

SERMON CL.

III. **T**HAT *by giving him this Rule, God did reveal to Man what was his Duty.* For the clearing of this two Inquiries may be made, viz. 1. *After what Manner God revealed this Law to Man at first?* 2. *How far this Law comprized in it Man's Duty, or the whole Rule of his Obedience?*

1. **AFTER**

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Ans. WE may trace this in the following Conclusions,

1. *THAT the Law was the Rule of Relative Justice, which God fixed between Him and Man.* God, who is the Creator, is also the rightful Governour of his Creatures: And he in Wisdom governs them according to the Nature he put into them. Man was made a reasonable Creature, and God would treat him in a rational way: And for that end put him under special Government, to which he accommodated a Rule; and this was the moral Law. Hence that *Job* 28. 28. And this was, for the display of his Justice, which can in no other way be manifested on a Creature, but according to some Rule of Proceeding: And in his Proceeding with it according to the tenour of that, He appears to be just. And we may call this relative, because it was that on which this Relation between God and Man was founded.

2. *THAT it was necessary that Man should at first know his Rule.* And that upon a double Account,

(1.) *THAT he might comply with it as a Cause by Counsel.* He was not only to be regulated by the instinct of it, but to be taught and instructed by it in his Duty. It was not only God's Rule, by which he would govern Man, but also Man's Rule, by which he was to order himself in his whole Conversation in this World. It was a Reasonable Service that was required of him, *Rom.* 12. 12. 1. He must therefore perform it with Reason. And he was to be voluntary in it, and to do it on Choice. Hence that, *Psal.* 119. 30. *I have chosen the way of truth: thy judgments have I laid before me.* And this he could not do except he had known what his Rule was.

(2.) *THAT he might be capable of being treated with in a way of Justice, according to his keeping or breaking of it.* Though God in Sovereignty may dispose of his Creature as he sees meet, and do it no wrong; yet to make it happy or miserable in a way of Reward or Penalty, necessarily supposeth a Rule of Procedure. And this Rule was once made known, and that he either actually knows it, or that it is his own fault if he be ignorant. Nor can it be a declaration of Justice to punish any for the breach of a Law never promulgated.

3. *THAT he might thus know it, it was necessary that God should some way reveal or make it known to him.* A thing may be more ways than one revealed to a Man: And we here understand it in the largest sense. And here let us observe,

(1.) *THAT the Law was the Contrivance of God's Supreme Will.* True, it is the product of his infinite Wisdom, and was adapted for the Government of Man, being suited to his Nature; and was therefore holy, just, & good, *Rom.* 7. 12. But the Will of God was the Supreme Authority from which it proceeded.

Hence so called, *Rom.* 12. 2. And see, *1. Pet.* 4. 2. God's Requiring it is Man's Warrant for his Doing it, and the highest Reason of his Obedience. God therefore counts it sufficient Obligation to subscribe every Precept, with, *I am the Lord.*

(2.) *HENCE Man could not know it, but by his some way signifying it to him.* Man must know it to be his Duty and consequently that it was God's Will, on which his Duty depends, and that he knows this, God must make it known to him: For it is not his secret Will that is our Rule, *Deut.* 29. 29. Hence we have that, *Alic.* 6. 8.

4. *THAT God did at first imprint this Law on the Heart of Man immediately, in his Creation.* And for our sight taking this up, let us observe,

(1.) *THAT in the Law, as given at first, we are to consider both the Precepts and Sanctions.* God gave the Law unto Man at his Creation, in a Covenant: And that it might be such an Instrument, it had these two parts in it, viz. Preceptive, which contained all that of Duty that God required of Man; and Obligatory, which consisted in a Promise made to Obedience, and a Threatning against Disobedience, by which it was suited for the Administration of Justice: Both of which the Word of God gives a full account of.

(2.) *THAT this Law was suited to the Nature of Man, which was therefore capable of the Impressions of it in his Creation in both of these respects.* That it was thus suited, may be read in the Law it self, and comparing it with Man's Capacity: but needs no other proof, then to consider that God is a wise Lawgiver, and both know what was the Nature that he gave to Man, and what was convenient to direct him how he might serve to the Glory of his Maker, which must needs be his last End. And that Man's Nature was capable of receiving these Impressions, is evident if we consider,

[1.] *THAT God put into Man a natural Conscience, as he was to be a Subject of the Law.* That every Man hath a Conscience in him, is witnessed by his own Conscience, for he experienceth such a thing; as will appear in that which follows. God therefore put it into him; and it was for some End & Use. And that this was to render him better fit to be a Subject of the moral Law, ariseth from the Nature of it; as will be seen. Hence,

