

The Assembly of Eloah

This is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and the one you have sent -- Jesus Christ. Jn. 17:3

The Ninth Commandment

The reading of the ninth commandment

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This paper is essentially a synopsis of R.J. Rusdoony's work on the ninth commandment in his book The Institutes of Biblical Law, Volume 1.



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Tempting God

Ex 20:6

Rahab, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob all lied to preserve lives.

James 2:25 praises Rahab.

We can't assume God will save us because we tell the truth in ALL cases. That could be tempting God.

Scripture doesn't appear to condemn Abraham and Isaac for lying. (Gen. 12:11-13; 20:2; 26:6-7). They are richly blessed and the men who put them in danger are condemned or judged (Gen. 12: 15-20; 20:3-18; 26:10-16)

No one seeking to do us evil by breaking the laws of God is entitled to the truth. We are to obey God rather than man.

Silence is not telling a lie.

The 5th amendment declares that no man shall be compelled to testify against himself.

Matt. 4:7. We cannot require God to do anything. Christ pointed this out by putting his life in danger as a test to see whether or not God would save him is improper.

Satan originally influenced humanity to tempt God. (Gen. 3:1)

The midwives in Egypt lied to spare the male babies and God blessed them for their efforts. (Ex. 1:17-21)

Lying is hateful to God. (Pro. 6:16-19; 12:22; Lev. 19:11; Col. 3:9)

Satan is the father of lies. (Joh. 8:44; Act. 5:3)

God sent a lying spirit in the mouths of false prophets. (I Kin. 22:22-23)

The ninth commandment forbids us from telling lies that may harm our neighbors. If we are prohibited from damaging our neighbor's good name how much less are we permitted to aid evil men to steal his property, rape his women folk or take his life? (pg. 548)

Sanctification and the Law

The law is holy. We are to be holy. (Lev. 19:2) Being holy is a prefix to every law and in Lev. 19:2 it is a prefix on the ban on gossip and false witness in court. (Lev. 19:16)

Salvation is through faith but sanctification in through the law.

The biblical doctrine is thoroughly practical in that it calls for the submission of all creation to the laws of God.

Asceticism teaches that the flesh is evil and we must treat it as an enemy. Many damage themselves in an effort to sanctify themselves and become more "holy".

Sanctification sought through the holy spirit instead of through God's law-order leads to lawlessness. This is Antinomianism.

Faith without works is dead. See also Isa. 8:20; Ps. 119:105)

Deep prayer to bring one closer to God without law-keeping is vain. (Matt. 6:7)

The call to sanctification...
(Lev. 19:2)

..is a summons to obey the law: it is the rule of sanctification.

We establish the law by obeying it.
(Rom. 3:31)

The False Prophet

The false witness which is banned by the ninth commandment includes a false witness concerning God. In Deu. 18:9-22 we have not only a prophecy of the coming of the Messiah but a test for false prophets.

The law bans idolatry and much of idolatry is designed to look into the future.

God doesn't reveal Himself by ritual or rite. He doesn't prosper men in response to gifts and bribes. Instead of turning to these abominations which brought judgment on the Canaanites,

Deu 18:12,14 ESV for whoever does these things is an abomination to the LORD. And because of these abominations the LORD your God is driving them out before you. (14) for these nations, which you are about to dispossess, listen to fortune-tellers and to diviners. But as for you, the LORD your God has not allowed you to do this.

we are to be perfect with Yehovah our Elohim.

Deu 18:13 (13) You shall be blameless before the LORD your God,

In one sense, the law itself is given as the God-ordained method of predicting the future. If you obey blessing will abound. If you don't, the cursings will come as promised. The one principal of prediction is the sovereign power and decree of God. The second is the demonic power which seeks to establish and independent and revolutionary concept of power and control. There are some portions of God's plan that only He knows.

Mar 13:32 ESV "But concerning that day or that hour, no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.

The law was given by Moses, but the means whereby the law was given was terrifying to Israel and brought them close to the presence of judgment. God will therefore raise up another Prophet, another Moses or lawgiver, and God will put the words he is to say in his mouth. Deu 18:18 ESV I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their brothers. And I will put my words in his mouth, and he shall speak to them all that I command him.

The great prophet is thus given in terms of the original law, and as the law-giver. The key to the relationship between the Prophet and Moses is the law.

False prophets will arise representing another god or power and therefore another law. Jeremiah in prophesying of the captivity did so based on the law

(Deu. 27-31) He also could speak of it lasting 70 years based on God's inspiration.

Jer 25:11 ESV This whole land shall become a ruin and a waste, and these nations shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years.

The key point is the law. Where there is no law, there is no true prophecy, neither a true speaking for God nor true prediction. Whenever Christians are neglectful of the law they fall easy prey to charlatans.

Those that fail to teach the whole word of God are no less guilty of being false prophets. They who neglect the law have no gospel, for they have denied the righteousness of God which is basic to the gospel.

The death penalty is required for those who presume to speak in the name of God.

Deu 18:20 ESV But the prophet who presumes to speak a word in my name that I have not commanded him to speak, or who speaks in the name of other gods, that same prophet shall die.'

Those who deliberately teach a revolutionary law-order are traitors to the God's law-order. Those who preach by cupidity, greed, or antinomian tendencies a defective view of scripture are also traitors, although not in the same sense or to the same degree.

The witness of the False Prophet

Adam and Eve were guilty before God for rebellion, for apostasy. They

compounded their sin by each placing blame on someone else: the serpent, and the woman. The guilt of Satan made no difference to the fact that Adam and Eve were primarily and essentially guilty for their own sin. Scripture clearly affirms that each one of us is personally responsible for our own sin.

Determinism is not supported by scripture either. Determinism is (Philosophy) the philosophical doctrine that all events including human actions and choices are fully determined by preceding events and states of affairs, and so that freedom of choice is illusory.

This philosophy implies an absence of free will or free moral agency and seeks to remove responsibility from the individual. Whatever happens is one's destiny so nothing can be done to change it. This can also be called the conspiracy theory.

Those who bear false witness ascribe powers to Satan and false gods that rightfully only belong to Yehovah. They ascribe to conspiracies a moral order and a discipline which is an impossibility. Satan cannot construct or create; he is merely a destroyer, a murderer, and he has power only to the extent that we forsake the true power of God. The further we move away from the true power the more apostate we become.

The power of evil is weak and limited; it is under God's control and is His scourge of the nations. The weakness of evil conspiracies means they can normally only occupy a vacuum. As God's law is

pushed out evil conspiracies fill the resulting void.

The key to overcoming evil conspiracies is not a concentration on evil but godly reconstruction. One of the sins Jesus condemned in some members of the church at Thyatira was their concern with studying "the depths of Satan".

Rev 2:24 ESV But to the rest of you in Thyatira, who do not hold this teaching, who have not learned what some call the deep things of Satan, to you I say, I do not lay on you any other burden.

Power is based on a faith, a philosophy. When the faith or philosophy behind a culture begins to die there is a shift in power. As so-called Christians continue to destroy the laws of God and become ever-increasingly antinomian no law-order can exist. As a result criminal impulses and movements grasp at power.

