tried and victorious Son.<sup>22</sup>

This obedience to the will of His heavenly Father characterized the entire ministry of Jesus and is the living

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<sup>21</sup> Mark 1:11.

<sup>22</sup> Matt. 4:1-11.

example of the law of the love to God. The Scripture is clear on its teaching regarding the suffering of Christ. It was vicarious suffering in obedience to the will of His Father for the salvation of lost mankind.<sup>23</sup> This suffering manifests the love of God for people, but it also illustrates love of man to God. Jesus came to live the moral law in the flesh and thereby illustrated this basic truth. Truly He exemplified this love amidst the most difficult conditions a man has ever faced. Experiencing trials far beyond what even a sinful man has experienced, yet His devotion, loyalty, and trust in His heavenly Father never failed. What a living testimony of what it means to truly love God with all your heart. Volumes could be written and included to substantiate this claim. Constant opposition by the Jewish hierarchy, misunderstandings by even His closest friends and loved ones, and disloyalty and even betrayal by some who had once followed closely, all could be included in the trials encountered as He sought to do His Father's will. Yet, a good look at the cross will suffice to firmly establish this fact.

The finite understanding and experience of man is incapable of describing the great crisis of the cross. The anguish of soul in the Garden of Gethsemane is beyond description. The incarnate Son pled, "O my Father, if it

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<sup>23</sup> Matt. 20:28; Mark 10:45.

be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will but as thou wilt."<sup>24</sup> The agony of the partaking of this cup brought such torture of soul that He literally sweat blood.<sup>25</sup> Human strength was unable to sustain Him through such a crisis, and God the Father sent a messenger from heaven to impart the needed assistance for survival.

It was from this experience that Jesus rose to face Judas, and suffered the humility of an open betrayal into the hands of His enemies by one of the twelve. Surely Jesus had every right to question the wisdom of His Father. Betrayed by one of His own, deserted by the other eleven who fled for personal safety, and faced with a hostile hierarchy and an indifferent populace, it would seem as though further effort to bring light to the world to be useless. Yet no word of protest escaped His lips, and His loyalty to His Father did not waver. With complete trust in Him, Jesus said, "Thus it is necessary to be."<sup>26</sup> This complete abandonment to the will of God enabled Him to endure the scathing denunciations of false accusers, the mockery of the soldiers, the jeering of the multitudes, the cruelty of the terrible Roman scourging, the nausea of the spittle, and the unjust condemnation of

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<sup>24</sup> Matt. 26:39.

<sup>25</sup> Luke 22:44.

<sup>26</sup> Matt. 26:54.

death by crucifixion. As the sinless Son was hanging painfully on that Roman cross as a common thief, the Syrian sun suddenly hid its face. Yet the gloom of night that fell upon that Palestinian landscape seemed daylight in contrast to the horrible darkness that enshrouded His soul in blackness. Jesus could endure the travail of soul, He could suffer the ignominy of the shame, He would withstand the unbearable physical suffering, but when the face of His beloved Father was lost from view, He could only cry out in a desperate plea, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"<sup>27</sup> Truly, that was a heart cry of love for the Father. Yet, even in that darkness of heart as He was hanging there dying alone, He could feebly utter, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit."<sup>28</sup>

"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart," has now a depth of meaning which should challenge every person's heart. Christ has given content to this great law which God has ordained as a ruling principle to guide and direct mankind. It is such obedience in love and trust to God in doing His will that furnishes the dynamic and the motive for a proper love to others.

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<sup>27</sup> Matt. 27:46.

<sup>28</sup> Luke 23:36.

Love to man. An analysis of the life of Christ as a living witness of the truth of the second great law, namely, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself," is necessary to complete this personalization of the law of God. Evidence is so abundant that the matter of selection creates the main problem in presenting this aspect of the law. The entire evidence used to illustrate Christ's love to the Father has its application in His love toward men. Yet to avoid repetition, a different approach will be made. This love toward man can best be presented by noticing His contacts with different people.

True love toward man is irrespective of social standing, and Jesus was no respecter of persons. Jews, Gentiles, rich, poor, despised, noble, morally good, and the most lowly sinner were all of equal concern to Him. What a contrast this was to the narrow nationalism of the Jews and even a greater contrast to the rigid exclusiveness of the Pharisees. Jesus conversed freely with a sinful Samaritan woman.<sup>29</sup> This woman was hated by the Jews because of her race, and was no doubt despised by her own people because of her sinfulness. Yet Jesus showed His love by a patient and careful presentation of truth which led her to a place of faith and victory. Gentiles were often called "dogs," but

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<sup>29</sup> John 4:7.

Jesus honored the faith of a humble Gentile mother and wrought deliverance for her demon possessed daughter.<sup>30</sup> The lepers were shunned as unclean and treated worse than animals. Yet the Bible records the coming of a leprous man to Jesus who "touched" him and brought deliverance in response to his faith.<sup>31</sup> Jesus treated the respectable and the wealthy in the same spirit. The disciples were men of good reputation and character. Nicodemus was a leader in Israel and was received by Jesus in the same manner as others. It is unnecessary to labor this aspect of human love. Jesus was no respecter of persons.

The nature of this love arouses compassion and extends mercy. The great needs of people on every hand aroused a deep feeling of pity which led Him to do much in alleviating this distress. The record says that, "When he saw the multitudes he was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd."<sup>32</sup> The fainting four thousand aroused compassion in His heart so that He fed them before sending them on their way.<sup>33</sup> Entering the city of Nain, His heart was deeply

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<sup>30</sup> Matt. 15:28.

<sup>31</sup> Matt. 8:3.

<sup>32</sup> Matt. 9:36.

<sup>33</sup> Matt. 15:32.

stirred by the sight of a sobbing widow following the funeral procession for her only son. Moved with compassion He spoke to her saying, "Weep not," and proceeded to deliver the son alive to his mother.<sup>34</sup>

It is the mercy of Christ, however, that expresses the depth of this love. Love to all and that often in terms of compassion is wonderful love, but to treat an offender, not on the basis of just desert, but in forgiving mercy is even greater. Mercy could be defined as the granting of favor to the undeserving. Such treatment to those who return good with evil is a real test of love. How did Jesus meet this test? His teaching was to forgive "until seventy times seven."<sup>35</sup> Peter asked the question that led to this answer, and then later learned the importance of such forgiveness when he so profanely denied his Lord. However, it was while Jesus was suffering the torture of the cross amidst the cruel taunts of the persecuting mob, that this forgiving love rose to its apex in living experience. While the jesting Roman soldiers were engaging in the casting of lots for Christ's garments, and the thoughtless mob was mocking Him, Jesus uttered this memorable prayer, "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do."<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Luke 7:13.

<sup>35</sup> Matt. 18:22.

<sup>36</sup> Luke 23:34.

It was Jesus' love for man that motivated His pronouncement of woe upon the sinful self-righteous. The realization of the terrible temporal and eternal consequences of evil must direct Him to speak the truth even when it hurts. Thus, even these severe statements made directly to the Pharisees, are not a contradiction to this principle of love to man.

This exemplary love toward man would not be complete without the very important fact of the vicarious nature of Christ's atonement.<sup>37</sup> This is love so great that it will stop at nothing short of the supreme sacrifice when such is necessary to save the objects of that love.

Jesus not only stated the truth of the law, but His life was an illustration of this truth. This has given content to what it means to love your neighbor as yourself. That this is a responsibility of all is obvious from this clear statement made by Christ:

A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.<sup>38</sup>

The writer has sought to relate Christ with the law of God by showing His life and death to be a living example

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<sup>37</sup> Rom. 5:8.

<sup>38</sup> John 13:34,35.



of this law. God sent His Son to this earth that He might live this truth in the flesh. Sufficient reference has been made to achieve this goal. The way is now prepared for a statement of the Christian life in relation to law. The difficulties of Christian living would surely be diminished if such love would be fully incorporated with every Christian life. A Christian's life will certainly magnify the Lord and be fruitful in relation to the personal appropriation of this true law through grace.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE CHRISTIAN AND THE LAW

In the light of the previous argument, it is evident that a Christian must be still under law. This law, however, is not as a set of rules to dictate to every movement of life, but as a principle of love. The Christian has not merely subscribed to a new code of conduct. If all man needed was to know right, then to reveal this right would suffice. Knowledge would be virtue and salvation would consist only in a revelation of the truth.

God's revelation of Himself has always included both law and grace. The only difference between Old Testament and New Testament revelation regarding law and grace is one of emphasis. The Mosaic revelation raised aloft the claims of Divine righteousness to meet the corrupt tendencies of human nature, yet promises of grace and blessing intermingled with its stern prohibitions and injunctions. The Sermon on the Mount begins with blessings and gives grace the prominence, yet underneath are the same stern demands of righteousness and law. Both revelations include the same fundamental principles. Jesus did not cancel men's obligation to any part of righteousness as inculcated in the Law, but sought to free this righteousness from the restrictive bonds that had been laid upon it, and bring it out in its proper breadth

and fulness. Thus, instead of being freed from law, its claims have been made understandable through Christ and with His fresh sanction becomes an imperative law of righteousness.

It is true that, in a certain aspect, this relation of the believer to the word, the salvation, and the life of Christ, may be regarded as coming within the domain of law; for in everything that concerns it--both the provision of grace and blessing in Christ, and the way in which this comes to be realized in the experience of men--there is a revelation of the will of God, which necessarily carries with it an obligation to obedience--has the essence and force of law. Man ought to receive the Gospel of Christ, and enter into the fellowship of His death and resurrection: they are commanded to do so, and in doing it they are said to be obedient to the Gospel, or to the truth therein exhibited.<sup>1</sup>

One's relationship to God who is truth will determine one's relationship to His law. It is important to here restate the purpose of law. It's first aim is to teach and to command. However, when one fails in the obligation to do this law, it of course becomes a witness against him. Thus, revelation impressing the law upon transgressors must first produce conviction. In other words, a person must first be a Christian before he can start living as a Christian. Jesus called all to repentance without exception. He recognized the difference in men--good, evil; just, unjust; sound, sick; good soil, bad soil--nevertheless He had a standard by which all men alike were pronounced sinful, and in need of repentance. In comparison with God all were unclean, corrupt, dark,

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<sup>1</sup> Patrick Fairbairn, The Revelation of Law in Scripture (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1868), p. 269.

blind, lustful, and selfish. They may be more or less sinful in degree, but all alike must seek forgiveness. In comparing men with men some are better and some worse, but with God all alike are sinners. As such they must come to God in child-like humility with no claim to merit, but conscious of their own weakness, resign themselves to the guidance of God and seek His forgiveness. It is only that men become convinced of sin in the proclamation of truth concerning Christ and His salvation that they can repent and enter into a spiritual union with Christ. However, the direct and immediate aspect under which Christ is made known in the Gospel is unquestionably that of a bestower of blessing, not a master of laws and service. He is made known as the gracious and merciful Redeemer who has at infinite cost wrought out the plan of our salvation, and laid freely open to our acceptance the whole treasury of its unsearchable riches. It is therefore with invitation and promise rather than with anything having the aspect of law. It is man's part to receive through the exercise of a living faith, the gifts so freely offered to him and to endeavor increasingly to apprehend the truth as it is in Christ and to grow in His likeness. In reference to the manner of effectual gospel presentation, Luther stated that many great and excellent men "knew not how to preach

Moses rightly, but sought to make a Moses out of Christ, out of the Gospel a law-book, out of the word works,"<sup>2</sup> and that this was the most effectual method to render Gospel and law alike of no avail for salvation.

