

‘The True Nature of Law’

1. Introduction

It is probably fair to observe that since law and authority are linked, and since, generally speaking, transgression is the ignoring or breaking of the law, that as the study of sin is one about which it is difficult for man to be objective so the very word ‘law’ has emotive connotation. The image that many have of law does not make it an easy subject to research, and for the most part it is a new thought for many, the thought that David expresses in Psalm 119:20, ‘my soul is consumed with longing for thy ordinances at all times!’ Also to say (Romans 7:22) ‘I delight in the law, after the inward man’, is not a cry of the moderns, and perhaps not a regular cry of the ancients, either!

Because of these peculiar problems we will try to see the living nature of law as quickly as possible, but first we must seek to see something of the meaning of the word ‘law’ and its allied terms.

2. The Meaning of The Word

The main word for law is torah in the Hebrew, being used some 220 times in the O.T. and apart from Genesis 26:5 it is not used in Genesis, although the first five books of the O. T. which include Genesis are spoken of generically as the torah. Without going into its original meaning (which, anyway is most difficult to trace) we can pick up the meaning which attached to it as time passed. It was primarily the idea of instruction rather than laid-down laws as such. In fact torah is really that way of life for the Israelite and the whole community of God. This is more than echoed in the sermon on the mount (Matt. chs. 5-7) where again guidance is given for the principles of true living. Torah then cannot be confined to the commands given in the Pentateuch (Genesis to Deuteronomy) - although of course it includes them - for Torah is the whole way of life for the covenant community. Hence in the N.T. the word torah (in Greek **nomos**) often includes the whole of the O.T., and certainly the whole way of life of the covenant community.

There are also other related words such as ‘commandment’ (Gen. 26:5, Exodus 15:26), ‘word’ (Exodus 34:28, Deut. 4:13), ‘Decree’ and ‘precepts’ (Amos 2:4), and judgement’, ‘custom’, ‘ordinance’ (Exodus 15:26). The use of synonyms is a favourite device in the O.T., especially in literary parallelism. It is therefore interesting to read Psalm 119 where these words are interchanged such as law, word, precepts, commandments, and so on.

The idea of instruction is seen in Proverbs 3:1, ‘My son, do not forget my teachings, but let your heart keep my commandments...’ (cf. 6:23, 7:2, 13:14). As with a father, so with a mother (1:8, 6:20, 31:26). However, often the instruction had to be wrought out by decisions (see Haggai 2:11-13) and this was the responsibility of a priest if it pertained to ritual cleansing, sacrifice, etc. Malachi 2:1-8 shows this responsibility given to priests was not

always executed or wrong instruction was given, in which case the priests were reprehensible. The command for the priests to guard the book of the law, and to judge and be judged by it is included in a telling passage in Deut. 31:24-26. Also, as we shall see, the prophets were intimately linked and concerned with torah, not as protagonists but as those who insisted on true righteousness, as against mere ritual righteousness and observance without heart commitment.

Later we will examine the genesis of laws in the O.T. and see how it came to be called 'law' instead of 'laws'. In the N.T. it is rarely spoken of as laws, but again, as in the O.T. as 'the law'. However, roughly speaking, in the N.T. the Greek word 'nomos' takes over the function of the word 'torah', and its meaning is the equivalent. None of this really explains the nature of law, but it does tell us that basic word when used generally denoted a common meaning.

To sum up, law was primarily instruction to guide the people of God in the manner of life they should live, and it was also to that degree legislative in that judgements were wrought where it was disobeyed. However, this narrow view of law has to be extended in order to compass the true nature of law itself.

3.Law In The Old Testament

When we recognise that the books of the Pentateuch are written late in time and see that the law, at least for Israel was not written in any form until the time of the journey through the wilderness, we then ask what is the nature of law before the time when, as Paul says, 'the law came' (Rom. 5:13, 20). Genesis 26:5 is an interesting passage, '...Abraham obeyed my voice, and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes and my laws'. This could mean two things (a) God's law, or laws are primarily creational (see below) and/or (b) God had given Abraham special laws which pertained to his covenantal relationship, and which he was bound to obey. The latter may not have been primarily related to moral operations, but in all probability Abraham knew both elements of law. However, this leads us to examine the matter of what we call 'creational law'.

(i) Creational Law

One of our problems in understanding law arises from its current use, and the image which we have of it. Our ideas of law or '**nomos**' are associated with Greek and Roman ('**lex**') views, since these, with Judaic-Christian concepts have been incorporated into much of Western society and legislation. Whilst Judaic law had its apodictic absolutes and its casuistic rationalisations of the apodictic, yet its law was virtually unchanging. Modern law constantly relates to a legislature which adapts the laws to changing society and to a great degree to changing opinions. This may or may not be a good thing, but it is the background of our thinking, and so law at once connotes with regimentation, police backing, punishment, as well as security. This is said by way of preamble to saying that law as Adam would have understood it would be difficult for us to discern. Seeing there would be no overtones of guilt, or a guilt-based view of authority or a legislator, and so on.

Adam was given law if commandment and instruction equate with law. Hence in Gen. 1:28ff the following emerge:-

- Multiply (i.e. procreate).
- Fill the earth (multiplication of families).
- Subdue the creational powers, according to their orders (cf. 2:19-20 where man 'names' the animals, i.e. gives them character, etc.).
- Have dominion, i.e. rule the world (cf. Psalm 8).

In Genesis 2:15 the ordinance of labour is given. In Genesis 2:2, 3 the sabbath ordinance is nominated. In Genesis 1:28ff and 2:23-24 the marriage principle is nominated, and this appears to be the 'fixed order' for marriage.

The work ordinance (six days shalt thou labour) and the sabbath ordinance are incorporated in the decalogue (cf. Exodus 20:1-17). Jesus speaks of marriage as monogamous, and irreversible, and gives the reason as the creational principle or 'law'. See Matt. 19:1ff. Likewise we discover, later, in the case of Abraham concealing the fact that Sarah is his wife, both with the Pharaoh of Egypt, and Abimelech (king of Gerar) as seen in Genesis chs. 12 and 20, it is inferred that adultery is a sin of great magnitude, and this principle is general in the civilisation. Hence we are led to infer that these laws are inbuilt into creation, rather than moral standards to be observed because moral living has now reached a certain level of practice, or, at least of desirability.

Further to creational law is the fact that creation is functional (cf. Gen. 1:31, Eccles. 3:11, etc.). The principles of functionality, according to, and necessitated by the nature of creation, must determine what true moral principles will be. For example the prohibition against adultery (or even, fornication) are given to indicate the true nature of masculinity and femininity, marriage, family, and so on.