Mankind is responsible for his own actions. Satan can't be blamed for what we do. God confronted Adam and Eve with their sin in the garden just as Nathan confronted David.

2Sa 12:7 ESV Nathan said to David, "You are the man! Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, 'I anointed you king over Israel, and I delivered you out of the hand of Saul.

The commandment against bearing false witness means we must bear true witness concerning all things. We aren't to bear false witness concerning God or man, and we are not to bear false witness concerning Satan by ascribing to him powers that belong only to God Almighty. The apostles didn't dwell on

the evil conspiracies of Satan and/or the wicked governments. They focused on the victory that overcomes the world.

Rom 16:20 ESV The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.

1Jn 5:4 ESV For everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world--our faith.

Joh 11:47-53 ESV So the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered the Council and said, "What are we to do? For this man performs many signs. (48) If we let him go on like this, everyone will believe in him, and the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation." (49) But one of them, Caiaphas, who was high priest that year, said to them, "You know nothing at all. (50) Nor do you understand that it is better for you that one man should die for the people, not that the whole nation should perish." (51) He did not say this of his own accord, but being high priest that year he prophesied that Jesus would die for the nation, (52) and not for the nation only, but also to gather into one the children of God who are scattered abroad. (53) So from that day on they made plans to put him to death.

It is always God who reigns as executes his plan as He sees fit.

Corroboration

Within the court systems, for justice to prevail, honest a faithful testimony is essential. However, because man is sinful and the courts reflect man's condition checks and balances had to be put in place.

Deu 19:15 ESV "A single witness shall not suffice against a person for any crime or for any wrong in connection with any offense that he has committed. Only on the evidence of two witnesses or of three witnesses shall a charge be established.

Deu 17:6 ESV On the evidence of two witnesses or of three witnesses the one who is to die shall be put to death; a person shall not be put to death on the evidence of one witness.

Num 35:30 ESV "If anyone kills a person, the murderer shall be put to death on the evidence of witnesses. But no person shall be put to death on the testimony of one witness.

This law is echoed in the New Testament.

Mat 18:15-16 ESV "If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother. (16) But if he does not listen, take one or two others along with you, that every charge may be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses.

2Co 13:1 ESV This is the third time I am coming to you. Every charge must be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses.

1Ti 5:19 ESV Do not admit a charge against an elder except on the evidence of two or three witnesses.

Heb 10:28 ESV Anyone who has set aside the law of Moses dies without mercy on the evidence of two or three witnesses.

There are limitations on the power of the courts. God's law of testimony does not permit torture or coerced confessions. Confession isn't cited in the law; it's place in the courts was apparently only

in connection with corroborating evidence. Thus Achan's confession required corroboration before he was sentenced and executed.

Jos 7:19-26 ESV Then Joshua said to Achan, "My son, give glory to the LORD God of Israel and give praise to him. And tell me now what you have done; do not hide it from me." (20) And Achan answered Joshua, "Truly I have sinned against the LORD God of Israel, and this is what I did: (21) when I saw among the spoil a beautiful cloak from Shinar, and 200 shekels of silver, and a bar of gold weighing 50 shekels, then I coveted them and took them. And see, they are hidden in the earth inside my tent, with the silver underneath." (22) So Joshua sent messengers, and they ran to the tent; and behold, it was hidden in his tent with the silver underneath. (23) And they took them out of the tent and brought them to Joshua and to all the people of Israel. And they laid them down before the LORD. (24) And Joshua and all Israel with him took Achan the son of Zerah, and the silver and the cloak and the bar of gold, and his sons and daughters and his oxen and donkeys and sheep and his tent and all that he had. And they brought them up to the Valley of Achor. (25) And Joshua said, "Why did you bring trouble on us? The LORD brings trouble on you today." And all Israel stoned him with stones. They burned them with fire and stoned them with stones. (26) And they raised over him a great heap of stones that remains to this day. Then the LORD turned from his burning anger. Therefore, to this day the name of that place is called the Valley of Achor.

Lie detectors strike at the heart of this law. The suspect is presumed guilty and he/she is challenged to prove themselves

innocent in the absence of two or more witnesses by taking the test.

Failure to testify in God's law means being an accessory to the crime:

Psa 50:18 ESV If you see a thief, you are pleased with him, and you keep company with adulterers.

Corroboration can't exist as an instrument of justice if the citizenry is not mindful of its responsibilities in the enforcement of the law-order.

Perjury

Perjury is regarded as a very serious offence by Yehovah. Precisely because the procedures of Biblical law rest, not on coerced self-incrimination but on honest testimony. Any perjury constitutes a destruction of the processes of justice. The law is thus explicit and severe in its attitude toward perjury.

Lev 19:12 ESV You shall not swear by my name falsely, and so profane the name of your God: I am the LORD.

Deu 17:6-7 ESV On the evidence of two witnesses or of three witnesses the one who is to die shall be put to death; a person shall not be put to death on the evidence of one witness. (7) The hand of the witnesses shall be first against him to put him to death, and afterward the hand of all the people. So you shall purge the evil from your midst.

Deu 19:16-21 ESV If a malicious witness arises to accuse a person of wrongdoing, (17) then both parties to the dispute shall appear before the LORD, before the priests and the judges who are in office in those days. (18) The judges shall inquire diligently, and if the witness is a false witness and has accused his brother

falsely, (19) then you shall do to him as he had meant to do to his brother. So you shall purge the evil from your midst. (20) And the rest shall hear and fear, and shall never again commit any such evil among you. (21) Your eye shall not pity. It shall be life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot.

Pro 19:5 ESV A false witness will not go unpunished, and he who breathes out lies will not escape.

Pro 19:9 ESV A false witness will not go unpunished, and he who breathes out lies will perish.

Pro 25:18 ESV A man who bears false witness against his neighbor is like a war club, or a sword, or a sharp arrow.

Mat 19:18 ESV He said to him, "Which ones?" And Jesus said, "You shall not murder, You shall not commit adultery, You shall not steal, You shall not bear false witness,

Rom 13:9 ESV For the commandments, "You shall not commit adultery, You shall not murder, You shall not steal, You shall not covet," and any other commandment, are summed up in this word: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself."

The law equates perjury with blasphemy since it is God's justice which is offended.

Lev 19:12 ESV You shall not swear by my name falsely, and so profane the name of your God: I am the LORD.

The priests have a part in the procedures of the court, in that the witness' oath is made to Yehovah, "before the priests and judges".

Deu 19:16-19 ESV If a malicious witness arises to accuse a person of wrongdoing,

(17) then both parties to the dispute shall appear before the LORD, before the priests and the judges who are in office in those days. (18) The judges shall inquire diligently, and if the witness is a false witness and has accused his brother falsely, (19) then you shall do to him as he had meant to do to his brother. So you shall purge the evil from your midst.

The courts are inescapably religious in nature. The law they administer represents a religion and a morality, and the procedures of the court rest in the integrity of the oath under which testimony is given. Both oath and law are religious; alter the religion behind them and society is in revolution.

It is apparent that perjury is a religious as well as civil and criminal offense. While the Bible places severe limits on the ability of the court or of any man to invade the mind of an individual, it does clearly declare that all legally required testimony must be an honest and faithful witness, or else a criminal offense against God and man has been committed.

