

a sermon from DEUTERONOMY 6:5 & LEVITICUS 19:18:

וְאַהֲבַת אֱת יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ בְּכָל-לִבְבְּךָ וּבְכָל-נַפְשְׁךָ וּבְכָל-מְאֹדֶךָ:
לֹא-תִקֶּם וְלֹא-תִטּוֹר אֶת-בְּנֵי עַמֶּךָ וְאַהֲבַת לְרֵעֶךָ כְּמוֹךָ אֲנִי יְהוָה:

ON THE LOVE OF GOD AND NEIGHBOUR

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I. OPENING PRAYER

O Eternal Love Incarnate, “I fly to Thee... my Saviour [JESUS CHRIST], for Thou art for my refuge, my only hope. Thou art The Remedy for all my miseries, my consolation in all my wretchedness, the reparation for all my infidelities, the supplement for all my deficiencies, the expiation for all my sins, and the hope and end of all my prayers.”

O Fathomless Divine Mercy, “Thou art the only One Who is never weary of me and Who can bear with my faults, because Thou lovest me with an infinite love. Therefore, O my GOD, have mercy on me according to Thy great Mercy, and do with me, and for me, and in me, whatever Thou wilt. For I give myself whatever Thou wilt, for I give myself entirely to Thee... with full confidence that Thou wilt never reject me. Amen.”¹

II. A SCRIPTURE TEXT - DEUTERONOMY 6:5 & LEVITICUS 19:18:^{2 3}

וְאַהֲבֵתָ אֶת יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ בְּכָל-לִבְבְּךָ וּבְכָל-נַפְשֶׁךָ וּבְכָל-מְאֹדֶךָ:
לְאַתְתָּקָם וּלְאַתְתָּר אֶת-בְּנֵי עַמֶּךָ וְאַהֲבֵתָ לְרֵעֶךָ כַּמּוֹד אֲנִי יְהוָה:

5 And thou shalt love The LORD thy GOD with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might.

18 Thou shalt not avenge, nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people, but thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself: I am The LORD.

III. A PROPOSITION

Our Lord JESUS CHRIST having come, not to destroy The Law of Moses, but to fulfill it, declares that we all are called to love The LORD our GOD with all our heart, soul and might - and to love our neighbour as ourselves - for this is the sum of all The Divine Law and all the Prophets, both Old and New!

IV. INTRODUCTION

Saint Matthew declares a scene for in MATTHEW 22:34-36 in which a Pharisee and lawyer of The Law of Moses comes before JESUS CHRIST, asking Him a question on The Torah in order tempt The Lord into error. So he demands, “Master, which is The Great Commandment in The Law?”⁴ And what does The King of the universe Incarnate answer? He goes to the core of The very Law Which He Himself revealed and commanded through Moses to Israel, The very Law by which the Pharisees outwardly strove so diligently to live their lives before men, but apparently inwardly often neglected before GOD.

So CHRIST declares back in MATTHEW 22:37-40, “...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

¹ 1, Catholic Devotional, adapted from “Prayer to The Sacred Heart of JESUS,” p 24.

² 2, BHS, DEUTERONOMY 6:5 & LEVITICUS 19:18

³ 3, KJV, DEUTERONOMY 6:5 & LEVITICUS 19:18

⁴ 3, KJV, MATTHEW 22:34-36.

These Two Commandments hang all The Law and the prophets.”⁵ If we first love The Almighty with all of our being – heart, mind and soul in all our thoughts, words and deeds – we can then not help but love our fellow man who, like us, is created in The Image of GOD Himself. And indeed, as Saint John declares in I JOHN:8, it can not be otherwise, “...for GOD is [Perfect] Love!”⁶

And this is a lesson from The Saviour so very much needed in this cruel and fallen world, both then and now. For by the time of The First Coming of The Messiah JESUS, The Chosen People – or at least the blind religious leaders of the Jewish nation - had to a great degree as CHRIST declares of them in MATTHEW 23:24, who “...strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel.”⁷ And indeed, there are many blind religious leaders of The Church today who suffer from the same malady. That disease, while keeping strict observance of outward religious rituals and forms, if the renewal and rebirth of the sin-laden souls of men away from the darkness of iniquity be ignored, produces people of faith who appear outwardly clean before men, but remain inwardly dead before The LORD!

So many Jews, encumbered by their ignorance of The Fact that JESUS CHRIST is The Messiah, are surprised to find The Lord in The blessed Gospels here pointing men back to the very core of The Law of Moses. And many Christians, likewise encumbered by their ignorance of The Fact that The New Covenant of Christianity is built as the fulfillment of The Old Covenant of Judaism, stand in wonder that The Lord here points us back directly to the very core of The Law of Moses with such penetrating insight.

But here we all are in danger of forgetting two things. First, that JESUS knows The Law, The Writings and The Prophets – that is, The Old Testament – so flawlessly because He, being eternally pre-existent with GOD The Father, is The One Who revealed and commanded The Word of GOD – His Word – to men. As CHRIST declares in JOHN 8:58 of Himself, “...Before Abraham was, I AM.”⁸ Second, as CHRIST declares in MATTHEW 5:17, “Think not that I am come to destroy The Law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil.”⁹

So here is the glorious connection between what CHRIST declares in MATTHEW 22:36-40 as The Two Great Commandments, the very heart of The Law of GOD – His Law – that we are to “...love The Lord thy GOD with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind... [and] love thy neighbour as thyself...”¹⁰ The Messiah JESUS repeats what He, by the inspiration of The HOLY SPIRIT, had inspired His servant Moses to declare for us in The Holy Torah. From DEUTERONOMY 6:5, “And thou shalt love The LORD thy GOD with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might.”¹¹ Take the total love of The Almighty from within a man, and all his good works become, as JESUS says of the hypocritical scribes and

⁵ 3, KJV, MATTHEW 22:37-40.

⁶ 3, KJV, I JOHN 4:8.

⁷ 3, KJV, MATTHEW 23:24.

⁸ 3, KJV, JOHN 8:58.

⁹ 3, KJV, MATTHEW 5:17.

¹⁰ 3, KJV, MATTHEW 22:37-40.

¹¹ 3, KJV, DEUTERONOMY 6:5.

