

The Natural Law.

Before speaking of the Ten Commandments which constitute the law of God, we shall say a few words in reference to law in general.

Law is the basis or the principle of the order which reigns, or which should reign, in the world, as well in the physical as in the moral world. If there is order in the physical world, in the course of the stars, in the succession of the seasons, it is because the physical world is obedient to its laws. If, on the contrary, there is frequently disorder in the moral world, in the hearts of men, in human society, it is because its laws are violated. If these laws were faithfully observed, the disorders would disappear, there would be perfect harmony.

The moral law of which we are speaking may be defined : An obligatory rule, general, just, and permanent, decreed in the interest of a community by him who has right to govern it.

There are two kinds of law, the divine law and the human law: the first emanates directly from God; the second, from human superiors invested with authority by God.

The divine law is natural or positive according as God promulgates it to us by the voice of nature or by an exterior voice by revelation. There is only one natural law, but there are two divine positive laws; namely, the Mosaic law and the Evangelical law.

By the natural law we mean the moral order which man must observe to accomplish his natural destiny, and which consists of all his obligations as a reasonable and social being towards God, towards himself and his fellow-man. The natural law is communicated to man at his birth; the Creator has engraven it on his reasonable nature.

The natural law admits of no dispensation, no change; founded on human nature, it is as invariable as that nature, and as the first principle from which all its sentiments proceed: Honor God, and do to another what you would wish to have done to yourself. Because invariable, it does not therefore follow that the natural law is not susceptible of perfection; for it has been, as a matter of fact, perfected by the divine positive laws, which are also called the written laws the laws of Moses and the law of the Gospel promulgated by Jesus Christ.

The law, being the principle of order, is also the source of happiness and peace; whilst our passions, which are opposed to the law, are the fountain of disorder and of every misery. Should we not, then, my brethren, resist our passions to obey the law and to follow constantly the rule of our duties?