Again the N.T. principle that love is the fulfilling of the law, and also its fulness (pleroma or 'fulness' goes close to meaning 'essence' or 'essential nature' as in Romans 13:10). See, then, Romans 13:8-10, Gal. 5:14, and James 1:25, 2:8-12. We will enlarge on this in a later section. If love is the true nature of the law, and the universe is created in love, then the true nature of law is instruction in love and then, the living out of that love. For example, the decalogue which has often been divided into (a) Love to God and (b) Love to one's neighbour must then not be simply Judaic but creational and universal. That it is given to Israel in written form does not imply it to be new or unique to one culture.

Add to this the passage in Romans 1:19ff and we see men fell into immorality in evil by rejecting God which necessarily brought them to reject the functionality of the creation in connection with God. Even though they fell into perverse ways, and enjoyed them, yet they knew that 'they that do such things are worthy of death' (Rom. 1:32), i.e. they understood the law they had rejected. To this Paul adds his claim that the Gentiles have the law written on their hearts and it is by this law that the conscience convicts (where it is transgressed) or praises (where it is fulfilled). See Romans 2:14-16.

It is clear that where views of creation differ from those set out in the Scriptures, and in particular the Pentateuch, then a different view of all law will be seen altogether.

(ii) Creational Law and Authority

The Genesis account of creation in chapter one points to some form of authority. In verse 16 the sun and moon are said to be 'greater' and 'lesser' and one is to 'rule by day' and the other is to 'rule by night'. At the end of the chapter man is under the authority of God since he is commanded, and he is delegated authority by which he is to rule the earth. This is reinforced in Psalm 8 as also following the Flood, in Gen. 9:1-7 where much of the original creational mandate (law) is repeated.

The wider question of angelic authorities, and man's subjection to them as also an order of authorities¹ within the human family is a principle which

¹ For a full exposition of this theme see Living Faith Study No. 5 'The Nature of Authority and Obedience' N.C.P.I. (1976).

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comes through not so much in the Genesis account as throughout Scripture, and law without authority is a principle not found in Scripture, if, indeed, anywhere.

In the N.T. the 'son of man' is said to have authority over the Sabbath. The sabbath is represented not as a tyranny but as a principle of recreation for man. John 5:17f suggests that God did not rest simply for recuperating His strength (sic!) but from creating in order to do something else. Marriage also is not presented as a tyranny but as a true functional mode of relationship. Likewise the command to love all men, including enemies, as given in Matt. 5: 43-48 indicates that love should be seen and exercised as the natural order of the universe. This is to happen under God as Father. It could be concluded that love is the true creational principle of the universe. Authority, within that order would be the authority of love, at least primarily.

As a general principle, throughout Scripture, law is seen as the will of God which is to be obeyed. It is never merely enacted legislation, although that, also, may well relate to the law or will of God. The will of God, then, must relate to more than observance of rules of good living, and prohibitions of bad living. It must be dynamic, forward looking, and related to the ultimate fulfilling of His goals.

4. Abraham and The Law

The passage of Genesis 26:4-5 is a statement of record told to Isaac, and not even to Jacob. Abraham had done the will of God, whether this is to be thought of in terms of recognised moral law, or simply the commands pertaining to covenant. It is told to Isaac so that they too may do likewise. In this case command is preceded by promise. In fact it is rare to find a situation where command is not preceded by promise. In Abraham's case we must remember that God appeared to him and as 'the God of glory' (Acts 7:2) so that his incentive to obedience would give him excellent views of law. Likewise Isaac is stimulated by Abraham's obedience, and in a specific sense he would have seen this at the happening at Mt. Moriah when he himself had been offered up in response to God's command to his father.

5. Israel and Law

Israel was the people who wrote the Pentateuch. Their view of creation was given in this, and from this doubtless was developed. The view of man's fall, and then, later his lawlessness as the time preceding the Flood, plus the commands to Noah and his family would be the background to their thinking. The actual giving of the law at Sinai was an unforgettable event for Israel, and is made much of in the holy writings. Proverbs is filled with wisdom concerning the law and obedience, whilst the Psalms develop very richly the beauty and terror and expediency of law. Israel was a people which was constantly tempted to idolatry, and which knew continuous and enormous conflict with God and His law. That, in fact, is the history of Israel, but this does not mean that at the core of the people there was not a deep understanding of law and a fine appreciation of it.

What we have to see is that for the Israelite the law (or, laws) was not so much a set of rules for living, as it was a prophetic teaching, a gift given by God to His chosen covenant people, and the keeping of the law was not to be by static legalism, but by dynamic obedience. Thus, in order to understand the history of the giving, receiving, formation and codifying of the law we have to understand intimately the history of Israel, first as a people under subjection in Egypt where they must have had their internal codes of conduct and ways of life, then their shared life in the forty years of nomadic desert wandering,

and following this their establishment as an agricultural people within Palestine. Also the difficulties they suffered as a people under the suppression of various powers both within Palestine and outside of it must have given them a view of law which we find to some degree ordered and fixed within their writings. Their view of law from a post-exilic point of view was different from that prior to it. The prophets too were always relating to the law, demanding heart obedience, and yet never allowing the ritual of the law to come to be something in itself. Finally we have the period from the end of the prophetic series to the coming of Christ, a period in which the law was highly codified, seen as a special gift of God, and often observed for its own sake, as a system, which in fact it had not been and was not intended to be.

In what way, then, did the law come, and how was it formulated and observed? These questions demand specialised study, far beyond the scope of this paper, and should be examined in detail.³

The passage in Deut. 33:1-5 shows the grandeur of God visiting His people and giving them the law through Moses. The writer says, 'Thus the Lord became king in Jeshuran when the heads of the people were gathered, all the tribes of Israel together.' This sort of statement means that law was formulated within and for a theocracy, and so, we take it, should be understood in that light.

Given that many of the laws had already been extant as a way of life in the times of the patriarchs and through the time of the bondage in Egypt, they flowered out under revelation and the gifts of God into the body of truth which can at once be called 'the law' and the 'word' (dabar) and precept (mitsvah) and even justice or judgement (mishpat), which was really a way of life of righteousness and equity, and related to the judgement of God. Against this background we must come to understand the law-codes which we find, particularly in the books of Exodus, Leviticus and Deuteronomy. Textual scholars and critics have worked in detail upon these codes and see their development as an increasing understanding and revelation of the true nature of law.