Right relation to truth is necessary for a proper perception of truth. A believing appropriation of the word of Christ precedes the consequent spirit of life which flows from Christ to the members of His spiritual body. The Scripture states that if anyone has not the spirit of Christ, this one is not of him.<sup>3</sup> It is absolutely essential for a person to enter into a living relationship with Christ. All religious effort prior to this is in the realm of works, and righteousness does not come in this way. If this were true, works would possess merit, and this merit warrant the receiving of salvation. Effort to live according to Christian revelation on this basis would reduce Christianity to the level of other religious systems. Christianity differs radically in that the spirit of God takes up His abode within the human heart.<sup>4</sup>

The objective of this thesis is yet to be answered. Wide diversity of opinion among Christian groups regarding proper Christian conduct presents a serious problem to the

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 270.

<sup>3</sup> Rom. 8:9.

<sup>4</sup> Rom. 8:11.

conscientious Christian. It is now necessary to state the principles upon which Christian conduct is based. Such principles thus secured form a foundation for rational Christian judgment. A normal Christian is a rational, intelligent, and spiritual being living in a relationship with God through Christ. This relationship involves a likeness of nature, a oneness of purpose, and a vital union between God and man through the abiding presence of the Holy Spirit. Yet the Christian has not become sufficient in himself, but realizes that the source of all life and truth is God. It is the Christian's purpose to ever increasingly fulfill God's purpose in life by constantly striving to learn more of God and through growth in stature and in wisdom exemplify Him more fully.

This resolves itself into the problem of freedom and authority. It is not enough just to refer to the law of love as exemplified in Christ. It is true that divine love is the reflection of a holy nature and as such will characterize the body of Christ.<sup>5</sup> Yet Jesus, while identifying Himself with the religion of His people, often was compelled to conduct Himself in contradiction to their accepted modes of expression.<sup>6</sup> He clearly affirmed the authority of their Scriptures and yet

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<sup>5</sup> John 13:35.

<sup>6</sup> Mark 7:2; 3:2; Matt. 12:2.

lived and taught in opposition to the accepted interpretation of this Scripture. It is evident that herein lies great danger in either extreme. Yet persons are not to substitute church consciousness for individual consciousness. Christianity is not a mere social organization embodying certain beliefs and rules for a life to which individuals subscribe and thereby become Christians. Constant repetition of this basic fact is necessary for emphasis. Christianity involves personal relationship of individuals with the living Christ and as intelligent, rational, moral people, must receive their light and life from Him.<sup>7</sup> Unless such a relationship is established, all the church standards, rules, and even beliefs will not suffice to make a person a Christian. A Christian's authority rests in a conscious relationship with Christ as He has become known by means of the Bible record and personally appropriated through faith. The highest ideal of all so related must be to reflect the likeness of God and this can only be in an effulgence of pure all-embracing love to God and man.<sup>8</sup> Outward service alone is of no value.

Jesus brought the light of cheerful piety which made every act of daily life religious. He threw down the wall of separation. He lived among men and shared their joys and

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<sup>7</sup> John 15:5.

<sup>8</sup> Matt. 5:16.

their sorrows. He dignified the humblest details of life by making them subordinate to the single aim of His Father's glory. Religion does not lie in selfish and morbid devotion to personal interests whether in the desert or in the temple, but in loving work and self-sacrifice for God and others. The Christian must realize that love is the fulfillment of the law.<sup>9</sup>

Whereas the Old Testament dispensation was characterized by a prescribed system of rules, yet the law of love was also present. The Hebrews were commanded to love the Lord, honour their parents, be kind to strangers, and to treat the poor with compassion. No legal enactment forced the poor widow to cast the two mites, all that she had, into the treasury. No explicit word forced the penitent woman to wash the feet of Jesus with grateful tears. In such cases love was their only law prompting them to do what breathed the inmost spirit of the law, but what no express enactment of law could demand. Such a spirit of love is the reality of the redeemed. The Spirit given to the members of the Kingdom is the living law and renders unnecessary a detailed system of rules and prescriptions concerning all that should be done and exactly how to do it. Nevertheless the grand outlines of moral obligation remain in force and that love,

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<sup>9</sup> Rom. 13:8.



which is the fruit and evidence of the indwelling spirit, can only be recognized as a law to itself only as it runs in the channel of those requirements and is controlled by a sense of duty.<sup>10</sup> The man who is truly possessor of the spirit of Christ Jesus will live under the moral law--not as a pining serf, but as a free-man and fellow-heir. The gospel thus secures liberty but guards against licentiousness.

To look only, or even principally, to the demands of the law, constituted as human nature now is, cramps and deadens the energies of the soul, generates a spirit of bondage, which ever vacillating between the fear of doing too little, and the desire of not doing more than is strictly required, can know nothing of the higher walks of excellence and worth. On the other hand, the look to the grace and liberty of the Gospel away from the law of eternal rectitude, with which they stand inseparably connected, is to give a perilous license to the desires and emotions of the heart, nurses a spirit of individualism, which, spurning the restraints of authority, is apt to become the victim of its own caprice, or the pliant slave of vanity and lust; for true liberty, in the spiritual as well as the civil sphere, is a regulated freedom; it moves within the bonds of law, in a spirit of rational obedience; and the moment these are set aside, self-will rises to the ascendant, bringing with it the witchery and dominion of sin.<sup>11</sup>

The problem of authority is an acute one. A violent search for authority and a repudiation of authority is modern man's great contradiction. The extreme external authority in religion which characterizes the Roman Catholic Church destroys freedom and vitality of faith and assumes

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<sup>10</sup> 1 John 5:3.

<sup>11</sup> Fairbairn, op. cit., p. 283.

man's permanent incapacity. For Protestantism to assume like prerogatives is to fall into the same error for the principle is the same whether one bow to tradition, or to the pope, or to the church. Modern man takes the other extreme, assuming that man is in full maturity, and as such, makes himself a subjective criterion of truth and authority. The one conceives of the salvation of man as being like the rescue of a horse from a cistern by means of machinery without his intelligent cooperation; the other, as of a Chinaman who fell into the mire and tried to save himself by tugging at his own braids. The truth lies between these two extremes. Christianity is both objective and subjective. Man's free development is achieved not by the abolition of authority but by the recognition of it.

Christianity as authority has none of the unlawful elements of ecclesiasticism or other forms of tyranny. It is rather the crystallizing in objective form of the eternal verities of the spiritual universe, a deposit of truth which is consonant with the nature of God and man and all forms of being, and which projected outward from the invisible God upon the stage of history is necessarily in the first instance objective to man and then subjectively apprehended and gradually assimilated by him.<sup>12</sup>

Authority for a Christian is thus personal and that by a living communion with the living Christ. Christian men are under the authority of Christ. True freedom is found in submission to His authority. Freedom has been thus defined

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<sup>12</sup> Edgar Young Mullins, Freedom and Authority in Religion (Philadelphia: The Griffith and Rowland Press, 1913), p. 32.

as the "submitting to the strength of joyous faith in the needed and accessible help and life of a living and loving and sufficient God."<sup>13</sup> "Apart from me ye can do nothing," and, "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me," are used by Speer to illustrate the aspects of freedom and authority in the Christian faith. "It is because we believe those two things that we can believe rationally in liberty. A liberty that does not know its limitations or that has no access to energy can be no liberty at all."<sup>14</sup>

Dean E. Walker has stated that the authority of Christ lies in His Lordship, in our nature, and in God's witness. "Human life has meaning because the Lord of life is a Person, in submission to and with whom men find freedom and through whom God is known by exact and authoritative manifestation."<sup>15</sup> It is not the law, but Christ, that Christians are indebted to for pardon and life. He has brought in the everlasting righteousness, which by its infinite worth has merited eternal life for as many as believe upon Him. When a believer receives Christ, he is not only justified by grace, but he comes into a state of grace which is a living, reigning, and

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<sup>13</sup> Robert E. Speer, The Gospel and the New World (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1919), p. 21.

<sup>14</sup> Loc. cit.

<sup>15</sup> Dean E. Walker, "The Authority of the Word," (unpublished address delivered at Ohio Region Inter-seminary Spring Conference at Bonebrake Theological Seminary, Dayton, Ohio, April 29, 1949), p. 6.

governing principle of life. This grace is the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus, and is in the person of the Holy Spirit. Holiness is the very element of his being and the essential law of his working. Thus, if men would be sufficiently possessed of this Spirit, and yield themselves to his direction and control, they would no longer need the restraint and discipline of external law, for their being, quickened and led by the Spirit, would love and do the things which such law requires. Paul has stated it thus:

Knowing this, that the law is not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and for sinners, for unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers, for whoremongers, for them that defile themselves with mankind, for menstealers, for liars, for perjured persons, and if there be any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine; according to the glorious gospel of the blessed God, which was committed to my trust.<sup>16</sup>

Christian consciousness is thus an important factor, for Christianity means that God has become active in a special manner in the religious life of man, and that he has made himself known objectively as well as in man's consciousness. There is a reciprocal relationship in which two consciousnesses interact. God's consciousness becomes definite and compelling in Christ. This human-divine relation through Christ has been described as,

That reciprocal relation with the divine and human persons in which the respective personalities involved

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<sup>16</sup> 1 Tim. 1:9-11.

in the relationship receive that consideration and deference which the nature of personality itself and the relation between the human and divine persons require.<sup>17</sup>

Creeds arise in an effort to interpret the faith as a means of defense and to establish unity. Creeds, as such, are expressions of man's freedom and serve for his welfare. Any authority which hinders such formulation is tyrannical and should be resisted. However, imposition of creeds by authority is also to be resisted. They must never be substituted for life and thus become mere intellectual beliefs taking the place of free inter-course of God and man. All ecclesiastical, priestly, and sacramental forms of authority must be rejected if they interfere with the free intercourse of the soul with God.

