

*the synagogue on the sabbath day, and stood up for to read*" (Luke 4:16).

We would never have an argument about God's keeping of the Sabbath, so this point need not be labored. Nor would we wish to say that He ever demonstrated that He was "above the law" in that He would have stolen from anybody. Or lied. He would never bow down to idols or commit adultery. Jesus kept sparkling fidelity to the commandment to honor one's earthly parents:

*"Every act of Christ's earthly life was in harmony with the precept He Himself had given, 'Honor thy father and thy mother'"* (DA 146.1).

Jesus, representing the Father in all things, said:

*"The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do: for what things soever he doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise"* (John 5:19).

In this, Jesus was telling us that *everything* ("what things soever") the Father does, is what *He* does and not only this, but that He does them *in the same way* ("likewise").

So what about "Thou shalt not kill?"

Jesus' words in John 5:19 can be taken to also mean that if we see the Father destroy anybody, then Jesus also will destroy. This is where we have the real problem. We have read the Bible in numerous instances to say that God uses direct lethal violence to enforce His will. Yet Jesus was very much against the idea. When the disciples wanted to call down fire on the Samaritan village for being inhospitable, Jesus, with "pained" expression rebuked them by telling them they were running on Satan's operating system and that God's business was not of that order; He came to *preserve* life, not *destroy* it (see DA 487).

Now, the Bible surely does say that God destroys. It also says that He rejoices in it. It says that He creates evil. It says that He hates:

*"...so the LORD will rejoice over you to destroy you..."* (Deut. 28:63).

*"I...create evil..."* (Isa. 45:7).

*"...Esau have I hated..."* (Rom. 9:13).

The Bible says that God does these things. This means that Jesus also does these things and, as we have seen, He does them exactly as the Father does them. So we have to find out how it is so, without making God to have a two-faced character AND without making the Bible contradict itself. This is the study of God's character and how He deals with sin and sinners without using violence. It is also the study of Bible language and how it came to speak the way it does and what God has done to give us the keys to interpretation. These subjects will be covered further in this series, but *what we want to understand right now is that God keeps His own law and that includes the sixth commandment, "thou shalt not kill"* (Ex. 20:13).

It is often said that the commandment actually means "*Thou shalt not murder*" and that there is a difference between premeditated murder and lawful killing. Does the Bible make a distinction between types of killing in the commandment? The word itself does not reveal it. This is a human idea.

The Hebrew word in the sixth commandment is "*ratsach*" and its definition includes *both* "kill" and "murder." In Numbers 35:6 we have a manslayer, called also "*ratsach*" (a killer) who "killeth any person unawares," (Num. 35:11). This is not a premeditated murder. Killing is killing. The word itself makes no distinction with regard to motive. That there would be distinctions between "kill" and "murder" in the Hebrew words is not even remotely accurate. There are many words for "kill"—11 of them—and they also mean "murder" and oftentimes are used in reference to God's acts, as in Exodus 20:24, "*harag*" (to smite with deadly intent, kill, murder)

*"And my wrath shall wax hot, and I will kill you with the sword; and your wives shall be widows, and your children fatherless"* (Ex. 22:24).

The same "*harag*" is used in Ex. 13:15, where it says that "the LORD slew all the firstborn in the land of Egypt...." To assert or imply in any way that there is a valid appeal to the Hebrew to support a case for justified killing is unfounded. This approach to the sixth commandment is a *manmade distinction*. It provides the basis for *the Christian* to re-establish "eye-for-eye" principles; it legitimizes, *for the Christian*, involvement in the use of lethal force in human legislature, law enforcement, capital punishment, and war. But this realignment of Christian attitudes toward the use of violence came about under the "falling away" of primitive Christianity and is known as the "*Constantinian Shift*." The early church was strictly against these things, based upon the teachings of Jesus. This changing of the law of God is justified by a selective application of varied meanings for the word "*ratsach*;" however, it is based upon a *corrupt* Christianity that takes us back to a false concept of the character of God *in its assumption that God does in fact stand toward the sinner as an executioner, which is then read back into the commandment*.

Is this valid? Let inspiration say it straight:

*"God does NOT stand toward the sinner as an executioner of the sentence against transgression; but He leaves the rejecters of His mercy to themselves, to reap that which they have sown"* (GC 36.1).

