

# S E R M O N C L I.

## Q U E S T I O N X L I.

*HERE is the moral Law summarily comprehended ?*

A N S W E R.

THE moral Law is summarily comprehended in the Ten Commandments.

**W**E have already considered the moral Law in the Nature of it ; and how God gave it to Man at the first for the Rule of his special Government over him, and after what manner he pleased to reveal it to and in our first Parents : As also what Obligation Man is under to pay Obedience to it notwithstanding the Apostasy ; and what use it is of to Christians under the Covenant of Grace : How far also it may be said to comprize under it the whole Rule of Man's Obedience.

THAT



THAT which next comes under Inquiry, is, *How Man may come to be acquainted with it since his Fall?* For if it still remains to be such a Rule, it is very necessary that Man be acquainted with it, how else shall he be able to yield conformity to it? For this there must be a new Revelation, as will presently be manifested. And this our Catechism tells us, that God hath given us the Sum and Abstract of in the Ten Commandments.

HERE we may Inquire, 1. *Why God was pleased to renew the Revelation of the moral Law to fallen Man?* 2. *To whom he hath made this Revelation?* 3. *After what manner he hath made it?* 4. *How it may be said to be comprized in the Ten Commandments?* 5. *By what Rules we are to reduce all moral Duties to these Ten Commandments?*

1. *WHY God was pleased to renew the Revelation of the moral Law to fallen Man?*

*Ans.* WE may take a brief Account of this in the following Remarks,

1. *THAT it is Man's indispensable Duty to serve God in Holiness and Righteousness.* It was not only Adam's Duty in a state of Integrity, when he was furnished with the Image of God for it; but, though the power be lost in fallen Man, yet the Obligation remains, these being the parts of Man's Obedience which God enjoyed him in, by the rule of special Government under which he was placed in his Creation; nor can his sinful losing his ability discharge him from his Duty. We are therefore told, in Job 28. 28. *And unto man he said, Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom, and to depart from evil is understanding.* And this is declared to be one end of Christ's Redemption, viz. to restore us to such a power, and re engage us in this Service, Luk. 1. 74, 75. *That he would grant unto us, that we being delivered out of the hands of our enemies, might serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him all the days of our life.*

2. *THAT the moral Law is the Rule of this Holiness & Righteousness, and must therefore be known in order to Practice.* That these are the two parts of moral Obedience, and how they comprize the Sum of Man's Duty under them, will be particularly considered under the next Question. From whence it will appear that this Law is the Rule by which we are directed to and in them. And indeed all moral Goodness is comprized under them, as may afterwards be further demonstrated. Now if Men would practice these as a Reasonable Service unto God, it is requisite that they be acquainted with them. Blindness and Ignorance must needs leave Men to error and wandering. And without this Knowledge the Mind cannot be good; though a bare literal knowledge is not sufficient to make it good. Hence that, Job. 13. 17. *If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them.*

3. *THAT by Man's Apostacy the first inscription of that Law on his Heart is greatly defaced* We observed that the whole Law was faintly

engraven upon it when he came out of God's Hand. But Sin did not only rob him of the Image of God, but also made woful blurs and blots upon his Rule, so that many Principles of it are quite lost, and others are wofully obscured. Hence a Sinner, and a Fool, are in Scripture terms Synonymical, *Psal. 14. 1.* Sin hath rendred us foolish, foolish, brutish. We have lost the knowledge of the true God, and are bewildred in our apprehensions about him, and entertain wrong notions about his Nature and Perfections, and have set up an Idol in his room. We have lost the right conceptions of true Happiness, and taken up in the room of them such opinions of Felicity, that will lead us into and leave us in misery. The Law of God is thrust out, and the law of Sin hath taken place in our Hearts in the room of it. We are mistaken in the true Worship of God, and turned to Idolatry, nor are we a-right opinionated about the Duties of Justice and Charity. In a word, we call good evil, &c. *Isai 5. 20.*

4. *THAT though, since the Fall, there are some remains of the Law on the Consciences of Men, enough to leave them without excuse, yet not sufficient to direct them in a way of Holiness and Righteousness.* Here are three Things,

(1.) *THAT since the Fall there are some remains of the Law on the Consciences of Men.* The Heart of fallen Man is like to some old ruined Fabrick, which was once stately, but now lies in rubbish, only here and there are to be seen some relicks of its Glory, which serve only to let Men know what a woful Catastrophe hath befallen it; and witness that once it was Glorious, to help us the more to bemoan its Desolation. The Heathen have some moral Truths left in them, but they are *imprisoned in unrighteousness*, Rom. 1. 18. Hence they have used the light of Nature in them so far as to let us know that there is a Synteresis in their Conscience, out of the Records whereof many broken fragments of Divine Truths may be read: Though we are not to suppose that all the natural Divinity pretended to by E-theick Philosophers was gathered merely from their own reason, but much of it by Converte with the People of God.