Mullin in his book, "Freedom and Authority in Religion," asserts that Jesus Christ is the "seat" of this authority, for in and through Him God acts for our redemption.<sup>18</sup> This being true, man is set free from other forms of illegitimate authority in religion. This is the truth that makes men free, and should be shouted from the housetops. This is liberty from the yoke of bondage. Christian authority rests in Christ made real through a personal relationship with Him.

One further question demands an answer. To what

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<sup>17</sup> Mullins, op. cit., p. 288.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., p. 315.

extent is the Bible authoritative? Protestants have been accused of the same error for which they have condemned the Roman Catholic Church. The accusation is not without some basis. A return to externals will always accompany a loss of the Spirit. This is almost inevitable. Thus even in orthodox groups, it is possible to lose the Spirit and retain a form with an authoritative basis in the Bible. In fact, this is orthodoxy's great danger. Christian belief as well as Christian conduct has all too often been defended in a manner which betrayed a lack of love to the detriment of the propagation of the gospel. Thus, a proper understanding of the authority of the Bible is essential.

Man needs a deliverance which must come from Him who has the power and authority to so deliver. Human knowledge of this Divine authority in redemption has come through revelation. Revelation has been defined as the self-disclosure of God to men in a definite time and place within the plane of history.<sup>19</sup> It comes as a message confirmed by an act. Jesus Christ was the fulness of this revelation as the Incarnate Son. Authority, as previously stated, is personal, yet the medium of this authority is human language. The authority is thus transmitted and received in language through which the mind of God and man may meet. The eternal

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<sup>19</sup> Walker, op. cit., p. 9.

Word became the incarnate Word and thereby became knowable to man. This Word was the subject of the apostles in their ministry. Their message was the fact of God speaking to men. Jesus of Nazareth was presented as the Word of God to be believed, loved, and obeyed. He was presented as the object of faith, love, and obedience. He was at the same time presented as the creator of faith, love, and obedience. The apostles witnessed and taught that the ultimate authority was this Incarnate Word. "This Word of God in Christ calls men, under the power of His own being, to obedience and discipleship, and sanctifies them under His authority and Lordship to life."<sup>20</sup> Thus the Word was proclaimed--Jesus is the Messiah and Lord and Saviour to them who in faith obey the will of God expressed in Him.

The Bible or written Word of God is authoritative as the medium of the living Word. The written language is not in itself authority, but is authoritative in that it expresses the attested will of Him from whom the written word comes.<sup>21</sup> The Bible must be received as the record of the acts of God, and at the same time as the act of God in itself. The Bible is the source of all we know about the Word of God--that is, all that is necessary is recorded. This record will invoke

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid., p. 22.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., p. 30.

faith, love, and obedience. It will point the way to authority from which man receives forgiveness, regeneration, and eternal life.

Authority therefore rests in God Himself as made known through revelation and preserved for succeeding generations by transcription. This authority is not confining and restrictive, but is liberating and redemptive. The great test for the validity of the written Word is that it effects salvation. This record is necessary to preserve the original form of the revelation. Tradition is never safe. Revelation of redemption must be recorded by those in close relation with the Redeemer. Thus the Bible is as a vehicle of objective truth about Christ and His salvation.

The astronomer is not accused of worshipping the telescope or advised to pursue the science of astronomy without its aid. The telescope tells him what he could never discover without it. He relies upon it as an "authority," and carries forward the discoveries of science. . . . If, however, men look through this rent in the veil, that is, the biblical writings, and thus obtain the vision of God and find redemption through his power in their lives, they simply repeat the experiences of the men who first had the experience and were inspired to write the Bible. For them the Bible is authoritative because it leads them to God and relates them to the redemptive forces. To argue against the authority of the Bible, therefore, to men who have had the life-adjustment and life experience which it enshrines, is like arguing against the symmetry of the Venus de Milo or the beauty of the Sistine Madonna to the artistic soul, on the ground of some defect in the material or the mechanical execution.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Mullins, op. cit., p. 352.



The importance of the Bible in the maintenance of Christian life is adequately illustrated by history. The Roman Catholic Church pursued its course through the Middle Ages in practical independence of the written record and the Christ of the New Testament was almost eclipsed by a sacramental system, and human freedom almost destroyed by a hierarchy. Neither has rationalism alone been able to answer the questions regarding Christ. Who and what was Christ is only realized from the authentic record of His life and work.

Protestant Evangelical teaching continues to differ from the Roman Catholic position. The Roman Catholic Church teaches that salvation is union with the church. Evangelicals teach that it is union with Christ. The Roman Catholic Church suppresses the individual, whereas the Protestant Church dignifies the individual. No one thinks of compelling acceptance of the Bible, for the Bible assumes man's capacity through grace to know God and urges men to claim the knowledge, to judge the revelation, and to enter upon the life. Salvation is not by belief in the Scripture but by a living faith in the Christ of which the Scriptures testify.

The function of the Bible is not at all primarily to get its teaching accepted, but rather to lead the soul to living contact with the Redeemer, and thus to an awakening of the whole nature, emotional, volitional, intellectual. To get men to bow down to the mere letter of Scripture apart from vital faith would be a melancholy defeat of all the Bible stands for.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid., p. 371.

The Roman Catholic Church, as does Islam, demands such submission. Christ, as the Revealer of God and Redeemer of men is the seat of authority in religion. He is above and underneath and before the Bible. However, the Bible is the authoritative record of God's revelation which leads men to Christ.

The authority of Scripture possesses none of the marks of illegitimate authorities in religion. The Bible is not a statute book in the legalistic sense. If so, it would necessarily be boundless in its details, an infinite code in fact, to meet all the varying conditions of human life. The Bible came not by legislation but by revelation. It is not even a book of rules, but rather of principles, infinitely expansive and adaptable. It is not a book of general decrees to be enforced by an authoritative priesthood. This would be Roman Catholic. The Bible is not a book of ritual, which, if made the chief thing in religion would leave it empty of vitality and power. The Bible might be any or all of these things and fail to produce the essential religious quality, vital union with God. Its finality as an authority in religion is due not to the presence, but to the absence of these things in its teaching.<sup>24</sup>

The New Testament does not destroy human freedom. The individual, the family, the church, and the civilization are left intact. It is within this freedom as it is motivated by the Spirit of Christ through redemption that man exercises his individual freedom in the moral, social, and religious life as this life in Christ finds expression through individual personality.

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid., p. 395.

The truths of Scripture are like a circle which encompasses all personal beings, including God and man. They define the boundaries and give the clue to the free interaction of God and man. The true doctrine of an authoritative revelation needs only the assumption that we have in the Bible such a moral constitution as we have described. This leaves it not only the final authority in religion, but the only clue to man's freedom and future culture, both intellectual and religious.<sup>25</sup>

It is obvious that man's relationship to law today is intimately related with salvation. Salvation is the divine work through which the lawless and defiled are the recipients of God's grace in forgiveness and regeneration. Such a work involves a new and living union with Christ. Each Christian must exercise his own faculty of judgment in the application of these principles to everyday life situations. Since only an infinite God of wisdom is faultless in judgment, Christian judgment will often err. Yet, through growing in grace and the knowledge of God through a study of the Bible, through the wisdom of the mature saints, and through the process of experience, these Christian judgments as to the doing of the will of God will become more and more expressive of the truth. To set aside this principle for the adoption of external codes would dethrone Christianity as a universal religion adaptable to any and every people, and would be a direct affront upon Christian experience by assuming man's utter inability for Christian reason. If this fact was properly understood perhaps the following chapter dealing with extremes would be unnecessary.

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid., p. 398.

## CHAPTER V

### TWO EXTREMES TO AVOID

The twin evils of freedom are anarchy and tyranny. The anarchist thinks that he is free from all responsibility, and the tyrant supposes that he has fulfilled all responsibility. The frail bark of social justice must sail between these two. Culture must lie dangerously between the lawless threat of revolution and the rigidity of a dictatorship. If men have no norms to stabilize their freedom, anarchy threatens; while if the norms do not condemn pretension, tyranny threatens.

Christian living too must seek a middle course between two dangerous extremes--lawlessness and legalism. It is because of these dangers that an understanding of them is basic. These are as ditches on either side of the Christian way. To fall into either is to suffer serious spiritual breakdown, and unless rescued will effect disaster--both to the individual and to the Christ he professes to follow. In fact, perhaps most of our present day confusion is a result of too many floundering around in the ditches and too few traversing the highway of holiness.

It is almost essential that a presentation of these extremes be included in this thesis. In fact, such a study becomes more understandable as these errors are presented in comparison with the true Christian position just presented.

It is only after such has been fully established as a norm that a presentation of error becomes intelligible. This importance has been thus emphasized by Fletcher:

Avoid all extremes. While on the one hand you keep clear of the Pharisaic delusion that slights Christ, and makes the pretended merit of an imperfect obedience the procuring cause of eternal life; see that on the other hand you do not lean to the Antinomian error, which, under pretense of exalting Christ, speaks contemptuously of obedience, and "makes void the law through a faith that does not work by love." As there is but one step between high Arminianism and self-righteousness, so there is but one between high Calvinism and Antinomianism. I charge you to shun both, especially the latter.<sup>1</sup>

The danger of Antinomianism. The literal meaning of this word is "against law," and is used to designate a theory which holds that faith frees a Christian from the obligations of the moral law. Such a view proceeds on the supposition that law and the Spirit are two distinct, or possibly even contending, authorities. Wesley defined Antinomianism as, "The doctrine which makes the law void through faith."<sup>2</sup> This teaching resulted from the supposition that faith and obedience were at variance with each other. Many talked of "finished salvation in Christ" whereas their hearts were void of humble love, and full of carnal confidence. Wesley was accused of a "dreadful heresy." His emphasis upon obedience, faithfulness,

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<sup>1</sup> John Fletcher, The Works of Reverend John Fletcher (New York: Carlton and Porter, I, p. 20.

<sup>2</sup> John M'Clintock and James Strong, Cyclopedia of Biblical, Theological, and Ecclesiastical Literature (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1895), I, p. 264.

and the necessity of works was attacked as a return to Pharisaism. Wesley believed that strong Calvinistic leanings encouraged the Antinomian delusion.<sup>3</sup> That which fails to impress faithfulness, the "working for life," and personal responsibility tends toward laxness. Mr. Wesley attacks such error thus:

Who among Christians is now accepted of God? Not he, that, like Hymeneus, formerly believed, and "concerning faith hath now made shipwreck:" nor he, that like Simon Magus, actually believes with speculative, Antinomian faith; but "he that now believes in Christ with a loving and obedient heart," or, as our Lord and St. Paul express it, he whose "faith works by love, and whose love keeps God's commandments." This must at once overflow the pretension of those whose feigned faith, instead of producing a change in their hearts, only adds positiveness to their self-conceit, bitterness to their bad tempers, and perhaps licentiousness to their worldly lives.<sup>4</sup>

It is almost natural that High Calvinism will wither or even destroy the consciousness of human responsibility. The extreme sovereignty view makes man an inevitable sinner in this life. The Gospel only being for the elect, therefore sinners are not at fault if they are not saved. Both John Wesley and John Fletcher opposed High Calvinism and John Fletcher wrote his "Checks to Antinomianism" in defense of John Wesley's position.

