

## XXIX.

**Love in the Old Covenant.**

“A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another.” — *John xiii. 34.*



In connection with the Holy Spirit's work of shedding abroad the love of God in our hearts, the question arises: What is the meaning of Christ's word, "A new commandment I give unto you"? How can He designate this natural injunction, "To love one another," a *new* commandment?

This offers no difficulty to those who entertain the erroneous view that during His ministry on earth Christ established a new and higher religion, to supersede the antiquated religion of Israel.

They assert that the ancient religious ideas of the Jews were crude, defective, and primitive, even far below pagan morality. Among Israel themselves it was an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth. For their enemies they pursued vindictive hatred. They sang imprecatory psalms. And to crown all, they indulged the bloodthirsty desire of dashing the enemy's innocent babes against the stones. Among this rude and barbarous people Jesus arose to proclaim a higher and nobler religion. He said: "Ye have heard it was said of old time, 'An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth!' but I say: 'Resist him not that is evil.' 'Ye have heard that it was said, 'Thou shalt hate thine enemy'; but I say unto you: 'Love your enemies.' And whatever shortsighted Moses may have taught ancient Israel, I, Jesus, give you a new commandment, that ye love one another."

In this sense the words "*new commandment*" offer no difficulty. "*New*," representing the Christian religion, is opposed to the "*old*," which stands for the Mosaic law. But however plausible, this representation is thoroughly false and contradicted by obvious facts.

In *Matt. v. 17-20*, Christ introduces the subject by showing that He does not oppose His Gospel as a superior code of morals to the antiquated and inferior Mosaic code, but that it is His aim, by opposing the *false interpretations* of Moses by the liberal, rabbinical schools, to restore the Mosaic law to its *legitimate position*. He says: "Think not that I am come to destroy the law, but to fulfil; not merely in a general sense, as tho the valuable germ which it may contain needed, for its development, only to be divested from its outward covering, but to fulfil it to its *very jot* or *tittle*. For whosoever shall do and teach them shall be called great in the Kingdom of heaven." From *verse 20* it is clear that He opposes, not the *righteousness of Moses*, but the *false interpretation* of it by the liberal rabbis.



And after this introduction He continues: "Ye have heard that it was said to them of old time, Thou shalt love thy neighbor and hate thy enemy." (*Matt. v. 43*) Did you ever find this in the Old Testament? Indeed not; on the contrary, in *Prov. xxv. 21* it reads: "If thine enemy be hungry, give him bread to eat; and if he be thirsty, give him water to drink"; and in *Exod. xxiii. 3, 4*, Israel was taught: "If thou meet thine enemy's ox or ass going astray,

thou shalt surely bring it back to him again. If thou see the ass of him that hateth thee lying under his burden, and wouldest forbear to help him, thou shalt surely help with him.”

Hence it is unfair to say that the Old Testament teaches a low and unholy morality, for it inculcates the very opposite. The words disapproved by Jesus are found not in the Old Testament, but in the writings of the liberal rabbis. “Liberal,” we say, for many of the rabbis did not support this interpretation. This shows that a man actually lowers himself when he lays upon the lips of Jesus a charge against the Old Testament which can be preferred only against the liberal rabbis.

Without going into the details of [Matt. v. 21 ff.](#), there is another reason why “*new commandment*” can not be interpreted by making it to oppose the law of Christian love to the Mosaic commandment of hatred. If [Matt. v. 43](#), “Ye have heard that it has been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbor and hate thine enemy,” had been the old commandment of Moses, Jesus could have opposed it by this new commandment: “But I say unto you, Love thy neighbor *and thine enemy.*” That would have had sense. But of the “new commandment” He speaks, *not in this passage*, but in [John xiii. 34](#), where He treats, not of love for the *enemy*, but of *neighborly* and *brotherly* love. He has just washed the disciples’ feet; no enemy is present, He is among friends. And then He says, not, “Moses gave you the old commandment to love one another, but I say, Love even your enemy, and this is My new commandment”; but, “A new commandment I give unto you, that [in your own circle] you love one another.”

Hence it is evident that this whole representation, as tho the new commandment of love opposed the Mosaic commandment of hatred, can not for a moment be maintained. And apart from this, the divine law of Sinai can not be anything but a perfect law; and Jesus, Himself being its Author, can not contradict Himself.

In order to prevent the drawing of such pernicious inference from the words “a new commandment,” St. John declares emphatically: “And now I beseech thee, lady, not as tho I wrote a new commandment unto thee, but that which we have had from the beginning, that we love one another” ([2 John 5](#)). And to make it still more impossible, he calls the same commandment *old* and *new*, according to the viewpoint from which it is considered: “Brethren, I write no new commandment unto you, but an old commandment, which ye had from the beginning. The old commandment is the word which ye have heard from the beginning. Again a new commandment I write unto you, which thing is true in Him and in you; because the darkness is past and the true light now shineth.” ([1 John ii. 7, 8](#))

The way is now open to arrive at the right understanding of this new commandment, especially with reference to the subject under treatment.

Jesus and the disciples have entered the inner sanctuary of His passion. Golgotha discloses itself. The painful strife of the feet-washing and of the expulsion of the traitor is ended. And during these solemn moments Jesus speaks of His departure, of the coming of the Holy



Spirit, and of the new relation which henceforth God's people shall sustain to the Messiah. From Paradise to the Lord's return there is but one salvation for all the elect, but one way in which all walk, but one gate through which all must pass. The whole redemptive work flows from one unchangeable counsel. And herein lies the unity of the Old and New Covenants.

