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GOD'S COMMANDMENTS

ACCORDING TO MOSES, ACCORDING TO CHRIST,

AND

ACCORDING TO OUR PRESENT KNOWLEDGE.

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A SKETCH

SUGGESTIVE OF

A NEW WESTMINSTER CONFSSION OF FAITH

FOR THE LAITY OF THE 19TH CENTURY.

ADDRESSED TO ALL WHO DEEM IT THEIR HIGHEST DUTY

AS WELL AS RIGHT TO

“THINK FOR THEMSELVES.”

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“HAPPY IS THE MAN THAT FINDETH WISDOM, AND THE MAN THAT GETTETH UNDERSTANDING.”  
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From an Essay entitled, 'Analysis of the Influence of Natural Religion on the Temporal Happiness of Mankind,' under the *nom de plume* of Philip Beauchamp (printed 1822, and reprinted by Saville and Edwards, Chandos Street, Covent Garden, 1866), the following extract is made as bearing to some extent on the present work.

The evils which flow from the belief, not founded on experience, of the interference of an unseen agent infringing at pleasure the laws of nature, are thus described:—

'As this persuasion utterly disqualifies mankind for the task of filtering truth from falsehood, so the multitude of fictitious tales for which it has obtained credence and currency in the world, exceeds all computation. To him who believes in the intervention of incomprehensible and unlimited Beings, no story can appear incredible. The most astonishing narratives are exempted from cross-examination, and readily digested under the title of miracles or prodigies. Of these miracles every nation on the face of the earth has on record and believes thousands. And as each nation disbelieves all except its own, each, tho' it believes a great many, yet disbelieves more. The most enthusiastic believers in miracles, therefore, cannot deny that an enormous excess of false ones have obtained credence amongst the larger portion of mankind.'

We heartily concur in the following observations on this Essay borrowed from the Westminster Review for April, 1866. 'If it is rightly attributed to a distinguished historian, we think it greatly to be regretted that he has not given us in a separate essay his ripest thoughts on the subject.' . . . 'If Philip Beauchamp would write something on these subjects, not grudging to lend the well-earned authority of a known name, and in a manner going directly to his object, he would meet with a more fitting circle of readers than he could have done five-and-forty years ago.'

We also extract the following passage from an Address of the Rev. Dr Robert Lee, delivered at the opening of the Theological Class in the University of Edinburgh (Published by Williams and Norgate):—

'In these days no class of men can possibly have, or should have at any time, any real weight and authority in guiding opinion, unless it occupy a somewhat independent position. Prisons and fetters are for the lawless and disobedient, for thieves and murderers, and all those abandoned classes who exist and thrive by injuring their neighbours and disturbing society. Christian teachers, we hope, do not deserve or need to be so guarded, confined, and pinioned; they are not so set upon perverting the truth, corrupting religion, seducing the people, as that they should be required by law to swear, at the beginning of their professional life, that they hold not only the great Articles of the Christian Faith, which are both very simple and very few, but a positive and categorical opinion regarding many hundreds of propositions which they have not had time to weigh and study; much less that they should be required to swear that they will so think on all those points which they are now required to profess 'during all the days of their life.'

# GOD'S COMMANDMENTS.

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## INTRODUCTORY REMARKS.

THE complaint against those, who have dared to think for themselves, and to throw aside the authority of all or some of what are called the orthodox Dogmas of Religion,—for instance, the plenary inspiration of the Bible, original sin, the eternity of hell torments,—that they leave the unhappy man, woman, or child, whom they may succeed in enticing from the pleasant paths of Orthodoxy, without a guide for their future conduct in life, is not altogether an unjust complaint. The effort of almost all free thought, no doubt, has hitherto been more on the negative side,—the pulling down of the old, rather than the constructing a new Faith, or putting the New Faith into such simple terms as to be at once understood by all classes.

Now this New Faith, no longer confined to a few isolated thinkers but spreading quietly in every quarter, on the one hand denies that God has only revealed himself to man at a particular time or up to a particular date in his history, and has since left him without any further revelation beyond what he can obtain by groping about for the meanings of a number of old books, written in various dead languages, of uncertain dates and authorship, and of which, whilst the originals are certainly lost, it is impossible to know whether the oldest extant copies, or supposed copies, are accurate or are not interpolated or even forgeries. On the other hand, this New Faith expressly declares that God is and ever has been revealing himself to man in the works of his Creation, and that He has never revealed himself in any other way. This Faith, it will be seen, interferes not with our freest speculations, nor with our highest aspirations. Thus on the question of a life hereafter, while some may maintain that one ground of their hope is, that only by a future life can the misery in this be compensated; others will be free to hold and will hold, that, while permitted to look forward to a future existence as being within the scope of the Divine will, still, God's governance of this world is perfect and does not absolutely require to be supplemented by the life hereafter, to make up for the imagined short-comings, imperfec-

tions, and injustice, in the arrangements for our life on earth ; and, moreover, that our obedience to God's Laws ought to be quite independent of, and not consequent on, the expectation of a future existence.

Now although there are many learned treatises setting forth the grounds for this Faith, there is no hand-book for the unlearned to refer to ; there is no standard book or ' Catechism ' of which the free-thinking father or mother may say, ' This little book contains what I believe to be a true exposition of God's laws, and out of this I desire my child to be taught his duty, his religious principles.' We here use the word ' religious ' advisedly and as the proper term, although the multitude may think that it can be used only by the believers in miracles, in a devil, and in the monstrous doctrine of the eternity of punishment, and of the endless woe of those whom it shall not please God arbitrarily to call to everlasting happiness.