The root of this trouble lies in a false view of the atonement. Antinomians will claim relation to Christ on the

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<sup>3</sup> Fletcher, op. cit., p. 23.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p. 23.

basis of imputed righteousness. Yet the Lord taught that mere boasting of faith is inadequate and that He will dismiss such with a "Depart from me, ye that work iniquity."<sup>5</sup> Such a doctrine is in direct antithesis of Divine Revelation and a subversion of all its principles. An attempt to magnify the grace of the gospel as something which abrogates law, not only fosters moral indifference by easing the conscience regarding the claims of holiness, but also opens the door for rationalism. If the law is interpreted as merely profitable for direction, rather than a binding obligation, it opens the door for both Antinomianism and Rationalism. Such an interpretation will produce only slight conviction of sin, and a loose notion of duty. Thus, it will thrust but a feeble barrier against either carnal desires or fanatical extremists.

It must be understood that the law and the Spirit have but one end in view, and therefore the Antinomian lacks even a shadow for a foundation upon which to stand. Conformity to the requirements of the law is still held out and inculcated as the very perfection of Christian excellence. Fairbairn has presented this relationship thus:

For it is not as if these two, the law and the Spirit, were contending authorities, or forces drawing in two distinct and separate lines. On the contrary, they are essentially and thoroughly agreed--emanations both of them of the unchanging holiness of Godhead--the one its outward form and character, in which it was to appear, the other

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<sup>5</sup> Matt. 7:23.

its inward spring and living pulse. What the one teaches, the other wills--what the one requires, the other prompts and qualifies to perform;--and as the law at first came as an handmaid to the previously existing covenant of grace, so does it still remain in the hand of the Spirit to aid Him, amid the workings of the flesh, and the imperfections of grace, in carrying out the objects for which He condescends to dwell and act in the bosoms of men.<sup>6</sup>

The Reformation was a revolt from the authority of a corrupt Roman Catholic hierarchy. This hierarchy was a re-incarnation of the spirit of Pharisaism, which had reduced the church to a worse than Judaic bondage. Martin Luther was the man who spear-headed a revolt against this legalism. However, as so often happens, one extreme tends to another. Luther made unguarded statements which were picked up and used to lead to antinomian excesses. Extravagant statements as, "In the new covenant there is no longer a constraining and forcing law; and that those who must be scared and driven by laws are unworthy the name of Christians," and, "Moses given to the Jews not to us Gentiles and Christians; we have our Gospel and New Testament,"<sup>7</sup> were picked up by John Agricola and used to institute heresy. Agricola instituted such antinomian views as,

Repentance must be taught, not from the Decalogue or any law of Moses, but through the gospel. Without anything whatsoever the Holy Spirit is given, and men are

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<sup>6</sup> Patrick Fairbairn, The Typology of Scripture (Philadelphia: James S. Claxton, 1865), II, p. 170.

<sup>7</sup> John M'Clintock and James Strong, op. cit., p. 265.



justified . . . without the law, solely through the gospel concerning Christ. The law of Moses need not be taught either for the beginning, the middle, or the end of justification. The law, without the Holy Spirit, convicts unto damnation; the gospel not only condemns but at the same time saves.<sup>8</sup>

The Anabaptists too, while devout and believing, held to views which led to antinomian excesses. They repudiated all civil authority and refused to serve in this capacity. They were almost without exception opposed to the doctrine which insisted upon the freedom of the will and the necessity of good works as the fruit of faith, and regarded faith as the great transforming process. When it is stated that, "they were unanimous in regarding Luther's teachings regarding the will and good works as in the highest degree immoral and opposed to the spirit of the gospel,"<sup>9</sup> they were in agreement with Luther's early rash statements which he later corrected in refuting Agricola.

Antinomianism is a constant danger. Experience apart from the Word can lead to license or fanaticism. Authority tends to become centered in self. Kant's moral autonomy of the individual prepared the way for moral chaos and the harvest of that sowing is now being reaped. Liberal theology, arising from the grafting of Kant's autonomous man to the

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<sup>8</sup> Albert Henry Newman, A Manual of Church History (Philadelphia: The American Baptist Publication Society, 1931), II, p. 318.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., p. 155.

Christian faith by Schleiermacher, has removed all law from Christianity. This is the rational extreme of Antinomianism. The danger of Antinomianism is present in Arminian, Calvinistic, and Liberal circles. The most orthodox must guard against this extreme.

The Word of God has sufficient teaching to guard against this error. Any age which experiences a break-up of the old foundations, is apt to experience a wave of lawlessness. The rule of Judaic bondage had been broken, yet the New Testament writers emphasized the imperative standard of holiness in accordance with God's law of righteousness. Peter's first epistle must be as a warning to all pretenders. This exhortation, "As he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation (living); because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy,"<sup>10</sup> leaves no room for laxness in living. Christians, redeemed with the precious blood of Christ were to be a holy priesthood; a holy nation showing forth His praise; a living example of honesty among the nations; obedient to civil authorities; adorned with the spirit of God; and, to live according to the example of Christ. Peter wrote, "Let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evildoer, or as a busybody in other men's matters."<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> 1 Peter 1:15,16.

<sup>11</sup> 1 Peter 4:15.

The book of James stands as an impassible barrier to all who would minimize works as an integral part of Christianity. "Be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves;<sup>12</sup> if any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion is vain;<sup>13</sup> even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone;<sup>14</sup> for as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also;<sup>15</sup> who is a wise man and endued with knowledge among you? let him shew out of a good conversation (life) his works with meekness of wisdom."<sup>16</sup> Such is the tenor of this book. No wonder Luther felt that it should be excluded from the canon. However, God makes no mistakes, and this book is included in the Holy Record as a warning against Antinomianism.

The book of Jude is also an invective hurled against Antinomianism as a perversion of grace. Jude, writing to believers said, "It was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints. For there are

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<sup>12</sup> James 1:22.

<sup>13</sup> James 1:26.

<sup>14</sup> James 2:17.

<sup>15</sup> James 2:26.

<sup>16</sup> James 3:13.

certain men crept in unawares . . . turning the grace of God into lasciviousness."<sup>17</sup> The message of this short book becomes extremely meaningful in the light of Antinomian extremes.

John's first epistle records righteousness, love, and belief as tests of Christian character. John too attacks moral indifference. Lawlessness is called sin.<sup>18</sup> He that doeth sin is of the devil.<sup>19</sup> Mr. Law, interpreting this epistle, states:

The whole passage (2:29-3:10) presupposes, as familiar to its readers, a doctrine of moral indifferentism according to which the status of the spiritual man is not to be tested by the commonplace facts of moral conduct. It is only as a passionate contradiction of this hateful tenet that the paradoxical language of 3:6-9 and 5:18 can be understood.<sup>20</sup>

Many statements made in Second Peter, Timothy, and Titus indicate a state of things which must have wrung the soul. Peter denounced the false prophets and exposed the fruit of their teaching and concluded the chapter by saying, "But is happened unto them according to the true proverb, The dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire."<sup>21</sup> One of the "Five

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<sup>17</sup> Jude 4, 5.

<sup>18</sup> 1 John 3:4.

<sup>19</sup> 1 John 3:8.

<sup>20</sup> R. Law, "The Epistles of John," International Standard Bible Encyclopedia, III, p. 1713.

<sup>21</sup> 2 Peter 2:22.

faithful sayings" of the Bible is this; "This is a faithful saying, and these things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works."<sup>22</sup> Paul in writing to Timothy urges him to be "an example of the believers in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity."<sup>23</sup>

This emphasis given by the New Testament writers, added to the teaching and example of Christ, is as a sturdy guard rail to save the travelers from plunging over the bank of lawlessness. Surely Christians need the "Sword of the Spirit" if they will be safe from this pitfall.

The danger of legalism. Whereas a lack of teaching respecting good work may lead into Antinomianism, an over-emphasis may result in the seeking of salvation by works of law. Legalism could be defined as a disciplinary action in relation to a prescribed law as possessing merit in itself. The danger of legalism, then, lies in expecting to receive salvation as merit for one's good works. To believe this would also indicate an improper conception of sin. Such a one would become proud of his own righteousness, and deny the necessity of the work of the Spirit. It is possible to maintain an outward adherence of religion and trample the great

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<sup>22</sup> Titus 3:8.

<sup>23</sup> 1 Tim. 4:12.

ends of that religion under foot. This was the constant failure of Israel.

Instead of viewing the institutions of services connected with the tabernacle--the ceremonial part of the law--as the complement merely of the Sinaitic tables, intended to help out their design and provide the means of escape from their just condemnation of sin, the persons in question exalted it to first place, and, however they might stand related to 'the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith,' thought all in a manner accomplished, if they kept the ordinances and presented the appointed offerings.<sup>24</sup>

This mode of procedure received many sharp denunciations by the prophets. Isaiah saw the people professing great concern for the interests of religion while oppression and iniquity were in their dwellings, and their hands were even stained with blood. There is no purpose in such meaningless sacrifices, and they are even obominable in the sight of God.<sup>25</sup> He rather says, "Wash you make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil; learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, plead for the widow."<sup>26</sup> Jeremiah too severely denounced this fallacy and pointed out the folly of men trusting in the temple and its services as a substitute for true godliness.

Trust not in lying words, saying, The temple of the Lord . . . if ye thoroughly amend your ways and your doings; if ye thoroughly execute judgment between a man and his neighbor; if ye oppress not the stranger, the

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<sup>24</sup> Patrick Fairbairn, The Revelation of Law in Scripture (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1868), p. 174.

<sup>25</sup> Isaiah 1:13.

<sup>26</sup> Isaiah 1:16,17.

fatherless, and the widow, and shed not innocent blood in this place, neither walk after other gods to your hurt: then will I cause you to dwell in this place.<sup>27</sup>

The prevalence of this error throughout the Old Covenant is indicative of its danger.

Not seeing to the end of the things amid which they were placed and wanting the incalculable advantage of the awful revelation of God's righteousness in Christ, the law failed to teach them effectually of the nature of that righteousness, or to convince them of sin, or to prepare them for the reception of the Saviour. But failing in these grand points the law became a stumbling-block and a hindrance in their path. For now men's conscience adjusted themselves to the imperfect appearance of things.<sup>28</sup>

The seriousness of this danger was demonstrated at the coming of Christ. Of all "the spirits in prison" to whom the word of the gospel came with its offer of deliverance, those proved to be the most hopelessly incarcerated in their strongholds of error, who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and stumbled at the rock of free salvation.