Pharisees of His Day in MATTHEW 23:27, mere “...whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men’s bones, and of all uncleanness.”¹²

And from LEVITICUS 19:18, “Thou shalt not avenge, nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people, but thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself: I am The LORD.”¹³ Take away the love of one’s neighbour from within a man, and all his faith becomes mere dead vanity, intellectual ascent devoid of new life in The LORD, empty of any fruit of The Spirit of GOD working within him. As Saint James declares in JAMES 2:26, “For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.”¹⁴

V. DEUTERONOMY 6:5 – YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD

First to The Hebrew Text of DEUTERONOMY 6:5:¹⁵

וְאַהַבְתָּ אֶת יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ בְּכָל-לְבָבְךָ וּבְכָל-נַפְשְׁךָ וּבְכָל-מְאֹדְךָ:

I offer this transliteration: VE’AHAVTA ‘ET [‘ADONAY]¹⁶ ‘ELOHEYCHA BECHAL-LEBABCHA UVECHAL-NAFESHCHA UVECHAL-ME’ODECHA.¹⁷ I offer this wooden translation, “And you love The LORD The GOD of you with all the heart of you, and with all the soul of you, and with all the force of you.” Or in The Young’s Literal Translation, “and thou hast loved Jehovah thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might.”¹⁸

The word here in DEUTERONOMY 6:5 for “love” is אָהַב ‘AHEV, meaning “affection both pure & impure, Divine & human.” It is the opposite of the verb “to hate” – שָׂנֵא – SANE’. There are at least 5 sense of this verb: It may be the love of men towards others, as that between a husband and wife; a parents and their children; between intimate friends; of romantic love between lovers, even carnal desire; as between a slave and a master, inferior to superior; love towards one’s neighbour, even towards a stranger. It may be love of men towards things, both objects and abstractions: of food, drink, wisdom, knowledge, righteousness. It may be the love of men towards GOD. It may be Divine Love of GOD towards men: to individuals; to GOD’s people; to Jerusalem: towards righteousness.¹⁹

Here we speak of man’s love commanded first above all else towards The Creator. And well all men should love GOD first above all else! The faithful Church, with faithful Israel, confesses in the opening of The Nicene Creed confesses, “We believe in one GOD, The Father,

¹² 3, KJV, MATTHEW 23:27.

¹³ 3, KJV, LEVITICUS 19:18.

¹⁴ 3, KJV, JAMES 2:26.

¹⁵ 2, BHS, DEUTERONOMY 6:5.

¹⁶ It is the practice of faithful Jewish people to not pronounce The Name of The LORD - יְהוָה - “The Tetragrammaton,” out of reverence for Him, but rather in reading The Sacred Scriptures in The Hebrew to substitute - הַשֵּׁם - HASHEM, which means simply “The Name,” or - אֲדֹנָי - ‘ADONAY, which means “The Lord,” a title of JEHOVAH. We shall do so here.

¹⁷ In my transliteration of The Hebrew, I represent the letter א aleph = ‘ and the letter ע ayin = “

¹⁸ 4, YLT, DEUTERONOMY 6:5.

¹⁹ 5, WTM Morphology + Whitakker’s Revised BDB Lexicon, B168 ‘AHEV - אָהַב – verb, “love,” page 12. Given here in DEUTERONOMY 6:5 in the Qal perfect 2nd person masculine singular form.

The Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, of all that is, seen and unseen.”²⁰ For GOD’s love for us is greater than anything we can imagine! Moses beheld this with his own eyes on Mount Sinai, as he records in EXODUS 34:5-6, “And The LORD descended in the cloud, and stood with him there, and proclaimed The Name of The LORD. ...The LORD GOD, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth.”²¹ David sings this out in PSALM 145:8-9, “The LORD is gracious, and full of compassion; slow to anger, and of great mercy. The LORD is good to all: and his tender mercies are over all His works.”²²

As The Catechism of The Catholic Church observes of GOD’s Love for man, “He not only gives them being and existence, but also, at every moment, upholds and sustains them in being, enables them to their final end.”²³ And what is man’s final end, but as The Westminster Shorter Catechism states, but “...to glorify GOD and to enjoy Him forever?”²⁴ Saint Augustine confesses the goodness of The Creator and The Divine Love that brings into being and sustains us by His hand from moment to moment, “For You [O Lord] love all things that exist, and detest none of the things that You have made; for You would not have made anything if You had hated it. How would anything have endured, if You had not willed it? Or how would anything not called forth by You have been preserved? You spare all things, for they are Yours, O Lord, You Who love the living!”²⁵ Is it not for The Almighty’s fathomless Perfect Love for us, that we should love Him in return?

VI. DEUTERONOMY 6:4 – THE LORD OUR GOD IS THE ONLY LORD

The Command to love GOD in DEUTERONOMY 6:5 is preceded by the first foundation of Judaism – and Christianity – that The LORD is GOD alone, The only Almighty Creator, and none else. Here is man’s first reason to love GOD first and above all else, because GOD is Who He is – our loving Creator – proclaimed in DEUTERONOMY 6:4, “Hear, O Israel: The LORD our GOD is one LORD!”²⁶ JEHOVAH alone being GOD being The Almighty Creator, it follows that – as DEUTERONOMY 6:5 declares – all men have a duty to love Him with all their heart, soul and might. Verse 4 is called “The Shema” after The first Word, the verb “to hear.” Here Moses, by the hand of The Spirit of The LORD, rephrases The First Commandment of EXODUS 20:2-3, “I am The LORD thy GOD, Which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. Thou shalt have no other gods before Me.”²⁷

²⁰ 6, Catechism of The Catholic Church, The Nicene Creed, paragraph 1, p 56.

²¹ 3, KJV, EXODUS 34:4-5.

²² 3, KJV, PSALM 145:8-9.

²³ 6, Catechism of The Catholic Church, # 301, p 89. “GOD upholds and sustains creation.”

²⁴ 7, WSC 1. “What is the chief end of man?”

²⁵ 6, Catechism of The Catholic Church, # 301, p 89. “GOD upholds and sustains creation.”

²⁶ 3, KJV, DEUTERONOMY 6:4.

²⁷ 3, KJV, EXODUS 20:2-3.