This statement is universal, applying to the "certain punishment that will fall upon the guilty" (*ibid.*). Again, how is this punishment "meted" to the guilty? Inspiration declares, "I was shown that the judgments of God would not come directly out from the Lord" but rather that the self-willed "place themselves beyond His protection" and after "repeated warnings if they choose their own way" He must let them have the results of evil (14MR 3.1). God does not kill them. He gives them up to outside forces. God is not above His law! This idea

is absolutely against the Bible teaching. Rather, *the law is a transcript of His character*:

"Christ came to our world to represent the character of God as it is represented in His holy law, for **His law is a transcript of His character**. Christ was both the law and the gospel" (CTr 339.2).

God and His law are both eternal and the law has eternally governed the kingdom. Therefore, there has never been a time when there was no law or when God acted above His law.

"God and His law...[have ever] governed, and ever will govern, His kingdom.—Manuscript 42, 1900" (CTr 56.7).

To say that God can act above His law is entirely invalid, because sin is defined as the transgression of the law. *God does not sin*. For instance, the Scripture says that God cannot lie (Numbers 23:19; Titus 1:2).

Neither can He steal, have other gods, or kill.

God's law is not arbitrary. This is an iron-clad principle. He did not sit down one day to think it up. It is what God is, and it was always there. His throne is founded upon it.

"The moral law...existed before man's creation, and will endure as long as God's throne remains. God could not change or alter one precept of His law...for **the law is the foundation of His government**. It is unchangeable, unalterable, infinite, and eternal (RH April 22, 1902)" (6BC 1097.1).

He can't change His law any more than He can change Himself (Mal. 3:6). He is always entirely consistent in His character and perfect in keeping His own law.

Why would we even *want* to see God as a killer? Our view of God shapes our own character. The

maxim, "By beholding we become changed" is Biblical truth. Further, it is an *inexorable law*:

"But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are **changed into the same image** from glory to glory, [even] as by the Spirit of the Lord" (2 Cor. 3:18).

"**It is a law both of the intellectual and the spiritual nature, that by beholding, we become changed**. The mind gradually adapts itself to the subjects upon which it is allowed to dwell. It becomes assimilated to that which it is accustomed to love and reverence. **Man will never rise higher than his standard of purity or goodness or truth**" (GC88 555.2).

It is ever our aim to be like Jesus! Just as Jesus, who is the express image of the Father, never repays His enemies with fire on their heads, neither will we do it or even *want* to do it. We will stop seeing God as a pagan deity who executes vengeance in the human way—the way of active, punitive, direct retribution and deadly violence. God's people will not be anxious for God to take revenge, as "Divine Proxy" for their own desire to avenge those who have done evil against them. For James tells us that "the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God" (James 1:20; see also Rom. 12:20; Matt. 5:44).

The gospel message is the *goodness of God that leads to repentance* and it includes the fact that God keeps His own law. *Share the good news!*



FOR FURTHER INFO OR LITERATURE CONTACT  
[straub@direct.ca](mailto:straub@direct.ca)

## "Do As I Say, Not As I Do"

### Is God Above His Law?

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Many well-meaning Bible preachers and teachers today will tell us about the "Sovereignty of God." They will say that "He made all things—including *us*--and He can do as He pleases with His creation." They sometimes will give us the impression, if not actually state outright, that *God is above His law*.

Is this true? Are we to expect less of God than we do of ourselves? What do we think of human leaders who make laws which they themselves do not keep? If we are voters, we are eager for the next election to "kick those bums out of office!" They do not represent the morality and decency we expect even of sinful human beings. So how do we allow that God can, in *righteousness*, kill untold millions in Bible stories and, in the end, perhaps countless *billions*, in the tortures of a literal fire that He creates? Does the almighty "Sovereignty of God" doctrine somehow make it moral?

Come, let us reason together:

"God wants us all to have common sense, and He wants us to **reason from common sense**" (3SM 217.2).

"Common sense" will tell us right from the start that God would keep His own law. But we have also the Word of God to sustain the fact of it. The keeping of Sabbath is a good example:

"And on the seventh day God ended his work which he had made; and **he rested** on the seventh day from all his work which he had made" (Gen. 2:2).

God commanded us to rest. And He Himself rested. Jesus, the "Lord of the Sabbath," also rested:

"And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up: and, as **his custom was**, he went into