Pharisaism was legalism carried to an extreme and as such illustrates the fruits of this error. Externalism, pride, self-righteousness, and censoriousness are some of the great attendant evils of this heresy. Carnality and self-righteousness lead to an exaltation of ceremonial and external observances. This stress on outward adherence as sufficient to attain righteousness betrays a false view respecting holiness

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<sup>27</sup> Jer. 7:4-7.

<sup>28</sup> Fairbairn, Typology, op. cit., p. 135.

and sin. The law, instead of a revelation of moral duty, becomes an outward discipline of specific rules of conduct. If this would be true, salvation is a reward for works, and a feeling of self-righteousness and pride is the inevitable result.

Great as the demand was, which the observance of these made upon the obedience, still, as viewed by the carnal eye, it was something that could be measured and chose--hence instead of undermining the nature of pride, only supplied it with a greater mass of materials for exerting its claims on the favour of heaven.<sup>29</sup>

It is as Jesus is compared with Pharisaism that legalism in contrast appears as an ominous cloud of darkness. The genius of Rabbinism was in direct antagonism to the teaching of Christ. Christ required a change of heart, while the Rabbis required instruction; He looked at the motive of an act, but they stressed strict accordance to legal forms; He contented Himself with implanting a principle of pure and loving obedience in the heart, which should make men a law to themselves, while they taught that every detail of religious observance should be prescribed and rigidly followed in every formal particular; He promised the Divine Spirit to aid His followers to a perfect obedience, but the Rabbis enforced obedience by the terrors of church courts which they controlled. The Pharisees and Christ thus rested upon entirely different conceptions--the Pharisees were self-satisfied in

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<sup>29</sup> Loc. cit.



the observance of external rites and requirements, whereas Jesus repudiated merit, and based His kingdom on the willing service of humble and grateful love. The seriousness of this error is magnified by the fact that Jesus attacked this position even at the cost of opposition which eventually led to His death. There could be no alliance between the two views. When accused of breaking the Sabbath, Jesus referred to the writings of the prophets, whom they professed to revere, and said, "I will have mercy and not sacrifice."<sup>30</sup> Jesus emphasized that practical godliness rather than legal forms, and divine sympathy with the lost, rather than an empty show of outward worship is the order of true religion.

In this system of merit, even prayer and fasting were paraded before the world to heighten a reputation for holiness. Jesus was criticized for not observing the various fasts and was called a "gluttonous man and a winebibber."<sup>31</sup> Asceticism is contrary to the spirit of the kingdom of God in which righteousness, peace, and joy are stressed. This misuse of even the highest of religious expression, prayer and fasting, should act as a warning to all that there is no merit in external observances of any kind.

Christ proclaimed the principles for the kingdom in

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<sup>30</sup> Matt. 12:7.

<sup>31</sup> Luke 7:34.

the Sermon on the Mount. In this great declaration the omissions are no less striking than the demands. There is no reference to the priests or the Rabbis who were at that time the undisputed authorities in religion. The rite of circumcision is not mentioned neither any other outward forms of worship. The "old wine-skins" cannot contain this universal kingdom of righteousness and love. All national limitations are set aside, and citizenship is offered to all who sincerely believe in Jesus as the Messiah, and honestly repent before God. Geikie's comment regarding the Sermon on the Mount is worthy of consideration:

Throughout the whole Sermon, no political or theocratic ideas find place, but only spiritual. For the first time in the history of religion, a communion is founded without a priesthood, or offerings, or a Temple, or ceremonial services; without symbolical worship, or a visible sanctuary. There is an utter absence of everything external or sensuous; the grand spiritual truth of absolute religious freedom, love, and righteousness alone are heard.<sup>32</sup>

Jesus denounced the insincere parading of virtue, but impressed upon them that true goodness must be seen and felt. True Christians were to be as light to the world and as salt to the earth. He prescribed no lengthy code of duties, but trusts to the ardour and devotion of loyalty to Himself as a perfect equivalent. Mr. Geikie has stated this fact thus:

Drawn to Him by grateful and lowly affection, He leaves it to the love of His followers to exceed all precise

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<sup>32</sup> Cunningham Geikie, The Life and Words of Christ (New York: John B. Alden, 1889), p. 420.

directions, and outstrip all formal requirements. His kingdom is as strictly under law as any other, but, for the endless statutes of earthly monarchies, and the equally unnumbered prescriptions of the old theocracy, He substitutes a single all-sufficing law--the law of love, which makes each member of His kingdom a law to himself. All are to give themselves up to Him as unreservedly as He has given Himself up for them.<sup>33</sup>

Jesus Himself was the one perfect illustration of complete fulfillment of God's law, and the new kingdom is to be a reflection of His character. The fundamental principle of the Pharisaic conception of righteousness was their idea that strict observance of the tradition and commands of the schools satisfied the requirements of God. They thus weakened the conception of moral evil. In tithes the greatest exactness was required, but matters of morality were lightly treated. The tithing of garden herbs was vital, whereas the grave questions of right and wrong were treated with indifference.<sup>34</sup> The question was, not what was right or wrong, but what the law as expounded by the Rabbis demanded. Jesus called the Pharisees mere actors.<sup>35</sup> All pretense, especially in religion, was abhorrent to Jesus. He said to His disciples,

When ye fast, be not as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance: for they disfigure their faces, that they may appear unto men to fast . . . when thou fastest, anoint thine head, and wash thy face, that thou appear not unto men to fast.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid., p. 424.

<sup>34</sup> Matt. 23:23.

<sup>35</sup> Matt. 23:13-33.

<sup>36</sup> Matt. 6:16-18.

To seek effect, applause, credit, or gain by a show of godliness must be shunned.

Jesus concluded this discourse with the announcement that the acceptance and performance of His commands would be the condition of future salvation or ruin. No wonder the multitude was astonished at His teaching. Surely the Sermon on the Mount is a great charter of religious liberty.

Whereas Christ sounded the death knell for Judaism with its accumulated traditions, the Apostle Paul led in the fight to establish the Christian Church. The enemies of Jesus became his enemies, and the enemies of all others who were followers of "the way." The early churches were constantly plagued by Judaizers attempting to foster the old ways upon the converts. Paul's letters to the churches were often directed against this return to legalism. Thus, we have in the New Testament writings of Paul, a body of sacred Scripture dealing directly with the problem of legalism to furnish instruction for the Christian Church. A consideration of this body of Scripture will add to a full understanding of the nature and danger of legalism.

A survey of all Paul's letters would indicate the predominance of this theme. Yet, a few select readings which deal directly with the subject will be sufficient. The letters to the churches at Galatia and Colosse were written to counteract an undue emphasis upon ceremonial observances. In other

words, external works were beginning to usurp the place of Christ in the churches as an essential means of salvation. Therefore the message of these two letters is especially apropos in this presentation.

Paul had been instrumental in winning many to Christ when ill health compelled him to spend considerable time in the region of Galatia. However, it is often the conscientious person who is easily misled when that faith is not firmly grounded on true knowledge of that faith. Thus, after Paul's departure, Jewish teaching led them to an acceptance of much of the old ritual. This teaching did not seem to be a direct attack against Christ, but rather an emphasis upon certain externals as essential to salvation. The main problem was not a return to irreligion, but a return to a religion of works unto bondage. Paul expressed astonishment that they had so quickly changed from his teaching about Christ to another teaching. To combat this error, Paul first substantiated his authority regarding the gospel which he proclaimed.

Paul's first recorded statement respecting the relation of believers to the law was occasioned by a reference to the vacillating conduct of Peter while in Antioch.<sup>37</sup> Peter, perhaps influenced by Jewish opinion, separated himself from the

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<sup>37</sup> Gal. 2:14-21.

Gentile fellowship. This led to such an extensive schism that even Barnabas was influenced. Paul reminded the Jews that they too had received salvation by believing upon Christ. They could not be justified by the law because they had not kept it. Therefore, they too could only be justified through faith in Christ. Paul's argument is this: to return to the old legal observances would imply no justification and make Christ the minister of sin. The returning to the law for justification would be a rebuilding of that which was destroyed. In such a retrogression, man becomes a transgressor by a departure from the very aim of the law which was to lead men to Christ. Paul then testified that he died to the law as a ground of justification that he might live to God--through confidence in a new source of life through the atoning death of the Saviour. Thus he magnifies the grace of God through the sacrificial death and risen life of Christ. The law's requirement of holiness only reveals man's sin and insures his condemnation--thus obedience to these can never be made the ground of a sinner's confidence and hope toward God.

"O foolish Galatians," Paul said, "Who has deluded you." Forcing an admission that the Spirit was received by faith, he then points out the folly of being made perfect by works. Paul then developed this grace versus legalism argument by referring to Abraham as a classic example of one justified

by faith.<sup>38</sup> The return to observance of the law as a means of justification is likened to a son returning again to the state of bondage under tutors and governors. Paul says that through Christ you have been raised from the place of a servant under tutors to the realm of sonship. "But now, after that ye have known God, or rather are known of God, how turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements, whereunto ye desire again to be in bondage?"<sup>39</sup> Since Christ has set you free, Paul said, stand in this liberty and be not entangled again in the yoke of bondage. To expect profit from circumcision is to disbelieve Christ and become a debtor to the whole system. The seriousness of such is obvious by the blunt statement, "Ye are fallen from grace."<sup>40</sup> In Christ these things are of no importance, for the important factor is faith being energized through love.<sup>41</sup> Paul then reminds his readers that this confusion did not come from God for they have been called unto liberty. This liberty must not be used as an occasion to the flesh, but rather through love used to serve one another.

Paul is certainly in agreement with the Sermon on the Mount. This epistle remains as a classic argument for

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<sup>38</sup> Gal. 3:6.

<sup>39</sup> Gal. 4:9.

<sup>40</sup> Gal. 5:4.

<sup>41</sup> Gal. 5:6.

Christian liberty in Christ. There is no room for a teaching that works are meritorious essentials for salvation in Christianity. A reference to Colossians will confirm this position. Whereas it is true, that the false teaching met in this epistle undoubtedly included a Gnostic element, yet a strong Judaistic element is also present. Paul always attacks Judaistic error by showing that the object of the Jewish law, with its religious observances, had found its realization in the work and Gospel of Christ. To the Church at Colosse, Paul said, "Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days: which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ."<sup>42</sup>

Thus the distinctively sacred days appointed in the Mosaic law, together with its stated festivals, its distinction of clean and unclean in food, and, by parity of reason, other things of a like outward and ceremonial nature, are here placed in one category, and declared to be no longer binding on the consciences of believers, or needful to their Christian progress.<sup>43</sup>

These Scriptures emphasize this truth so clearly that additional references would add little to the argument. In spite of this clarity, legalism continues to plague the church. The Roman Catholic Church is a living system of legal bondage of the worst kind. By sure and successive

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<sup>42</sup> Col. 2:16,17.

