

the **CALVIN** **orum**

Democracies
Will They Survive?

Preaching
What Will It Be?

Democracy In Emergency
Do We Coöperate?

The Decalogue
Is It Abrogated?

Patriotism
Its Enemies

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But why go on? Hitler and lawless America both know what the law of God is, but neither one wants to do it.

What is freedom? Freedom is obedience to justice. A dictionary stands as the law of speech. If I say, "I want 'moon' to mean 'cabbage,' and 'cow' to mean 'cowslip,' and 'man' to mean 'monkey,'" and then insist on talking in that fashion, we will soon find ourselves no longer free to talk at all, but from the window of our padded cell we will see the

dictionary go blithely on, setting the laws for freedom of speech. Lawlessness is only self-destructive, like a loaded gun in the hands of a child, and the Maker of law and justice and truth is just as much self-sufficient as before.

By all means, let us sing: "God bless America!" . . . but not so boastfully, rather on our knees: "God . . . bless America . . . and save us from our own conceits."

Is the Decalogue Abrogated?

DR. ALBERTUS PIETERS in the February issue of *THE CALVIN FORUM* has taken the position that since the Old Covenant has been abrogated in the Christian dispensation, "this abrogation covers the Decalogue as well as the rest of the Mosaic law. Hence not only the Fourth Commandment but all the Ten Commandments are without legal authority in the Christian church and in the Christian life" (p. 136). This alternative, suggested by the present writer in the May issue, will have to be examined. The other alternative, that the fourth commandment has been abrogated while the other nine have not, was considered in the May issue.

It must be remembered that Dr. Pieters' position is that the decalogue is not to be identified with the moral law, that the moral law existed before the decalogue, that it abides after the decalogue is abrogated and that the decalogue is, therefore, simply "a partial, temporary and local formulation of the Moral Law" (Cf. p. 137). If, for the sake of the argument, this position were granted, it does not establish the abrogation of the Sabbath law set forth in our previous article. The Sabbath as an institution existed prior to the Sinaitic promulgation of the decalogue, and it was shown that in the matter of moral obligation Scripture does not warrant discrimination between the Sabbath law and the law of the other nine commandments. Therefore, even on Dr. Pieters' own presuppositions in this part of his argument, we should be required to contend for the permanent obligation of the Sabbath principle. This would just mean an application, to the moral law underlying the fourth commandment, of the same principle which he applies in the case of the other precepts of the decalogue. To put it otherwise, if the moral law temporarily and partially formulated in the other nine commandments abides, why should not the moral law expressed in the fourth commandment also abide?

A Reply to Dr. Pieters

John Murray

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But this *ad hominem* argument in the reference to Dr. Pieters' position is not enough. It is necessary to examine the position itself. Can this position that the decalogue has been abrogated be supported and validated?

Historically Conditioned, But Not Abrogated

There is and can be no dispute that the form of the decalogue reflects the conditions and circumstances of that period of revelation in which it was given. The language is the language of Israel, and the commandments were given in a form that was directly suited to the life of the people at that time. But this is exactly what we find to be true of the whole of Biblical revelation—it was given at various times in the very *milieu* of the life of the people to whom it was in the first instance directed. This is no less true of the New Testament revelation than it is of the Old. Each part of revelation is given in the context of a concrete situation. In a word, revelation is historical and therefore not given in abstraction from historical situations. Furthermore, revelation is progressive and organic and this organism of progressive revelation unfolded itself in direct contact with, and relation to, the needs of each particular generation. By the process of inscripturation it was, however, designed in the wisdom and grace of God to form a permanent deposit of revelation that is God's Word for all subsequent generations of the history of the world and of the church.

Now if the form of the ten commandments reflects the conditions and circumstances of the age in which they were given, this in no way provides a reason for their abrogation any more than does this feature of the whole of revelation in both Testaments establish the abrogation of revelation itself.

