

THE LAW OF THE TEN WORDS

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The law of the ten words by J. Oswald Dykes

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J. OSWALD DYKES

**THE LAW OF
THE TEN WORDS**

THE
LAW OF THE TEN WORDS.

BY

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the Kingdom," &c.*

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CHARACTERISTICS OF THE
DECALOGUE.

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“ These words the Lord spake unto all your assembly in the mount out of the midst of the fire, of the cloud, and of the thick darkness, with a great voice: and He added no more. And He wrote them in two tables of stone, and delivered them unto me.”
—DEUT. v. 22.

“ Ye are not come unto the mount that might be touched, and that burned with fire, nor unto blackness, and darkness, and tempest, and the sound of a trumpet, and the voice of words; which voice they that heard entreated that the word should not be spoken to them any more: for they could not endure that which was commanded: ‘ And if so much as a beast touch the mountain, it shall be stoned, or thrust through with a dart:’ and so terrible was the sight, that Moses said, ‘ I exceedingly fear and quake.’ ”
—HEB. xii. 18-21.

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE
DECALOGUE.

THE Law of the Ten Words constitutes the very heart or kernel of the entire Mosaic system. Upon it as on a basis reposed the sacred covenant of the Hebrew nation with Jehovah its God. The two tablets of stone were preserved in the ark as the palladium of Israel's national independence. Around this brief code, as a nucleus, there gathered by successive accretions the ritual and the jurisprudence of Israel. It was the Law which lent to Mosaism its peculiar character as a temporary interlude in the history of revelation. If the ethical principles involved in this summary of duty were not the most valuable or original contribution made by Mosaism to the permanent religion of mankind, at least it may be said that, of all the portions of that system, the Decalogue is the one which has suffered the least through lapse of time. It passed almost unaltered into the New Testament Church. While nearly everything else in Judaism is grown obsolete, the code of ten commandments still keeps its place in the theology, the

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catechisms, and the ritual, of the Christian world.

It is obvious that a portion of ancient revelation so stable and fundamental as this deserves to be very carefully studied. It retains for us a practical utility. My design in the chapters which follow is not merely to discuss the Decalogue as it was originally imposed on a newborn nation of emancipated slaves in the desert of Sinai, or as originally understood by them. Starting from its adaptation and utility to the Hebrews in the first instance, I wish to enquire what religious and moral principles underlie its clauses, to discover what light has been shed on these from later, especially from New Testament, revelation, and under that light to make some application of the ancient law to our modern life. The undertaking is a difficult one; and I cannot hope to carry it out as it ought to be done. But even the most imperfect or superficial examination of the Divine Commandments can scarcely fail to yield us many a humbling and salutary lesson in practical godliness.

In the present chapter I propose, by way of preface, to invite attention to certain general characteristics of the Decalogue Code as a whole, which may prepare us for approaching its Ten Words from a right point of view and in a becoming spirit.