The present pamphlet is put forth as a partial attempt to supply this want and to put into plain language what many men, while allowing their children to learn by rote ten Commandments (possibly compiled for the Hebrews, long after the time of Moses), and likewise the curious denunciation of themselves contained in the Church-Catechism, as ' children of wrath ! ' really do teach them in the practical lessons of every-day life. Its object is also to bring home to many men the dishonesty of not declaring more openly what they believe on religious subjects, and at the same time to give them aid in expressing their convictions, where from want of time or inclination they have never exactly formularized what they do believe, though feeling great repugnance to the dogmas sought to be imposed upon them by the clergyman, who gives priestly consolation to their wives and daughters. We have none of us, probably, very far to look without finding among our friends or acquaintances some in this state ; men who are not masters in their own household, who may command the affections, but have not the least influence over the theological or spiritual lives of the members of their own family. In many cases utter worldliness or amiable weakness is pleaded as an excuse for that dishonesty to which we have taken exception.

Take, for example, a husband and wife—the latter, perhaps, not very well grounded in her orthodox views : ' It will never do to bring up our children otherwise than according to Church principles. How can we expect they will get on ? ' The wife will say, ' don't give these new notions to the girls ; even for the boys it will be far *safer* not to be marked as unsound Churchmen. Think of their being called Infidels, Theists, Atheists, and all those other shocking names. Why not leave well alone ? The world got on very well, before that horrible Bishop of Natal was heard of.' And then, perhaps, the thought of a rich old uncle will arise, and the wife will add the conclusive argument, ' If he were to get the idea

into his head that we were not bringing up our children in the strictest Church principles, you know he would disinherit us and leave all his property to charities ; pray be careful.'

Again, the following is not altogether an isolated or imaginary picture, the result of an appeal from one free-thinker to another to come forward with his name, on a subscription, say, for the Essays and Reviews Fund, or still later for the Colenso Testimonial. 'I will give you willingly my £20 ; but pray keep my name a secret. I would not have my wife suspect me of thinking as I do on any account. If she were to imagine that I do not believe exactly as she does, that I have doubts about Bible inspiration, whatever that may mean, that I do not feel quite steady in my adherence to the doctrines laid down with such peculiar clearness and force in the Athanasian Creed, or to any other of the so-called fundamental dogmas, she would be quite miserable. Pray never give her a hint of such a thing. We have lived so peaceably together for years. It would be quite cruel on my part to give her an idea of my holding different views from her own, and what would be the use of it ? It would only unsettle her mind,—if not her faith, in which she is so wrapped up and contented !' Thus two beings, with reasoning faculties, living together nominally as one, professing to have no secrets from each other, are yet perfectly estranged on the most important of subjects, have no real interchange of thoughts ; and the man, on his side, acts a lifelong lie on the plea at best of good and amiable motives.

We will not here undertake to judge our friend. Doubtless it may be said with truth that any attempt on his part to 'convert' his wife would at their time of life be useless ; but this we will say, many a man imagines the difficulty far greater than it is. How often, if a husband were quietly to explain to his wife his opinions and the grounds for them, would he meet with a ready listener ; and even should he fail to convince, he would still have placed himself in the right position towards the woman he has chosen for his life companion. If his own views have only gradually opened to a wider sphere of thought, still is he not to be at liberty to speak his thoughts ? Is free speaking to be the peculiar privilege of the orthodox ? Are the clergy for ever to have their own way, and is a husband in his own house to be the only person not allowed to express an honest opinion ? Ought not every sensible wife, instead of being shocked, to be gratified by the confidence shown in her better judgment ? Her true complaint should be, of that confidence having been so long delayed.

One cause for men not discussing these subjects with their wives may not unfrequently be, that they have not worked out for themselves their own faith ; they have perhaps discarded the traditional theory of religion, they may disbelieve in miracles, but have never completely argued out the

why and the wherefore with themselves ; they may not feel the force of the dogmatic assertions that every thing is true that is in the Bible, and that all our knowledge must be cut and shaped so as to suit and fit into the narrow compass of that book ; but they have never seized the true argument in reply ; they have no clear and definite notion as to God's governance of the world. Consequently they feel uneasy when reproachfully asked, 'And where is your substitute for God's Bible ?' And they think it far pleasanter to smother up their difficulties and let their wives, who have no doubt on any one subject, and scorn, in the plenitude of their blind faith, to notice the few little intricate difficulties in the dogmas of the Church (difficulties which by-the-way eighteen centuries of learned controversy have not solved), take the lead and give true orthodox religious principles to their children. And be assured these fortunate children will never be allowed to suppose that any but very wicked people, who are sure to go to hell, can hold any other views on the Catholic Faith.

To some of our male friends who find themselves thus situated, the perusal of these pages may suggest a little self-examination, and the acting out their lives, according to the straight-forward promptings of their reason.

The 'Commandments' which will be found at the end of this work are drawn up as a suggestion for a Code by which the principles of duty may be taught to our children, in preference to the Ten Commandments of the Jewish law, or to any selection of precepts, in the words which tradition gives us as uttered by Christ. Apart from questions of dogma, many of these Commandments will be accepted by the 'orthodox.' They necessarily illustrate the unfitness of the New Testament as a school-book, by the direct contrast which becomes evident between many of its precepts, in their literal if not in their actual sense, and the real teaching which we all ought to give to our children for their conduct in life, —in one word, to make them truly 'righteous.' We need however scarcely observe that the quotations from the sayings of Christ are not given as an attempt to decry his teaching ; nor, in framing Commandments for children who have never been crammed with the (to them) confusing lessons of the Old and New Testaments, would the apparently antagonistic reference to the sayings or precepts attributed to Christ here introduced be at all necessary. They are, as will be seen, introduced to counteract what is often the effect of teaching children from a collection of books unsuited to their capacities.