But, altho we fully acknowledge this unity, we may not overlook the fact that, in different dispensations and circumstances, the saints sustain different relations to their Lord. To see the atonement typified in the promises of the ceremonial sacrifice is one thing, to look at it as finished on Calvary is quite another; and the difference creates a modified relation. The same is true of living before or after the Incarnation. To walk with Jesus on earth, or to know Him in heaven, puts the saints in a different position. Our departed friends and those who shall live at the return of the Lord are in different relations; for the latter shall not die, but be changed in a moment when this mortal shall be swallowed up of life.

The subject of Christ's conversation before He entered Gethsemane was *this change of the mutual position and relation*. He strongly emphasizes the new fact of the coming of the Holy Spirit to be their Comforter. He Himself will depart, but their treasure will be even richer and more glorious. Hence they need not fear. They will receive the Holy Spirit whom He will send them from the Father. Not as tho the Holy Spirit had not wrought already for and in Israel's saints; for then faith and salvation would have been impossible. In fact, His work in the souls of men is as old as the generation of the elect, and originates in Paradise. But to the saints under the Old Covenant this operation came from *without*; while now, being freed from the fetters of Israel, the body of the Church itself becomes the bearer of the Holy Spirit, who descends upon it, dwells within it, and thus works upon its members from *within*.

This is the *new* thing. This is Pentecost. This is all the difference between the dispensation before and after Christ's Resurrection. This is His promise to and for His disciples and for all His saints.

And in this connection Christ speaks of the new commandment, that they should love one another. The same love commanded them by Moses was now to affect them in a different way, since by His departure they were to enter into a different relation. It is not a rare occurrence when the children of the same family, suddenly orphaned, feel as it were a more intimate relation to each other than they ever felt before, and at their parents' grave pledge one another a new love. As they stand at the open sepulcher and look at each other, they suddenly feel a sensation in their hearts hitherto unknown; it is the realization of a new relation. It is the old, and yet a new love, with a new conception, a new motive, a new consec-

ration. So it is here. So long as they were with Jesus, the disciples loved one another; yet they never understood the close and unique character of the relation. But when Jesus suddenly left them, they realized the truth of His new commandment, and their love became consciously deeper, more intimate, really *new* love.

And this new love is the fruit of the Holy Spirit dwelling in the Church. It is like the difference between carrying water with great exertion from a distant fountain, and having a stream from that fountain flow by one's own door, from which he can drink copiously, by whose invigorating scent he feels his spirits revived, into which he can throw himself for a refreshing bath. The Holy Spirit comes with glorious blessings to the children of God under the New Covenant. They drink, not with scant measure, but from a full and overflowing cup. They revel in the fulness of eternal Love, And He that creates this blessedness is the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, whom Jesus has sent from the Father.



## XXX.

**Organically One.**

“From whom the whole body, fitly joined together and compacted, maketh increase unto the edifying of itself in love.” — *Ephes. iv. 16.*



The *newness* of holy Love lies *in the Church*. As we look at the withered state of the Church in almost every period, we almost hesitate to make this statement; yet in principle we maintain it to its fullest extent and power.

The Church of Christ on earth is like an “incline.” The “incli” were honorable men and women who in the Middle Ages immured themselves in little cells of stone, built under the street, just high enough to allow a man to stand erect. After the incline had descended into his cell, it was closed over him with a grating, and thus he spent his lonely, comfortless life in voluntary isolation. Passers-by could see but little of him. Through the grating the faint outline of a dark form was dimly visible; but it did not seem to possess the least attraction; did not once suggest what manly and noble stature might be concealed in that cell; much less what extraordinary power might be embodied in that incline, and what hours and days were spent in inward conflict. And such is the image of the Church of Christ on earth. It is enclosed and can not reveal itself. Of its real form only a faint outline appears, almost always unfavorable and unprepossessing. Unless its spiritual wealth and nobility are discovered in some other way, no one will surmise that this is the Church which shall one day decide the destiny of heaven and earth.

Still this is the fact. The Father loves the Son. The body of the Son is the Church. Hence no one can be saved but he who is incorporated into His body the Church.

Surely it requires a great stretch of the imagination to believe that this muddy shell of the visible Church contains such a precious pearl; but the initiated believe it. They know that in this respect the Church resembles its glorious Head, in the days of His flesh; of whom it was said: “When we shall see Him there is no beauty that we should desire Him. He is despised and rejected of men; we hid, as it were, our faces from Him; He was despised and we esteemed Him not.” (*Isa. liii. 3*) And when Herod’s soldiers mocked and shamefully entreated Him, when stripped and dying He moaned upon the cross, “I thirst,” no one but those who looked beneath the surface could surmise that this man was the Lord of Glory. And yet so He proved to be. “He received beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness.” (*Isa. lxi. 3*) And so it may be said of the Church while an earth. When we see her, there is no beauty that we should desire her; she is despised and rejected. Every one is, as it were, hiding his face from her. Still, she is the Lamb’s Bride-elect; and the holy Church, which without spot or wrinkle shall one day be presented to the heavenly Bridegroom, is concealed within her. And therefore holy Love must celebrate its triumph in the Church.