Again, what intelligible or conceivable meaning can the idea of abrogation as applied to these commandments have? "Thou shalt have no other gods

before me." What could abrogation mean in such a case? "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain." "Thou shalt not kill." "Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor." We simply need to review these precepts, relate them to the unchangeable perfections of God of which they are the transcript, properly analyze the import of the word "abrogation," and the suggestion that they could be abrogated becomes not only inadmissible but intolerable.

It is, of course, true that the principle of progressive revelation comes to bear even upon the ten commandments. As revelation advanced from stage to stage until it reached its consummation in the New Testament, there was ever fuller disclosure of what the implications of these commandments were and an ever enlarging exhibition of the length and breadth, and depth and height of their application. In the teaching of Jesus, for example, we have the emphasis upon what we may call the internalism and spirituality of the decalogue, that obedience is first and foremost a condition of the heart, that all outward conformity must spring from love and purity. Sin does not merely consist in the overt act of transgression but also in the desires, motives and intents of the heart. "Whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart" (Matt. 5:28). But progressive revelation as to the import and application of a commandment is one thing, abrogation is another and, in this case, totally another.

Law and Love in the New Testament

We must, however, turn to the use made of the decalogue in the New Testament. We shall take Romans 13:8-10 as a typical instance. Paul is here dealing particularly with man's relation and duty to man. "Owe no man anything, but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law" (vs. 8). The pivot on which his exhortation turns is that, "Love is the fulfilling of the law" (vs. 10). It is always lamentable superficiality and distortion that would set love and law in opposition the one to the other. It is not love in opposition to law but love fulfilling law. Love is not an autonomous, self-instructing and self-directing principle. Love impels to the fulfilling of the law, but it does not itself excogitate that law. No statement of the New Testament more briefly and forcefully expresses the necessity of both love and law for the fulfilment of Christian morality than just this, "Love is the fulfilling of the law." It is the epitome of our Lord's teaching when he says, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets" (Matt. 22:37-40).

But more directly pertinent to our present purpose, Paul tells us here not only that love fulfills but

also what the law is which love fulfills. "For this, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not covet, and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself" (vs. 9). Paul here cites four precepts. He reminds us by the brief clause, "and if there be any other commandment," that he does not consider these four as a complete enumeration of the commandments that regulate the performance of man's duty to man. He has quoted enough to make obvious what he means by the law that love fulfills. These four commandments are four of the well-known ten commandments and they are quoted in exactly the form in which they appear in the decalogue. Let it be distinctly marked that Paul is here dealing with the elementary principles of conduct in man's relation to man; he is enunciating the great principle that must govern Christian morality and guide Christian sanctification—"Love is the fulfilling of the law." And it is just then that he quotes from the decalogue in order that he may define or, at least, illustrate for us what that law is without which the all-determining principle of Christian ethics is meaningless.

Now, by what expedient of reasoning can the abrogation of the decalogue be maintained in face of such an appeal to its unmodified terms by the Apostle, and that in a context where he is enjoining upon Christian believers the discharge of those obligations that determine the character of the Christian life? It would surely be a travesty of the most obvious import of the Apostle's argument.

Love and Law in the Old Testament

It should be noted that Paul in this passage says, "If there is any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself" (vs. 9). The last clause is a quotation from Leviticus 19:18. It is in this relation that he enunciates the principle which has all-comprehensive application, "Love is the fulfilling of the law." It is significant that both elements of this cardinal principle he finds in the Old Testament. What the law is he defines or illustrates from the Old Testament, and that it is love that fulfills he also derives from the Old Testament, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." The words we have already quoted from our Lord, Matthew 22:37-40 enunciate the same thought as the Apostle, only by our Lord it is applied comprehensively to include our duty to God as well as our duty to man—"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God," "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself."

