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By Thomas Aquinas

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The Law of the Gospel, Called the New Law, Considered in Itself

1. What kind of law is it? i.e. is it a written law or is it instilled in the heart?
2. [OMITTED] Its efficacy, i.e. does it justify?
3. Its beginning: should it have been given at the beginning of the world?
4. [OMITTED] Its end: i.e. will it last until the end, or will another law take its place?

Article 1. Whether the New Law is a written law?

[Objection 1 omitted]

Objection 2. [It would seem that the New Law is a written law. For] the law that is instilled in the heart is the natural law, according to Romans 2:14-15: "(The Gentiles) do by nature those things that are of the law . . . who have [Vulgate: 'show'] the work of the law written in their hearts." If therefore the law of the Gospel were instilled in our hearts, it would not be distinct from the law of nature.

[Objection 3 and On the contrary *omitted]*

I answer that, "Each thing appears to be that which preponderates in it," as the Philosopher [Aristotle] states (*Nicomachean Ethics*, 9.8). Now that which is preponderant in the law of the New Testament, and whereon all its efficacy is based, is the grace of the Holy Ghost, which is given through faith in Christ. Consequently the New Law is chiefly the grace itself of the Holy Ghost, which is given to those who believe in Christ. This is manifestly stated by the Apostle [Paul] who says (Romans 3:27): "Where is . . . thy boasting? It is excluded. By what law? Of works? No, but by the law of faith": for he calls the grace itself of faith "a law." And still more clearly it is written (Romans 8:2): "The law of the spirit of life, in Christ Jesus, hath delivered me from the law of sin and of death." Hence Augustine says (De Spiritu et

Littera [On the Spirit and the Letter], 24) that "as the law of deeds was written on tables of stone, so is the law of faith inscribed on the hearts of the faithful": and elsewhere, in the same book (Chapter 21): "What else are the Divine laws written by God Himself on our hearts, but the very presence of His Holy Spirit?"

Nevertheless the New Law contains certain things that dispose us to receive the grace of the Holy Ghost, and pertaining to the use of that grace: such things are of secondary importance, so to speak, in the New Law; and the faithful need to be instructed concerning them, both by word and writing, both as to what they should believe and as to what they should do. Consequently we must say that the New Law is in the first place a law that is inscribed on our hearts, but that secondarily it is a written law.

[Reply 1 omitted]

Reply to Objection 2. There are two ways in which a thing may be instilled into man. First, through being part of his nature, and thus the natural law is instilled into man. Secondly, a thing is instilled into man by being, as it were, added on to his nature by a gift of grace. In this way the New Law is instilled into man, not only by indicating to him what he should do, but also by helping him to accomplish it.

[Reply 3 omitted]

Article 3. Whether the New Law should have been given from the beginning of the world?

Objection 1. It would seem that the New Law should have been given from the beginning of the world. . . .

[Objections 2 and 3 omitted]

On the contrary, The Apostle [Paul] says (1 Corinthians 15:46): "That was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural." But the New Law is highly spiritual. Therefore it was not fitting for it to be given from the beginning of the world.

I answer that, Three reasons may be assigned why it was not fitting for the New Law to be given from the beginning of the world. The first is because the New Law, as stated above (Article 1), consists chiefly in the grace of the Holy Ghost: which it behoved not to be given abundantly until sin, which is an obstacle to grace, had been cast out of man through the accomplishment of his redemption by Christ. . . .

A second reason may be taken from the perfection of the New Law. Because a thing is not brought to perfection at once from the outset, but through an orderly succession of time; thus one is at first a boy, and then a man. And this reason is stated by the Apostle [Paul] (Galatians 3:24-25): "The Law was our pedagogue in Christ that we might be justified by faith. But after the faith is come, we are no longer under a pedagogue."

The third reason is found in the fact that the New Law is the law of grace: wherefore it behoved man first of all to be left to himself under the state of the Old Law, so that through falling into sin, he might realize his weakness, and acknowledge his need of grace. This reason is set down by the Apostle [Paul] (Romans 5:20): "The Law entered in, that sin might abound: and when sin abounded grace did more abound."

[Replies omitted]
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