The Bible is not environmentalist in its explanation of sin.

Deu 17:7 ESV The hand of the witnesses shall be first against him to put him to death, and afterward the hand of all the people. So you shall purge the evil from your midst.

We have to purge the evil from our midst. Evil doesn't exist as an abstract entity. Evil can't exist outside of evil people or beings. The environmentalist seeks to separate the person from the sin and places the sin in the

environment, which is precisely the thesis of Satan in Eden. God is our environment therefore every environmentalist is at war with God.

You have heard that we are to love the sinner and hate the sin. In terms of scripture this is an impossibility. There is no sin apart from a person or being committing the sin. By separating the sin from the person committing the sin judgment is withheld from the actuality, the person, and placed on the possibility, the sin. Because God created man with the potential to sin, the judgment and guilt for the possibility are thus transferred to Yehovah.

Adam blamed Yehovah, he blamed his environment, for his sin in Eden.

Gen 3:12 ESV The man said, "The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit of the tree, and I ate."

The principal of an eye for an eye is that on which Israelite law is based. It is most often applied to vengeance but has nothing to do with vengeance at all. Vengeance is prohibited in both the Old and New testaments. The principal of an eye for an eye is a legal one that limits vengeance. It is for the guidance of the judge in fixing the penalty which shall befit the crime committed.

The principal simply means that if someone bears false witness in a case where the defendant's life is at stake, the false witness must be executed. If restitution of \$1,000 is involved then the false witness must pay \$1,000. The penalty of the case falls on the perjurer.

The law forbids pity toward a false witness.

Deu 19:21 ESV Your eye shall not pity. It shall be life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot.

Pity toward a false witness aligns us with those that are destroying society and the law-order of Yehovah. Pity the righteous, the victims, the offended, the poor and needy, widows and orphans but move severely against the evil and put the evil ones away from us.

Jesus as The Witness

The law requires not only true and faithful testimony but requires the witness in a capital case participate in the execution.

Deu 17:6-7 ESV On the evidence of two witnesses or of three witnesses the one who is to die shall be put to death; a person shall not be put to death on the evidence of one witness. (7) The hand of the witnesses shall be first against him to put him to death, and afterward the hand of all the people. So you shall purge the evil from your midst.

Lev 24:14 ESV "Bring out of the camp the one who cursed, and let all who heard him lay their hands on his head, and let all the congregation stone him.

Deu 13:9 ESV But you shall kill him. Your hand shall be first against him to put him to death, and afterward the hand of all the people.

The policing of the society rests on all of the people. All have a duty in the enforcement of the law and, in an execution, the witnesses play a leading role. The enforcement of law requires the participation of law-abiding citizens.

The meaning of "witness" has been confused, however, because of the post-Biblical development of the Greek word for "witness". The Hebrew word for witness, *ed*, *edah*, is given in the Greek NT as *martus*, *marturion*. The Greek word is the proper translation of the Hebrew as Matt. 18:16 and Mark 14:63 make clear.

Mat 18:16 ESV But if he does not listen, take one or two others along with you, that every charge may be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses.

Mar 14:63 ESV And the high priest tore his garments and said, "What further witnesses do we need?"

But the Greek word *martus* is the origin of the English word *martyr* and the result is an amazing confusion. The witnesses to Jesus were executed by the Roman Empire, and the result was a strange reversal in meaning. In the Bible the witness is the one who works to enforce the law even to the point of participating in executions of the convicted defendants.

Martyr has come to mean the exact reverse, i.e., one who is executed rather than an executioner, one who is persecuted rather than one who is central to the prosecution. The result is a serious misreading of scripture.

The point is more important as Jesus is identified primarily as *the* witness.

Rev 1:5-6 ESV and from Jesus Christ the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of kings on earth. To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood (6) and made us a kingdom, priests to his God and Father, to

him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

Rev 3:14 ESV "And to the angel of the church in Laodicea write: 'The words of the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of God's creation.

In the letter to the Laodiceans Jesus identifies himself as the faithful and true witness. The meaning is obvious thereby: Jesus testifies against the church and promises to execute sentence against them if they don't repent.

Rev 3:15-22 ESV "'I know your works: you are neither cold nor hot. Would that you were either cold or hot! (16) So, because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of my mouth. (17) For you say, I am rich, I have prospered, and I need nothing, not realizing that you are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked. (18) I counsel you to buy from me gold refined by fire, so that you may be rich, and white garments so that you may clothe yourself and the shame of your nakedness may not be seen, and salve to anoint your eyes, so that you may see. (19) Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline, so be zealous and repent. (20) Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me. (21) The one who conquers, I will grant him to sit with me on my throne, as I also conquered and sat down with my Father on his throne. (22) He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.'"

As the greater Moses and the great prophet Jesus is both the giver and the enforcer of the law.

Deu 18:15-19 ESV "The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me

from among you, from your brothers--it is to him you shall listen-- (16) just as you desired of the LORD your God at Horeb on the day of the assembly, when you said, 'Let me not hear again the voice of the LORD my God or see this great fire any more, lest I die.' (17) And the LORD said to me, 'They are right in what they have spoken. (18) I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their brothers. And I will put my words in his mouth, and he shall speak to them all that I command him. (19) And whoever will not listen to my words that he shall speak in my name, I myself will require it of him.

The Rabbinic priesthood rejected him and called his witness false; therefore, he sentenced them to death.

Mat 21:43 ESV Therefore I tell you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people producing its fruits.

Mat 23:23-28 ESV "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe mint and dill and cumin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faithfulness. These you ought to have done, without neglecting the others. (24) You blind guides, straining out a gnat and swallowing a camel! (25) "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you clean the outside of the cup and the plate, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence. (26) You blind Pharisee! First clean the inside of the cup and the plate, that the outside also may be clean. (27) "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs, which outwardly appear beautiful, but within are full of dead people's bones and all uncleanness. (28) So you also outwardly appear righteous to others, but

within you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness.

The law applied to the Pharisees as they bore false witness against Jesus and had him put to death.

Mat 26:65-75 ESV Then the high priest tore his robes and said, "He has uttered blasphemy. What further witnesses do we need? You have now heard his blasphemy. (66) What is your judgment?" They answered, "He deserves death." (67) Then they spit in his face and struck him. And some slapped him, (68) saying, "Prophecy to us, you Christ! Who is it that struck you?" (69) Now Peter was sitting outside in the courtyard. And a servant girl came up to him and said, "You also were with Jesus the Galilean." (70) But he denied it before them all, saying, "I do not know what you mean." (71) And when he went out to the entrance, another servant girl saw him, and she said to the bystanders, "This man was with Jesus of Nazareth." (72) And again he denied it with an oath: "I do not know the man." (73) After a little while the bystanders came up and said to Peter, "Certainly you too are one of them, for your accent betrays you." (74) Then he began to invoke a curse on himself and to swear, "I do not know the man." And immediately the rooster crowed. (75) And Peter remembered the saying of Jesus, "Before the rooster crows, you will deny me three times." And he went out and wept bitterly.