We have to see very clearly the principle that:

- (a) Israel is the covenant people of God and He is covenant Father (Mal. 2:10, Isa. 63:16, 64:8, Exod. 4:22, Hosea 11:1, and Deut. 14:1f).
- (b) God has delivered them from Egypt, and into Palestine (Exodus 20:1f.).
- (c) They are to be a people holy to the Lord a priest- nation to the Gentiles (Exodus 19:5-6, Lev. 11:44). Often the statement is made, 'I am the Lord. I am holy', but the repetition of 'I am holy' is later left out as though 'I am the Lord' is sufficient to remind them of His holiness. If we add to this
- (d) They are an eschatological people then we mean that their ultimate end is to relate to all the peoples of the earth and the blessing of God. This is seen in the promises to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and later becomes the message of the prophets who even see a new covenant, and a new Jerusalem, and such things.

³ The reader is directed to articles in Bible Dictionaries such as Dictionary of N.T. Vol. 2 (Colin Brown) pp.438-441, New Bible Dictionary pp.718-722, Alimen's Vocabulary of the Bible, pp.224-227, and The interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible, Vol. 4, pp.82-95.

Against this most dynamic background we can see the nature of law. It is related to salvation and life, and is the way God's people should live, not in mere moralistic pursuit, but in relating to the God of heaven Himself, and being within His kingdom.

(i) The Codes of Law

We must be clear that there were other codes of law, the most famous of which was that of Hammurabi (c.1792-1750 B.C.)⁴. He preceded the law of Moses, and of course many see it as having influenced the Pentateuchal laws. Hammurabi himself was depicted as a shepherd of the people and a father to them. What is of interest to us is the early date of writing and the fact of a written code.

Without seeking to examine the background of the giving of the various codes within the Pentateuch let us look at them as they are, and abstract certain principles from them:-

(a) The Covenant Code: Exodus 20:22 - 23:33

In looking at the three codes we need to keep in mind the decalogue (ten commandments) itself, noting that the three codes are an outworking of that set of principles, although in varying ways.

Within the Covenant Code is the sense that God is the authority who governs, and that privileges have come to the people of God. The idea of a legislative body or a body to execute punishment such as a police body is absent. The congregation, as the people of God and under God, execute judgement when it is needed. We also remember the background of the seventy elders elected in the time of Moses to carry out jurisdiction and jurisprudence.

In this code the law seems to fall into two categories (1) **Apodictic**, that is absolute judgements because things are clearly established, e.g. premeditated murder, and (2) **Casuistic**, that is ameliorating judgements and punishments when 'circumstances alter cases', e.g. a man murdering where crime has been committed, and so on. One thing about the code, as indeed all Israelitish law was that it was fixed. Amending legislation, or legislations to alter such commands was never made. In this sense the people were secure in an unchanging order of law, even if the levels of morality went up and down in the actual experience of the community.

This code covered the following elements:- An introduction reminding the people of the nature of the covenant God. Laws that dealt with modes of worship, and instructions dealing with persons. Law related to slavery, to bodily injury, to property and to the maintenance of covenant. These were linked with Yahweh's relationship to His people and so governed the dealings the people were to have with strangers and the weak. Again they also had to do with relations with neighbours, with the whole matter of worship especially as this related to the sabbath, the sabbatical year and with the festivals. In its context it closes with warnings and promises, especially as these relate to entry into the promised land.

Doubtless this code helped to form the thinking and action of Israel in regard to law.

⁴ Cf. Bible Dictionary articles, e.g. New Bible Dictionary, pp.501-502.

(b) The Holiness Code: Leviticus, Chapters 17 to 26

The Hebrew word generally indicates cutting or separation. This code wishes to indicate that God wishes to share His holiness with His people. Whilst other gods have 'tabus' or 'devoted things' in the nature of their worship, yet Yahweh sets up the elements of place, days and things of worship (22:2-3, 23:2-4, 21), and also He makes His priests to be holy (Lev. 21:6-7) both to Himself and to the people. There are two aspects to holiness, i.e. separation from that which is unholy, and separation to God who is holy. 'You shall be holy to me: for I the Lord am holy and have separated you *from* the peoples, that you should be *mine*.'

Holiness is not, then simply a mutual action alone, but it is sharing in ethical holiness. 'Consecrate yourselves therefore, and be holy, for I am the Lord your God. Keep my statutes and do them; I am the Lord who sanctify you'. Holiness, then, lies not in ritualistic impeccability alone, but in a spotless ethical purity, an obedience to, as also conformity with, the holiness of God. 'You shall be holy, for I am holy'. It is against this background that we must understand the nature of law, so mere legalism is wholly excluded.

This vertical obedience and relationship to the holiness of God is worked out in the horizontal where one loves one's neighbour, and even one's self, for one's personal rights are also nominated.

This code, sometimes called 'the priestly code' is not primarily for priests but for the whole community.

(c) The Deuteronomic Code: Chapters 12 to 26

So advanced is this code that many scholars cannot accept it as coming from Moses, and seek to find its explanation in the importation of later thought and experience, especially that of the prophets. It is acclaimed by all as a very high code, and indeed the whole book is spoken of as one of the most profound and beautiful of all the books of the Scriptures, not excepting the N.T. It is certainly a rich code.

Its provisions are at one with those in the other two codes, and indeed often repeat the precepts contained within them, as well as making provision for things not included in them. The allied concepts of holiness, Covenant and love are present, but it is the latter which is so powerful. Holiness and love are not separated. As a holy people they are to purge evil from the midst (13:5, cf. 17:7, 12, 19:19). In fact this is the way of walking in love (19: 19). As for love itself God's love was first for the patriarchs (10:14-16) and then to Israel in Egypt (10:22), and this is a reason to love God. Such love, anyway, is commanded, and is shown in and by obedience (11:1, 13, 11:22, cf. 13:4).

The actual laws of the code need to be examined particularly. They deal with religious institutions, feasts, offerings, laws of purity, justice, kindness and clemency. Others deal with the destruction of pagan shrines, the appointment of judges and officers, and the establishment of cities of refuge. Prostitution was to be absent, whilst laws concerning kindness to the family, to the poor and to the debtors were magnanimous. Also a neighbour's boundary was not to be moved, whilst false witness was to be punished.

We may then conclude by saying that the three of these codes were simply the practical outworking as to people, time and place of the great moral law of the ten commandments. Whilst their outworking is quite remarkable, there is no introduction of a higher or better state of things. It is simply that the modes are nominated and in practice this can prove most helpful.