So to The Hebrew Text of DEUTERONOMY 6:4:²⁸

שְׁמַע יִשְׂרָאֵל יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ יְהוָה אֶחָד:

I offer this transliteration, “SHEMA” YISRA’EL [‘ADONAY]²⁹ ‘ELOHEYNU [‘ADONAY]³⁰ ‘ECHAD.³¹ And this wooden translation, “You hear, Israel, The LORD The GOD of us, The LORD, [is] one.” From The Young’s Literal Translation, “Hear, O Israel, JEHOVAH our GOD is one JEHOVAH.”³² As Keil and Delitzsch state, “what is predicated here of JEHOVAH (JEHOVAH one) does not relate to the unity of GOD, but simply states that it is to Him alone that The Name of JEHOVAH rightfully belongs, that He is The one absolute GOD, to Whom and no other... [gods] can be compared.”³³ The Jerome Bible Commentary concurs, that The Shema is “The call to hear... The Command to love YAHWEY alone...” The Shema is then not so much a call to monotheism, though it is that, but first a call “...of exclusive devotion to YAHWEY.”³⁴

The Shema then restates the foundation of The First Table of The Ten Commandments,³⁵ where Moses declares man’s duties to GOD, and from which all The other Commandments follow: “You shall have no other gods before Me. You shall not make unto you any graven images. You shall not take The Name of The LORD your GOD in vain. You shall remember The Sabbath and keep it holy.”³⁶ And we the redeemed in CHRIST – with all the Apostles and the saints, know this – that we are called to love GOD because He first loved us! He made us. He created the universe for us. He sustains us from moment to moment. He blesses us with all good things.

And when, we being alienated from His holy Presence because of our sin, He redeems us back to Himself with His very Body and Blood given up for us! For there is no greater example of GOD’s Love for us as may be found at The blessed Cross of our Lord JESUS CHRIST, which calls us to return our love first and above all else to GOD. As Saint John declares in JOHN 3:16, “For GOD so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in

²⁸ 2, BHS, DEUTERONOMY 6:4.

²⁹ It is the practice of faithful Jewish people to not pronounce The Name of The LORD - יְהוָה - “The Tetragrammaton,” out of reverence for Him, but rather in reading The Sacred Scriptures in The Hebrew to substitute - הַשֵּׁם - HASHEM, which means simply “The Name,” or - אֲדֹנָי - ‘ADONAY, which means “The Lord,” a title of JEHOVAH. We shall do so here.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ In my transliteration of The Hebrew, I represent the letter א aleph = ‘ and the letter ע ayin = “

³² 4, YLT, DEUTERONOMY 6:4.

³³ 8, Keil and Delitzsch, “Commentary on The Old Testament, Volume 1, The Pentateuch.” The fifth Book of Moses, Chap VI, Verse 4, p 323.

³⁴ 9, New Jerome Bible Commentary, DEUTERONOMY 6:4-6, p 99. “22. (D) A Law for Life in The Land.”

³⁵ The Jewish, Catholic and Protestant versions of The Ten Commandments differ slightly in organization. I employ here the Protestant version.

³⁶ 10, Parsons, “A Brief Overview of The Ten Commandments,” a table comparing the Jewish, Catholic and Protestant versions, Protestant version. Table One of The Ten Commandments declare man’s duty to GOD, and are derived from EXODUS 20:1-11.

Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”³⁷ The verb used in The Hebrew New Testament in JOHN 3:16 is the same verb “to love” – אָהֵב – ‘AHEV which we encounter in DEUTERONOMY 6:5, reflecting the understanding that we are to love GOD with all that we are because of Who He is and because of His love for us.³⁸

VII. LEVITICUS 19:18 – LOVE THY NEIGHBOUR AS THYSELF

Second to The Hebrew Text of LEVITICUS 19:18:³⁹

לֹא־תִקֶּם וְלֹא־תִטֹּר אֶת־בְּנֵי עַמֶּךָ וְאֶהְבֵּתָ לְרֵעֶךָ כַּמֹּךָ אֲנִי יְהוָה:

I offer this transliteration: LO’-TIQQOM VELO’-TITTOR ‘ET-BENEY “AMMECHA VE’AHAVCHA LERE”ECHA KAOCHA ‘ANIY [‘ADONAY].^{40 41} I offer this wooden translation, “Not you will at any time, now or ever, avenge yourself. And not you will at any time, now or ever, keep wrath [towards] sons of the people of you. And you love towards the friend of you like the equal of you. I [am] The LORD.” From The Young’s Literal Translation, “Thou dost not take vengeance, nor watch [with a grudge] the sons of thy people; and thou hast had love to thy neighbour as thyself; I am JEHOVAH.”⁴²

Let us first note here that we find the same verb, “to love” – אָהֵב – ‘AHEV in The Command to love our neighbour as we first encountered in The Command to love GOD in DEUTERONOMY 6:5.⁴³ Let us turn our attention now to the word for “neighbour” – רֵעַ – REA” – a friend, even a close friend such as a lover or spouse; a companion, especially within a reciprocal, giving and receiving relationship; one’s fellow, especially one’s fellow citizen, that is countryman.⁴⁴ The object of the love commanded is לְרֵעֶךָ LERE”CHA, meaning “towards the fellow of you.” How shall “you love towards the fellow of you?” The next word כַּמֹּךָ KAMOCHA explains how, “as the like of you,” as your equal.⁴⁵

³⁷ 3, KJV, JOHN 3:16.

³⁸ 11, HNT, JOHN 3:16.

³⁹ 2, BHS, LEVITICUS 19:18.

⁴⁰ It is the practice of faithful Jewish people to not pronounce The Name of The LORD - יְהוָה - “The Tetragrammaton,” out of reverence for Him, but rather in reading The Sacred Scriptures in The Hebrew to substitute - הַשֵּׁם - HASHEM, which means simply “The Name,” or - אֲדֹנָי - ‘ADONAY, which means “The Lord,” a title of JEHOVAH. We shall do so here.

⁴¹ In my transliteration of The Hebrew, I represent the letter א aleph = ‘ and the letter ע ayin = “

⁴² 4, YLT, LEVITICUS 19:18.

⁴³ 5, WTM Morphology + Whitakker’s Revised BDB Lexicon, B168 ‘AHEV – אָהֵב – verb, “love,” page 12. Given here in LEVITICUS 19:18 in the Qal perfect 2nd person masculine singular form, the same form as given in DEUTERONOMY 6:5.

⁴⁴ 5, WTM Morphology + Whitakker’s Revised BDB Lexicon, B9466 רֵעַ [רֵיעַ] – REA” [REYA”], noun masculine, friend, companion, fellow, p 945.

⁴⁵ 5, WTM Morphology + Whitakker’s Revised BDB Lexicon, B4349 כַּמֹּךָ adverb + conjunction, meaning “like; as when; literally the like of...,” p 455. Here the Hebrew suffix for you is added, rendering the word “as the like of yourself.”