Mat 27:22 ESV Pilate said to them, "Then what shall I do with Jesus who is called Christ?" They all said, "Let him be crucified!"

The significance of Jesus as the faithful and true witness is that he not only

witnesses against those that are at war against God but he also executes them.

The false witness concerning Jesus, to which all unbelievers, all apostate "Christians", and all nations and institutions which deny the law-word that he carried from the Father, with one accord assent, that law requires their death. (Deu. 19:16-21) So Jesus puts evil away from the kingdom that has been given to him by the Father.

False Witnesses

Subtle but important varieties of false witness are cited in the law and we need to recognize them. By examining the specific context of the law, sometimes much is indicated as to its meaning. Exodus 23:1, 2, 7 becomes clearer if verses 1-9 are examined.

Exo 23:1-2 ESV "You shall not spread a false report. You shall not join hands with a wicked man to be a malicious witness. (2) You shall not fall in with the many to do evil, nor shall you bear witness in a lawsuit, siding with the many, so as to pervert justice,

Exo 23:7 ESV Keep far from a false charge, and do not kill the innocent and righteous, for I will not acquit the wicked.

Exo 23:1-9 ESV "You shall not spread a false report. You shall not join hands with a wicked man to be a malicious witness. (2) You shall not fall in with the many to do evil, nor shall you bear witness in a lawsuit, siding with the many, so as to pervert justice, (3) nor shall you be partial to a poor man in his lawsuit. (4) "If you meet your enemy's ox or his donkey going astray, you shall bring it back to him. (5) If you see the donkey of one who hates you lying down under its

burden, you shall refrain from leaving him with it; you shall rescue it with him. (6) "You shall not pervert the justice due to your poor in his lawsuit. (7) Keep far from a false charge, and do not kill the innocent and righteous, for I will not acquit the wicked. (8) And you shall take no bribe, for a bribe blinds the clear-sighted and subverts the cause of those who are in the right. (9) "You shall not oppress a sojourner. You know the heart of a sojourner, for you were sojourners in the land of Egypt.

The ninth commandment is primarily in reference to a court of law, and secondarily with reference to life and community. The above passage sets the law of false witness, in both its meanings, in the broader requirement of justice.

Several principals appear in this passage.

1. A godly man must move in terms of God's law, not the mob or multitude, because the spirit of the mob, however powerful in governing man, is rarely if ever the law of God. The power of God rather than the power of man must govern us.
2. We cannot be governed by personal considerations like pity for the poor etc. Bribes distort the law as does respect of persons. ALL people are to be treated equally even enemies.
3. There is a close relationship between words and deeds. Malice in words means malice in deed as well. A man who issues a false and malicious report or witness concerning his neighbor is unlikely to help his neighbor at all. A

dishonest witness is also essentially a corrupt neighbor.

The law of God does not allow us to use words with reference to our love and hatred, likes and dislikes, or our profit and loss. The analogical word means the obedient word. David cites, as a man of God, regarding the man who gives testimony in a court of law to his own detriment.

Psa 15:1-5 ESV A Psalm of David. O LORD, who shall sojourn in your tent? Who shall dwell on your holy hill? (2) He who walks blamelessly and does what is right and speaks truth in his heart; (3) who does not slander with his tongue and does no evil to his neighbor, nor takes up a reproach against his friend; (4) in whose eyes a vile person is despised, but who honors those who fear the LORD; who swears to his own hurt and does not change; (5) who does not put out his money at interest and does not take a bribe against the innocent. He who does these things shall never be moved.

This Psalm is a commentary on Exo. 23:1-9. The analogical word is the word of a faithful witness in the act of obedience. True witness has reference, first and last, to God and His justice, not to man and his wishes.

The Lying Tongue

Scripture has much to say about the lying tongue. Solomon's comments on the subject are quite revealing.

Pro 6:16-19 ESV There are six things that the LORD hates, seven that are an abomination to him: (17) haughty eyes, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, (18) a heart that devises wicked plans, feet that make haste to run to evil, (19) a false witness who breathes

out lies, and one who sows discord among brothers.

Of the seven sins cited here three deal with matters of speech. No vice is a greater abomination to God than striving to set men at variance who love one another. This is how Satan set humanity at odds with Yehovah.

Basic to all lying tongues is the unwillingness to accept responsibility. Satan is called the father of lies by Jesus.

Joh 8:44 ESV You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, and has nothing to do with the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies.

Adam and Eve, after accepting Satan's lies lied about their own guilt.

Gen 3:9-13 ESV But the LORD God called to the man and said to him, "Where are you?" (10) And he said, "I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked, and I hid myself." (11) He said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten of the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?" (12) The man said, "The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit of the tree, and I ate." (13) Then the LORD God said to the woman, "What is this that you have done?" The woman said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate."

Where men are avoiding their responsibilities they are liars. In denying their guilt and their responsibility, they must affirm the guilt and responsibility of

their environment which as we have already discussed is God the Father.

Slander within marriage

Biblical law forbids slander within marriage, i.e., slander by husband or wife with respect to their spouse.

Deu 22:13-21 ESV "If any man takes a wife and goes in to her and then hates her (14) and accuses her of misconduct and brings a bad name upon her, saying, 'I took this woman, and when I came near her, I did not find in her evidence of virginity,' (15) then the father of the young woman and her mother shall take and bring out the evidence of her virginity to the elders of the city in the gate. (16) And the father of the young woman shall say to the elders, 'I gave my daughter to this man to marry, and he hates her; (17) and behold, he has accused her of misconduct, saying, "I did not find in your daughter evidence of virginity." And yet this is the evidence of my daughter's virginity.' And they shall spread the cloak before the elders of the city. (18) Then the elders of that city shall take the man and whip him, (19) and they shall fine him a hundred shekels of silver and give them to the father of the young woman, because he has brought a bad name upon a virgin of Israel. And she shall be his wife. He may not divorce her all his days. (20) But if the thing is true, that evidence of virginity was not found in the young woman, (21) then they shall bring out the young woman to the door of her father's house, and the men of her city shall stone her to death with stones, because she has done an outrageous thing in Israel by whoring in her father's house. So you shall purge the evil from your midst.

This is case law. If slander by the husband is forbidden, and carries such

severe penalties,(100 shekels was a stiff penalty) then slander by a wife is also forbidden. If the penalty is so severe for such slander, then any slander between man and wife carries severe penalties in Biblical law. The fine imposed for lesser offenses of slander would still be proportionately high.

Biblical law requires a high degree of care and thoughtfulness in speech between a husband and wife. In marriage, words must be weighed special care because the relationship is so important.

Eph 5:28-29 ESV In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. (29) For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church,

1Pe 5:5-6 ESV Likewise, you who are younger, be subject to the elders. Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another, for "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble." (6) Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you,

Husbands and wives can defame one another through distrust. If a husband doesn't trust his wife to perform the duties which she is competent to administer he has defamed her. In the same way, if wives make accusations of infidelity against her husband she has defamed her husband. The truth can be slanderous if used to give a partial picture or distorted picture.

The ninth commandment requires that we bear no false witness against our

neighbor. This law makes clear that our closest neighbor is our spouse. Man finds his richest freedom in his family life under God. This freedom is destroyed, and the home turned into a prison, where men and women bear false witness against one another.