(ii) The Law and the Prophets

This too, is a vast subject, and one which cannot be covered by our papers.⁵ The relationship of the prophets to law was a most dynamic one. On the one hand they upheld the law, not only accrediting it but giving commentaries upon it, and making keener demands than would at first sight appear to reside in the law. On the other hand they condemned that keeping of the law which was superficial, shallow or hypocritical. Then, when it came to the fact and matter of **mishpat** (judgement and justice) their prophetic insistence was not in doubt. They pressed for obedience to the heart of the law, for social justice and love and purity.

Each prophet, in his period has to speak to his generation. It is the hortatory element of prophecy which is more strongly present than the predictive, it is more 'forth-telling' than 'foretelling'. In the failure of Northern Israel and Southern Judah kingdoms the prophets had to foretell their doom. They called the people to repentance and a new obedience to law. At the time of the exile they had to show the people that the happenings were part of the fulfilment of the Mosaic prophecy - that disobedience would bring judgement, and repentance would bring restoration.

During the time of exile they told of the new day coming when their judgement had been fulfilled, and in post-exilic time they urged the people to believe the promises of God especially in relation to restoration, the new temple, and so on.

In all this the prophets had pointed to a new era, and a day when the kingdom would be restored to Israel. They also spoke of a wider kingdom, one which would also embrace other nations, and yet Israel was to form the core of that Kingdom. God would give a new era in redeemed Israel, bringing her back to life, and giving her a new heart for obedience. This new obedience would spring from the new covenant. In this sense the prophets and covenant were one, and covenant is certainly the key to a true understanding of law, as also the key to understanding the prophets.

God had given Israel a covenant, and with it the law. Whilst the law had its elements cultic, ritualistic, didactic and symbolical, and these would pass, yet the heart of the law would ever be the same. This law could not be abrogated. It was just that the new heart would give a new view of law, and a new desire to obey it. Yet even this had been contained within the whole, had they only understood. Otherwise the writer of Psalm 19 would never have seen it as 'sweeter than honey, yes, and much fine honeycomb', and the writer of the 119th Psalm could not have said that his heart was breaking with the longing he had after God's commandments!

6. The New Testament and Law

Again, this is a vast subject on its own. It presupposes

- (a) A knowledge of law in Israel in the time of the kingdom and the prophets, and
- (b) A knowledge of the growth of interest in the law. Ezra - Nehemiah shows the people listened to the law and received instruction and sought to live by it.
- (c) A knowledge of the contemporary views of the law at the time of Jesus.

⁵ For the whole matter of prophecy, see Living Faith Study No. 7 'prophecy, Its Meaning, Scope, and Significance'

Even more the nature of theocracy, the establishment within Israel, i.e. the ruling powers, and the relationship of law to authority. If authoritarianism is 'authority for its own sake', then the true nature of authority must be 'authority for other's sake' or 'authority for the sake of the ends determined'. Thus if we take the whole prophetic thrust into consideration, i.e. God's dealings with His people currently, as He had dealt with them in the past, and also those dealings with a regard to the end-time - the 'day of the Lord', and the messianic consummation of things, then indeed we have a vast canvas on which to depict or study the nature of law.

It is true that Israel had built up a large law system, and that there was intense interest in law. The interest seems, at this distance in time, to have little of the prophetic. The inter-testamental period, though lively enough in political action was not a prophetic time, and preoccupation with the law was natural enough. It had almost come to be deified, Certainly it governed - with its added particularisms and minutiae - almost every action of the Jews as they pursued their daily living.

Our knowledge of certain elements comes from (a) Jesus' clash with the Jews, and (b) Paul's clash with certain views of the law by the same people. What we must be careful not to do is to generalise, saying that all Jews held the views with which Jesus and Paul differed - each on his own level. For example, we must not think that all Jews were legalistic and particularistic, and that most believed in a doctrine of salvation by works, that is through the keeping of the law.

(i) Jesus and the Law

Long ago the prophets had pointed out that true obedience was a disposition of the heart. The last commandment in saying, 'thou shalt not covet' spoke of an inward disposition, and this could scarcely be recognised until it had resulted in (wrong) action.

Just as Jesus had been the creative Word, so now he was the word made flesh, and all that was the true ethic of the covenant people, righteousness, justice and goodness now became flesh in him. Nothing the law or the prophets had said was absent from him. His ethics were rooted not in some new and different system, but in the heart of true law as a true Israelite could have, or would have known it.

This is why Jesus said, 'Think not that I have come to abolish the law and the prophets: I have not come to abolish them, but to fulfil them'. He also said, 'It is easier for heaven and earth to pass away, than for one dot of the law to become void'. That is why he added, 'Whoever relaxes one of the least of these commandments and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven: but he who does them and teaches them shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven

All of this shows Jesus in no way denigrated the law, even if, as we shall see, he interpreted it at a higher level than some had done. At the same time he had no regard for legalism as such, especially when it was mixed with hypocrisy. That is why he added, on this very occasion, '...I tell you that except your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven' (see Matt. 5:17-20, Luke 16:17).

Some take 'to fulfil them' meaning either (a) Jesus would do what none other had done and obey them fully, as though that then took away the necessity of their being there! or (b) That what Jesus would do on the Cross would be to take the judgement of others' non-fulfilment (i.e. their transgressions) and so

the law would be fulfilled and could now be superseded. Whilst it is true that 'Christ is the end of the law, that every one who has faith may be justified' (Rom. 10:1-4), yet the true law still stands.

It is Jesus' use of the law which is interesting. He could object to a wrong use of it, as in Mark 7:1-13 (cf. Matt. 15:1-9) where the wrong use of 'Corban' (i.e. a gift to God, literally meaning to the temple) went against the law of honouring parents. Again a legalistic approach to the Sabbath was wrong (cf. Matt. 12:1-4, Luke 6:1-11, 13:10-17, 14:1-6, John 7:21-24, 5:16-17). Jesus deeply objected to such interpretations, wishing men to be blessed by law and not brought under a false tyranny.

Sometimes he would compare what had been 'said of old' and what he now said. Matt. 5:21-48 is interesting in this regard:

THEY HAD HEARD IT SAID	JESUS SAID
No murder.	No anger.
No adultery.	No adulterous thought.
Divorce for some 'indecentcy'.	No divorce (cf. Matt. 5:32, 19:1-9.)
No false oaths.	No oaths.
An eye for an eye.	No retaliation
Love neighbour.	Love enemy.