We may be told that some passages, such as 'take no thought for tomorrow,' and others, are not properly rendered in the authorized version of the Bible. Our answer is, perhaps not ; but if so, you, the 'orthodox,' should not be so opposed as you admittedly are to an amended version,

and until it is amended, you cannot blame us for objecting to the use of words in a book you acknowledge to be faulty. There are nevertheless other passages, about which no doubt as to the correctness of the translation exists, and which still do not give us the proper teaching we require.

Let us, however, emphatically repeat that nothing written below is intended to cast contempt on the sayings of Christ here referred to. We cannot be sure of the sense in which his hearers were intended to understand him, even if we have his very words. The language in which his discourses have been handed down to us is the figurative, and often beautifully poetic, language of the East; but it is not the language in which we want to teach our own children—still less the little plough-boys and the girls of our country villages—their plain lessons of moral duty. Go into any Sunday-school throughout the land, and calmly listen to the blundering attempts of the well-meaning volunteer teachers, and hear what a mess they make, what utter confusion they introduce to the children's minds, in stumbling over passages which, if they explain properly, they have frequently to declare mean exactly the reverse of what the words say; while, to keep up a consistency between these words and their teaching, they have to repeat to the children at every breath 'the words are figurative, are allegorical, are spiritual.' We ask, ought this to be? Without much presumption we may express a hope, that what is here written may give some of these teachers a clearer view of the way in which they should, in the words of the Church Catechism, teach a child to 'keep God's holy will and commandments and walk in the same all the days of his life.'

It will be said that the language of these Commandments is not wholly suited for children. That may be true, although the greatest care has been taken to make the language as simple as possible. These Commandments are sketched out to assist parents and others in teaching their children—not by merely cramming by heart, but by patient explanation and training; and at any rate, there is nothing contradictory in the language used, as in the passages to which we have taken exception.

According to the age and development of the child, so ought the teaching to be. It would be difficult to say how early thought does not guide some of an infant's acts. The infant takes food at first without knowing the result; but before long, because it remembers the pleasure experienced on former occasions. The child must then have formed an idea, must have begun to think; and from that moment his education has commenced. How ever little the parents and nurses may notice the fact, the child, before he can speak or understand a word that is spoken, may learn something of God's Commandments. Through the language of frowns and caresses, he learns the duty of obedience,—blind obedi-

ence at first, necessitated by his ignorance. Before the child can speak, much more read, he will, in any well-regulated house, have learned much. Even when he does begin to speak and read, how few are the words he can understand. The difficulty of teachers is and always must be, to adapt their language to the capacity of a child, and it is almost impossible to put Commandments into words that shall be absolutely suitable to children of all ages, and also to grown-up persons.

Here let us say a few words on obedience of children. Many parents fear to lose their authority, if they encourage their children to think for themselves, too early as they would say. They inculcate blind obedience, just as the parson tries to inculcate it upon all his parishioners, whom he would like to keep as children, in the bondage of authority, all their lives. Why should this be so? Is it not that the parents, through indolence and want of proper education, have never attained to a thorough knowledge of the reasons and principles which ought to govern their own and their children's conduct? They have no faith of their own, of which they can give a rational account. They are, moreover, afraid of telling their children that they, their parents, are and must be ignorant of many things; and, they take, as they suppose, the proper course of teaching—by dogmatically telling the child he must do what he is bid, without a reason; when, by a little pains, the child would obey with his understanding, instead of on mere authority.

Instead of repressing a young child's eager searching for a reason, we ought to be gently leading him on with a kindly 'think for yourself on all occasions, and on all subjects.' How few parents dare to do this! On the contrary, both parents and priests do just the reverse, saying, 'Think as I think'—adding, when religion is the subject—'under pain of loss of your eternal happiness;' and thus they crush out that early instinct implanted in all of us; for the child will think for himself if only encouraged, instead of being snubbed. We are almost inclined to say, that nearly the only independent thoughts of many men have been those of their infancy.

We trust, in conclusion, that nothing in this pamphlet will be taken as intentionally offensive to the clergy. We number among them many as our truest friends, and gratefully acknowledge the zeal of the whole body in good works; nevertheless, we look forward to the time when, set free from the trammels of dogmatic authority, and no longer feeling bound to expend their energies in 'reconciling' old books and fables with the facts of modern science, they will join still more heartily with the laity in aiding the intellectual and moral development of the human race.

## THE COMMANDMENTS,

ACCORDING TO MOSES AND TO CHRIST.

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If the question be asked how many Commandments has God given to us, the almost invariable answer, in the stereotyped words of the catechism, will be, 'Ten.'

Few of those making such an answer will have ever troubled themselves with a thought on the subject. Satisfied with what they learnt like parrots, when children, 'on their mothers' laps,' they have taken for granted that what is said in the Prayer Book is the correct, the only possible answer to the question.

Now let us ask, Has God given us ten, and only ten, or as many as ten Commandments? Many in reply will refer to the Decalogue as conclusive; but let us hope that this answer will not continue to satisfy us and our children.

It is true that Moses is said to have received Ten; but on the face of the Pentateuch itself it is impossible to say exactly what the Ten were, for, as we shall see below, there are at least two \* differing versions even of these Ten. And, moreover, the Pentateuch contains many more Commandments said to have been given by God himself to Moses. The

\* Besides the versions of the Decalogue in the xx. chap. of Exodus and in the v. chap. of Deuteronomy, we find in the xxxiv. chap. of Exodus a third version. This version is declared to have been delivered, quite as authoritatively as the other two, by God to Moses. Here we will merely notice that it gives Sab-  
batical Commandments which, if any such are binding on Christians, must be equalled so with the 4th in the xx. chap. of Exodus.

v. 18. The feast of unleavened bread shalt thou keep. Seven days thou shalt eat unleavened bread.

v. 21. Six days thou shalt work, but on the seventh day thou shalt rest: in eaning time and in harvest thou shalt rest.

v. 22. And thou shalt observe the feast of weeks, of the first-fruits of wheat harvest and the feast of ingathering at the year's end.

question remains, ought a Christian to be satisfied with merely looking for God's Commandments in the Old Testament? Should he not give a preference to what he may find in the New Testament as uttered by Christ, the founder of his religion?