[2.] *THAT this Conscience was every way suited to receive the forementioned Impressions.*

For,

1. *CONSCIENCE properly belongs to the practical Understanding, and is therefore fitted to conduct a Man in acting according to Rule.* Whether Conscience be an Habit, or only an Act, I dispute not; but that it is not a Faculty or Power distinct from the Understanding, I think may be made good, if we consider the Nature of the Understanding and Usefulness of it in Man, which is not only to inform him in the Theory of things, but also to guide him

him in practice; and for this it is endued with a power of Judgment, by which it can inquire into the Nature of Things, and compare them, and discern the Connections and Consequents of them, and accordingly commend or discommend them to the Will. Now, when it thus exerts it self with respect to the Law of God, and makes a Judgment of it, and of our Relation and Carriage towards it, then it is called Conscience. Hence that, *Rom. 2. 14, 15.*

2. HENCE *Conscience is a Subject recipient of the Rule into it.* And indeed, it were not otherwise fitted for its proper Function: For the Judgment it is to make is, whether this be Right or Wrong, a Duty or a Sin, commanded or forbidden; which cannot be done but by bringing and applying it to the Rule, which is the measure of Obedience and Disobedience. For we are told, *1 Joh. 3. 4. Whosoever committeth sin, transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law.* It must therefore be acquainted with the Law in order to its passing such a Judgment; nor can it do it any farther than it knows the Rule, and is able thus to apply it. Hence an erroneous Conscience, ever makes a false Judgment about those things wherein it is erroneous. It must therefore be capable of receiving the Rule into it, or else it would not be truly Conscience.

3. THAT *God stamped this Rule on Man's Conscience at the first, together with the Sanctions of it, and thereby fitted him to be a Subject of his special Government.* It is enough to evince the Truth of this, to consider that Man was ordained to be a Subject of this Government, which he could not have been capable of without it. But besides, it is apparent in our first Parents immediately after their Fall, *Gen. 3. 8, 9. And they heard the voice of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day: and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God amongst the trees of the garden. And the Lord God called unto Adam, and said, Where art thou? And whence was this but from the impression the Law had on their Consciences. The relicks also of the Law that are found in the Hearts of meer Heathen, thus acting, are a further witness of this. As, Rom. 2. 14, 15. For when the Gentiles which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these having not the law, are a law unto themselves: Which shew the works of the law written on their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing, or else excusing one another.* And it is further confirmed, in that it is promised as a great Benefit of the New Covenant, that God will anew write his Law upon the Hearts of his People, which had been so defaced by the Apostasy, *Jer. 31. 33. But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel, After those days, saith the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write them in their hearts, and will be their God, and they shall be my people.*

4. *THE Image of God, on Man's Understanding, not only gave him a perfect Knowledge of the Law, but also an Approbation of it, & Assent to it, as holy, just, and good.* The Image of God, concreated in Man consisted in the Sanctification of all his Faculties & Powers, one of which was his Understanding; and the Operation of it on that was, not only the giving him a clear Light to know what was commanded, and what forbidden, and on what Terms he stood with God; but mainly, in the right Judgment that he had of the Rule, and a full consent which it gave to it, as every way proper and convenient for Man. This therefore we find *Paul* when renewed again, fully assented unto, *Rom. 7. 12.* And he declares it to be a fruit of the Transformation which is wrought by Regeneration, *Rom. 12. 2.* On the account therefore of this first impression of the moral Law on the Conscience of Man, as well as of the remaining light in fallen Man, it is usually called the Law of Nature. And here this Question may in few words be discussed, viz.

Quest. *WHETHER the Law of Nature be the same with the moral Law?*

Ans. LET us here observe these Things,

1. *THE Law of Nature may be considered, either as it was given to Man at first, or as to the Relicks of it in the Consciences of fallen Man.* When God first wrote it on Man's Heart, it was perfect and compleat in all the Rules that belonged to Man in a state of Integrity, and of subordination to the Government of God. Whereas the remains of it in sinful Men are broken fragments and imperfect: fallen Man being under ignorance and error.

2. *THE moral Law is to be considered either as it is purely Moral, or as it hath something Positive annexed to it.* And from these distinctions, we may take up the following Conclusions,

1. *THAT the Law of Nature, and the moral Law, are the same for the Substance.* If we speak of the Matter of Duty required in them, there is no substantial difference between them; for the Law given to *Adam* was perfectly suited to direct him as a moral Agent: Yea, it was a Law of Life; and therefore hath nothing wanting to it as such. The *Ten Commands*, which are the Sum of the Law moral, (as will be considered in the next,) were all in the Law of Nature.