(2.) *THAT these remains of natural light on the Heathen, are sufficient to leave them without excuse.* When God calls them to their Trial, there will be enough found of the Law written on their Consciences, to convince & condemn them. See *Rom. 1. 20.* 2. 14, 15. They will be found to have sinned against Light, and inward Warnings; to have done things, which their Consciences told them they ought to have avoided, and neglected Duties which they suggested to them. There are the common Principles in the Light of Nature, that are practical and improvable by humane reason, in the observation of the Works of Creation and Providence; the neglect whereof will inforce Men to confess themselves Guilty. That told Men that there is a God, that he is the greatest and best of

Beings, and ought therefore to be worshipped and served by Men: That Man is made for an End, which must be better than himself; and that because God is the best Being, he must needs be Man's last End. That there are Rules of Righteousness, and a Justice, Equity, and Charity to be maintained between Men; and that there are Sins against these which deserve Death, Rom. 1. ult. *Who knowing the judgments of God, that they which do such things are worthy of death.* Hence, how many of them have been terrified & distracted with the Stings and Reverberations of their own Consciences, after the commission of some enormous Crimes, which was nothing else but a judgment which they pass upon themselves, according to the Law of God.

(3.) *LET* they have not sufficient to direct them in the way of Holiness and Righteousness. Not only have they no knowledge of the new Way, revealed in the Gospel, but they have lost the knowledge of the latitude of the Law of the first Covenant. Many moral Duties they are ignorant of, both in respect of the Worship of God, and Righteousness towards Man. Their Minds are blinded; they have condemned many Virtues of Folly, and advanced many Vices into the number of Virtues. The Apostle giveth them such a Character, Eph. 4. 17, 18. *This I say therefore and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk in the vanity of their mind, Having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart.* They trust to their own carnal reasonings, and they contradict the Spiritual things of the Law of God, and in lead them into deceits and errors.

5. *THAT* except God had again revealed this Law, fallen Man must have abole in his natural Ignorance of it. The whole World was gone out of the way. Not only had they lost all the impressions of Holiness and Righteousness on their Hearts, by losing the Image of God on them, but they were filled with all carnal Lufts, which possessed them, and fixed them in those cursed Principles, that they still were on the losing hand; and their Minds were so perverted, that they could not so much as discover the deceit they were under. Hence that, Isai 44. 20. *He seedeth of ashes: a deceived heart hath turned him aside, that he cannot deliver his soul, nor say, Is there not a lie in my right hand?* Rom. 1. 21. Hereupon we have them sadly Characterized, Rom. 3. 10,—19. Who then should have shewn them the Rules of Obedience, required by the Law, if God had not a new declared them?

6. *THAT* God had merciful Ends in thus revealing it to Men. It was a great favour of God, to give to Man a new fair transcript of the moral Law, when that which was at first written on their Hearts was so woefully defaced. And this may be confirmed, if we consider what it was for; viz.

1. Negatively; NOT that the moral Law

was sufficient to point fallen Man to Felicity. That now ceased of it self to be able to shew Sinners the way how they might recover God's Favour, and so live as to please him. It now no longer offered to Man the terms of a Covenant of Life, as it did at the first; it doth not now say to him, this do and live. For all this is introduced by the Gospel, in the New Covenant, which is there opened, and Men are invited into. The Apostle lays down that assertion, and gives the reason of it, Rom. 3. 20. *Therefore by the deeds of the law, there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin.*

2. Positively; IT had especially these three Ends in it,

(1.) *TO convince Unregenerate Men of their Sin and Misery.* We are told, in the fore-cited, Rom. 3. 20, &c. So that Man's losing his clear knowledge of the Law, rendered him very insensible of his sinful and undone state. Hence arose that woful security that Men laboured of; Conscience not being able to do its Office fully for want of Light. Paul tells us how it was with him, when though he had the Law in the Letter, yet he was without the right apprehension of it, Rom. 7. 9. How then must it be with them that have not the Letter of it afforded them.

