THE LAW OF THE LOVE OF GOD: AN ESSAY ON THE COMMANDMENTS OF THE FIRST TABLE OF THE DECALOGUE

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649626298

The Law of the Love of God: An Essay on the Commandments of the First Table of the Decalogue by George Moberly

Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.
Cover @ 2017

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An Essay

ON THE

COMMANDMENTS OF THE FIRST TABLE OF THE DECALOGUE.

BY

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M.DCCC.LIV.

LONDON:
T. RICHARDS, 37, GREAT QUEEN STREET.

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INTRODUCTION.

ON THE FIRST TABLE OF THE DECALOGUE.

When the lawyer or scribe, according to the narrative of St. Matthew and St. Mark, asked our Lord, "Master, which is the great Commandment of the Law?"—"Which is the first Commandment of all?" it is probable that he meant to entrap Him into expressing a preference of some one Commandment of the Law over the others. The Pharisees themselves made such distinctions among the various Commandments, dividing them into the "weighty" and the "light," and it may, probably, have been with an intention of exposing the Lord to odium, or, possibly, of gaining His testimony in favour of some view of his own, or, any how, with a view to the design of "catching Him in His talk," set on foot by the Sanhedrim, and

pursued by the Pharisees, Scribes, and Sadducees, one after the other, that the lawyer, "tempting Him," put this question to Him.

There can also be no doubt, that when the Lord answered the tempting Scribe by saying "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind: this is the first and great Commandment: and the second is like unto it:—Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself: on these two Commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets:" He designed to frustrate his evil purpose, by summing up all the precepts of the Law into two; and, speaking with equal force of the necessity of obeying both, to cut off all idea of such preference or distinction, in respect of the gravity or sanction of the various Laws, as the Scribe had in mind.

It is also reasonable to conclude, that when the Lord shaped His answer to the Scribe in the particular form recorded by St. Matthew and St. Mark, He meant to make especial reference to the Decalogue, or Ten Commandments, written upon two Tables, offering herein a short summary of the Decalogue, as the Decalogue itself is a summary of the precepts of the Law. "For to these two Command-