It is both necessary and pertinent at this point to deal with a rather amazing statement made by Dr. Pieters in his article already cited, a statement both misleading and confusing. It is that "the Decalogue, so far from being the same as the Moral Law, does not even contain the highest Moral Law, according to our Lord, in Matthew 22:36-40" (p. 137). It is

important to observe that our Lord in this passage is quoting from Deuteronomy 6:5 and also from Leviticus 19:18. Deuteronomy 6:5 comes closely after the Deuteronomic account of the decalogue. And Leviticus 19:18 occurs in a chapter that is shot through with express reference to the precepts of the decalogue. Indeed it is questionable if there is another chapter in the Old Testament that shows in this respect such close affinity to Exodus 20 and Deuteronomy 5, the two chapters in which the decalogue is given. In the very context of the decalogue, then, we do have what Dr. Pieters calls "the highest Moral Law" (a phrase the present writer does not deem the most accurate but which I shall continue to use by way of accommodation). This shows that the decalogue was never intended to be placed in any other relation than that of complete complementation to, or dependence upon, that upon which, according to our Lord, all the law and prophets hang, namely, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God," "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself."

The Decalogue and Its Summary

It is, of course, true that the words our Lord quotes from Deuteronomy 6:5 and Leviticus 19:18 are not actually contained within the compass of the decalogue. But of what avail is this fact in establishing the abrogation of the decalogue? The relation that these words quoted by our Lord sustain to the decalogue, as it appears in the Old Testament, is just precisely the same as the relation they sustain to the specific commandments which, on Dr. Pieters' own presuppositions, are binding upon the Christian believer (Cf. article cited p. 136). He will surely have to admit that "the highest Moral Law" is not actually stated within the compass of the *specific* and *particular* "required things" that are comprised in Christian duty. And so, if the fact that the actual *statement* of "the highest Moral Law" is not enunciated in so many words within the compass of the *particular* duties incumbent upon the Christian does not abrogate these particular duties, how possibly can the omission, as regards statement, of "the highest Moral Law" from the compass of the decalogue be any argument for the abrogation of the decalogue? We have simply to understand that things have to be stated in their own place and in their proper relation. And that is exactly what we find in the case of "the highest Moral Law" both in the Old Testament and in the New. That it should have occupied another place than that which it does occupy in both Testaments, and in both Testaments similarly, would have been singularly incongruous with its nature and relations.

This is just saying that what Dr. Pieters calls "the highest Moral Law" could not be contained within the compass of the decalogue, for the decalogue is an enumeration of the elementary and specific moral obligations. This "highest Moral Law" is not a *specific* duty in the sense the ten commandments are; it is the principle that applies to all moral duties.

It does not express one duty that is on a par with others in a certain classification; it occupies a unique position and sustains to all the other commandments an all-embracing relationship. It prescribes the condition of heart and mind indispensable to the fulfillment of all other duties. It applies to all and therefore must occupy the position of preface or appendix. In a word it is not specific but generic, it is not particular but universal. It sustains identically the same relation to specific moral duties in the New Testament as it does in the Old, and in the Old as it does in the New.

The Old Testament, may we repeat, enunciates the two commandments upon which, according to our Lord, hang all the law and the prophets. But it sets these in their proper relation to the ten commandments. The New Testament reiterates these all-determining principles and by the words of our Lord interprets for us their significance. But it too places them in proper focus and relation to the other commandments. The place they occupy is thoroughly congruous with their nature and significance. Without them and the great truth on which they are based, namely, that God is the Lord and that God is one, there would be no decalogue. And without the decalogue we should not know how they are to take effect in the various relations of life. We cannot but see in the place they occupy in the statement of our obligations signal congruity with the place their very nature determines for them. The fact that the decalogue does not contain them has, then, no relevance whatsoever to the question as to whether or not the decalogue has been abrogated, nor to the question as to whether or not the decalogue is to be identified with permanent moral law. Hence we conclude that the datum Dr. Pieters adduces that "the Decalogue . . . does not even contain the highest Moral Law" does not in the least support his contention that the decalogue is not the abiding moral law.