2. *WHATSOEVER Positive Precepts were annexed to the moral Law in the new Edition, were generally contained in the Law of Nature.* There are some Precepts laid down in the Word of God, whose Reason is Moral, and yet the particular Determination of them is Positive: Such as the limitation of the Sabbath to a Seventh Day, and to this Seventh, before, and another after Christ's Coming in our Flesh; but it is not for that Reason to be counted Ceremonial, but Moral; tho' the fixing of it thus were arbitrary, and depended on a further Revelation.

3. *THAT*

3. THAT the moral Law, as it was given or proclaimed at Mount Sinai, differed from the Law of Nature as given at first, in respect of the Design or End of it. In the first Edition of it, it was to be the Law of a Covenant of Works, to which Man was either to stand or fall: It had Happiness promised to Obedience, and Misery threatened to Disobedience; but in the new Edition it was given in the hand of a Mediator, and for gracious Purposes, Gal. 3. 19. *Wherefore then serveth the law? It was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come, to whom the promise was made, and it was ordained by angels, in the hand of a mediator.* It was therefore to be a Schoolmaster to bring us to Christ, ver. 24. It was to convince God's People of their Sin and Misery, and thereby to make them to look out to Christ for their Salvation, who was typically represented to them by the ceremonial Law which followed.

2. HOW far this Law comprized in it Man's Duty, or the whole Rule of his Obedience?

Ans. FOR a through Understanding of this, we are to consider the State of Man in Integrity, and under the Apostacy. And here,

1. IN general, concerning both of these States. Two things may be remarked.

1. THERE was a Reservation for particular positive Precepts in the Law, which were not particularly imprinted on Man's natural Conscience, but yet a general Obligation to such, when revealed, was therein contained. All the positive Laws ceremonial & judicial refer hither, and all Institutions Evangelical. For though the Law of Nature did not expressly command them, nor could the meer Light of Nature have known them, nor had they been Duties if not particularly promulgated, yet the Obedience to them is Moral, i. e. required by the command of the moral Law, in general by the first Command. Hence that, Deut. 12. 32. *What thing soever I command you, observe to do it: thou shalt not add thereto, nor diminish from it.* And particularly by the several Commands, to which they are nextly to be reduced.

2. THAT none but God could make any such Precepts to oblige the Consciences of Men. He hath therefore absolutely forbidden either to add too, or diminish from what he is pleased to command, in the forecited, Deut. 12. 32. And hence that Curse denounced against those that shall dare so to do, Rev. 22. 18. *For I testify unto every man that heareth the prophesie of this book, if any man add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book.* And there is reason for it, because Man's Conscience, as such, is liable to no other Judgment but that of God.

2. IN particular; referring to these severally.

1. CONCERNING Man in a State of Integrity. These two things may be observed,

1. THERE was no moral Duty lying upon Man in that State, but what was contained in

this Law. Else it had been imperfect, and consequently not a Law of Life, nor a fit Instrument to advance the End of special Government, which was to conduct Man to an everlasting State of Happiness or Misery, according as he kept or brake that Law. That Law said, *do and live*, Rom. 10. 5. It therefore had all in it, that was necessary to Life in a Rule, and consequently no moral Duty wanting to it.

2. THAT hence, Man by a perfect Conformity to that Law, should have obtained his End and Happiness. This necessarily follows from the former, and because the Promise of the first Covenant, under which he then was, referred to no other as the Condition with which it was connected. There were indeed, Sacraments annexed to that Covenant, for the Confirmation of the Sanctions of it; which being revealed, they could not violate, but by a Transgression of one at least of the Commands of that Law.

2. CONSIDERING Man in a State of Apostasy. There are these things to be observed,

1. THAT the Law will be the great Rule of the Judgment at the last Day. In that Day there are Books to be opened, and Men are to be judged out of them, and this is one of those Books. There must be a Rule of Judgment, and that must be the Law of Government under which Men are in this World. Hence that, 2 Cor. 5. 10. The Case of all will be tried according to the moral Law, whether the Condition of Life required in that Law be answered, and that will turn the case. True, the Gospel hath brought in a Suretyship, in which Christ is accepted to answer the demands of Justice for all that are in him by Faith; which will be then enquired into, and will issue the Matter on the side of all true Believers; but the Reason will be, because the Law is satisfied and they justified by the Righteousness of the Mediator: Which made Paul so solicitous to be found in him, Phil. 3. 9. But still, the Law is regarded in all this, according to Mat. 5. 18.