It was not that the 'old' and the 'new' were essentially opposed, but that the new was a full interpretation of the old. For example, the 'eye-for-an-eye' has often been thought cruel, yet it was introduced to prevent cruelty, for it had been customary to exact more than (equal) just vengeance. Jesus is simply saying that vengeance, even just vengeance accomplishes nothing.

Again he bases his ethic, not upon some new truth, but upon a fuller revelation, namely that God is Father and covenant people are His children (Matt. 5:43-48).

We also have to understand that Jesus' ethic (obedience to true law) was based on the fact of the Kingdom of God. It was to this Kingdom the prophets, including John had taught. Jesus said, 'The law and the prophets were until John: since then the good news of the Kingdom of God is preached'. He meant that those who had entered the Kingdom lived in this realm, and not just in any realm of men or evil powers. One did not speak to them of laws as heavy burdens. Obedience was to be a delight. This was his point when speaking of taking on his yoke, 'For my yoke is easy and my burden is light' (cf. Matt. 11:25-28).

Jesus then required obedience to the law in every aspect, but put it in the context (as had the O.T.) of the love and holiness of God and His eschatological purposes (of the Kingdom).

(ii) Jesus and Authority

Law and authority are linked together, functionally and irretrievably. Jesus had respect for the authority of his day, both Jewish and Gentile, even though it proved itself to lack genuine godliness. He submitted to taxes, to the Sanhedrin, to Pilate (the Roman empire) even to death. However it was his submission to the Father which is most revealing. John's Gospel depicts this very powerfully. He does nothing but what the Father shows him. At the same time the Father loves him and gives all things into his hands. Also the Father shows him all things (John 5:19f, 3:35, Matt. 11:25, etc.). Phil. 2:8ff depicts him as obedient unto death, whilst Hebrews 2:10 and 5:7-8 speak of him becoming perfect through suffering, so learning and effecting obedience. The centurion who wished his servant to be healed said, 'I, also am a man under

authority', meaning that he recognised Jesus as a person under authority. Subjection to authority, from the heart (cf. Romans 6:17) is the acceptance of law.

Jesus similarly expected the submission of his disciples to him and his Father even to the point of having a primary relationship with him and God, and to forsaking all persons and things, especially where they would interfere with an unsullied loyalty.

(iii) The Law of Kingdom and Covenant

The prophets had spoken of the Kingdom to come, and the covenant which God would make with Israel. In Ezekiel 36 and 37 both kingdom and covenant concepts flow together. In Ezekiel and Jeremiah there are frequent prophecies of covenant. In Jer. 31:31-34 a profound statement is made where the prophet avers that with the making of the new covenant God will place his laws in the heart and write them upon the inward parts. This means, if anything, an internalisation of the law. Or, to put it another way, law will be obeyed spontaneously, willingly.

The writer of the Hebrew epistle points out that (a) There is a better covenant than the old - the new! (b) There is a better covenant-mediator of the new than the old, i.e. Jesus as against Moses. He liberally quotes Jer. 31:31-34. He makes much of 'I will forgive their sins, and their iniquities I will remember no more'. Likewise Jesus pointed to the Cross as the fulfilment of this covenant (Matt. 26:28) 'This is my blood of the new covenant which is shed for you and for many for the remission of sins'. Hence the great dynamic to obedience is the forgiveness of sins, or put another way, the experiential knowledge of the love of God. See Luke 7:47f, I John 4:19, cf. 4:9-10, II Cor. 5:14 and John 14:15. Jesus said, 'If you love me you will keep my commandments'. This at once fulfils both the law of the Kingdom and the law of the covenant.⁶

(iv) Views of Law in the New Testament

(a) Jesus' View of Law

In the Gospels we find legalistic approaches to law, although we must not interpret the approach of the rich young ruler to be so. It seems he had kept the law with delight, and had not thought he would gain eternal life by it, or he would not have asked how he could obtain it. The true nature of law came through to him when he was asked to give up his riches. He was idolatrous of riches, or covetous of them, which is saying the same thing.

Jesus met nit-picking views of law in regard to the Sabbath, to riches, to marriage and other matters. Without doubt Palestine had its share of legalists. However, it was hypocrisy with regard to law which concerned him. Men could tithe and fast and yet have disregarded the true nature of law. They could condemn harlots and tax gatherers and yet be further from the Kingdom of God than they. They could know the detailed matters of law but pass over mercy and (true) judgement. They could meticulously observe ritual, and yet be like rotting corpses within a (whitewashed) grave.

The Jews certainly had a deep problem on their hands when Jesus confronted them. He posed to them that their system was on the way out. He averred that Gentiles would sit down in the Kingdom and some blood-Jews would be cast out. He said the vineyard (i.e. the Kingdom) would be given to others. He even inferred that the stone temple would be replaced by his temple, i.e. his resurrected body. What was most disturbing was his seeming condoning of evil. He not only preached to sinners but received them and ate with them. Seeing these were excommunicants, he was encouraging their evil. The scene in Matthew's home when Jesus was present at the feast of the convert and his friends was

⁶ A full treatment of motivation for obedience to the law, as also the connection of 'law' and 'grace' is found in Deane Meatheringham's book 'The Delight of Law'

most disturbing. Jesus' story of new wine in new bottles was highly confusing. Yet Jesus saw no problem in all this. He saw a new obedience given from a new (repentant) heart, and it was about this that the prophets had spoken.

(b) Law in the Acts

Some scholars claim that the book of Acts was written as apologia for both Jewish and Roman authorities to show that Christians were not revolutionaries but law-abiding, both in regard to the Jewish economy and that of Rome. Certainly it succeeds in doing so. In Acts the apostles and their followers keep to the law. At the same time it is evident that the new wine is spilling out of old Jewish containers. A new container is being used, the bottle of the church! Nevertheless the transition is made carefully, and nothing of a revolutionary nature is apparent.

A sight of the legalistic Judaisers is given. The epistles help us to see that there is a great difference in approach to the law between these and the Gentile converts. We must look at that more closely, but the council held at Jerusalem (see Acts 15) agreed to make no Mosaic law demands upon the Gentile Christians. That they should not eat meat which was strangled or offered to idols was more a cultural matter than one of theological importance.

In Acts then we have a law-abiding group of people which at the same time is obedient to Jesus as Lord and God as Father. Without doubt Christ has given commands (Matt. 28:18-20, Acts 1:3, 10:42) and he required that these be also given to those who came to conversion.