The fine imposed for rape or seduction, in a case involving an unbetrothed virgin and a young man without a criminal record, was 50 shekels of silver; if marriage followed, i.e., if the guilty man were accepted as a husband, no divorce was possible. The fine for slandering a wife by a false accusation of premarital unchastity was twice that for rape or seduction. The penalty for slander is greater because it strikes at an existing marital relationship and undercuts it brutally.

Slander

Lev 19:16-17 ESV You shall not go around as a slanderer among your people, and you shall not stand up against the life of your neighbor: I am the LORD. (17) "You shall not hate your brother in your heart, but you shall reason frankly with your neighbor, lest you incur sin because of him.

This passage of scripture is usually cited as that instance where gossip is condemned by the law. It is often read as a denunciation of gossip as opposed to court-related law. A close examination with prove to the contrary. The first part of verse 16 can be translated as slander. It is translated as slander in Jer. 6:28; 9:4 and in Eze. 22:9. True witness must be given both in and out of court.

Circulation of slander anywhere is prohibited.

Slander is a form of murder: it seeks to destroy the reputation and integrity of a man by insinuating falsehoods. The reason why the rabbis regarded it as worse than idolatry, incest, and murder was because its moral consequences are fully as deadly, if not worse, and it is a crime easily committed and not too readily detected. Moreover, slander, because it passes from mouth to mouth quickly, involves far more people in a very short time, than does idolatry, incest or murder.

If a brother or neighbor is actually guilty of wrongdoing we must go to him and seek to dissuade him from his evil course. Otherwise we become an accomplice in his evil deeds. We are our brother's keeper.

Slander as theft

Slander robs a man of his reputation and good standing in the community. It can therefore be considered theft. It is listed with dealing falsely and stealing. Stealing, lying and cheating are classed together as kindred sins.

Lev 19:11 ESV "You shall not steal; you shall not deal falsely; you shall not lie to one another.

We are admonished to avoid it.

Col 3:9-10 ESV Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old self with its practices (10) and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator.

Eph 4:25 ESV Therefore, having put away falsehood, let each one of you speak the

truth with his neighbor, for we are members one of another.

Slander is extensively denounced in scripture.

Pro 11:9 ESV With his mouth the godless man would destroy his neighbor, but by knowledge the righteous are delivered.

Tit 3:1-2 ESV Remind them to be submissive to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for every good work, (2) to speak evil of no one, to avoid quarreling, to be gentle, and to show perfect courtesy toward all people.

Eph 4:29 ESV Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear.

Jas 4:11 ESV Do not speak evil against one another, brothers. The one who speaks against a brother or judges his brother, speaks evil against the law and judges the law. But if you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law but a judge.

Pro 10:18 ESV The one who conceals hatred has lying lips, and whoever utters slander is a fool.

Psa 101:5 ESV Whoever slanders his neighbor secretly I will destroy. Whoever has a haughty look and an arrogant heart I will not endure.

Pro 11:9 ESV With his mouth the godless man would destroy his neighbor, but by knowledge the righteous are delivered.

The word neighbor is the Hebrew word *rea* or *rach*, meaning "to feed or nourish", and *rach* also appears in scripture as the verb "to feed". The neighbor, whether a close relative or

friend, an enemy, or a fellow creature, is one whom we are thus to nourish, even as he has a duty to nourish us. We nourish one another, are good neighbors or feeders of one another, when we establish and further a law-order that feeds and strengthens common life.

When we bear true witness we feed one another with truth. We have to work together to further the godly law-order. Slander destroys that mutual feeding; it breaks the bonds of community life and is murder and theft directed both against individuals and against the community.

Every idle word

Too often, instead of presenting the Biblical teaching concerning slander as law, the church has taught it as pragmatic advice. Not surprisingly, an age taught by antinomian churches has become existentialist. Many passing condemnations of gossip and slander appear in scripture. The following are a few.

Slander comes from an evil heart.

Luk 6:41-45 ESV Why do you see the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? (42) How can you say to your brother, 'Brother, let me take out the speck that is in your eye,' when you yourself do not see the log that is in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take out the speck that is in your brother's eye. (43) "For no good tree bears bad fruit, nor again does a bad tree bear good fruit, (44) for each tree is known by its own fruit. For figs are not gathered from thornbushes, nor are grapes picked from a bramble bush. (45) The good person out of the good treasure of his heart produces

good, and the evil person out of his evil treasure produces evil, for out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks.

It arises from hatred.

Psa 109:3 ESV They encircle me with words of hate, and attack me without cause.

A lack of faith plus idleness breed slander.

1Ti 5:13 ESV Besides that, they learn to be idlers, going about from house to house, and not only idlers, but also gossips and busybodies, saying what they should not.

Hypocrites are addicted to slander toward the just.

Pro 11:9 ESV With his mouth the godless man would destroy his neighbor, but by knowledge the righteous are delivered.

The wicked are so addicted to it they even slander their family.

Psa 50:19-20 ESV "You give your mouth free rein for evil, and your tongue frames deceit. (20) You sit and speak against your brother; you slander your own mother's son.

Satan is an accuser or slanderer.

Rev 12:10 ESV And I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying, "Now the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ have come, for the accuser of our brothers has been thrown down, who accuses them day and night before our God.

The wicked love to destroy men with their slander.

Psa 52:4 ESV You love all words that devour, O deceitful tongue.

Anyone who indulges in slander is a fool.

Pro 10:18 ESV The one who conceals hatred has lying lips, and whoever utters slander is a fool.

Older women are warned against indulging in it.

Tit 2:3 ESV Older women likewise are to be reverent in behavior, not slanderers or slaves to much wine. They are to teach what is good,

The wives of church officials are warned against it

1Ti 3:11 ESV Their wives likewise must be dignified, not slanderers, but sober-minded, faithful in all things.

Jesus was the target of perjury.

Mat 26:60 ESV but they found none, though many false witnesses came forward. At last two came forward

Rulers are exposed to slander by "filthy dreamers" or false idealists.

Jud 1:8 ESV Yet in like manner these people also, relying on their dreams, defile the flesh, reject authority, and blaspheme the glorious ones.

Paul was a target of slander.

Rom 3:8 ESV And why not do evil that good may come?--as some people slanderously charge us with saying. Their condemnation is just.

2Co 6:8 ESV through honor and dishonor, through slander and praise. We are treated as impostors, and yet are true;

The people of God are exposed to it.

Psa 38:12 ESV Those who seek my life lay their snares; those who seek my hurt speak of ruin and meditate treachery all day long.

Psa 108:12 ESV Oh grant us help against the foe, for vain is the salvation of man!

1Pe 4:4 ESV With respect to this they are surprised when you do not join them in the same flood of debauchery, and they malign you;

The saints are given instructions concerning their conduct in relationship to false witnesses.

Psa 15:1-3 ESV A Psalm of David. O LORD, who shall sojourn in your tent? Who shall dwell on your holy hill? (2) He who walks blamelessly and does what is right and speaks truth in his heart; (3) who does not slander with his tongue and does no evil to his neighbor, nor takes up a reproach against his friend;

Psa 34:13 ESV Keep your tongue from evil and your lips from speaking deceit.