Let us compare the Decalogues given in Exodus and Deuteronomy with the Commandments given in the New Testament.

THE COMMANDMENTS RECORDED AS  
GIVEN TO MOSES—WRITTEN BY GOD  
HIMSELF IN TWO TABLETS OF STONE.

From Exodus xx. 2—16.

1. I am the Lord thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. Thou shalt have no other gods before me.
2. Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me, and shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments.
3. Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain: for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain.

THE COMMANDMENTS RECORDED IN THE  
GOSPELS—AS DECLARED BY CHRIST.

From Mark xii. 28.

And one of the Scribes asked him, which is the first Commandment of all? (or, as quoted in Matt. xxii. 36, which is the great Commandment in the Law?) And Jesus answered him, The first of all the Commandments is:

1. 'Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord, and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul and with all thy mind and with all thy strength.' This is the first (and 'great' in Matt.) Commandment.

[This command is taken by Christ from Deut. vi. 5. Omitting all reference to the land of Egypt, it is of universal application alike to Jew and Gentile; while, to quote the words of the author of the 'Sabbath,'\* 'it far more distinctly proclaims the unity of God, and it enjoins what the Commandment in the Decalogue does not,—the Christian duty of Love to God.']

\* See a reference to this work in the note to page 13.

And the second is like it: namely, this—

2. Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.

[This command is taken by Christ from Lev. xix. 18.]

There is none other greater than these (Mark xii. 28—31).

On these two Commandments hang all the law and the Prophets (Matt. xxii. 36—40).

A new Commandment give I unto you, that ye love one another (Jno. xiii. 34).

4. Remember the Sabbath-day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work. But the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates: For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day, and hallowed it.

In all the four Gospels not one word can be found, as uttered by Christ, in favour of keeping one day holy above the others, or against doing work on the Jewish Sabbath, nor for change of the Sabbath from the seventh to the first day of the week, nor for honouring him or God by the observance of days. On the contrary, Christ is reported as having on some occasions worked or commanded unnecessary work to be done on the Sabbath day.\* Christ evidently held different views from

\* Plucking corn, Matt. xii. 1; Mark ii. 23; Luke vi. 1. Christ did not deny that this was a breach of the Sabbath; but defended his disciples by quoting David's act as a precedent.

Healing on the Sabbath day a woman who had been ill for 18 years, and who could well have waited one day longer. Luke xiii. 12, 13.

The impotent man takes up his bed, and thus deliberately, by Christ's orders, did unnecessary work (John v. 8). It could not even have been necessary for him to do so to show that he was cured. The cure must have been evident without his carrying a burden,—contrary to God's injunction in Jeremiah xvii. 21.

'Jesus spat on the ground, and made clay of the spittle, and he anointed the eyes of the blind man with the clay' (John ix. 6). Clearly, however trifling, this was unnecessary work for one who is believed to have been God omnipotent.

Christ, again, joined a large feast on the Sabbath. Luke xiv. 1, 7—12.

But in the version given in Deut. v. 14, the reason stated for this Commandment is quite different.

‘That thy manservant and thy maidservant may rest as well as thou. And remember that thou wast a servant in the land of Egypt, and that the Lord thy God brought thee out thence through a mighty hand and by a stretched out arm : therefore the Lord thy God commanded thee to keep the Sabbath day.’

7. Thou shalt not commit adultery.
6. Thou shalt not kill.
8. Thou shalt not steal.
9. Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour.
10. Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour’s house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbour’s wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that is thy neighbour’s.

those of our modern English and Scotch Sabbatarian. Christ’s great apostle Paul also distinctly tells his Christian converts that they need not observe days.\*

It is possibly on this ground, that in the Catechism no reference is made, either in the summary of our duty to God or to our neighbour, to any obligation to observe one day above another.

And from Mark x. 17 ;

And one asked him, Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life ? And Jesus said unto him—Why callest thou me good ; there is none good but one, that is God. Thou knowest the Commandments.†

3. Do not commit adultery.
4. Do not kill.
5. Do not steal.
6. Do not bear false witness.
7. Defraud not.

The 10th Commandment of the Decalogue is not referred to by Christ. He may have considered that his far more universal Commandment of ‘Love your neighbour’ was sufficient.

\* ‘Let no man, therefore, judge you in respect of an holyday, or of the New Moon, or of the Sabbath days.’ Colos. ii. 16.

‘O foolish Galatians (iii. 1), how turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements whereunto ye desire again to be in bondage? Ye observe days and months and times and years. I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labour in vain.’ Gal. iv.

† What an opportunity was here lost by Jesus of enforcing the keeping of the Sabbath if he had intended to enforce it,—an opportunity that our modern Divines would only too gladly avail themselves of.

5. Honour thy father and thy mother that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee.

In the version given in Deuteronomy the ground suggested for keeping this Commandment varies from that in Exodus, and is more explicit.

5. Honour thy father and thy mother as the Lord thy God hath commanded thee, that thy days may be prolonged, and that *it may go well with thee* in the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee. Deut. v. 16.

8. Honour thy father and mother.

[It is surely better to teach this Commandment as given by Christ than with the addition of such a weak or incomplete ground as we find in Exodus.] \*

And he answered and said, Master, all these things have I observed from my youth. Then Jesus beholding him, loved him, and said unto him, One thing thou lackest. [If thou wilt be perfect, Matt. xix. 21.]

