

prehensiveness and suggestiveness. In few words, easily remembered, it touches all the great departments of human duty, and forbids the central sins around which all others, in some fashion cluster. It bars the passes, as it were, which open out on the great realms of evil, and guides the soul into the one straight and narrow path of righteousness. In one way it is not so comprehensive as the two-fold law of love which Christ found also in Moses, and emphasized in such a striking manner; but it is practically more helpful in the education of the conscience just because it is more specific and detailed.

You will observe, however, that the decalogue can be made to serve the purpose of a moral code or of an educator of conscience only by a somewhat free and liberal interpretation of its terms—so free and liberal, in fact, that it sometimes becomes even strained and unnatural. You require to take its precepts as suggestions rather than anything else, and read into them a great deal that does not appear on the surface. If you take them literally, they would come very far short of being anything like a complete statement of duty. They expressly forbid only a few plain sins out of a much larger number of the same class that might be mentioned. They contain fewer still positive requirements—and those few not the ones we would be inclined to think the most important—Sabbath keeping and respect to parents. Nothing whatever is said about such virtues as patriotism, courage, patience, gratitude, benevolence, temperance or self-sacrifice. The motives which they present are of a somewhat local and temporary character, suited to the circumstances of the Jewish people, valid elsewhere only by a certain degree of accommodation or spiritualizing. Jehovah alone is to be worshipped and feared, for He it was who had brought Israel out of the land of Egypt, and out of the house of bondage. They are

to honor father and mother, that they might, as a people, long retain possession of the land whither they were going. The commandment as to the observance of the Sabbath appears in two forms. In one of them the reason is general; but in the other it is urged on them by the memory of their hard experience in Egypt. These may suggest very good reasons why we should keep the commandments, but if taken literally, we can hardly be expected to feel their force.

All this is sufficient to make it plain that it is only by a sort of accommodation or theological convention the decalogue can be taken as a statement of the moral law, and leads us to inquire whether this was the purpose for which it was originally given, whether it had not at the outset some narrower aim altogether.

We do not need to go very far in order to discover what that primary aim was. It is universally recognized that the Mosaic law was for the most part a legislative code rather than a moral code. It was a body of civil statutes intended to be enforced by the authorities of various kinds with pains and penalties, just as our acts of Parliament are enforced by the executive and judicial officers of the land. It was characteristic of the time and stage of civilization, that these Israelitish laws should extend over a somewhat wide range, and be made to cover some subjects now left largely to the freedom of individuals, especially the subject of religion. Here the worship of Jehovah was established and maintained by law, while all other cults were forbidden on pain of death. But they were essentially the same in character as national statutes. And the decalogue so far from being formally a promulgation of the moral law, was really only the first sketch-programme or outline of the fundamental principles of that legislation. Details were filled in by subsequent enactments where neces-