(c) Law in the Epistles

Here we are introduced to the whole idea of law in its richest form and operation. There are so many aspects, so that a study of them is quite demanding. We will try to deal with them under certain headings:-

(1) Law and Grace

John 1:14-16 speaks of the Word becoming flesh, and being, as the Son, like the Father 'full of grace and truth'. John speaks of them receiving from this fulness, and says 'The law came by Moses, but grace and truth by Jesus Christ'. The question is, 'What grace and truth did the disciples receive from Christ?' Probably this refers not only to his ministry prior to the Cross, but includes the Cross and the Resurrection, and even the gift of the Spirit at Pentecost.

Once or twice Christ had pointed deliberately to grace as opposed to the condemnation of law. Once was when he told the story of the tax-gatherer being justified, rather than the self-righteous Pharisee. On another occasion he had said that whatever a man uses to justify himself before God and man is an abomination before God (Luke 18:9-14, 16:15).

This sort of thing comes very close to the idea of grace which is in all the epistles but expounded most powerfully by Paul. His first three chapters of Romans run the whole gamut of this. Whereas normally the righteousness of God is known by law, yet there is a (or, another) righteousness which both the law and the prophets testify to; it is that righteousness of God which justifies a sinner, by faith. It is not opposed to the law, in fact the law endorses it. What then is this proposition? We outline it as follows:

The normal process of law is to condemn a sinner, and judge him worthy of death, and that judgement is executed. The law can do nothing but condemn. It cannot do anything for man for it is made weak by his flesh, i.e. sinful rebellion (cf. Rom. 7:1, 8:3). The law is really for life and not for death (Gal. 3:12, Lev. 18:5).

He who does not do the law is under its curse (Gal. 3:10) and to offend in one part is to offend in all (James 2:10). Since none has kept the law, then all are under the curse. Romans 5:12ff shows that death is the outcome of the original sin of Adam, and has passed upon the entire race. Even so, everyone has sinned personally (Rom. 3:23), and so on that basis is deserving of death.

Galatians 2:16-21, as Romans 3:24-31, proposes the following:-

Christ becomes the propitiation for sin upon the Cross. Hence he destroys the guilt which man should have to bear. By faith in his propitiatory death the demand of the law is met, and its curse destroyed. Man is redeemed from law (cf. Gal. 4:4-5) by faith in that work. This sets him free from guilt, i.e. it justifies him. It would seem that in the past God has passed over certain sins. No! At the Cross all sins are borne, and so their guilt and condemnation are destroyed. Man is now justified, i.e. freed from the accusation of sin. He has died in Christ, and Christ's death is accounted to be his (Rom. 6:7, II Cor. 5:14-15, Rom. 6:10f).

This is also what is meant by 'Christ is the end of the law for all who believe'. It means that he has fulfilled the judgemental requirements of the law. That is why 'there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus'. The argument that this weakens the law is far from true. Because the judgemental requirements of the law have been fulfilled it means that the law has been certified as true, correct, and inescapable. Its demands have been fully met in the death of Christ. This further seals the genuine liberation of a justified person. Also it becomes an incentive and motive for true obedience, as we have seen.

All of this action is the pure grace of God. Where sin (and death) did abound grace did much more abound.

(2) Law, Salvation, and Works

'By works of the law shall no one be justified' is an echo of Psalm 143:2, 'In Thy sight shall no man living be justified'. It had never been propounded under the law of Moses that a man could be justified by works of the law. Hence Jesus' story of the Pharisee and tax-gatherer. He told it 'to them who trusted in themselves that they were righteous and despised others'. Ephes. 2: 8-10 shows that faith and salvation are gifts, and it is 'not by works lest any man should boast'. The verses go on to point out that nevertheless works follow salvation, and these can rightly be termed 'good works' because they proceed from justification.

Gal. 3:1-3, (cf. 5:16-25) shows that by faith a man is justified and receives the gift of the Spirit (cf. Gal. 3:10, 13, 14) and not by works. If one is led by the Spirit one is not under the law. The flesh revels in the law, and in works, but finishes up with the horrific results of 'the works of the flesh', though it started off thinking good things could come from fleshly law-endeavour.

(3) The True Law: The Law of Christ

Galatians 6:2 says, 'Bear one another's burdens and so fulfil the law of Christ'. This law must be a burden-bearing principle, and that is what Christ did. He bore our griefs and carried our sorrows (Isaiah 53:4) and in healing many this was quoted of Christ (Matt. 8:17). In the context in Galatians it is of one overtaken in sin also.

What then is the law of Christ? We know that he said, 'A new commandment I give unto you that you love one another as I have loved you'. This was a new law, and really caught up all laws and law, yet it was not a law opposed to the law of Moses. In Matt. 5:43-48 Jesus had pointed out that true love loves all. The law of Christ then is really the law of love, and we will now look at this. See also I Cor. 9:21 where to be enlawed to Christ is to be under his law. It is also to be under the law of God. We conclude then that the law of Christ is God's true law.

(4) The True Law: The Law of Love

We have already seen that all love is the law, that law is the way of love. This is clear from the ten commandments. Rightly understood they constitute full love to God, and to our fellow-creatures. The word 'neighbour' from the parable of the Good Samaritan indicates anyone, really, and one even formerly counted as an enemy. 'That thy days may be long' indicates that the commandments also embrace genuine and healthy love for oneself, and this supports the idea to love one's neighbour as one's self.

James 1:25 speaks of the law of liberty, which we discuss below, but also speaks of it as the royal law and sums it up as 'You shall love your neighbour as yourself'. This is what Paul says in Gal. 5:14, 'For the whole law is fulfilled in one word, 'You shall love your neighbour as yourself'. Again, in Romans 13:8-10 Paul runs through a number of the commandments and concludes, '...and any other commandment, are summed up in this sentence, 'You shall love your neighbour as yourself'. Love does no wrong to a neighbour; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law'. We have seen that love is not only the action of fulfilling the law (which of course it is) but it is also the fulness or essence of the law.

An interesting point connects this with Jesus' view of the law of marriage being rooted in creation. He said divorce had not been from the beginning, and when asked why Moses had allowed divorce he said it was 'because of the hardness of your hearts'. His point was, 'if your hearts had been soft, i.e. loving, then you would never have divorced, i.e. you would have loved!'