VIII. LEVITICUS 19:2 – BE HOLY AS I AM HOLY

Now it is noteworthy that LEITICUS 19:1-2 opens with the purpose of this chapter, to guide GOD’s people into living out the love of GOD from their hearts into a lively faith which produces the harvest of good works, “And The LORD spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto all the congregation of the children of Israel, and say unto them, Ye shall be holy: for I The LORD your GOD am holy.”⁴⁶ Therefore, embedded within the middle of LEVITICUS 19 is this Second Great Commandment, that we should love our neighbour as ourselves. Here Moses declares how the saints of The LORD are to live out The Second Table of The Ten Commandments,⁴⁷ man’s duty before GOD to his fellow man: “Honor your father and mother. You shall not murder. You shall not commit adultery. You shall not steal. You shall not bear false witness. You shall not covet anything that belongs to your neighbor.”⁴⁸

So to The Hebrew Text of LEVITICUS 19:2:⁴⁹

דַּבֵּר אֶל-כָּל-עֵדֻת בְּנֵי-יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאָמַרְתָּ אֲלֵהֶם
קְדוֹשִׁים תְּהִיּוּ כִי קָדוֹשׁ אֲנִי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם:

I offer this transliteration: DABAR ‘ET-KAL-‘ADAT BENEY-YISRA’EL VE’AMARCHA ‘ALEHEM QEDOSHIM KIY QADOSH ‘ANIY [‘ADONAY]⁵⁰ ‘ELOHIYCHEM.⁵¹ And this wooden translation, “You indeed speak [to] all the congregation [of] the sons of Israel. And you say to them, holy and sanctified you all be, both now and forever, because holy and sanctified [am] I The LORD!” Or in The Young’s Literal Translation, “Speak unto all the company of the sons of Israel, and thou hast said unto them, Ye are holy, for holy am I, JEHOVAH, your GOD”⁵²

Here The LORD calls us His covenant people to be קָדוֹשׁ QADOSH, that is holy, because He Himself is קָדוֹשׁ QADOSH, and He has made us in His Image. Therefore, to be complete, we ourselves must be in communion with The Creator, that He might mold us and remake us into His Likeness. This requires the removal of our sin, the only sacrifice available being The Blood of The Lamb of GOD, JESUS CHRIST, to atone for the sin-guilt over our souls before His Throne. This means that we must be separate and set apart in all that we think, say and do from sin, that we might dwell in His Presence now and forever. The impurities within is that offends the righteous being of The Almighty, our iniquity, must be washed away in the regeneration of our souls from within by The HOLY SPIRIT, that

⁴⁶ 3, KJV, LEVITICUS 19:1-2.

⁴⁷ The Jewish, Catholic and Protestant versions of The Ten Commandments differ slightly in organization. I employ here the Protestant version.

⁴⁸ 10, Parsons, “A Brief Overview of The Ten Commandments,” a table comparing the Jewish, Catholic and Protestant versions, Protestant version. Table Two of The Ten Commandments declare man’s duty to his fellow man, and are derived from EXODUS 20:12-17.

⁴⁹ 2, BHS, LEVITICUS 19:2.

⁵⁰ It is the practice of faithful Jewish people to not pronounce The Name of The LORD - יְהוָה - “The Tetragrammaton,” out of reverence for Him, but rather in reading The Sacred Scriptures in The Hebrew to substitute - הַשֵּׁם - HASHEM, which means simply “The Name,” or - אֲדֹנָי - ‘ADONAY, which means “The Lord,” a title of JEHOVAH. We shall do so here.

⁵¹ In my transliterate`on of The Hebrew, I represent the letter א aleph = ‘ and the letter ע ayin = “

⁵² 4, YLT, LEVITICUS 19:2.

we might be made acceptable vessels of The LORD.⁵³ For only then may we begin to learn to love The Creator and our fellow man as He Himself loves us!

If we are called to be holy as The Almighty is holy, and that may be summed up as loving Him first with all our heart, soul and might, and to love our neighbours as ourselves, how can we attain this? How can we love even our enemies, those that persecute and hate us? By GOD's Grace, to love others, we must first be reconciled to He Who created us by The Saviour at The Cross Who alone takes away our sins. As Saint John says in I JOHN 3:4-6, "Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also The Law: for sin is the transgression of The Law. And ye know that He [our Saviour JESUS CHRIST] was manifested to take away our sins; and in Him is no sin. Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not..."⁵⁴

To he who repents of his sin at The Cross, The mercy of The LORD is always extended by His loving hand. Pope John Paul II says of The Lord's loving forgiveness towards the repentant sinner, "[Divine] Mercy in itself, as a perfection of The infinite GOD, is also infinite. Also infinite therefore and inexhaustible is The Father's readiness to receive the prodigal children who return to His Home. Infinite are the readiness and power of forgiveness which flow continually from the marvelous value of The Sacrifice of The Son..." JESUS CHRIST on The Cross for us!⁵⁵

So David proclaims in PSALM 103:8-13, "The LORD is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy... He hath not dealt with us after our sins; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities. For as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is His mercy toward them that fear Him. As far as the east is from the west, so far hath He removed our transgressions from us. Like as a father pitieth his children, so The LORD pitieth them that fear Him."⁵⁶

IX. DEUTERONOMY 6:8-9 – BEHOLD OUR PHYLACTERIES AND MEZUZAHs!

We must now ask ourselves this question: Do we obey The Word of The LORD for love of GOD or praise of men? Moses declares for us in DEUTERONOMY 6:3-5 The First Great Commandment of CHRIST, "Hear therefore, O Israel, and observe to do it; that it may be well with thee, and that ye may increase mightily, as The LORD GOD of thy fathers hath promised thee, in the land that floweth with milk and honey. Hear, O Israel: The LORD our GOD is one LORD: And thou shalt love The LORD thy GOD with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might."⁵⁷

⁵³ 5, WTM Morphology + Whitaker's Revised BDB Lexicon, B8709 קָדוֹשׁ – QADOSH – adjective, "sacred; holy," p 872.

⁵⁴ 3, KJV, I JOHN 3:4-6.

⁵⁵ 12, The Wisdom of John Paul II, p 41, quote 1. "Encyclical: Mercy of GOD (Dives in Misericordia), 1980."

⁵⁶ 3, KJV, PSALM 103:8-13.