Summary and Conclusion

Much more might be said to show that the New Testament treats the decalogue as a formulation of binding and permanent moral law and therefore as no less authoritative for the New Testament economy than it was for the Old. But we have reached the limits of our available space.

In concluding these two articles I feel compelled to state that their content has been in several respects different from what I had contemplated when I was asked by the editor of THE CALVIN FORUM to contribute to its pages on this question. The reason is that Dr. Pieters, with directness and candor it must be admitted, laid the axe to the very root of the tree. It was therefore necessary to defend the foundations upon which the Westminster view of the fourth commandment rested. That I have attempted to do. In the main, and to sum up, the thesis of these articles has been (1) that Scripture

does not warrant discrimination between the fourth commandment and the other nine, and (2) that neither Scripture as a whole nor the New Testament in particular warrants any such supposition as that of the abrogation of the decalogue but rather treats it as the compact summation of perpetually binding moral obligation. They are the transcript of the moral perfections of God as these come to expression for the regulation of the thought and conduct of men in their relations both to God and to one another. The fourth commandment, therefore, with the other commandments, enunciates a law of divine authority and sanction in the Christian dispensation.

Many questions of the greatest importance have had to be left untouched. But readers will appreciate that when foundations are attacked they must be vindicated. We hope that through this discussion which THE CALVIN FORUM has presented to its readers there will result a deeper understanding of the grounds upon which the plea for the observance of the Sabbath rests, and that with more intelligent understanding will proceed apace a renewed appreciation and observance of the Sabbath institution as the perpetual memorial of God's work in creation and redemption and as the foretaste of the Sabbath rest that remains for the people of God.

The "Emergency" Challenges Democracy

Henry J. Ryskamp
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THE great depression was too much a matter of individual losses, of accusations and of counter accusations, of finding fault with employers, with laborers, and with the government to result in the building up of a fine morale. Returning prosperity contributed as greatly to a self-interest that had not been satisfied for years as it did to the solution of the problems which the depression revealed. We were beginning to live easily again, more unconcernedly, with more of an opportunity to demand things for ourselves and to get them. Life was not so compelling, our little lives could swing more self-centeredly through their own little orbits, and we were again becoming complacent. Now the world situation, as interpreted and defined by our president, is declared to be one of national emergency. And we are beginning (just beginning if at all) to realize that there is always something confining, directing, individually uncontrollable about this world in which we live, something to which we must bow, a purpose beyond our own; and more or less grudgingly we are beginning to give assent to the need of common action for the achievement of a purpose that is more inclusive than our own.

The Example of Germany

International rivalry is today being fought out on several fronts, the economic, the diplomatic, the propaganda fronts as well as the military. In this contest the totalitarian states, Germany especially, are the more successful to date. Germany's achievements in almost every kind of national and international activity are simply breath-taking in their effect. Her military and political successes have us glued to our radios, listening and hoping for

what must seem to us as almost impossible reverses. Her propaganda control, both without and within the country, is not only equally successful, it apparently furnishes the foundation upon which her other achievements are built. And little of this could continue long if it were not for a measure of economic control that strikes us as incredible in view of the prostrate condition of Germany some twenty years ago.

Germany has something which the democratic nations have not yet developed. She has careful planning, thorough organization, detailed execution. Her organization involves the entire populace, and includes, therefore, not only the highest degree of centralization of authority and control but also complete and immediate readiness to respond on the part of the millions of the German people. Dictatorial this organization may be, and undoubtedly is in large part, but that it has succeeded in developing a morale, of which German responsiveness is in part the evidence, no one who is fairminded can deny. The German government was planning for war years before the war broke, and is already planning and building for the peace that will eventually come. This government is effecting a continuing organization that, it is expected, will be able to meet every strain, and that will give to each citizen his opportunity to live and contribute to the national life. Is it surprising that, our wishful thinking to the contrary, the German people have to such a great extent supported their government? In spite of much that they object to, and will no doubt grasp the opportunity to change, they are welded into one active organization today, not only by force of authority, but also by a recognition of