If we go back to all creational laws, we will see they constitute love. The law rituals of Israel were simply the amplification of this basic moral law of love being worked out in Israel's situation, whilst also, at the same time, through the washings, sacrifices, etc. teaching of a day to come when the love of God would be known through one sacrifice, Christ, and it would be seen that the law of God is the law of love and the law of liberty at one and the same time.

(5) The True Law: The Law Of Liberty

James calls the law 'the law of liberty', in fact he uses the terms 'the perfect law, the law of liberty'. He also uses the thought that all will be 'judged under the law of liberty'. Paul speaks of being 'free from the law', but never in the sense that a person is free to disobey law. He is speaking of being free of the condemnation of the law, that is one is guilt-free. He says, 'For you were called to freedom, brethren; only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love be servants of one another The very peak of the law is to serve one another. So, then there is a freedom (so-called) which is in fact not freedom but fleshly operation. II Peter speaks of libertines who are of such character. After giving a lengthy description of their insolent and rebellious practices it says (II Peter 2:19), 'They promise them (i.e. others) freedom, but they themselves are slaves of corruption, for whatever overcomes a man, to that he is enslaved'.

What then is the law of liberty? To answer this we come back again to love. Love is the true functional way of life in a truly functional world. Had man not sinned then obedience would have been willing conformity to the functional laws (or, law) of the universe. Because of the fall and sin, love has greater demand upon it in that one must stretch beyond the sinfulness of one's own being and that of other persons and love. Even then love will be operating according to the true creative principle which is love. Because of love Christ dies for humanity, but even so he was commanded to do so (John 10: 17, 14:31), and he did so.

Psalms 119 is a great help here. It speaks in such terms as verse 45, 'I shall walk at liberty, for I have sought thy precepts'. He means that as he follows the commands of God he will walk freely. They are the way of freedom. Once free, one walks this way, in freedom.

This brings us to the other side of the law of liberty. We have seen that the law is liberty itself when obeyed. This of course against the original rebellion of man against God so that he might go his own way. Romans 1:19ff shows us that to rebel against this liberty is to become involved in dreadful bondage, i.e. malfunctioning ways of living, and so on. Yet what we are concerned with is liberty to obey law.

Liberty to Obey

Romans 6:7 says that believing man is justified. This is because his death for sinning has occurred in the death of Christ. Romans 7:6 says, 'Now we are discharged from the law, dead to that which held us captive, so that we serve, not under the old written code, but in the new life of the Spirit'. Perhaps he even means 'in newness of spirit', i.e. our spirits have been made new. We have a new spirit towards law. Certainly without the Holy Spirit we would not have that. Paul means that once we are free from the guilt of the law we can see it differently. We can understand what it is about, and we can therefore love to obey it.

It is significant that when persons are freed from guilt they live a new and different life. The woman at the well, the woman taken in adultery ('Neither do I condemn thee, go and sin no more'), the justified tax-gatherer, the woman who was a sinner ('she has loved much for she has been forgiven much'), and numerous others obey because they have been liberated from the condemnation of the law.

The Spirit and Liberty (to obey)

From Romans 8:1-3, and II Cor. 3:6 (cf. II Cor. 3:15-17), it is clear that the Spirit applies the Gospel to the heart of man, effectively, and through him one knows one is forgiven and justified. This is the way the Spirit brings the love of God to our hearts (Rom. 5:5ff). Hence one has liberty, now, to obey. The Spirit goes on keeping it this way, especially as we are filled with the Spirit, aglow with the Spirit, receive what the Spirit supplies, and are led of the Spirit and walk in the Spirit.

In Jer. 31:31-34 the law of God was to be internalised in the heart. In Ezekiel 36:24-28 the old heart is to be taken out and a new heart placed within, and a new spirit, i.e. the Spirit of newness, the Holy Spirit so that 'we serve in the newness of spirit (i.e. through the Spirit)'. Gal. 5:1-13 is powerful teaching on keeping fresh in liberty and (at the same time) humble in the Spirit, so keeping the law.

7. God, Man, and The Practice of The Law

The law is inexorable. 'As long as a man liveth he is under the law'. Also, whilst 'He who does them (i.e. 'the things of the law') shall live by them', yet none has ever done them, with the exception of Christ. The penalty the law exacts is death, and so one must die to fulfil the penalty, and only in that way is one justified! Again, 'For all who rely on works of the law are under a curse, for it is written, 'Cursed be everyone who does not abide by all things written in the book of the law, and do them''. Whilst it is clear here that Paul is talking of written law and so is directing the fact towards Jews, yet the principle still obtains whether a man has written law or not. As we have seen, the Gentiles have the law written on their hearts, and by that they shall be judged. Man then is in a pitiable plight, and the implacable, ruthless nature of law is very frightening to a transgressor, whether he is conscious of it that way or not.

We need then to see the true nature of law and God's intention through the law for man. Also we need to reassure ourselves as to the nature of the Cross so that we can define man's freedom, and finally we need to see the problems in practising the law, as regenerate persons.

(i) The Value of the Law of God

We have suggested that since creation is functional, then its principles of operation are those of function. That is, a law is not thought up and then imposed upon a man. Any law which is rational relates to some need of man or society. Whilst religious or cultic-practising persons do think up laws incongruous with the true nature of things, this is not essential law. Essential law is that which corresponds to the essential nature of things.

We have seen that such principles as loving God, one's neighbour (and all that these involve), that of a sabbath rest, marriage, family life, and so on are structured into and from creation. Thus the ten commandments could be covered by these. If man kept these he would correspond in action to the essential nature of the creation. Unfortunately the Fall has complicated the matter. Man's rebellion against God, and so against authority is endemic in man. Hence his rejection of the nature of God must mean the rejection of the nature of himself and his universe. When he re-rationalises all of these he refuses to see and know the essential nature of things and so lives in the existential nature of things, that is as he has chosen to experience God, man, and creation. Or, we might say, also as he has chosen not to experience them in their essential nature.

Man's serenity, his peace, and his well-being lie in obedience. His correspondence in action to the essential nature of things does not bring him into objective guilts. He also is truly functional. He relates to things as they really are. Man in sin can only be at odds with such things, and his guilt becomes intolerable, although he may choose as far as is possible to ignore it. Being a functional creature and insisting on malfunctional actions he must, sooner or later be brought into dreadful states of dislocation, disjunction, and so suffer great stress and tension. If the functional is dynamical in its nature then the malfunctional must be correspondingly dynamic in its tension and anguish.