⁵⁷ 3, KJV, DEUTERONOMY 3:3-6.

Moses continues in DEUTERONOMY 6:6-9, “And These Words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: And thou shalt teach Them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of Them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. And thou shalt bind Them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes. And thou shalt write Them upon the posts of thy house, and on thy gates.”⁵⁸

Here we have one of many practical prescriptions declared in The Torah of how the covenant people of The Almighty are to live out the love of GOD first in all that they think, do and are. If we, the saved of The LORD, are to keep “The Shema” – The LORD our GOD is The One True GOD – He requires of us more than just an affirming nod of the head and a passing affirmation of the lips! The New American Bible comments of DEUTERONOMY 6:4, “This passage contains the basic principle of The whole Mosaic Law, the keynote of The Book of DEUTERONOMY. Since The Lord alone is GOD, we must love Him with an undivided heart.”⁵⁹ So if we love GOD first, with all our heart, soul and might, we by necessity then are “embracing in itself The whole Law of GOD. This is why The New American Bible renders this verse, “Hear, O Israel! The LORD is our GOD, The LORD alone!”⁶⁰

For the ancient Israelites, as for faithful Christians, dwelling in The Presence of GOD requires that we obey what He has commanded of us in The Scriptures, and that our obedience is an earnest return of GOD’s Love for us back to Him. As The Jerome Bible Commentary observes, in The LORD’s calling out for Himself of a consecrated people, “Israel... [was to be] a holy people... which expresses its fidelity to The one GOD in The Shema...”⁶¹ And as for ancient Israel, so now for The Church.

GOD forbid then, that we should be cast away from The Presence of The Lord JESUS CHRIST for unfaithfulness and mere externalism devoid of love above all else for He Who saves us by His Blood shed for us on The blessed Cross! Let us not be so haughty to boast that, though ancient Israel was cast into outer darkness from The Creator’s Presence, we The Church shall not be so judged if we so sin! As Saint Peter declares in I PETER 4:17, “For the time is come that judgment must begin at The House of GOD: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not The Gospel of GOD?”⁶²

But man’s fallen sinful nature tends towards self adulation in place of humble piety, lifting up of the self in place of lifting up the Name of The LORD, seeking the praises of men rather than that of GOD. Such is the result when we retain the outward form of religious observation, but loose the inward love of GOD. So it was common among the observant Jews by the time of The First Coming of CHRIST, and still is today, of taking The Text which follows The Shema both figuratively and also literally. Indeed, this is natural, for we are created both physical body and spiritual soul by The Creator. But what if we become so caught up in the

⁵⁸ 3, KJV, DEUTERONOMY 6:6-9.

⁵⁹ 13, NAB, DEUTERONOMY 6:4, commentary note 6, p 167.

⁶⁰ 13, NAB, DEUTERONOMY 6:4, p 167.

⁶¹ 9, New Jerome Bible Commentary, DEUTERONOMY, Introduction, “III. Theology of DEUTERONOMY,” p 95.

⁶² 3, KJV, I PETER 4:17.

outward physical obedience to These Commandments, that we loose sight of the inward spiritual obedience?

So it is common for the more observant and pious Jew to wear “phylacteries” upon his wrists and forehead, small “boxes containing strips of parchment on which The Words [of Scripture] were inscribed,”⁶³ often literally The Words of DEUTERONOMY 6:8, “And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes.”⁶⁴
⁶⁵ So too, many Jews, both observant and nonobservant, still place “mezuzahs” on the doorposts of their homes, which likewise contain Scripture Texts inscribed on paper,⁶⁶ at times literally The Words of DEUTERONOMY 6:9, “And thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house, and on thy gates.”⁶⁷

As long as there is love in the hearts for GOD of those obeying These Words, their observance serves well to keep The Word of The LORD ever before our eyes, warning us away from sin, encouraging us to keep the many idols of the world, the flesh and the devil from the thrones of our hearts, and calling us to repentance and renewal when we violate The Law of GOD. As Keil and Delitzsch observe here, “The maintenance of the fear of GOD... [brings] prosperity, and the increase of the nation promised to the fathers.”⁶⁸

Dwelling in The Presence of The Almighty, and receiving His full covenantal blessings both earthly and eternal has always required the covenantal obedience of His people, under both The Old and The New Covenants. But that obedience must first be a matter of the heart and soul fully committed in love to The LORD first and above all else in the lives of men. If having Texts of The Word of GOD strapped to our foreheads, bound upon our wrists and fixed upon the doorposts of our homes is born from the soul that seeks The LORD – and with the desire to encourage faithful obedience in ourselves and in others – then well and good! But The Word of GOD must first be inscribed upon our hearts!

X. BUT LORD, WHO IS MY NEIGHBOUR?

Here Moses declares for us The Second Great Commandment of CHRIST in LEVITICUS 19:17-18, “Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thine heart: thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbour, and not suffer sin upon him. Thou shalt not avenge, nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people, but thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself: I am The LORD.”⁶⁹ As Keil and Delitzsch note here, it was understood from This Commandment that “they were not to avenge themselves, or bear malice against the sons of their nation (their countrymen), but

⁶³ 13, NAB, DEUTERONOMY 6:8, commentary note 6, p 167.

⁶⁴ 9, New Jerome Bible Commentary, DEUTERONOMY 6:8, p 99. “22. (D) A Law for Life in The Land.”

⁶⁵ 3, KJV, DEUTERONOMY 6:8.

⁶⁶ 9, New Jerome Bible Commentary, DEUTERONOMY 6:9, p 99. “22. (D) A Law for Life in The Land.”

⁶⁷ 3, KJV, DEUTERONOMY 6:9.

⁶⁸ 8, Keil and Delitzsch, “Commentary on The Old Testament, Volume 1, The Pentateuch.” The fifth Book of Moses, Chap VI, Verse 3, p 322.

