

SUNDAY  
SCHOOL

## The Quiet Hour

YOUNG  
PEOPLE

## SOME LAWS OF THE KINGDOM.\*

By G. Campbell Morgan, D.D.

Perhaps no recorded words of Jesus have filled the heart of man with fear and wonder in the way which these have. All kinds of attempts have been made to escape from them. These have resulted in some cases from a misunderstanding of the text, due to the mistake of removing it from its context. In other cases they have been due to unwillingness to yield complete obedience to the demands of Christ. No change whatever in value is created by the change in translation in the Revised Version. Whether the words as they fell from the lips of Jesus were in the imperative or the indicative mood matters nothing. If He said, "Be ye therefore perfect," it is for us to remember that His commands are always equivalent to promises, inasmuch as He never bids us do anything without providing power, by availing ourselves of which we are able to obey. If He said, "Ye shall therefore be perfect," we must remember that all His promises are commands, inasmuch as their realization depends upon our fulfilment of conditions.

These words end a section in which Christ had been dealing with that Mosaic law in which the man who listened to Him had been brought up. I cannot refrain from saying that I consider that it is a great pity that in the International Lesson the passage is mutilated by omission, and I should strongly advise every teacher at least to have the whole movement in mind when dealing with this final word of Jesus.

Let it be recognized first of all, then, that in Christ's reference to the law of Moses there is not a trace of abrogation but rather that of fulfilment of intention. In this case there is a most significant and important alteration in the Revision. The text of the Authorized in each case read, "Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time," "to them" being the marginal reading. The Revisers have properly changed the text by adopting the marginal reading of the Authorized. The difference is important because in the one case the method of statement would give color to the idea that He looked upon the Mosaic economy as originating with them of old time, whereas as a matter of fact He looked upon them as being merely the instruments through which the Divine law was given to men. All this becomes the more patent in view of these closing words, in which He recognized that the ancient law was the law of a Father. Its deeper meanings which Christ unveiled were but the profounder revelations of the Father. In the law God reveals Himself. Therefore, as your Father is perfect, ye shall be perfect. The Kingdom is of the King. The King is Father. In proportion therefore as men obey His law they are like Him. That was the Mosaic idea. Christ begins from the other centre, and by bringing men into relationship with God as Father, His declaration is that in proportion as men are like the Father, they will obey His law.

The whole section therefore dealing with the law as given to them of old time, and now interpreted by Jesus, constitutes a revelation of God. This is the key to the understanding of the entire paragraph. It opens with the declaration on the part of Christ that He has not come to abrogate the law. There is to be no setting aside thereof. God is a God of law, and insists upon government in the interests of His children. The law revealing the Father is a law characterized by a sense of the value of life, and makes provision for its guarding. There is to be no

destruction of life, neither must there be any injury to character by slander. This God of law and of regard for life demands purity in the sacred and fundamental family relationship, there safeguarding the material bases of life. God is a God of essential truth, and His law demands such simplicity of truth as makes oaths unnecessary. He is, moreover, One Himself devoting all His resources to the interests even of those who have sinned against Him, and His law therefore demands a service which submerges compulsion and captures the oppressor. Finally, He is a God of love, and His law demands such overwhelming mastery of love as is expressed in love, not merely toward kindred and friends, but toward enemies.

In the light of such revelation of the Father we now interpret the meaning of the word of the text, "Ye shall therefore be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect." That perfection consists first in the ordered life which abides under government. Restlessness under control is contrary to the nature and will of God, and is therefore a disturbing and destructive element in the universe, preventing the establishment of the Kingdom of God.

That perfection consequently expresses itself in jealous guardianship of the interests of others. It makes the taking of life impossible, and equally prevents unjust judgments and bitter speech. That perfection is expressed in absolute chastity, so rigorously observed that personal mutilation is to be preferred to relative incontinence. That perfection is therefore revealed in methods of simple speech, resulting from truth in the inward part in matters of thought and desire, which has no desire to avenge personal wrongs, but is prepared to overwhelm unjust demands by abounding response. And finally it manifests itself in a love even for those who are enemies, and who persecute, which love is the direct outcome of the relationship of sons to the Father.