<sup>43</sup> Fairbairn, *Revelation of Law*, op. cit., p. 472.



steps in the wrong direction, a system of evil of gigantic magnitude developed and "reduced the church to a worse than Judaic bondage."<sup>44</sup> Ecclesiastical traditions have obtained the force of law and much of the world lies writhing in the tenacles of this church. External rites have again been made essential truths.

On every account, therefore, this retrogressive policy, this confounding of things which essentially differ, is to be condemned and deplored as the source of incalculable evils. It is a disturbing as well as an enslaving system, shackles the souls which Christ has set free, and robs the Gospel of its essential glory as glad tidings of great joy to mankind. Men may disguise it from themselves; they may resolutely shut their eyes on its more objectionable features, or refuse to make full application of its more distinctive principles; but its native tendency and working unquestionably are to place the believer under the Gospel in much closer dependence than even the disciple of Moses on the carnal elements of a merely external polity and human administration; and, were it left to his choice, he might well exchange the fuller knowledge he has obtained of the eternal world for the larger freedom from arbitrary impositions, and the more assured possession of peace with God, which were enjoyed by those who lived in the earlier periods of Divine dispensation.<sup>45</sup>

The Protestant churches too have been plagued by this tendency, and history records the tragic story. In fact, this is perhaps the great danger of orthodoxy--especially Arminianism. One wonders if the presence of the two bodies within orthodoxy, Calvinism and Arminianism, is a providential blessing--Calvinistic emphasis guarding against

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<sup>44</sup> Ibid., p. 299.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., p. 322.

legalism and the Arminian emphasis against Antinomianism. At any rate, to recognize the danger should cause evangelicals to maintain eternal vigilance. No external works of any kind are meritorious. It is all too possible for people to become converted to a church system, and not to Christ. How tragic!

John Fletcher, realizing the dangers of the extremes of faith and works which lead to the heresies of Antinomianism and legalism, illustrated the importance of the right relation of both faith and works by a reference to a row boat:

I shall observe that the Antinomian is like a sculler, who uses only his right hand oar; and the Pharisee, like him who plies only the oar in his left hand. One makes an endless bustle about grace and faith, and the other about charity and works; but both, after all, find themselves exactly in the same case, with this single difference, that one has turned from truth to the right, and the other to the left.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Fletcher, op. cit., p. 432.

## CHAPTER VI

### THE CHRISTIAN AND THE SOCIAL ORDERS

It has been often erroneously supposed that allegiance to the state, the church, or the family constitutes a violation to one's allegiance to God. The totalitarian political-religious hierarchy of the Roman Catholic Church has confused and complicated this problem. False Protestant teaching with regard to this relationship has also added to the confusion of thought. It is only as these great social institutions find their foundation in God, and exist as beneficent orders for the well-being of mankind, that true unity and harmony can exist. It is because of this inextricable bond which unites these orders to the purposes of the All-Knowing Creator, that this writer feels it necessary to include this chapter. What is the relationship of the Christian to the laws of family, church, and state? Has he been freed from all obligation and duty toward these orders? Quite the contrary is rather true. It is as a Christian recognizes the sovereign purpose of these orders, that true honour and duty will be manifested. A divine order must of necessity include certain prerogatives of authority. A person who spurns the authority of God, will have little regard for the authority of His social orders. Modern anarchy in the home, in the church, and in the state is an indication of the pertinency of this problem.

It is obvious that this argument will stand only if the stated premise regarding the divine nature of these orders is valid. This premise, however, can be adequately substantiated. It is interesting to note that leaders in the liberal wing of the church recognize something of this fact. Albert C. Knudson of the Boston University School of Theology refers to the fundamental institutions which make up the social order as "the orders of creation." With reference to this phase, Mr. Knudson has stated, "When we speak of the orders of creation, we have in mind chiefly the fixity of the social order. It is a divinely established order to which we must submit and to which we must adjust ourselves."<sup>1</sup>

The Christian's obligation to the family. The family relation of husband and wife dates its origin from the commencement of the race. It was while Adam was living in the paradise of Eden that the Lord God said, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him."<sup>2</sup> Eve, springing from Adam, was thus a companion fitted for him, and with regard to this relationship the record states, "Therefore shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall cleave unto his wife; and they shall be one flesh."<sup>3</sup> Whereas

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<sup>1</sup> Albert C. Knudson, The Principles of Christian Ethics (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press), p. 194.

<sup>2</sup> Gen. 2:18.

<sup>3</sup> Gen. 2:24.

theories have been posited to explain the origin of the family as an evolutionary development of social process, yet all evidence rather secures the Genesis account. Knudson admits that the theory of original promiscuity is "less commonly held now than it was a generation or two ago."<sup>4</sup> God's revelation of the "Law" to Moses included the duty to honour father and mother, and Jesus himself verified the Genesis account of the divine origin of the family. When questioned regarding divorce, Jesus said, "Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female . . . for this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and they shall be one flesh."<sup>5</sup> It is as the family is thus recognized, that a foundation is secured for its permanence and its purpose. Thus secured, however, there exists a divine obligation to the duties and obligations of the order. Marriage, being originally an appointment of God, and the duties pertaining to that relation being prescribed in Scripture, is properly a divine institution. Therefore, indifference or rebellion against the duties prescribed, is in reality a reflection on one's attitude toward God. Adultery, inordinate affection, fornication, and sinful lust are expressly forbidden in the Scripture. The duty of the husband is to be the guardian, protector, and comforter of his wife;

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p. 196

<sup>5</sup> Matt. 19:4,5.

and of the wife to reverence, honour, and obey her husband. These reciprocal duties are used by Paul to illustrate the union between Christ and His Church.<sup>6</sup> Parents are to protect and care for their children. One who disregards this obligation is denounced as having "denied the faith," and of being "worse than an infidel."<sup>7</sup> Thus, every parent is bound to the full discharge of this obligation to the extent of his or her ability. Children in turn are to obey their parents.<sup>8</sup> The Decalogue states that children are to "Honour thy father and thy mother." Irreverence and disrespect for parents is a most ignominious sin. When children forget to respect their parents, they themselves lose the respect of all the better class of society, and seldom fail to bring upon themselves degradation and ruin.

The Christian's obligation to the state. Sinless beings would no doubt be able to find the law of duty. Suppositions could be made as to the social function of a sinless mankind. However, it is useless to speculate as to how these orders may have been. The entrance of sin has both obscured the sense of duty and created many new needs. The objective declaration of the "Law" included statutes necessary for a re-affirming of

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<sup>6</sup> Eph. 5:32.

<sup>7</sup> 1 Tim. 5:8.

<sup>8</sup> Eph. 6:1.

these duties to a sinful people. The fact of sin has greatly increased the need for the state to provide the family with security against internal and external foes. Power to secure this protection must needs be the very essence of the state. Before a proper concept of the state can be secured, its divine order must be established.

God has revealed the nature and purpose of civil government through the Apostle Paul. After discussing the duties of Christians as members of one body, he deals with their duty in relation to the civil authorities. No doubt many Jewish Christians held to the spirit which prompted Pharisees to ask, "Is it lawful to give tribute to Caesar or not?"<sup>9</sup> Christians of Gentile origin too may have been open to the impulses of the same spirit, feeling that loyalty which was due to Christ alone emancipated from all subjection to inferior powers. Paul in writing to the Roman Church impressed upon them the obligation to be subject to the civil government.<sup>10</sup> In the light of a growing church, this passage assumes great importance as to the relationship of church and state. With reference to this passage, Adam Clarke has included this quote taken from the notes of Dr. Taylor:

The attentive reader will be pleased to see with what dexterity, truth, and gravity the apostle, in a small compass, affirms and explains the foundation, nature,

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<sup>9</sup> Mark 12:14.

<sup>10</sup> Rom. 13:1-7.

ends, and just limits of the magistrate's authority, while he is pleading his cause, and teaching the subject the duty and obedience he owes the civil government.<sup>11</sup>

There is perhaps nothing added in the passage which is not already given in Christ's statement, "Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's," yet nothing can be more worthy of admiration than the soberness with which a Christian idealist like Paul lays down the Divine right of the state. The Apostle was not thinking, however, of either passive obedience or tyranny.

What is in his mind is that the organization of human society, with its distinction of higher and lower ranks, is essential for the preservation of moral order, and therefore, one might add, for the existence of the Kingdom of God itself; so that no Christian is at liberty to revolt against that organization. The state is of God, and the Christian has to recognize its Divine right in the persons and requirements in which it is presented to him.<sup>12</sup>

"Let every soul be subject to the higher powers," is a declaration of the mind of God on a subject of the utmost importance to the peace of the world. Every man is to be obedient to the civil government under which he lives; "For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God."<sup>13</sup> It is by God's act and will alone that there is

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<sup>11</sup> Adam Clarke, The Holy Bible Containing the Old and New Testaments with a Commentary and Critical Notes (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press), VI, p. 144.

<sup>12</sup> James Denny, "St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans," The Expositor's Greek Testament (London: Hodder and Stoughton), II, p. 695.

<sup>13</sup> Rom. 13:1.



such a thing as an authority, or magistrate. As God is the origin of power, and the supreme Governor of the universe, He delegates authority to whomsoever He will. Though in many cases the governor himself may not be of God, yet civil government is of Him. This Divine order is thus separate from the Church and has a right to be. Without civil government "there could be no society, no security, no private property; all would be confusion and anarchy, and the habitable world would soon be depopulated."<sup>14</sup>

God has on many occasions in the past appointed individuals who were to govern. These rulers governed by Divine right. Moses, Joshua, the Hebrew Judges, and several of the Hebrew kings were thus appointed. The Jewish people were to respect these leaders as divine representatives of justice. The Mosaic law included civil, economic, and judicial aspects. Moses and his assistants were to judge the affairs of the people on the basis of righteousness. Flagrant violators of the essential principles of the constitution received the penalty of death.