⁶⁹ 3, KJV, LEVITICUS 19:17-18.

to love their neighbour as themselves” with an other-centered charity of which The Almighty had showed so miraculously to all of them.⁷⁰

But who indeed is our “neighbour” to whom The Lord commands our love towards? Is it to include only those like us? Only those with whom we worship? Only those of our own Covenant? Only those of our own people? In LEVITICUS 19:18, as The New American Bible comments, the ancient Israelites under The Law of Moses were commanded to love their “fellow countrymen,” their fellow brethren within The Old Covenant community and nation. Or so they thought. And indeed, do we in The Church today not find it seemingly more a duty before GOD to forgive our brethren in CHRIST more readily than the heathen? But JESUS corrects this misconception, since all men are made in The Image of GOD by His very hand, for He “extends its meaning to embrace all men, even enemies.”⁷¹

Now it is much easier to love those who love us, but more difficult those who do not love us, especially if they are not our immediate neighbour within The Body of CHRIST, but stand outside The Church looking in. It is even more difficult to love those who make themselves our enemies, those who abuse us and even hate us. But this is what GOD calls us to, and enables us by His Spirit to accomplish, when we are His in The Messiah JESUS. Did not our Eternal Redeemer love us while we were yet sinners? As Saint John declares in I JOHN 4:19, is it not true, that “We love Him, because He first loved us?”⁷² Is it not true of our Lord that, as Saint Peter declares in I PETER 2:24, upon “...His Own Self bare our sins in His Own Body on The tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by Whose stripes ye were healed?”⁷³

So The Lord commands us in MATTHEW 5:43-48, “Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; That ye may be the children of your Father Which is in Heaven: for He maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same? And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? do not even the publicans so? Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father Which is in Heaven is perfect.”⁷⁴

Indeed, even the heathens and the tax collectors, the pagans and the cold-hearted criminal, may be observed to treat others of their own ranks when it suits their own selfish purposes. But CHRIST repeats and then expands Moses here, calling us to love our neighbour, even if he makes himself our enemy. So the Jerome Bible Commentary observes, “Precluded is a spirit of enmity, revenge and grudge-bearing and required that fraternal correction be made when necessary.” Love of one’s neighbour forbids that we set ourselves up as judge over the

⁷⁰ 8, Keil and Delitzsch, “Commentary on The Old Testament, Volume 1, The Pentateuch.” The Third Book of Moses, Chap XIX, Verse 18, p 421.

⁷¹ 13, New American Bible, LEVITICUS 19:18, commentary note 19, p 112.

⁷² 3, KJV, I JOHN 4:19.

⁷³ 3, KJV, I PETER 2:24.

⁷⁴ 3, KJV, MATTHEW 5:43-48.

souls of others, for that is The Almighty's place alone, but that we not remain silent when we see others destroying themselves and those around them with sin. Moses then reveals to us that "...self-love as the measure of charity towards a fellow countryman."⁷⁵ CHRIST commands from us no less, and even much more!

JESUS calls us to see all men as our fellow countrymen, and that we walk with them in fellowship and in calling them to repentance, as we ourselves would wish to be treated and ministered to. So we have from our Lord "The Golden Rule" from MATTHEW 7:12, "Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is The Law and the prophets."⁷⁶ And when we love our neighbour, which flows of itself from our hearts if we love GOD fully and firstly, we are indeed blessed. What does our Lord declare in MATTHEW 5:10-12 at the conclusion of The Beatitudes? "Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is The Kingdom of Heaven. Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for My Sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you."⁷⁷

XI. MATTHEW 22:36-40 – THE SUM OF ALL THE LAW AND THE PROPHETS

Now we may return to CHRIST's declaration of The Two Great Commandments in MATTHEW 22:36-40, that we are to "...love The Lord thy GOD with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind... [And] Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." Life out these two Great Commandments, says our blessed Saviour, and we shall be brought to the place, by GOD's Grace, where we shall live out the earnest keeping of "...all The Law and the prophets!"⁷⁸ Rabbis have said, "The world hangs on Torah, Temple service and deeds of loving-kindness – or, on truth, judgment and peace."⁷⁹ But here The Eternal Lawgiver, Who took on flesh to come Incarnate for man because of His boundless love for us, "...makes The Law itself depend on deeds of love!"⁸⁰

Saint Andrew of Crete connects for us CHRIST's Two Great Commandments, to which He calls all men to keep, with The Grace of GOD we require to do so: "The fulfillment of The Law is CHRIST Himself, Who does not so much lead us away from the letter as lift us up to its Spirit! For The Law's consummation was this, that The very Lawgiver accomplished His work and changed letter into Spirit, summing everything up in Himself and, though subject to The Law, living by Grace. He subordinated The Law, yet harmoniously united Grace with it..." so

⁷⁵ 9, New Jerome Bible Commentary, LEVITUCS 19:17-18, p 73. "38. (C) Various Rules of Conduct (19:1-37)."

⁷⁶ 3, KJV, MATTHEW 7:12.

⁷⁷ 3, KJV, MATTHEW 5:10-12.

⁷⁸ 3, KJV, MATTHEW 22:36-40.

⁷⁹ 9, New Jerome Bible Commentary, MATTHEW 22:40, p 666. "(m.' Abot 1:2,18)"

⁸⁰ 9, New Jerome Bible Commentary, MATTHEW 22:40, p 666. "133. (Q) The Great Commandment (22:34-40)."

that, as adopted sons and daughters of The Most High, we come to know Him face to face by His great love for us! ⁸¹ Can we then not help but return love to first Him and then second to others?

How then does steadfast love of GOD and neighbour fulfill The Law and the prophets? This we are offered by living in The Divine Love Incarnate, JESUS CHRIST. By His Grace, our love for The LORD and for others, as The Jerome Bible Commentary says, are no longer feigned in mere "...feeling, but [in] covenant fidelity, [yielding in us] a matter of willing and doing 'with all your heart... soul... mind!'" ⁸² From a humble and upright love of GOD flows the first inward and then outward keeping of all The other Laws of The LORD! So the pious man who loves The King of the universe first with an undivided heart and will, soul and life, strength and wealth, shall by consequence come to the living and active love of his fellow man – both his brethren within The Church on earth – and those outside The Church. If GOD Incarnate loves us so much that He suffered and died in our place to redeem our lives and souls back to Himself on The blessed Cross, shall we not lay down what He has given us in love for others?

For this reason David cries out in PSALM 145:17-20, "The LORD is righteous in all His ways, and holy in all His works. The LORD is nigh unto all them that call upon Him, to all that call upon Him in truth. He will fulfil the desire of them that fear Him: He also will hear their cry, and will save them. The LORD preserveth all them that love Him: but all the wicked will he destroy." ⁸³ And for this reason Saint John declares in I JOHN 3:16-18, "Hereby perceive we the love of GOD, because He [JESUS CHRIST] laid down His life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of GOD in him? My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth." ⁸⁴

XII. LUKE 10:25-26 – MERE INTELLECTUAL ASCENT IS NOT ENOUGH

We shall finish with a consideration of what the love of GOD and neighbour looks like in the Christian life, observing that mere knowledge of and intellectual ascent to GOD's Word is not enough. The Almighty requires more from us than merely this! Let us look to the shining example in The Gospels of the parable of "The Good Samaritan." But first to the context of the parable. Saint Luke records for us in LUKE 10:25-26 an exchange between a certain lawyer of The Law of Moses who, desiring to tempt JESUS into public error, stands to ask of The Lord, "...Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?"