The deepest thought therefore in this injunction is enshrined in the great word "Father." All the laws of life given by Moses, and more perfectly interpreted by Christ, are the laws of God, and give expression to the truth concerning His own nature. The perfection which is insisted upon is that of the realization of our kinship to God, and of a conduct which results from our abandonment thereto.

It is of the utmost importance that we recognize at once that if Jesus has done no more than utter this great ideal He has left man in a more hopeless condition than Moses did. The centuries proved man's inability to obey the law of Moses, and when that law is made even severer by profounder interpretation, the difficulty becomes greater. The thought therefore of the Fatherhood of God involved in the teaching of Jesus is not that merely of the kinship which man has with Him by first creation, but of the relation which he may bear to Him when, the work of Jesus being accomplished, man is made, in a new and fuller sense, "partaker of the Divine nature."

## IF WE WOULD LEARN.

Only exceptional persons are willing to take advice that runs sharply against their desires; and only exceptional persons profit by advice. Most of us seek counsel of others when our minds are already made up, and then the only counsel that interests us is that which confirms our own view. Professor Ramsay's characterization of the people within the church who were already, even in Paul's day, moving restlessly away from Christ's teachings, is that "they want teachers who will aid them to do what they want to do." Christianity has no room for such. Our own wants must forever be put behind us if we would learn anything from the Master Teacher.

## HEARING GOD.

By Rev. Wylie C. Clark, B.D.

Innumerable voices claim a hearing from us. The artist in music pours into our delighted ears his enchanting melodies; the newgatherer brings to us at the opening of each day the world's happenings of the day scarcely closed; scientific searchers proclaim to us their ever-growing discoveries in nature, history and life; teachers from countless platforms and pulpits summon us to listen to the truth and give heed to the law of righteousness. Above all these voices is the realm of the spiritual, where the soul hears the voice of God. It is this hearing which gives religious experience to the soul. The first sense of it is when the soul recognizes a relationship existing between itself and the divine. This hearing has sometimes driven the soul to joyous salvation, sometimes to hopeless despair, sometimes to open rebellion.

There is the voice of His suffering love,—the Shepherd's voice,—the Father's voice. This is the calling voice which reaches the lost sheep, far out on the hills, and the prodigal child in the swine-yard, inviting back to the fold and to the Father's house.

Again, there is the voice of friendship, as God speaks to His own redeemed ones, calling them His "well beloved" and holding rare converse in heavenly things, until they realize their oneness with Him through Jesus Christ.

At times, there is the voice of reproof. When there has been coldness and carelessness on the part of those who should have followed close and obeyed without questioning, He speaks partly in anger, but mostly with a great pity, so that they may return to their allegiance.

There is the call, too,—which is a bugle blast,—the call to service. Hear it: "Follow me into the lowly home, the lonely shack, the far-away camp, the island of the sea, the distant jungle, and, as you follow, speak the word of hope, stoop to pick up the fallen, heal the sick, cheer the faint, and everywhere bring heaven's message to the earth."

At last, as the soul draws on towards the end of the journey, it listens for the great invitation: "Come up hither," and then the approving "Well done."

Quebec, Que.

## PRAYER.

O Lord, Thou dost stoop to lift up the little child; Thou art merciful beyond all our dreams of pity; God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on Him should not perish, but have everlasting life,—astounding love! marvellous beyond all imaginings! We must die to know its meaning; we must read the entirety of its purpose in the cloudless light and everlasting time of heaven. Give us Thy peace, Thou peaceful One; make us quiet with the rest of God; drive away all torments, anxieties, and fears, that would trouble the depth of our tranquility. Hold Thou Thy Cross before our eyes in the night-time, and let it be a light above the brightness of the sun at noonday, and all the while may our hearts gaze upon it, and beholding its meaning, our life shall take comfort and be young again, and strong with eternal energy. Let us enter into the meaning of Thy peace; it is a peace which passeth understanding; no words can follow it with adequate expressiveness; it is the mystery of the universe. May we enter into it by the wide open door of Christ's priesthood and Christ's atonement. Amen.

Conviction, were it never so excellent, worthless till it convert itself into conduct.—Carlyle.

\*S.S. Lesson, January 30.—Some Laws of the Kingdom. Golden Text.—Matthew v. 48. "Ye therefore shall be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect." Matthew v. 17-26, 38-48.