9. Go thy way ; sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven.

A Commandment set aside in our day, not only by the very rich, as this man is represented to have been, but by Christians in general.

In addition to the nine Commandments here selected from Christ's teaching, and which Christians may be recommended to use as being his substitute for the Decalogue, we find many more quite as solemnly laid down by Christ as of universal obligation. Let us refer to Matt. v. and vi., in which Christ in the Sermon on the Mount is represented as giving new Commandments.

\* If the reader of this pamphlet cares to look further into the parallel here drawn between what may be called Christ's substitute for the Decalogue, and to satisfy himself that the Decalogue was written for the Jews and not for Christians, he is referred to 'The Sabbath' (Chapman and Hall, 1855), vol. ii., in the first chap. of which, the Mosaic Sabbath is very fully considered.

10. Swear not at all—but let your communication be yea, yea, nay, nay.
  11. Resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also.
  12. Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour and hate thine enemy: but I say unto you 'Love your enemies.'
  13. When thou prayest enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door pray to thy Father which is in secret.
  14. But when ye pray use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do.
  15. Take no thought, saying, What shall we eat and what shall we drink, or wherewithal shall we be clothed? Take no thought for the morrow. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.
- And from Luke vi. 30.
16. Give to every man that asketh of thee, and of him that taketh away thy goods ask them not again.

Some of these are wisely ignored by Christians at the present day; while two which might be obeyed, with no detriment—if with no positive good, namely, (1) praying in secret only and not parading prayers in churches, and, (2) not using vain repetitions in praying—are universally disobeyed by the great body of professing Christians.

Christ, therefore, at any rate did not confine himself to Ten; according to the Catechism, he did not give the proper reply to the question. He never repeated all the Commandments of the Decalogue. For anything that Christ is reported to have uttered, he need not even have been aware of the 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th, or 10th Commandment of the Decalogue, as handed down to us; or of the statement in Deuteronomy that the Ten Commandments were written by God himself in two tables of stone. Even in giving out those Commandments of the Law which he

did refer to, he did not repeat them in the order in which they stand in the Decalogue; and on the subject of the 4th and the 5th Commandments, he certainly has not enlightened us as to which is the true version,—the true Commandments, written in the tables of stone.

It is singular that Christians should not have sufficient faith in the words of their Saviour to adopt his express teaching on the subject of Commandments. For example, had they such faith, they would not now, running back to the 'weak and beggarly elements' of the Jewish Scriptures, repeat every Sunday they are at church such a Commandment as the 4th, never uttered by Christ, and which not one of them attempts to keep, in its strict letter and meaning,—that of absolute cessation from work and nothing else.\*

We may here remark that the Catechism errs not only in limiting the number of God's Commandments, expressly contrary to the teaching of Christ; but it further makes the child declare that he learns from these Ten Commandments what no one ever could learn from them. What is laid down in the Catechism as the child's duty is a very fair summary of moral law and duty as believed in and practised by many at the present day; but to say that the child or grown-up person 'chiefly learns' from the Ten Commandments all that is there put down is not true. Where do we find in the Ten a word about 'submitting ourselves to our spiritual pastors and masters'? or 'ordering ourselves lowly and reverently to our betters'? or 'keeping our bodies in temperance and soberness'?

\* See on this point 'The Sabbath,' vol. ii. p. 179.

## THE COMMANDMENTS,

WHICH BELIEVERS IN A GOD, WILLINGLY CALLING THEMSELVES CHRISTIANS, MAY CONSIDER OBLIGATORY UPON THEM.

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Turning now to the realities of life, we will look at the Commandments from our own point of view.

Surveying dispassionately the history of religious opinion through all ages of the world, we perceive that, notwithstanding all the assumptions of infallibility by Popes and Ecclesiastics in general, there has been a constant progress in religious belief. We also perceive that the saying of old, that 'God made Man in his own image,' should be replaced by the real fact that 'Man has always been and is still making God in *his* own image'; that as human knowledge increases, as our ideas of what is right and noble and true go on improving, so do our ideas of what a perfect God must be. We have long since given up the crude notion of an angry and jealous God—of a God who was ready to walk in a Garden on earth, and to come at the call of every patriarch who chose to summon him,—and though kings and earthly potentates may still invoke the God of Battles in their prayers, and Archbishops and Bishops may still write prayers on cattle plagues and cholera, deprecating God's wrath, and urging him to interfere and abrogate his own laws at the call of man, we express the hope that the days of such mistaken attempts to honour God are numbered, and that the time is rapidly coming when true science or knowledge shall have swept away these lingering superstitions of bygone ages.

And what is prayer—the only prayer fitted for educated minds,—unless it be, in the spirit of the Axiom stated below, an earnest searching after and earnest endeavour to obey all the unchanging laws, moral as well as physical, which govern this world? In this sense alone can 'prayer without ceasing' be possible. In this sense men of science, though possibly never entering a church built by the hands of man, may be constantly offering up their 'praise and thanksgiving' to the Unknown 'whose temple is all space,' and 'with whom,' as was well said several hundred years ago, 'is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.'

The Commandments which we, who have not been brought out of the land of Egypt, and who are not Israelites, but the descendants of Gentiles, may believe to be binding on us, though not given out, as the Ten Commandments are said to have been, on the top of Mount Sinai, are

such as we now derive from the united wisdom and experience accumulated by mankind during the past and present ages.

OUR ONLY AXIOM IS THIS :—

It is our duty with all our energies to ascertain the laws, both moral and physical, which govern this world and ourselves; to be constantly endeavouring to obey these laws when ascertained, and never to hesitate to give up an opinion or belief on what is called religion, any more than on any other subject, if we find that that opinion or belief, even though handed down to us from very ancient times, is inconsistent with our better knowledge at the present day.