(2.) *TO make way for their entertainment of Christ in the Gospel Revelation.* The end of Christ's coming was to supply the Law's deficiency of being able to lead sinful Man to Blessedness, Rom. 8. 3. Now that Men may be brought to see their need of Christ to be a Saviour, that so they may be persuaded to seek to him for Salvation, it is necessary that they be made to know what their Condition is by Sin; how miserable and helpless that hath made them: And for this, God renewed the Law, as being most serviceable thereunto. And by this means it becomes a School-master to Christ; as we are told, Gal. 3. 23, 24.

(3.) *TO help Believers in their new Obedience.* The Law is the Rule of Man's Obedience. Believers are in Regeneration Sanctified, with a new Principle furnishing them for this Obedience; in the faithful performance whereof they glorify God, and honour their Profession, and serve to the End they were made for. God therefore hath required this, that so they may have their Rule made plain, by which they may be pointed in their way. And therefore David gives it that commendation, Psal. 119. 105. *Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my paths.*

7. *GOD* also did it in Sovereignty, to leave some the more inexcusable. It doth not attain its gracious End in all to whom it is revealed, but they neglect it, and using it to lead them to Christ, and hereby they aggravate their Guilt, and bring the greater Condemnation upon themselves. The Apostle on this account hath that distinction, Rom. 2. 12. *For as many as have sinned without the law, shall also perish without law: and as many as have sinned in the*

the law, shall be judged by the law. Without Law, i.e. the written Law: And they shall perish without Law, i.e. it shall not be Charged on them, that they had it thus given them. The contrary to which he asserts of the other; intimating an aggravation of Sin by it.

II. TO whom he hath made this Revelation?

Ans. WE may briefly take this up in three Particulars,

1. NOT to all the World. Though all Mankind are equally fallen under the loss of the primitive engravings of it, yet all are not favoured with the new Edition of it. The Apostle plainly distinguisheth between such as are without it, and them that are under it, in the forecited, Rom. 2. 12. God hath hitherto left the bigger part of Mankind without this Privilege.

2. NOT only to his Elect. For though God graciously revealed it for their sakes, and with a design of their good; and though none but these, have the new inscription of it made on their Hearts; yet the outward Dispensation of it is more extensive, and it is made a common Privilege to the Elect and others; and it must needs be so, because these are mixt together, and are accordingly equally made to partake in the outward Benefits of the New Covenant, whereof this is one. This is supposed, in Luk. 12. 47. *And that servant which knew his lords will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes*

3. BUT to the Visible Church. God, designing to dispense his Grace to his Chosen, in the way of Means and Ordinances, accommodated to Men as Reasonable Creatures, hath accordingly sent his Word to Men as he pleased, and they have been perswaded by it to give entertainment thereto by an outward Profession, and thereby brought into a Visible Church State, and made Partakers in the means of Grace, though not all in the saving Fruits thereof. According to that, Mat. 20. 16. *For many be called, but few chosen.* We are therefore told, Rom 9. 6. *For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel.* And to these pertained the giving of the Law, ver. 4. Now this was of old limited to the literal Israel, Psal. 147. 19, 20. But hath, since Christ's appearing in our flesh, been extended to the Gentiles.

III. AFTER what manner he hath made this Revelation?

Ans. THAT we take this up right, we must observe, that this Revelation is either External or Internal: Between which there is a difference.

1. CONCERNING the External, we may observe,

1. THAT God was pleased to signify this to some of his Servants by Inspiration and immediate Revelation. The Apostle hints, Heb. 1. 1. *God who at sundry times, and in divers manners, spake in time past unto the fathers.* And this was one of them. There were therefore extraordinary Persons from the first: Enoch was such, Jude 14.

2. THAT these Communicated it to others. They were sent by God to Men for this End, and hence they spake to others, as God had signify'd his mind to them, 2 Per. 1. 21. *For the prophesy came not in old time by the will of man; but holy Men spake as they were moved by the holy Ghost.*

3. AND this was from Adam to Moses handed down by Tradition. The Fathers told their Children, and they their Children. And thus was the mind of God continued from one Generation to another, Psal. 78. 5. *For he established a testimony in Jacob, and appointed a law in Israel: which he commanded our fathers: that they should make them known to their children.*

4. WHEN this Tradition grew into decay, God raised up others, extraordinarily spirited, to revive it. Men through neglect and folly, lost the Doctrines taught them, and fell into Apostasy: and God pleased to send Prophets to restore them again; so that this knowledge might not be utterly lost.