Now one thing for certain of lawyers, is that they never ask a public question without first knowing the answer to their own inquiry. But CHRIST knew his heart, though the man apparently did not, and replies to him, "...What is written in The Law [of Moses]? how readest thou?" ⁸⁵ As The Wycliffe Bible Commentary observes, this lawyer of The Word of GOD

⁸¹ 14, Liturgy of The Hours, Volume IV, Second Reading, p 1370, paragraph 1. "From a discourse by Saint Andrew of Crete, bishop. (Oratio 1: PG 97, 806-810.)"

⁸² 9, New Jerome Bible Commentary, MATTHEW 22:37-38, p 666. "133. (Q) The Great Commandment (22:34-40)."

⁸³ 3, KJV, PSALM 145:17-20.

⁸⁴ 3, KJV, I JOHN 3:16-18.

⁸⁵ 3, KJV, LUKE 10:25-26.

“...could have found the answer to his query in The Scriptures, had he really searched Them,” but this man’s purpose in questioning JESUS was not so much for the sake of righteousness as for the sake of his own pride.⁸⁶

Now this man who desired to show himself righteous and knowledgeable of The Law of Moses before men had no idea that he was standing up to tempt, like the devil had tried in the wilderness and failed so miserably, The very Son of GOD, The Creator of the universe Who – because of His love for fallen man – took on human flesh upon Himself in The Person of JESUS CHRIST! So this lawyer of Torah answered as in LUKE 10:27, “...Thou shalt love The Lord thy GOD with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself.”⁸⁷

And what do we see here? We see that The Two Great Commandments which JESUS pronounces as in MATTHEW 22:36-40 was already common knowledge – at least intellectually – as The very core and essence of The Law of GOD among the religious leaders of the Jews in The Day of CHRIST’s First Advent! As The Wycliffe Bible Commentary observes, this man answers CHRIST first from The Jewish Shema, “...or Creed, which was customarily recited in the synagogue worship.” This Creed, as we have seen, requires that we love The LORD our GOD with all our heart, “the inner life, not necessarily only emotions;” with all our soul, our “personality [and] conscious being;” with all our might, our entire “mind... [our] capacity to think.”⁸⁸ From this flows the ability to then love others as and even above ourselves. So CHRIST answers in LUKE 10:28, “...Thou hast answered right: this do, and thou shalt live.”

But this is not the end of the matter, for in the next verse, Saint Luke reveals to us his readers what The Messiah JESUS already knew of this man, that his heart was dark with self love and wanting of the love of GOD and neighbour. So we read, “But he, willing to justify himself, said unto JESUS, And who is my neighbour?”⁸⁹ Like many of us within The Church today, this man knew the right answer, but his faith being dead, his life was lacking in the good works that flow from a soul which is truly born again by water and by The Spirit of The LORD. Therefore, CHRIST proposes to penetrate the shroud of blindness about this man’s heart, as He does ours, with the parable of “The Good Samaritan.” To show him, as Saint James declares in JAMES 2:20, “But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead?”⁹⁰

If we do not come to love GOD first, and our neighbour as ourself, we can never be fulfilled or find our purpose. For we are created by The Almighty, in The Image of The One Who – as Saint John reveals in I JOHN 4:8 – “...is love.” Therefore, we can neither truly love nor obtain peace, either in this life or in eternity, if we are not in communion with GOD. As Pope John Paul says, “Because he is made by GOD and bears within himself an indelible imprint of GOD, man is naturally drawn to GOD. When he heeds the deepest yearning of the heart,

⁸⁶ 15, Wycliffe Bible Commentary, LUKE 10:26, p 1046-1047.

⁸⁷ 3, KJV, LUKE 10:27.

⁸⁸ 15, Wycliffe Bible Commentary, LUKE 10:27, p 1047.

⁸⁹ 3, KJV, LUKE 10:28-29.

⁹⁰ 3, KJV, JAMES 2:20.

every man must make his own The Words of Truth expressed by Saint Augustine, ‘You have made us for Yourself, O LORD, and our hearts are restless until they rest in You!’”⁹¹

XIII. LUKE 10:30-37 – THE PARABLE OF THE GOOD SAMARITAN

Now keep in mind, that the religious Jewish mindset then, and sadly not infrequently the religious Christian mindset today, is that we owe charity, mercy and kindness only to those who are brothers and sisters within covenantal community with ourselves before The Maker. The Samaritans were a remnant of half-Jews who, having remained in The Promised Land after the Assyrian and Babylonian onslaughts against ancient Israel, had intermarried with pagan Gentile peoples over the centuries. They retained a knowledge and worship of The LORD, but yet were seen as “unclean, defiled and unworthy” people by the remnant of Jews and their descendants who had returned from Babylon centuries before.

So to the parable itself, which JESUS begins in LUKE 10:30, “...A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, which stripped him of his raiment, and wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead.”⁹² We are not told if this man is a Jew or a Gentile, if he was righteous before GOD or a hardened sinner, if he walked daily with The LORD in love and humility or if he beat his own chest in pride and arrogance. We know only that he, being created by The Almighty in His Image like all of us, is a man in deep distress, suffering and teetering on the edge of death from the attack of evil men.

Now The Lord paints for us the arrival of 3 men on the scene in LUKE 10:31-33. First came by a certain Priest, a holy man devoted to ministering to GOD’s people The Divine Love of The LORD. But “...when he saw him, he passed by on the other side.”⁹³ Then came a Levite, a holy man devoted to doing the routine maintenance and support needed at The Temple in Jerusalem, so that GOD’s people could there be ministered to by the Priests. But he too, “...when he was at the place, came and looked on him, and passed by on the other side.” Perhaps the man was dead, and at the very least, he was covered with blood. The Priest and Levite, if they were ritually clean, and desiring to avoid the inconveniences associated with becoming ritually unclean, did not risk contact with the man. And who knows, perhaps the man was a Gentile, hardly worthy of their charity! So the holy men of GOD went on their way without helping.