1Pe 2:12 ESV Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation.

1Pe 3:10 ESV For "Whoever desires to love life and see good days, let him keep his tongue from evil and his lips from speaking deceit;

1Pe 3:16 ESV having a good conscience, so that, when you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame.

Eph 4:31 ESV Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice.

Tit 3:1-2 ESV Remind them to be submissive to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for every good work, (2) to speak evil of no one, to

avoid quarreling, to be gentle, and to show perfect courtesy toward all people.

1Co 4:13 ESV when slandered, we entreat. We have become, and are still, like the scum of the world, the refuse of all things.

Mat 5:11 ESV "Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account.

Slander separates friends.

Pro 16:28 ESV A dishonest man spreads strife, and a whisperer separates close friends.

Causes deadly wounds.

Pro 18:8 ESV The words of a whisperer are like delicious morsels; they go down into the inner parts of the body.

Pro 26:22 ESV The words of a whisperer are like delicious morsels; they go down into the inner parts of the body.

Causes strife.

Pro 26:20 ESV For lack of wood the fire goes out, and where there is no whisperer, quarreling ceases.

Sows discord among brethren.

Pro 6:19 ESV a false witness who breathes out lies, and one who sows discord among brothers.

Causes murder.

Psa 31:13 ESV For I hear the whispering of many-- terror on every side!-- as they scheme together against me, as they plot to take my life.

Eze 22:9 ESV There are men in you who slander to shed blood, and people in you

who eat on the mountains; they commit lewdness in your midst.

The unbridled tongue represents an evil desire to lord it over other men by debasing them, and it receives "the greater condemnation" or judgment, possibly greater accountability. The law is clearly in the mind as James speaks.

Jas 3:1-12 ESV Not many of you should become teachers, my brothers, for you know that we who teach will be judged with greater strictness. (2) For we all stumble in many ways. And if anyone does not stumble in what he says, he is a perfect man, able also to bridle his whole body. (3) If we put bits into the mouths of horses so that they obey us, we guide their whole bodies as well. (4) Look at the ships also: though they are so large and are driven by strong winds, they are guided by a very small rudder wherever the will of the pilot directs. (5) So also the tongue is a small member, yet it boasts of great things. How great a forest is set ablaze by such a small fire! (6) And the tongue is a fire, a world of unrighteousness. The tongue is set among our members, staining the whole body, setting on fire the entire course of life, and set on fire by hell. (7) For every kind of beast and bird, of reptile and sea creature, can be tamed and has been tamed by mankind, (8) but no human being can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison. (9) With it we bless our Lord and Father, and with it we curse people who are made in the likeness of God. (10) From the same mouth come blessing and cursing. My brothers, these things ought not to be so. (11) Does a spring pour forth from the same opening both fresh and salt water? (12) Can a fig tree, my brothers, bear olives, or a grapevine produce figs? Neither can a salt pond yield fresh water.

The most telling reference is Jesus' declaration.

Mat 12:36-37 ESV I tell you, on the day of judgment people will give account for every careless word they speak, (37) for by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned."

The law against false witness is not a counsel of sweetness and light. We are not counseled to be evasive in our speech, or to flatter, nor are we forbidden to tell the truth about evil, or to condemn it. We are not to judge based on appearance but with righteous judgment.

Joh 7:24 ESV Do not judge by appearances, but judge with right judgment."

We are forbidden to judge based on humanistic criteria.

Mat 7:1-2 ESV "Judge not, that you be not judged. (2) For with the judgment you pronounce you will be judged, and with the measure you use it will be measured to you.

The seriousness of the law regarding slander is apparent in Rev. 22:15.

Rev 22:15 ESV Outside are the dogs and sorcerers and the sexually immoral and murderers and idolaters, and everyone who loves and practices falsehood.

On the other hand blessed are they that keep His commandments.

Rev 22:14 ESV Blessed are those who wash their robes, so that they may have the right to the tree of life and that they may enter the city by the gates.

Trials by Ordeal and the Law of Nature

The trial by ordeal subjected the accused person to a fearful physical test, such as

plunging the hand in boiling water, drinking poison, carrying a hot iron, and the like; injury meant proof of guilt. In West Africa, the ordeal was the preferred method of trial.

The only passage of scripture that seems to indicate some trial by ordeal is the trial of jealousy.

Num 5:11-31 ESV And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, (12) "Speak to the people of Israel, If any man's wife goes astray and breaks faith with him, (13) if a man lies with her sexually, and it is hidden from the eyes of her husband, and she is undetected though she has defiled herself, and there is no witness against her, since she was not taken in the act, (14) and if the spirit of jealousy comes over him and he is jealous of his wife who has defiled herself, or if the spirit of jealousy comes over him and he is jealous of his wife, though she has not defiled herself, (15) then the man shall bring his wife to the priest and bring the offering required of her, a tenth of an ephah of barley flour. He shall pour no oil on it and put no frankincense on it, for it is a grain offering of jealousy, a grain offering of remembrance, bringing iniquity to remembrance. (16) "And the priest shall bring her near and set her before the LORD. (17) And the priest shall take holy water in an earthenware vessel and take some of the dust that is on the floor of the tabernacle and put it into the water. (18) And the priest shall set the woman before the LORD and unbind the hair of the woman's head and place in her hands the grain offering of remembrance, which is the grain offering of jealousy. And in his hand the priest shall have the water of bitterness that brings the curse. (19) Then the priest shall make her take an oath, saying, 'If no man has lain with you, and if you have not turned aside to uncleanness while you were under your husband's authority, be free from this

water of bitterness that brings the curse. (20) But if you have gone astray, though you are under your husband's authority, and if you have defiled yourself, and some man other than your husband has lain with you, (21) then' (let the priest make the woman take the oath of the curse, and say to the woman) 'the LORD make you a curse and an oath among your people, when the LORD makes your thigh fall away and your body swell. (22) May this water that brings the curse pass into your bowels and make your womb swell and your thigh fall away.' And the woman shall say, 'Amen, Amen.' (23) "Then the priest shall write these curses in a book and wash them off into the water of bitterness. (24) And he shall make the woman drink the water of bitterness that brings the curse, and the water that brings the curse shall enter into her and cause bitter pain. (25) And the priest shall take the grain offering of jealousy out of the woman's hand and shall wave the grain offering before the LORD and bring it to the altar. (26) And the priest shall take a handful of the grain offering, as its memorial portion, and burn it on the altar, and afterward shall make the woman drink the water. (27) And when he has made her drink the water, then, if she has defiled herself and has broken faith with her husband, the water that brings the curse shall enter into her and cause bitter pain, and her womb shall swell, and her thigh shall fall away, and the woman shall become a curse among her people. (28) But if the woman has not defiled herself and is clean, then she shall be free and shall conceive children. (29) "This is the law in cases of jealousy, when a wife, though under her husband's authority, goes astray and defiles herself, (30) or when the spirit of jealousy comes over a man and he is jealous of his wife. Then he shall set the woman before the LORD, and the priest shall carry out for

her all this law. (31) The man shall be free from iniquity, but the woman shall bear her iniquity."