Why the breaches of these great precepts of the Decalogue should have been met so uniformly with the severity of capital punishment, is to be accounted for by the nature of the kingdom set up in Israel, which was a theocracy, having God for its supreme Lawgiver and Head,

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<sup>14</sup> Clarke, op. cit., p. 144.

and for its subjects a people bearing His name and occupying His land. How completely would the great end of such an institution have been frustrated, if the holiness to which the people were called had been outraged, and the sins which ran counter to it openly practiced? To act thus had been to traverse the fundamental laws of the kingdom, nay, to manifest an unmistakable hatred to its Divine Head, and could no more be tolerated than overt treason in an earthly government.<sup>15</sup>

The Mosaic law has set the pattern for all true government. Civil laws are statutory measures expressive of the righteous law of God for the benefit of its subjects. Israel was planted in the midst of the nations as a light placed on a hill. Its statutes and judgments relating to compensation have often been misunderstood. The "eye for an eye" law was designed for a proper administration of justice between man and man requiring that when a particular wrong was done to anyone, and through him to society, an adequate compensation should be rendered. "So far from being peculiar to the Mosaic code, no legislation that is not capricious and arbitrary can dispense with such a rule, nor could society exist in peace and comfort without its faithful application."<sup>16</sup>

The spirit of humanity and moderation is evident, and the tenor of the Decalogue is the embodiment of love and the application of its precepts designed for the well-being of all living under its dominion. Murder is carefully discriminated

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<sup>15</sup> Patrick Fairbairn, The Revelation of Law in Scripture (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1868), p. 100.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., p. 103.

from death brought in some casual manner. Real malice and deliberate intent would condemn a murderer, but, Levitical cities of refuge were provided where violators could receive a fair trial before persons skilled in the knowledge of the law and capable of giving intelligent judgment.<sup>17</sup> Slavery, marriage, rights of women, property rights, and public administration of affairs were all included in the civil government of the theocratic state of Israel. Lack of faith and obedience to God will naturally effect one's loyalty and devotion to government. Such anarchy was experienced in Israel during the period of the Judges. An interesting note on this period is included in the Divine record which says, "In those days there was no king in Israel: every man did that which was right in his own eyes."<sup>18</sup>

Revelation is much larger in its scope than is often realized. God did reveal the true place of civil government, the duty of rulers, and the place of subjects in the Mosaic revelation. Applications will be made to meet varying situations, but the essence of the divine order of government is forever established. Paul had a reason for saying that "the powers that be are ordained of God." God does today by "general superintending providence which he did

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<sup>17</sup> Deut. 19:2.

<sup>18</sup> Judges 21:25.

before by especial designation."<sup>19</sup> In every nation of the earth there is some plan by which a state is governed which could be called a constitution. This constitution is ordained to promote the interests of the community, and the civil governor, whether by election or by dynasty, agrees to govern according to this constitution. The civil government is thus of God, who is the source of law and authority, and the civil governor who administers the laws of the state according to its constitution, is thus the minister of God.

A civil magistrate can thus be called, "the minister of God," since the office he fills is by Divine appointment. The man who is worthy of the office will act in conformity to the will of God. The power of the state has a double purpose. Positively this power has been delegated for the defence and encouragement of the good. Thus, the great beneficent end of civil rule must be recognized. Paul has stated that, "He is the minister of God to thee for good."<sup>20</sup> This good has been well stated by James Denney when he wrote,

The state serves God, with good in view as the end to be secured by its ministry, viz., the maintenance of the moral order in society; and this situation is one of benefit of which redounds to the individual.<sup>21</sup>

In a political or civil sense, whether the governing power be

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<sup>19</sup> Clarke, op. cit., p. 144.

<sup>20</sup> Rom. 13:4.

<sup>21</sup> Denney, op. cit., p. 696.

styled emperor, king, monarch, sovereign, president, governor, ruler, judge, or patriarch, there are important duties involved. These duties grow out of certain important inherent rights which all men are supposed to possess, and which the government to which they submit is bound to protect and defend. Thomas N. Ralston has listed "personal security, personal liberty, and private property" as the principle rights which rulers are bound to protect.<sup>22</sup>

Negatively, the state has the power to check evil by the infliction of punishment. Paul reminds his readers that condemnation of individual vengeance and retaliation does not apply to the action of the state in enforcing law, for the state is God's minister, and it is the just wrath of God which is acting through it. The sword of the magistrates symbolizes the power of life and death which they hold in their hands and Paul said, "He beareth not the sword in vain; for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil."<sup>23</sup> Peter too reminds the readers of his letter that the governors have the authority and power to punish the wicked.<sup>24</sup> It is obvious that freedom is a right accorded by ethics to the moral and not to the immoral person. The immoral are subject to restraint by the state.

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<sup>22</sup> Thomas H. Ralston, Elements of Divinity (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1924), p. 841.

<sup>23</sup> Rom. 13:4.

<sup>24</sup> 1 Peter 2:14.

The conclusion is that he who sets himself against the authorities withstands what has been instituted by God. "Ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake," Paul said.<sup>25</sup> He who sets himself in order against this order of God, and they who obstinately and for no right reason oppose the ruler, and strive to unsettle the constitution and to bring about legal changes, shall be condemned both by the spirit and letter of that constitution, which, under pretense of defending or improving, they are directly labouring to subvert. There is a twofold necessity for submission--an external one, in the wrath of God which comes on resistance; and also an internal one in conscience. Even apart from the consequences of disobedience, conscience recognizes the Divine right and function of the power and submits to it.

As civil government is established in the order of God for the support, defence, and happiness of society, they who transgress its laws, not only expose themselves to the penalties assigned by the statutes, but also to guilt in their own consciences, because they sin against God.<sup>26</sup>

Thus, here are two powerful motives to prevent lawlessness and to instill obedience--the dread of punishment which restrains the ungodly, and the keeping of a good conscience which affects those who fear God.

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<sup>25</sup> Rom. 13:5

<sup>26</sup> Clarke, op. cit., p. 146.

It is evident that submission to the civil authorities, and obedience to the laws are prime duties of every citizen. In fact, men who love God and recognize the divine nature of the social orders, will almost of necessity become the very best representatives of these orders. Patriotism, or love of country, is really a duty incumbent on every citizen. "The same natural tie that binds to the love of family, kindred and home, originates the obligation and suggests the impulse of patriotism."<sup>27</sup>

This duty of patriotism will be manifested by personal effort in sustaining the institution, and in promoting the prosperity of the country. The apostle said, "For this cause pay ye tribute also."<sup>28</sup> Because civil government is an order of God, and the minister of state must become involved in considerable expense in providing for the safety and defence of the community, it is necessary that those in whose behalf these expenses are incurred should defray that expense. Taxation is a reasonable way by which state expenses can be defrayed and a remuneration made for the services of those employed for the services of the public. Patriotism also requires the giving of due respect and reverence for the rulers. "Thou shalt not speak evil of the ruler of thy people," is a quote from Moses which reveals Paul's attitude

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<sup>27</sup> Ralston, op. cit., p. 846.

<sup>28</sup> Rom. 13:6.

toward those in authority.<sup>29</sup> Since they are "ministers of God," filling a divine office, surely they are worthy of due reverence for the office's sake. A Christian's duty as a citizen also involves prayer in behalf of the rulers. Paul urges all to pray "for kings, and all that are in authority."<sup>30</sup> The fulfillment of this Scriptural duty "tends to preserve a continual memory of our indebtedness to God for the gracious providence which confers upon us all our social, political, and religious blessings, and to teach us our dependence upon him for their continuance."<sup>31</sup>

The present day disregard and disrespect of these divine orders is appalling. The great institutions of the family and state have almost lost their true significance. Such irreverence toward these divinely ordained social orders must spell chaos. In the great Christian land of America, the highest office of the land is often the object of ridicule and jest. Since Paul exhorted Christians to render homage to the unchristian Roman rulers as God's ministers of justice, and Peter likewise urged Christians, even under persecution, to "submit to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake," should Christians in America expect to do less? The answer is obvious. Surely Christians must lead the way in exemplary

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<sup>29</sup> Acts 23:5.

<sup>30</sup> 1 Tim. 2:2.

<sup>31</sup> Ralston, op. cit., p. 846.



living and in teaching to promote a proper attitude, respect, reverence, and sense of duty toward the government to which they owe so much.

This whole discussion of course presupposes normal conditions. The question might be asked: Is an immoral or profligate man who does not prove himself worthy of his high office to be deposed? Or, is rebellion against the civil government ever justifiable? Adam Clarke's position is worthy of note:

If he rule according to the constitution, nothing can justify rebellion against his authority. He may be irregular in his own private life; he may be an immoral man, and disgrace himself by an improper conduct: but if he rule according to law; if he make no attempt to change the constitution, nor break the compact between him and the people; there is, therefore, no legal ground of opposition to his civil authority, and every act against him is not only rebellion in the worst sense of the word, but is unlawful and absolutely sinful.<sup>32</sup>

Nothing then could justify the opposition of the subjects to the ruler but overt attempts on his part to change the constitution, or to rule contrary to the law. Ralston agrees with this position and emphatically states:

No personal immorality, imbecility, or bad conduct, on the part of rulers, while the constitution is maintained in good faith, can justify rebellion. The personal character of a ruler is one thing, and his official character is another thing. He may be immoral and profligate in his private life, and yet comparatively a good civil ruler; or he may be unimpeachable in his private character, and tyrannical and unsafe as a civil ruler. For his private

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<sup>32</sup> Clarke, op. cit., p. 145.

conduct he is amenable to God; but, for his official acts, to the constitution and the people over whom he holds dominion.<sup>33</sup>

The early Christians were subject to a power which sometimes required them to do what was forbidden by their religion. To that extent and within those limits they could not and did not obey it. However, they never encouraged in any way resistance or rebellion. "The Church must influence the world by its hold on the hearts and consciences of individuals, and in that way, and not by political power, will the Kingdom of God come."<sup>34</sup> The cases in which rebellion against the authorities of civil government may be justifiable are exceedingly rare. Ralston has stated it thus:

Rebellion is a remedy so terrible in its character and consequences, that it should never be resorted to except in cases of extreme necessity, and after all milder means of redress have been tried in vain. Rebellion is never justifiable when the evils proposed to be remedied are less than those which rebellion would be likely to involve. In such cases, great evils had better be born for a season rather than incur greater evils by attempting their removal.<sup>35</sup>

The social orders have each one a definite purpose and all find unity in God. Statehood must be subject to criticism by the church to maintain proper justice. Extreme pietistic and eschatological tendencies fail to take any

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<sup>33</sup> Ralston, op. cit., p. 845.

<sup>34</sup> William Sanday and Arthur Headlam, "Epistle to the Romans," International Critical Commentary, p. 372.