But now comes a third man, not a Jew, but a mere half-breed Samaritan. Yet he was the one who, as we read in LUKE 10:33-35, “...as he journeyed, came where he was: and when he saw him, he had compassion on him, And went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him. And on the morrow when he departed, he took out two pence, and gave them to the host, and said unto him, Take care of him; and whatsoever thou spendest more, when I come again, I will repay thee.”⁹⁴

⁹¹ 16, Pope John Paul II, His Essential Wisdom, p 53, 3rd quote. “Evangelium Vitae, 1995.”

⁹² 3, KJV, LUKE 10:30.

⁹³ 3, KJV, LUKE 10:31-32.

⁹⁴ 3, KJV, LUKE 10:33-35.

Now these Samaritans during The First Advent of CHRIST, as The Wycliffe Bible Commentary explains, "...were scorned by Jews because they were descended [in part] from Gentile ancestry and because their kind of worship was different from that of orthodox Judaism. They worshipped at Mount Gerizim rather than in Jerusalem, and maintained a priesthood of their own."⁹⁵ But what is this? Our Lord's parable has what the Jews viewed as a half-breed inferior Gentile as the righteous one who loves GOD and neighbour, while the very covenantal minister servants of The LORD at The Temple in Jerusalem – the Priest and then the Levite – pass by without caring enough to show even the slightest compassion to the injured and dying man! O, how The Almighty often uses the good works of those outside The Covenant to shame and convict we within The Covenant for our lack of love!

So in LUKE 10:36-37 we find CHRIST confronting this self-righteous religious expert, convicting him with the heart of GOD's Law, The Command to love GOD and neighbour, "Which now of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbour unto him that fell among the thieves? And he said, He that shewed mercy on him. Then said JESUS unto him, Go, and do thou likewise."⁹⁶ The man who comes to love GOD with all his heart, soul and might soon comes to also see that he is called to love his neighbour as himself. Even more than this, he comes to see that he is called to love his neighbour – whomever they may be – above himself! As Saint Paul declares in GALATIANS 5:14, "For all The Law [of GOD] is fulfilled in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself."⁹⁷

XIV. IN CONCLUSION

We began with this proposition: Our Lord JESUS CHRIST having come, not to destroy The Law of Moses, but to fulfill it, declares that we all are called to love The LORD our GOD with all our heart, soul and might - and to love our neighbour as ourselves - for this is the sum of all The Divine Law and all the Prophets, both Old and New!

And where have we searched to reach this place? We sought for the sum of all The Law and the prophets, first not in The Gospels but in The Torah, and find that our Lord JESUS CHRIST – in stating The Two Great Commandments in MATTHEW 22:36-40 – is in fact quoting the very core of His Own Divine Law in DEUTERONOMY 6:5 and LEVITICUS 19:18: "And thou shalt love The LORD thy GOD with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might. Thou shalt not avenge, nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people, but thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself: I am The LORD."⁹⁸

Imbedded within The First Great Commandment in DEUTERONOMY 6:5, stated in the verse immediately preceding, is "The Shema" – The Creed, if you will, of both ancient Israel and of modern day Judaism, "Hear, O Israel: The LORD our GOD is one LORD!"⁹⁹ JEHOVAH being The only GOD and Creator of all, The Giver of life and of all good things, The Eternal

⁹⁵ 15, Wycliffe Bible Commentary, LUKE 10:33, p 1047.

⁹⁶ 3, KJV, LUKE 10:36-37.

⁹⁷ 3, KJV, GALATIANS 5:14.

⁹⁸ 3, KJV, DEUTERONOMY 6:5 & LEVITICUS 19:18.

⁹⁹ 3, KJV, DEUTERONOMY 6:4.

One Who spoke us into existence because of His Perfect Love, should not men love Him with all the heart, soul and might?

And opening the chapter of LEVITICUS 19, where we find in verse 18 The Second Great Commandment to love our neighbour as ourselves, is The LORD's call in verse 2, "...Ye shall be holy: for I The LORD your GOD am holy." ¹⁰⁰ GOD Himself being gracious, longsuffering, full of mercy and truth, being Perfect Love as part of Who He is – and we being made in His Image – we can not be complete unless we are in communion with Him. And when we draw close to Him, learning to love Him because of His holy Love for us, we learn to also love others – even those who hate us, spitefully use us, even those who make themselves our enemies. For we are called to love others as GOD loves us, in that CHRIST died for our sins because of His Love for us while we were still lost in our sins, by loving our fellow man as ourselves – even above ourselves.

We saw These Two Great Commandments at work in our Saviour's parable of The Good Samaritan in LUKE 10:30-37. Recall the helpless man who was beaten, robbed and left for dead on the roadside. We would have expected the righteous covenantal ministers of The LORD, the Priest and the Levite, to have stopped and given this poor man aide and comfort, but they instead pass by without intervening. Perhaps they were more concerned to keep their ritual purity by avoiding the touching of human blood or worse a dead body. Perhaps they observed this man was not a Jew. Perhaps they merely felt it was not their responsibility, as they had more important tasks to perform for GOD and man. In any event, CHRIST puts a despised, half-breed Samaritan at the heart of the story as an example of one who loved GOD and his fellow.

Now we may better see why our Lord JESUS CHRIST, when asked what was The Great Commandment, gives in MATTHEW 22:36-40 this reply, that we are to "...love The Lord thy GOD with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind... [And] Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." Life out these two Great Commandments, says our blessed Saviour, and we shall be brought to the place, by GOD's Grace, where we shall live out the earnest keeping of "...all The Law and the prophets!" ¹⁰¹

It is not merely enough to possess knowledge of The Laws of GOD, and to give our intellectual ascent. The Almighty expects more than this. As Saint James warns us in JAMES 2:20, "...faith without works is dead." ¹⁰² If our profession of faith before GOD and man is not to be vain, but a living, sanctifying and saving faith at The blessed Cross of CHRIST, it is demanded of us that we love GOD with all of who He has created us to be in Him, and to love our fellow man as and even above ourselves. For, as our Lord declares, this alone is the sum of all The Law and the prophets of GOD! May it ever be so with us. In The Name of GOD The Father, The Son and The Holy Ghost. Amen.

¹⁰⁰ 3, KJV, LEVITICUS 19:2.

¹⁰¹ 3, KJV, MATTHEW 22:36-40.

¹⁰² 3, KJV, JAMES 2:20.

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