5. FROM Moses till the Canon was perfected, he did it partly by tradition, partly by Revelation, partly by Writings. The first writer of Canonical Scripture was Moses. The Canon was not perfected till all the Sacred Writings were completed; till then therefore, there were Men continued in the Church, who were extraordinarily inspired.

6. SINCE that, it is compleatly contained in the holy Scriptures; where only we are to seek to know our Duty. Hence that Text of the Bible, Rev. 22. 18. *For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophesie of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book.*

2. THE Internal is by a new inscription of the Law, in the Hearts of God's Children, which is done in Conversion. Of this we read, Jer. 31. 32. And this belonging to Sanctification, is done by Degrees.

IV. HOW it may be said to be comprized in the Ten Commandments?

Ans. 1. WHEN God revived the Law at Mount Sinai, he delivered it in Ten Words, or Precepts. This is evident both by the Matter it self recorded, which hath neither more, nor fewer distinct Subjects in it; and because God himself hath so enumerated them, Exod. 34. 28. Deut. 4. 13.

2. THIS being given as a Rule of moral Obedience, it must needs comprehend the substance of the whole Law. God is said to make a Covenant with them, Deut. 5. 2. And we are told what that was, v. 2. *and he added no more.* Now this was a revival of the Covenant of Works, to make way for the gracious Covenant that followed; and therefore it must comprize all the Precepts of that Covenant.

3. GOD afterwards gave forth many particular moral Precepts to his People. And that both by Moses, for many of the Laws, deli-

vered by him, were purely Moral, as *Lev. 18.* and elsewhere; and by the Prophets that succeeded after *Moses*, whose Writings abound with them.

4. *THAT all these Precepts are but Commentaries upon the ten Commands.* God did, in and by them explain the meaning of these, and therein give a Specimen of the great breadth of that Law. So that there is not one of them but is referrible to one or other of these Classes. And if we would rightly understand the full purport of them, we must reduce them hither. And herein the great Wisdom of God hath discovered it self, in so Epitomizing all moral Duties, for our better carrying of them in our Minds, and to facilitate our right understanding of them. It therefore becomes us, whensoever we find any particular Precept in the Word of God, to reduce it to its proper Head in the Decalogue. And for our help in this, we may proceed to inquire,

V. *By what Rules we are to reduce all Moral Duties to the Ten Commandments?*

*Ans.* THERE are divers profitable Rules for this laid down by Divines, and variously expressed: The substance whereof may be taken up in these that follow.

1. *THAT every of these Commands hath something in it distinct from every other.* The Matter of each is diverse from all the rest. There are no tautologies in them. This may be distinctly evidenced, when we come to the Consideration of each of them in particular. And hence if we would know God's Mind, and our Duty, we must inquire after the particular Subject designed in either of them.

2. *THAT every of these Precepts extends to the whole Man.* They greatly err, who think these Commands to require only the outward behaviour of Men, for the sufficient observing of them. Men's Laws can reach no further, but God is Lord of the Conscience, and Judge of that; and he observes, not only what we do, but with what Heart. Hence that, *2 Chron. 25. 2.* *And he did that which was right in the sight of the Lord, but not with a perfect heart.* God requires the inward Man, *Prov. 23. 26.* *My son, give me thine heart.* And we are told, *Heb. 4. 12.* *For the word of God is quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints & marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts & intents of the heart.* This Law, respects the Thoughts, as well as the Words and Actions; and may as well be broken by them, as by the other, *Mat. 5. 28.* They also are mistaken, who think, that the outward actions are aimed at in some, and the Heart only in others, for every Command of the Law is Spiritual, *Rom. 7. 14.*

3. *THAT hence the Habits of Sanctifying Grace are required in every of them.* As when the Law was given, Men had all Grace fitting him for Obedience, so the Law expects that the Man should have kept that

Image, and condemns the loss of it. Hence that Law not only forbids Actual, but also Original Sin; and condemns that lust or concupiscence in the Heart, which unfits us for moral Obedience, *Rom. 7. 14.* *For we know that the law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under sin.* That looks after the Principle from which all our Actions flow; and that is the reason why the natural Man cannot serve God, but sins in his Duties. This is the reason why the Prayer of the Wicked is abomination.