Acting up to this axiom we accept St John's declaration, 'Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous,' 1 John iii. 7. We also readily accept, as a bond of brotherhood between Christ and ourselves, his declaration in Matt. xii. 50, 'Whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother.' Looking also to Christ's earnest endeavour to enforce the law 'Love your neighbour as yourself,' we desire to be called Christians, although we may utterly repudiate all the miraculous stories of the Old and New Testaments,—although we may utterly repudiate any belief in a personal Devil, just as we do in witchcraft,—and although we admit neither sacraments nor priests of any kind, and look upon the miscellaneous books bound up together and called the Bible as entitled to no more respect than what is due to them as ancient records of what men have believed and have felt in former ages.

We differ from the priests of all denominations and the self-styled orthodox in this; that, while believing much that is in the Bible, we believe nothing *merely because* it is in the Bible. We seek enlightenment in the place of dogmatic assurance, and we accept the declaration of the man of science, who, to use the words of Professor Huxley (in his lecture on improving Natural Knowledge, delivered at St Martin's Hall, London, on Sunday evening, 7th January, 1866), 'absolutely refuses to acknowledge authority as such; for him scepticism is the highest duty, blind faith the one unpardonable sin. The man of science has learnt to believe in justification, not by faith, but by verification.' Our faith may be described as a simple 'Faith in Works.'

The Commandment which we may state includes all others is to 'love thy neighbour as thyself.' This was, so far as we have any record, first laid down, not by Christ, as many suppose, but in Levit. xix. 18; but there its meaning was narrowed by the words which follow, 'Thou shalt hate thine enemy.' Christ could truly say to the Jews that he gave it to them as 'a new Commandment,' earnestly endeavouring to counteract the narrow teaching in Leviticus by telling his hearers to love their

enemies, and showing here and elsewhere, that by 'neighbour' we should understand every human being. Five hundred years before Christ, Confucius, the great Chinese Philosopher, wrote the precept, 'Do unto another what thou would he should do unto you, and do not unto another what thou would not should be done unto you. Thou only needest this Law alone. It is the foundation and principle of all the rest.\*' The heathen, Seneca, also said 'Live for another as you would live for yourself.' Now we do not accept even this Commandment because it was uttered by Moses, by Confucius, by Christ, or by Seneca, but because all our experience teaches us that, whether uttered by them or not, it is, in complete accordance with the above Axiom, a true law of God ;—for the more we study the laws of this world, both moral and physical, the more do we find that the happiness of ourselves and of our fellow-creatures—in one word, our well-being in this life—is intended to be the great object of our existence here, and that the real happiness of each individual is dependent on the happiness of others ; that a man cannot be truly happy if those around him are miserable. It may be added that by acting thus, and only thus, by really loving ourselves and our neighbours, can we show reverence and love to that mysterious 'UNKNOWN,'—that, to us in our present state, incomprehensible Power which we call GOD, and believe to have, in some way wholly beyond our capacity to imagine, created the Universe, of which our little world is the merest atom.

We therefore, to prevent a possible misapprehension of Christ's meaning, would alter the order in which in selecting the two Commandments from Deut. vi. 6, and Lev. xix. 18, he is recorded as having placed them, and would say : ' first, thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself, and by so doing (secondly) thou wilt, and in this way only canst thou, show thy love to God.' In this sense love to God may be said to be the first (meaning by the first the ' greatest,' Matt. xx. 38) Commandment.

Only think of the cruelties and murders practised by Christians in all ages under the plea of ' first love God,' and we shall agree how important is the alteration in the order of the two Commandments as here suggested. What were the Crusades and all the religious wars since the commencement of the Christian Era—all the martyrdoms and persecutions of Protestants by Catholics, and no less of Catholics by Protestants ; and in a less degree, what are all the bitter persecutions and religious feuds and heart-burnings of the present day, but miserable, mistaken attempts to love and honour God by hating and ill-using instead of loving our neighbour ?

\* Confucius also said, ' Desire not the death of thine enemy. We may have an aversion for an enemy, without desiring revenge.' This probably is the doctrine practically held by most Christians at the present day, of whom it would be a stretch of imagination to say that they consider it a duty to 'love their enemies.'

## THE COMMANDMENTS.

1. Love your neighbour as yourself. Do unto others as you, in the exercise of your best intelligence, think they ought to do unto you.

And how ought I to love *myself*? This is a question not generally put to children. The duty itself is not properly enforced—but is rather deprecated under the fear of inculcating ‘selfishness.’ The following may be stated as some of the laws, without obedience to which it is impossible to say, ‘I truly love *myself*.’

2. PARENTS.—As a parent or guardian of children, so instruct and educate them, and so conduct yourself, that they may learn to honour and obey you, and prepare themselves in their turn to instruct their children, without troubling themselves too much whether ‘their days may be long’ or short, but taking every pains that ‘it may go well with them’ in the land of their birth or adoption; and that they may, in learning to honour and obey you, in your imperfection, learn still more to reverence and obey that perfect Power, which is revealing itself continuously in the works of the Creation, and which we worship as God, the Father Universal.

The Hebrews of old said, the sins of the parents are visited on the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate God. While rejecting the idea implied by the literal statement of a jealous God punishing mankind for merely hating him, we accept these words partly as meaning, If you do not obey the laws of God, but disobey them either through wilfulness or ignorance, the consequences of your conduct or your bad example will, by God’s unvarying laws, injure not only yourself but also your children. Remember too that your neglect of your children will react upon yourself.

Assist also in educating the poor—those whom their parents are unable or neglectful themselves to educate. Be to them as a parent, where opportunity offers. All of us are liable to suffer, and are constantly suffering through the ignorance of what are called the lower classes, although this effect of their ignorance is very generally overlooked.