2. HENCE none of fallen Men can be acquitted then unless he hath either by himself or by his Surety answered the Demands of this Law. The judge of all the Earth will do that which is right, Gen. 18. 25. The Law is the Rule of that, and therefore none can stand in the Judgment, but such as can shew a true Claim to a Righteousness by which the Law hath been satisfied in their behalf; for the Gospel doth not undermine the Law, but ratify it, Rom. 3. 31.

3. BUT the Law is not a sufficient Rule of Life to fallen Man, by his perfect Obedience to it. Not only can he not obtain Life by it, because he hath lost this Power of perfect Obedience to it, and therefore it must needs condemn him if he stand to the trial of it, Eccl. 7. 20. Prov. 20. 9. 1 John 1. 8. But it ceaseth to be a Rule of Life to Man that is fallen, because all Men are by Adam's Fall under the Condemnation of Death, by it, Rom. 5. 12.

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Which Guilt they cannot expiate of themselves, and by that means the Law becomes incapable of conferring Life on them, Rom. 8.

3. *For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin condemn'd sin in the flesh.* Gal. 3. 21.

4. *HENCE the new Covenant hath introduced new Duties, which were not accommodable to the Law, in this State of Integrity.* The Gospel hath brought in Faith in Christ, as necessary to Salvation, Mark 16. 16. And it is not only indulged Men, but commanded them, 1 John 3. 23. And it hath introduced Repentance both as a Duty, and is therefore commanded, Acts 17. 20. Yea, and it is made a necessary medium to the obtaining of Life; yea, and Life is secured to it. Hence is that Tide put upon it, Acts 11. 18. *Repentance unto Life.* Whereas there was no occasion for justifying Faith, during Man's Integrity, nor room for it in the Covenant of Works, because Man by that was to be justified by his own personal Righteousness; nor was there any room for Pardon upon Repentance, because that Covenant positively denounced Death upon Sin, Ezek. 18. 4.

5. *NEVERTHELESS, these Duties, considered as Works required of us, are reducible to the moral Law.* We before observed, that by that Law, Man was bound in Subjection to God, to yield him Obedience in whatsoever he should see meet to enjoy him in, and reveal to him to be his Will. When therefore God, in Favour to Man, did upon his fearful Apostasy, open to him a way of Recovery in a new Covenant, and prescribe to him the Duties which he required of him in order to his recovering of Life, Man now was bound by that Law to obey him in it, and is guilty of moral Transgression if he refuse or neglect it, and is liable to Punishment for Disobedience, 2 Thef. 1. 9.

6. *HENCE, whatsoever is required in new Evangelical Obedience, is comprized in this Law.* Not only are the moral Duties, under which Man was expressly engag'd at first revived in it, and have a new Force put upon them, by the Consideration of Christ's Redemption, 1 Cor. 6. 20. But also the Duties of Faith and Repentance are reducible to it, so far

as they are commanded by that Authority which we are obliged to own and obey by the first Command.

USE. I. *LEARN hence, how vainly they expect Salvation by Christ, who despise the moral Law.* How many are there, who if not professedly, yet practically allow themselves in Sin, under a Presumption that Christ hath freed them from the Law, and there is now no more danger by Sinning against it. Such are all they that pretend, they may sin that Grace may abound; which the Apostle rejects with Detestation, Rom. 6. 1, 2. These will find themselves miserably deceived at last.

USE. II. *LEARN we hence, how dangerous a thing it is, to sin against the light of a natural Conscience.* God hath put into every Man a Conscience to curb the exorbitant motions of Lust in him, from breaking out into leud Actions; and requires him to hearken to the Voice of it, and not so to do is Wickedness. Conscience is God's Deputy in a Man, and speaks to him in God's Name, he therefore that rejects the warnings of that, in so doing renounceth God's Government over him, and may expect his fearful Wrath to fall upon him. Hence the Apostle hath such an Observation; John 3. 20. *For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things.* Such therefore as hearken not to it, are grown to a prodigious height of Impiety.

USE. III. *THIS should put us upon frequent studying of the moral Law; if we would live and please God.* True, it concerns us to study the Gospel, because thence all our Hope and Consolation must derive; and the Law alone, will offer to fallen Man nothing but Terror; but if under pretence of the Gospel we neglect the Law, and nourish in ourselves Ignorance of it, we can never lead a Life of Evangelical Obedience, which God requires of us, but must do the things that dishonour and displease him. Let us then labour to know our Duty by it, and then improve the Gospel to point us how we may do this Duty in Faith, so as may be acceptable to him.

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S E R M O N C L I.