4. *THAT both the Affirmative and Negative is included in every Precept.* There are some of these expressed Affirmatively, as the *Fourth* and *Fifth*, and the rest Negatively, but in each of these the other is included. When we are forbidden to have any other God, we are therein enjoined to take the true God, and him alone for our God. When we are forbidden Adultery, we are commanded Chastity. When we are commanded to keep the Sabbath Holy, we are forbidden all Profanation of it; and so of the rest. *Isai. 58. 13.* And the reason is evident, because of the inseparable connexion between Sins of Commission, and Omission.

5. *THAT where any thing is commanded or forbidden, it extends to every kind and degree relating thereto.* Some of the Precepts mention only one Species, but this is to be understood Synechdochically, and applied to every other. When Adultery is forbidden, which is properly a defiling of the Marriage-Bed, all sorts of Uncleannesses are comprehended, even to a lascivious Look. Hence that, *2 Pet. 2. 14.* *Having eyes full of adultery, and that cannot cease from sin.* Yea though on a maid, *Job 31. 1.* *I made a covenant with eyes, why then should I look upon a maid?*

6. *THAT every Precept includes all the Means, Occasions, and Advantages, which refer thereto.* When it requires such a Duty, it therein requires that we use all proper Courses to help us in it. When it forbids such a Sin, it therein prohibits our using, and requires our avoiding all the Temptations and Occasions leading thereto. And this may be part of the meaning of that, *1 Thes. 5. 22.* *Abstain from all appearance of evil.* When it forbids Murder, it consequently Prohibits unjust Anger, that is leading thereto, *Mat. 5. 22.* When it forbids Adultery, it warns us against coming into the Company of lascivious Persons, where a train will be laid for us, *Prov. 5. 8, 9.*

7. *EVERY Precept bids us not only to avoid the doing of such things our selves, but to take heed that we do not partake in other Men's Sins.* *1 Tim. 5. 22.* And we bring this Guilt upon our selves when we either encourage them in their Sin, and seek to hide or cover it, or do not use endeavours according to our Opportunity to prevent them.

8. *THE same Duties may have a reference to divers of these Commands in several respects.* There are such several respects which Actions may be clothed withal, and accordingly are diversely

divertely applicable. A Positive Command, may be considered as Positive, and so it belongs to the First, or it may be considered as referring to Instituted Worship, and so to the Second, or as limiting the Time, and so to the Fourth; excess in Meats, Drinks, and Apparel; may be reckoned as pernicious to the Health, and to belong to the Sixth, or as contrary to Sobriety, and incentives of fleshly Lust, and so to the Seventh, or as a prodigal wasting of Men's Estates; and so to the Eighth.

9. *AND where there are Promises or Threatnings annexed to any Command, the contrary is included.* As the Promise refers to Obedience, so it involves a Menace against Disobedience. In the Third Command there is a Threatning, not to hold Guileless, &c. which assures us, that God will accept, commend, and reward such as reverence his Name. In the Fifth, there is a Promise, &c. And this infers, that if Men despise their Parents, some fearful Curse awaits them, as, *Prov. 20. 17.*

*USE.* THIS may point us, what is the proper use we are to make of the Decalogue, viz.

1. *NOT to make our moral Obedience to it, the Ground of our Hope to obtain Eternal Life.* We shall certainly labour of an undoing mistake if thus we do, *Rom. 3. 20. By the*

*deeds of the law, there shall no flesh be justified in his sight.*

2. *TO regulate our Conversation by, in our whole ordering of it.* Would we know what is Duty, and what Sin? Would we keep the right Way, and not turn into the Paths of the Destroyer? Let us then keep close to this. *Mat. 8. 20. To the law and to the testimony, if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.* Trust not to our own Reason, for that is blinded & prejudiced. Lean not upon Impulses and inward Motions, for they are uncertain, and often proceed from the Evil one, &c.

3. *TO judge of our Actions by, and that not only as to the Master, but also the Sincerity of them.* And hence to lay our selves by it, both in the thing done, the Principle by which, and the End for which; all whereof come under the Cognizance of this Law.

4. *TO convince us of our short-coming in all this, and to drive us out of our selves, to place our whole reliance upon Christ, for Pardon and Acceptance.* And if thus the Law raise our esteem of Christ, it will serve to Evangelical Purposes.

[ MARCH II. 1701. ]

## S E R M O N C L I I.