3. HEALTH.—Will ye ‘take no thought for your health, what ye shall eat and what ye shall drink; and for your body, what ye shall put on?’ Matt. vi. 25. On the contrary, study the laws which govern your body and your mind. Make yourself well acquainted with the beauty of that wonderful piece of mechanism, that temple in which you dwell and which constitutes your ‘self,’ and strive to preserve it in perfect health as your most valued treasure—‘that it may be well with you’ on this earth.

Though Solomon's finery, made by human hands, was not so wonderful as the lily, yet Solomon's body without any clothing at all was at least as glorious, and so is your own naked body, as any lily of the field or any other of the comparatively simple works of creation.

Do no injury wilfully to your own body, nor to that of any man or creature. 'If thine eye cause thee to offend' (Matt. v. 29 and 30) ever so much, *do not* pluck it out; 'if thine hand offend thee,' *do not* cut it off; but keep both eye and hand, both body and mind, under proper control. You cannot 'cut off' the real offender, your brain and will.

In the carelessness for health, we continually find the sins of the parents visited on the children, as instanced by madness, gout, and other diseases properly called hereditary. Without health you are incapable of doing your duty, and you become a burden to those whom you ought to protect and to comfort. Thus fasting is no duty to us. We must take the greatest care to get good food, though never eating or drinking too much; while if we purposely eat or drink too little, simply to 'mortify the flesh,' we do an injury to our health, and thus do wrong.

Remember also that mind or soul and body are one. You cannot separate what God has truly joined together. A strong and healthy body enables the mind to act healthily. A weak body tyrannizes over the mind.

4. CONDUCT.—Form good habits when young. Think for yourself. Study to do right. Do not be misled by the common notion that what is called 'Conscience' is an intuitive faculty or gift at your birth which will develop itself without effort on your part. As a child gradually learns to stand upright, wholly unconscious of the slight mental and bodily effort still necessary to sustain him in that position, so by the careful exercise and training of his moral and intellectual powers may a man gradually learn to judge, almost unconscious of an effort, when he is acting uprightly or otherwise. Watch over this faculty continually so as to keep it, like the rest of your bodily and mental powers, in an ever healthy state.\* Be just; be industrious, frugal, and careful, thus avoiding debt (understand by this word inability to fulfil your engagements) as the greatest shame, and becoming a self-supporting member of the community in which you live. Be sober, be temperate, be chaste, controlling your passions and preserving your health; but if you are struck on one cheek (Matt. v. 39) *do not* offer the other cheek to be struck. Or if a man takes your coat (Matt. v. 40), *do not* let him have your cloak also; of him that taketh away thy goods, *do* ask for them again (Luke vi. 30). If a man wastes your time by making you walk a mile with him

\* The reader is referred on this question to an able treatise, A Discourse on Ethics of the School of Paley, by W. Smith, Esq. London, Pickering, 1839. 8vo, price 3s. 6d.

(Matt. v. 41), *do not* add to his folly and your own by walking two with him. On the contrary, and notwithstanding what is said in Matt. v. 39, 'resist evil' always to the best of your ability. If injured by another, strive to have him punished, that his conduct may be amended.

Be considerate of the feelings and opinions of others; but still be not frightened out of plainly expressing your honest convictions either from false delicacy towards others who differ from you or from a fear of their coldness or hatred. Never give way to anger in discussion. Be more particularly guarded when the question is a religious one, for here its very importance is apt to excite. The inclination to anger may arise from vanity rather than zeal for the truth, and should warn you that you are possibly in error or have not mastered the subject.

Judge others, that in so doing you may learn to judge yourself. While obeying the injunction, 'Judge not, and ye shall not be judged; condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned' (Luke vi. 37), to the extent of not blaming others where, as constantly happens, you cannot know all the motives of their acts; do not think that by judging leniently of others, you will escape 'judgment,' or the consequences of your own folly or wickedness.

Moreover be not deceived! Justice may be, but mercy, in the usual sense of the word, is not an attribute of that Great Power which governs and controls this world. Punishment, either direct or indirect, in the deprivation more or less of that state of well-being for which we are fitted, attends every breach of God's laws, physical or moral. Neither ignorance nor good intention can be pleaded with success. The infant that burns its hand in the fire or falls out of window, suffers punishment, without mercy. The man who swallows poison, believing it to be medicine—and the man who, knowingly, drinks strong liquors in excess, equally suffer for their acts; and so does the man who gives way to his passions, whether he has, or has not, had the advantage of a good education. For a definition of what may in one sense be called mercy, we might quote the Psalmist, 'Thou, Lord, art merciful; for thou rewardest every man according to his works,' Psalm lxii. 12. The true mercy shown is the gift of reason, which enables us by care and foresight to protect ourselves and our children from nearly all suffering. For the rest, we must be contented, seeing that all things are not possible even to a God. How can we be free-agents, and yet be secured against all suffering from our own acts and the acts of other free-agents like ourselves?

5. LANGUAGE, TRUTHFULNESS, AND OATHS.—Strive for the greatest accuracy in expressing yourself, and early teach your children the true meaning of the words they utter, and urge on them the importance of correct expression. A child is often made unhappy from inability accurately to con-

vey its meaning; and through life what constant quarrels and misery, among even those who ought to be nearest and dearest to each other, arise from carelessness or inaccuracy in the use of language.

Speak the truth at all hazards; but do not suppose it to be a duty to say at all times every thing you happen to believe. When called upon in a court of justice to give evidence, do not accept the direction 'Swear not at all' (Matt. v. 34) literally; but swear or promise in the way that other men may think most binding on the conscience, even though you feel that in thus doing you in no way increase your obligation to speak the truth, and nothing but the truth.