<sup>35</sup> Ralston, op. cit.

responsibility of social action in the administration of state justice. Anarchy may result from an over-emphasis of eternity apart from history, but tyranny may rise when history is emphasized apart from eternity. Carnell has realized the importance of this relationship and has stated, "If the individual is nothing in relation to the One, the dictator is armed with a perfect basis for his pretenses that he descends from the One, and that his cause and that of the One are the same."<sup>36</sup>

The Christian's obligation to the church. This imperative importance of the aspect of eternity demands that a consideration be given regarding the third of the great social orders, the Church. The physical organization of the church is an institution through whose agency the spiritual and eternal kingdom is to be made effective among men. Christianity is a living witness of the true God. A personal relationship exists between the individual and God. The instinct of this new life is to propagate itself by diffusion and for this diffusion it must have organization. This organization, whose purpose is to make universal the religion of the individual, is the church.

Once again, however, the significance of a social order must be determined by its origin. Is the institution of the

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<sup>36</sup> Edward John Carnell, The Theology of Reinhold Niebuhr (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1950), p. 97.

church also a divine order? Knudson, perhaps representative of liberal theology, says this regarding the church:

We may interpret it in a broad sense as meaning organized religion in general. And if we do so, it is clear that there is no good reason why it should not be regarded as occupying a position paralleled to that of the state. Both owe their origin to fundamental human needs, an inner need of the soul in one case and the need of external security in the other. If, therefore, the latter need points to a divine purpose and stamps it as an order of creation, the former need would seem plainly to have a similar significance for the church.<sup>37</sup>

All societies, institutions, and organizations must be either human or divine in their origin. Those who establish these orders must possess certain prerogatives to arrange their constitutions in accord with their intended purposes. The continuance of this order then must be in accord with the founders constitution. Leadership and membership must be directed by this prescribed constitution if the original purposes of the organization are to be preserved and propagated. Thus, if the church is a divine order, its ministers and membership must be duty bound to the Creator of the order to carry forth the function of that order. The Christian Church must be either a divine or human institution. Ralston asserts that it is a divine institution.

So far as it originates in the appointment of God, or has been prescribed by his authority, it is divine; but so far as any thing pertaining to it has been left to the judgment and discretion of uninspired men, it is human.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Knudson, op. cit., p. 236.

<sup>38</sup> Ralston, op. cit., p. 861.

That the Christian Church is a divine institution is admitted by all Christians. It has its roots in the Mosaic institution, which originated by divine appointment and revelation. Christ fulfilled all typical aspects of this order and instituted a higher order, the Christian Church. The Christian Church rests upon a sure foundation, the eternal Son of God. Therefore it is true, whether one speaks of the institution of the church, the state, or the family, the same principle applies in the same way. Just so far only as they originate in the appointment or by the authority of God, to the same extent are they divine institutions.

Whereas agreement seems unanimous as to the divine origin of the church, it is also largely agreed that church polity was not divinely ordained. Many types of church governments are in existence. The question of chief importance is the adaptation of polity to the attainment of the spiritual ends for which the church is constituted. All polity, however, must include officers, rules enforced by some kind of penalty, and power for administration. Just as organization is a natural necessity, so also are these aspects necessary for organization. Leaders, rules, and power must be present. In all governments, whether civil or ecclesiastical, the supreme or highest power is vested somewhere. That the highest authority must be vested somewhere is just as essential in the church as in the state.

Wherein is this authority centered in the church? Congregationalists say each congregation; Roman Catholics say the Pope; Presbyterians say the ministers and the lay officers together; Episcopalians say the ministry by right of apostolic succession; Methodists say the ordained ministry or eldership of the church. The important point to observe, however, is that all agree that there must be authority.

Since the church is a divine religious-moral society, connected together by a common faith in Christ, and which seeks to represent the life of Christ to the world, its purity must be maintained if divine purpose will be achieved. Herein lies the necessity for church discipline. This exercise arises from the fact that the church is also a human institution, the members of which are subject to the limitation and weakness of humanity. The Christian congregation, therefore, like every other community, needs a means of self-protection in order to suppress or eliminate whatever might impair or destroy its life. Knudson too recognizes this duty:

It is also clearly its duty to promote and preserve its own purity and sanctity. To achieve these ends, the exercise of ecclesiastical discipline has seemed necessary. The discipline has been directed against both erroneous teaching and evil conduct; and its aim has been either to reclaim the offender from the error of his ways, or to cut him off from the church and thus to save it from contamination.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Knudson, op. cit., p. 245.

No institution with such ideals and tasks could hope to fulfill its mission without the upholding of these ideals and beliefs. H. Orton Wiley says that the church, through its ministers, exercises three forms of administrative powers. Administration of laws of order and government, the defence of the Scriptures, and the disciplinary function of the church.<sup>40</sup> Thus, ministers are required both to teach and to exercise proper discipline in the congregation. The character of their discipline is in accord with the spiritual constitution of the church. Therefore, the only means which can be properly employed is exclusion, partial or total, of those whose acts jeopardize the church. Neither the church nor its ministers have the power to use civil authority in even the most severe cases. Their power is limited to censure, suspension, or excommunication. This procedure is best illustrated by the old Methodist procedure in which an accused member was brought to trial before a committee in the presence of the minister. The accused member was allowed the right to call to his assistance any member of the church of good and regular standing.

The seriousness and responsibility of both leadership and membership is apparent. To assume leadership, as called of God, and lead in contradiction of and opposition to the

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<sup>40</sup> H. Orton Wiley, Christian Theology (Kansas City, Missouri: Beacon Hill Press, 1949), III, p. 136.

constitution as prescribed in the Holy Word is to be guilty of high treason against Almighty God. Membership too imposes an obligation and a duty to faithfulness and purity. A Christian who would stand condemned before the church, must surely also stand guilty before God. To continue membership as one of good standing under such circumstances, is to misrepresent the church and jeopardize its mission.

The family, state, and church thus find unity in Almighty God. Personal relationship and responsibility to the orders is also unified. Each order exists for an express purpose, yet the principle of faithfulness and obedience must mark all who are subjects of these orders. A non-christian may or may not recognize a sense of duty to these institutions. He may disregard the family and the church, yet have a sense of regard for the state. Or, he may be devoted to his family, and have little or no regard for the others. However, a Christian should recognize a sacred responsibility to all three. In fact, it is the Christian who has a true basis for this responsibility. It is not mere duty for the organization's sake, but rather is an expression of devotion to God. It is the Christian who recognizes the true purpose of these orders, and diligently strives to promote their influence. Christian liberty does not permit one to live in violation of the constitution, civil or moral, of which he



is a subject. No true Christian could willfully defy God's known will, and disregard His divine institutions without incurring both the penalty of law and the wrath of God. Surely, such a one is a hypocrite pure and simple, and his problem is not one of liberty, but of moral and spiritual disobedience.

## CHAPTER VII

## CONCLUSION

The problem of Christian conduct is a complex one. The aspect of true individuality in the exercise of personal choice makes an objective standardization impossible. Personality qualities, changing situations, apprehension of truth, the degree of consecration, the presence of barriers of prejudice, physical handicaps, and a myriad of other things might be factors to influence choice. Certainly even the most understanding of spiritual advisors can only suggest answers to those who might seek counsel. It is obvious that the great important factor in one's life is that he "wills to do God's will." Such a person may often err through lack of understanding, but will learn by these experiences the more excellent way.

The writer feels that the information set forth in this thesis should furnish a foundation upon which Christian choices can intelligently be made. The Revelation of God has been related to God's eternal moral law to which all mankind is responsible. God's purpose has been to arrest mankind by the reminding him of responsibility to this holy standard. It is only as man is thus arrested that he is prepared to receive the grace which God so freely offers. A Christian is one who has been made aware of transgression through Christ and

restored into the state of sonship through Him. When the prodigal returns home and is re-instated as a son, he assumes the duties of this restored relationship. Thus it is with the Christian. He has been restored to the filial relation of sonship and his duty is to perform the obligation of this relationship. He endeavors to give expression of this sonship through the various organs of his life. His one desire is to fulfill the purpose of the Divine Father. This purpose is fulfilled as God Himself is the guiding, sustaining, and quickening power. One's efforts will be directed in the accomplishing of the mission which God directs. Loyalty to God is the Christian's supreme aim.

The principles of this filial sonship have been revealed by the relationship of Christ with the Father in the Incarnation. Love and loyalty to the Father issue in devotion and obedience in the accomplishing of His appointed tasks. Christians too are to fulfill a Divine purpose. The principle of love and loyalty must apply. True holiness and morality must issue in love and sacrificial service. Sacrifice will be motivated by love in service--not as a meritorious achievement.

This conclusion is apparent. No Christian lives by a carefully prescribed list of rules. Such a system would necessitate a different set for each person, with the code undergoing constant change to cope with changing circumstances.

It is obvious that such a method of procedure would lead to confusion. He rather lives through the motivation of divine love and thus attempts to deal with each situation in accord with this basic principle. Scripture provides a wall of truth to prescribe limits of Christian liberty. Truly, the Word is a necessity through which God will guide His children aright.

The writer feels that the problems which cause difficulty in the realm of Christian liberty have been answered. The progressive revelation of the Bible has been interpreted in relation to God's unchanging moral standard and man's need. It has been established that there is no place for moral indifference and laxness in the Christian life. Also, the danger of external works as meritorious for salvation has been clearly set forth. There is no merit in works. A basis has been given for a proper attitude toward the social orders. Obligation to all is concomitant with loyalty to God. Thus, a true basis for loyalty unto the promotion of these orders is furnished. Disrespect for these social institutions will of necessity reflect disrespect for God. Such an attitude is unthinkable for one living as a true son. It is the belief of the writer of this thesis, that an adequate foundation for Christian conduct has been laid.

Modern society has multiplied the problems in the task of Christian living. Yet, an understanding of basic principles

will furnish a Christian with the necessary means for everyday guidance. Problems of dress, recreation, courting, worship, and all daily living must receive their answer in this way. The answer of all will then be in relation to one's main purpose. Therefore, whether it be personal habits, the recreational life, marriage and home life, church relations, life's work, or any other aspect of life, all will be directed toward the fulfilling of the filial duties of a son in behalf of a loving Father.

There are many benefits from a proper understanding of Christian liberty. There will be a normal growth in grace through this personal trust and obedience to God. This freedom of the spirit will manifest itself in a joyous life with vision and personal initiative in the service of mankind. Such personal victory will naturally incite a desire in the hearts of others to know God. A true Christian spirit is one of God's means for successful evangelism. One does not become a Christian without first wanting to be one. Such a life will eliminate the unlovely elements which so often mar and blight the Christian witness. The benefits in home life will make that institution as a light set on a hill showing to all that Christianity is real. The influence of a Church when enlightened by such a witness is beyond computation. A nation too would be the recipient of benefits and then in turn be a blessing to all the world.

Surely, Christianity is the answer for the world's need. The Gospel is the only hope of the world. History must be related to eternity. The individual and society must find unity in God. God's redemption through Christ is the answer. True Christian living is the living witness of this redemption. The realization of this witness must be the supreme objective of every Christian.

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