If man could totally train his conscience to ignore the functional and accept as correct his perverse view of all things, then he would achieve peace. However the conscience, although it can be greatly manipulated, is always related to law in some form or another. That is why man is always legally oppressed. The idols he creates make legal demands of him, and each new law- system

he devises, or even each anti-law system he creates makes legal demands of him. This is Paul's proposition in Galatians 4:8-10. In any case it is significant to see that when man rejects God he immediately fills the gap with some idol or another (cf. Romans 1:19ff).

Paul's other point is that man having fallen, now seeks to attain his salvation by the law. This means that he assesses himself as capable of fulfilling the law. Christ's classic example of the Pharisee thinking his observances of tithes and fasts made him righteous is contrasted with the tax-gatherer's self assessment as being a failure, and unable to offer propitiation. The latter sees God as the propitiating God, the former does not.

We must come to the conclusion then that man's rebellion against law, and the presence of his conscience,⁷ place him in a situation where he sees God through the lens of his own guilt, and so either hates God and rejects him, or he seeks to manipulate God by his own concocted 'obedience' to law. In both cases he has a distorted view of God.

Once man sees the grace of God in Christ, repents and believes, he then has a new mind on law. In fact he has the mind of Christ (Phil. 2:5, I Cor. 2:16) and so his view of law is different. The new motivation to obedience, the presence of the Spirit, the understanding of the true nature of law causes him to lose his guilty prejudice. He now delights in the law of God after the inner man. He has no great problem about desiring to keep the law of God. However he has a problem in the practising of that law.

The problem is outlined in the passage of Romans 7:13-25. In this passage Paul is saying the following:- The law in its essential quality is spiritual, I, in my essential quality am not spiritual but carnal. Carnal does not have evil connotation so much as connotation of moral inability. So the whole passage must be understood in the light of

- (a) Law of itself.
- (b) Sin of itself (strong).
- (c) I of myself.

It adds up to:- 'I of myself am not strong as sin of itself. The law of itself is spiritual. I of myself am human and weak. I delight in the law of God and seek to desist from sin and do good, but when I try of myself then I find sin is always with me, is stronger than me, and forces my hand. In one sense I am responsible for what I do, but in another I am not. If my intention is good and I lack power then how can I desist from evil and do good. I wish to be out of a body where such is the case, and I will be rescued from this body, but meanwhile I recognise the facts, and live with them.'

Paul does not take this fatalistically. Romans 6 and 8 speak of a triumph over sin, but in both cases the 'I, of myself' is not present. In the first case it is the defeat of sin by Christ and his Cross, in the second it is the empowering of the Spirit so that one can desist from evil, and can do good.

Yet to know that in no case can one do good of oneself is a salutary and valuable lesson! We must not miss the great point of the passage, namely, 'I delight in the law of God in my inmost self' (v.22) for this equates the believer with the man of Psalm 1, and indeed with the man of Psalms 19 and 119. Through the Cross a brilliant miracle has taken place. The child of disobedience has become the child of God and the law!

⁷ For the whole matter of conscience see Cassette NS. 30 (N.C.P.I.) entitled 'The Principle & Power of Conscience'. Note that this treatment speaks of conscience being primarily linked with law as law, whereas the Hebrew spoke of the heart as knowing the nature and will of God and so obeying the dictates of the heart. The whole subject needs to be thoroughly explored since conscience represents law to us in its ruthless and inexorable guise.

(ii) The Goodness of the Law

Often Paul's writings have been interpreted wrongly, as though Paul were condemning law, as such. Never! If he criticises anything it is people thinking they can be justified by law-way or law-principle. Since the law never claimed this could be so Paul is not, therefore, criticising the law itself.

The writer of Hebrew, and also Paul (in essence) point to the fulfilment of the law in Christ. Paul points to judicial fulfilment. The writer of Hebrews says the cultus of the new covenant supersedes and outmodes the cultus of the old covenant. He also indicates that the ritual of the old was simply there to teach the principle of the new. The new (better) priesthood of Christ outdates the old of Levi. Hence the ritual laws are now outmoded. So, we presume sanitation laws and the like, as being mandatory. Peter was told to eat the unclean animals on the basis that 'Whatever I have made clean, call thou not unclean'. Whilst this symbolically referred to the Gentiles, yet as Jesus had said, 'Nothing that enters into a man defiles him', and the Gospel writer adds, 'Thereby making all foods clean

We come back then to the moral law, which is at once the law of God, of Christ, the law in which the Spirit leads man, the law of love, and the functional law of the universe. Of it Paul says '...the law is holy, and the commandment is holy and just and good'. He also says it is spiritual. Such terms justify us saying, as some have said that the law is the outshining of God's nature. It is the expression of Himself, and Paul may have meant this when he said that by the law is known the righteousness of God. God does not give law which is incongruous with Himself.

What we have to see - and a study of Psalm 119 and the ten commandments will reveal this powerfully - is that when law is detached from God the Lawgiver then disastrous things happen:-

- (a) Law exercises tyranny over the conscience, or by the conscience over man.
- (b) Man tends to take up the role of judge as Christ warned against in Matt. 7:1-5, and James in James 4:11-12.
- (c) Man tends to execute judgement as indicated in Romans 12:19-21.

Finally we must see that law is dynamic. If we think of law as the functional norm for operations, then those operations, in some sense, proceed from the law. Since the law is holy, spiritual, just and good, then so will be the acts of obedience to it. Further, in Psalm 1 the psalmist says that the man who loves the law and meditates on it, day and night, will be like a tree planted by a stream, so that his roots and leaves do not wither, and he is fruitful.

In Psalm 19 the law is said to have dynamic properties. It revives the soul, it makes the simple wise (with its instruction). Likewise the heart is rejoiced and the eyes enlightened. It is also sweet nourishment and enjoyment to the true law-lover. Psalm 119 says so many things that a whole new wonder is introduced to the man, who with open eyes and willing heart reads it. When his heart is enlarged he will run the way of these commandments! He even says, 'It is good for me that I was afflicted, that I might learn thy statutes

We conclude then, that the law of the Lord is eternal. Its precepts which relate to the here-and-now may not be required in the there-and-then, but one thing is clear, the law of love is the way and true mode of heaven and earth, and since love abides, then the law, in that sense is eternal.

Hence: -

Oh, how I love thy law!
It is my meditation all the day,
How sweet are thy words to my taste,
sweeter than honey to my mouth.
Through thy precepts I get understanding:
Therefore I hate every false way.
Thy testimonies are my heritage for ever,
yea, they are the joy of my heart.

(Psalm 119:97, 103, 104, 111).

...ooOoo...