The trial by ordeal required nature to deliver the innocent party by miraculous intervention; nature is normative, and the law of nature perfect, according to the trial by ordeal. As a result, the accused took poison, or plunged his hand into boiling water, on the supposition that nature would protect the innocent.

The Biblical law of jealousy, is not nature but God who is the judge. Holy water and dust are swallowed, ingredients which are not likely to cause any harm. The water and the dust of the sanctuary both represent the holiness of God. The penalty for the woman If guilty was serious ailments in the reproductive organs. If innocent, she was blessed with fertility. This method was used when no evidence for adultery existed but suspicion remained. The law is thus related to Deu. 22:13-21, and the penalty on the husband was thus the same.

Deu 22:13-21 ESV "If any man takes a wife and goes in to her and then hates her (14) and accuses her of misconduct and brings a bad name upon her, saying, 'I took this woman, and when I came near her, I did not find in her evidence of virginity,' (15) then the father of the young woman and her mother shall take and bring out the evidence of her virginity to the elders of the city in the gate. (16) And the father of the young woman shall say to the elders, 'I gave my daughter to this man to marry, and he hates her; (17) and behold, he has accused her of misconduct, saying, "I did not find in your daughter evidence of virginity." And yet this is the evidence of my daughter's virginity.' And they shall spread the cloak before the elders of the city. (18) Then the elders of that city shall take the man and whip him, (19) and they shall fine

him a hundred shekels of silver and give them to the father of the young woman, because he has brought a bad name upon a virgin of Israel. And she shall be his wife. He may not divorce her all his days. (20) But if the thing is true, that evidence of virginity was not found in the young woman, (21) then they shall bring out the young woman to the door of her father's house, and the men of her city shall stone her to death with stones, because she has done an outrageous thing in Israel by whoring in her father's house. So you shall purge the evil from your midst.

Of interest too is the uncovering of the woman's head during the ritual. Not only was the head uncovered but the hair was loose and disheveled.

Num 5:18 ESV And the priest shall set the woman before the LORD and unbind the hair of the woman's head and place in her hands the grain offering of remembrance, which is the grain offering of jealousy. And in his hand the priest shall have the water of bitterness that brings the curse.

During the trial the marks of her submission to her husband and to do due authority were removed from her, to symbolized the implications of the trial. If she were innocent, and her husband's jealousy had falsely denied her the authority and protection due to her, then she was permanently restored to his authority and support without any right of divorce allowed to him (Deu. 22:19).

Both adultery and false jealousy are offenses to Yehovah. This is why the husband had to bring an offering and the wife had to hold it during a portion of the trial.

Num 5:25 ESV And the priest shall take the grain offering of jealousy out of the woman's hand and shall wave the grain

offering before the LORD and bring it to the altar.

The Biblical perspective and law denies that either nature or man is normative. Neither the common man, nor the aristocracy, nor intellectuals are to be trusted. All without exception have sinned, and all alike are under God's judgment unless regenerated in the Christ.

Rom 3:9-18 ESV What then? Are we Jews any better off? No, not at all. For we have already charged that all, both Jews and Greeks, are under sin, (10) as it is written: "None is righteous, no, not one; (11) no one understands; no one seeks for God. (12) All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; no one does good, not even one." (13) "Their throat is an open grave; they use their tongues to deceive." "The venom of asps is under their lips." (14) "Their mouth is full of curses and bitterness." (15) "Their feet are swift to shed blood; (16) in their paths are ruin and misery, (17) and the way of peace they have not known." (18) "There is no fear of God before their eyes."

God and the law of God are normative not man, and His law must be the criterion of judgment. The trial of jealousy is a law which spoke clearly against the whole principal of the ordeal.

Judges

In any civil order, one of the most important positions is that of the judge. The courts of law cannot represent any real justice if the judge and his office are defective by nature and authority. For the social order to prosper and to provide its people with the stability and peace, it is necessary, first of all, for the state to require all people with serious grievances to submit them to a court of law. Men can't be allowed to take the law into

their own hands. The law transcends the people, and the law requires an agency separated from the people and immune to their personal feelings.

Second, the courts of law must have the power of the state to enforce their decrees, or else anarchy prevails. Every decision of a court will make at least one part unhappy. While the court can never be infallible, the decision of the court must be protected, and appeal against its decision must be made within the structure of the courts, not outside them nor against them, otherwise anarchy prevails.

Third, the court must represent a transcendental concept of law and justice, a standard beyond man and above man, a law-structure derived, however faultily, from God. The whole idea of a judge and a court implies transcendence: to gain justice, something more than the victory of the most powerful litigant or party is required. If the judge or the court represent a political party or idea, or a class or a caste, instead of providing the transcendence a court requires, they simply magnify the original evil by compounding it.

This means, fourth, that the election or selection of the judges is not the real issue, but their character and faith of citizenry at large. If a strong faith has marked the social order, the judges have been usually superior men; if relativism and pragmatism prevail, the courts and judges have reflected it.

The institution of graded courts in Israel was pragmatic; it was Jethro's wise counsel, designed to relieve Moses of the pressure of cases.

Exo 18:13-16 ESV The next day Moses sat to judge the people, and the people stood around Moses from morning till evening. (14) When Moses' father-in-law saw all that he was doing for the people,

he said, "What is this that you are doing for the people? Why do you sit alone, and all the people stand around you from morning till evening?" (15) And Moses said to his father-in-law, "Because the people come to me to inquire of God; (16) when they have a dispute, they come to me and I decide between one person and another, and I make them know the statutes of God and his laws."

The graded courts were to govern the tens, the hundreds, and the thousands of Israel.

Exo 18:21 ESV Moreover, look for able men from all the people, men who fear God, who are trustworthy and hate a bribe, and place such men over the people as chiefs of thousands, of hundreds, of fifties, and of tens.

The ten, it seems, may have represented ten families. In this case every ten families would have had a judge to deal with minor problems and to refer other cases to a higher jurisdiction.

Moses made clear the purpose of courts of law.

Exo 18:15-16 ESV And Moses said to his father-in-law, "Because the people come to me to inquire of God; (16) when they have a dispute, they come to me and I decide between one person and another, and I make them know the statutes of God and his laws."

In this he echoed Yehovah's purpose.

Deu 16:18 ESV "You shall appoint judges and officers in all your towns that the LORD your God is giving you, according to your tribes, and they shall judge the people with righteous judgment.

God filled the judges with His spirit to signify they were prophets of God, called to speak for Yehovah in the ministry of justice.

Num 11:16 ESV Then the LORD said to Moses, "Gather for me seventy men of the elders of Israel, whom you know to be the elders of the people and officers over them, and bring them to the tent of meeting, and let them take their stand there with you.

The office of judge is a theocratic office. The godly judge is warned against bribes, perjury and miscarriages of justice.

Exo 23:6-8 ESV "You shall not pervert the justice due to your poor in his lawsuit. (7) Keep far from a false charge, and do not kill the innocent and righteous, for I will not acquit the wicked. (8) And you shall take no bribe, for a bribe blinds the clear-sighted and subverts the cause of those who are in the right.