6. PROMISES.—Keep your promises, unless in keeping them you are committing a greater error than in breaking them; but to avoid the disgrace of breaking a promise, be extremely guarded in making any promises at all. You are not able to foretell what may happen, and you may find you cannot keep rash promises. Who but the most infatuated would now hold up Jephtha's slaughter of his only daughter, on account of a rash and superstitious promise, as any thing but a foul murder, an abominable wickedness?

7. PROPERTY.—*Lay up* for yourselves treasures here (Matt. vi. 19). *Take thought* for to-morrow, so that you may be able not only to keep yourself and your children from want and bodily suffering, and consequent ill health; but may have a surplus for those who through real misfortune, or mental or bodily incapacity, have need of assistance. Bear always in mind that although two of us shall agree to ask something (Matt. xviii. 19), *it is not true* that God will grant it merely for the asking. Nor if, like fowls of the air, none of us sow nor reap, nor gather into barns, shall we be fed as they (Matt. vi. 26); but we shall starve, and deservedly so. Though God has clothed us with a body more beautiful and complex in its structure than any lily of the field (Matt. vi. 28), still his having done so is no reason for supposing that we shall have, without proper exertions on our own part, proper clothing to protect us from the inclemency of the weather. The lilies of the field want no clothing; but you will die of cold unless you clothe yourself.

8. CHARITY.—*Do not* 'sell all that thou hast and distribute unto the poor' (Luke xviii. 22); for if you do, you will only increase improvidence and want. On the contrary, never 'give to him that asks you' (Matt. v. 42), merely because he asks you; neither give to the poor merely because they are poor. Rather suspect that the beggar is an unworthy object; and remember that the giving alms to such a one is a bad act on your part (prompted by your own ill-regulated impulsiveness), for it is—not

only an encouragement to idleness, but a discouragement to the industrious neighbour of that beggar, and increases the evil you thus thoughtlessly try to remedy.

Neither purposely give your alms 'in secret,' relying on the promised reward in Matt. vi. 4; rather attend to the instructions to 'let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works' (Matt. v. 16). Alms openly and judiciously given, will offer an example and encouragement to your neighbour to do likewise. Still give not alms ostentatiously nor in expectation of praise or of mercenary reward here or hereafter. If the knowledge that you are doing good to a neighbour is not a sufficient reward, you must have been very badly trained as a child.

Probably the greatest real charity you can bestow is to assist in having the children of those who are unable or indifferent, properly trained and taught, so that 'they may learn and labour truly to get their own living, and do their duty in that state of life' in which they may be placed, or to which they may attain by their own intelligence.

9. OBSERVANCE OF DAYS.—Keep each day as holy as any other;—God, in the only way we can see him, namely, in his works, works every day alike; He never rests. Vary your occupations, arrange them as may be expedient ('all things are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient,' St Paul in 1 Cor. vi. 12); but *your* work in life—working righteousness—must be continuous as God's is.\*

\* Freed from superstitious observance of days as being one more holy than another, such an institution as a periodical cessation from ordinary work is eminently 'expedient' among a hard-working people, so expedient that as mankind grows in wisdom neither the penalty of death enacted by Moses nor the 5s. fine of our modern legislation will be wanted to enforce it. The Sunday as a day more particularly set apart by man for assembling together, either in public or private, for worship, or for moral instruction and training, which if true must be religious,—for family and social reunions and intercourse,—and for the enjoyment of healthy recreation, bodily exercise, and innocent amusement,—may be an institution of the utmost importance for promoting the love of ourselves and our neighbours.

We have to remember, however, that the real rest given by God to man is the portion of time allotted to sleep. If it were not that man commits excesses in labour, both mental and bodily, periodical days of rest would certainly not be necessary, however enjoyable. A proper amount of labour judiciously varied in its kind every day in the year would be quite as conducive to health; but just as a man, who commits excesses in eating and drinking all the week long, may recruit himself by abstinence on one day in the week, so may we, in the present state of society, be in every respect benefited by a cessation from labour.

Let us remember also that the artisan, shut out by the superstition of the age from national museums, picture galleries, botanical gardens, and other places

10. IDOLATRY.—‘Little children, keep yourselves from idols’ (1 John v. 21). Avoid Idolatry in any form, whether it be in making an idol of one day over another, or of a book, of an idea, or of a man. Accept a belief from no man. To adopt or to hold a belief because it is written in a book, or because a man or a church, in olden times or at the present day, declares it to be true, is idolatry and superstition just as much as to fall down before a stone, a picture, a graven image, a piece of bread, or a wafer, and worship it. Think for yourself, unfettered, and undismayed by the fear of consequences, or by the knowledge that the multitude is against you. If you wish for a saying of Christ in support of this, remember the passage (Matt. x. 35), ‘for I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law.’

If you thus obey the command to love yourself and your neighbour alike, you will, in the only way possible to man, show your real love to GOD, and you may truly say with the Deuteronomist—

‘The Lord our God is one Lord, whom we love with all our heart, and with all our mind, and with all our strength.’

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In conclusion, we would ask our Christian neighbours to think for themselves, whether it would not be better to teach their children even from such a code of Commandments as is here imperfectly sketched out, than from those of the Jewish Decalogue. We would also ask them whether they would not prefer that their children should, on their entrance into the world, have some such plain and simple guidance for their inexperience, in the place of solemnly binding themselves to believe, most usually without pretence of understanding them, three Creeds, differing one from another, and the present Thirty-nine Articles of our National Church? In the one case they will be free to use their God-given faculty of reason; in the other, they will grow up under a crushing bondage, slaves to a priesthood and their barbarous anathema, ‘To doubt is damnation!’

How can a Church be truly national, if it does not permit the widest differences on questions of mere intellectual belief!

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where he might have a chance of learning God’s ways to man—has a perfect right to spend the Sunday in his ordinary employment, and far better will it be that he should do so than in mere idleness.