Lev 19:15 ESV "You shall do no injustice in court. You shall not be partial to the poor or defer to the great, but in righteousness shall you judge your neighbor.

Lev 24:22 ESV You shall have the same rule for the sojourner and for the native, for I am the LORD your God."

Deu 12:12-18 ESV And you shall rejoice before the LORD your God, you and your sons and your daughters, your male servants and your female servants, and the Levite that is within your towns, since he has no portion or inheritance with you. (13) Take care that you do not offer your burnt offerings at any place that you see, (14) but at the place that the LORD will choose in one of your tribes, there you shall offer your burnt offerings, and there you shall do all that I am commanding you. (15) "However, you may slaughter and eat meat within any of your towns, as much as you desire, according to the blessing of the LORD your God that he has given you. The unclean and the clean may

eat of it, as of the gazelle and as of the deer. (16) Only you shall not eat the blood; you shall pour it out on the earth like water. (17) You may not eat within your towns the tithe of your grain or of your wine or of your oil, or the firstborn of your herd or of your flock, or any of your vow offerings that you vow, or your freewill offerings or the contribution that you present, (18) but you shall eat them before the LORD your God in the place that the LORD your God will choose, you and your son and your daughter, your male servant and your female servant, and the Levite who is within your towns. And you shall rejoice before the LORD your God in all that you undertake.

Deu 16:18-20 ESV "You shall appoint judges and officers in all your towns that the LORD your God is giving you, according to your tribes, and they shall judge the people with righteous judgment. (19) You shall not pervert justice. You shall not show partiality, and you shall not accept a bribe, for a bribe blinds the eyes of the wise and subverts the cause of the righteous. (20) Justice, and only justice, you shall follow, that you may live and inherit the land that the LORD your God is giving you.

Deu 25:1 ESV "If there is a dispute between men and they come into court and the judges decide between them, acquitting the innocent and condemning the guilty,

Deu 27:25 ESV "'Cursed be anyone who takes a bribe to shed innocent blood.' And all the people shall say, 'Amen.'

The judge is secondarily an officer of the state, he is primarily an office of Yehovah. Ungodly judges are to be feared and hated: they represent a particularly fearful and ugly

form of evil, and their abuse of office is a deadly cancer to any society.

Responsibility of Judges and Rulers

A basic premise of Biblical law appears in a law of central importance. It is the responsibility of judges and leaders to right every wrong, whether the culprit is located or not.

Deu 21:1-9 ESV "If in the land that the LORD your God is giving you to possess someone is found slain, lying in the open country, and it is not known who killed him, (2) then your elders and your judges shall come out, and they shall measure the distance to the surrounding cities. (3) And the elders of the city that is nearest to the slain man shall take a heifer that has never been worked and that has not pulled in a yoke. (4) And the elders of that city shall bring the heifer down to a valley with running water, which is neither plowed nor sown, and shall break the heifer's neck there in the valley. (5) Then the priests, the sons of Levi, shall come forward, for the LORD your God has chosen them to minister to him and to bless in the name of the LORD, and by their word every dispute and every assault shall be settled. (6) And all the elders of that city nearest to the slain man shall wash their hands over the heifer whose neck was broken in the valley, (7) and they shall testify, 'Our hands did not shed this blood, nor did our eyes see it shed. (8) Accept atonement, O LORD, for your people Israel, whom you have redeemed, and do not set the guilt of innocent blood in the midst of your people Israel, so that their blood guilt be atoned for.' (9) So you shall purge the guilt of innocent blood from your midst, when you do what is right in the sight of the LORD.

The fact that the animal's neck was broken is symbolic of the punishment that would have been inflicted on the perpetrator if he were found. If the murderer were subsequently found the death penalty would still be executed upon him.

There are things that appear in the examination of this law that are of particular importance.

1. The entire community has a responsibility to right the wrongs committed within its jurisdiction. This is an aspect of the police power of the citizenry.
2. If the community can't locate the guilty party, then it must take steps to right the wrong all the same, or else *it* becomes guilty, along with its courts and rulers. The point of the ceremony is to "put away the guilt of innocent blood". (Deu. 21:9) In this sense only is there collective guilt.
3. This is case law and must be understood in terms of its basic principal, restitution. The law clearly affirms that crime must be atoned for, and the wrong righted. There are two aspects of restitution; one is capital punishment, in the case of murder. The second is the aspect of monetary restitution. (Exo. 21:30-32).
4. The presence of the priests in the court is to be noted. Levites were regularly assigned to all courts as a part of the implied requirements of the law of Moses. In the determination and application of the law, these Levites were authoritative; the civil judges dealt with the guilt of the criminal and the hearing of evidence, the Levites with the specific nature of the application of the law.
5. With respect to the trial of jealousy, according to Hosea 4:14, when guilt becomes prevalent, God's specific judgment of guilty wives is replaced

with a general judgment. The ceremony of breaking the heifer's neck ended about the same time as the trial of jealousy, in the first century A.D.

The Messiah's atonement to Yehovah is his act of restitution for all humanity; by his perfect obedience to God's law, and his vicarious death for the elect, Jesus made restitution for his people. The elect will make restitution between man and man as their response to Yehovah's grace. Men who have no atonement with Yehovah through Jesus will make no atonement toward men.

The court

The law of atonement for all offenses makes clear the participation of a Levite, i.e., an expert in the laws of Yehovah, a theologian, in the civil courts. The presence of the Levites didn't mean a confusion of church and state: it meant rather the total permeation of church and state, as well as every other institution, by the authority of God's word.

The Levites in question were experts in God's law, lawyers. The frequent reference to lawyers in the New Testament was precisely to these experts who were members of the court. The law required this:

Deu 17:8-11 ESV "If any case arises requiring decision between one kind of homicide and another, one kind of legal right and another, or one kind of assault and another, any case within your towns that is too difficult for you, then you shall arise and go up to the place that the LORD your God will choose. (9) And you shall come to the Levitical priests and to the judge who is in office in those days, and you shall consult them, and they shall declare to you the decision. (10) Then you shall do according to what they declare to you from that place that the

LORD will choose. And you shall be careful to do according to all that they direct you. (11) According to the instructions that they give you, and according to the decision which they pronounce to you, you shall do. You shall not turn aside from the verdict that they declare to you, either to the right hand or to the left.

The only authority wherewith the church (of Israel or of Jesus) can "bind" or "loose" is the written law of God. The reference of Jesus was clearly to this law when he spoke of binding and loosing:

Mat 16:17-18 ESV And Jesus answered him, "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven. (18) And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

Mat 18:18 ESV Truly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.

The keys of the kingdom are not neither an episcopal or papal power per se' nor private interpretation: they are the law as the only instrument of true power under God, not the church, which binds or looses men, and only as the church faithfully declares the law is there any true binding or loosing.

The state similarly can't bind or loose men apart from the law-word of God, it is itself bound, that is, it is itself under judgment. In order for the state to rightly bind or loose it must submit to the law-order of Yehovah.

The procedure of the court

The place of the court was at the city gates.

Deu 21:19 ESV then his father and his mother shall take hold of him and bring him out to the elders of his city at the gate of the place where he lives,

Deu 22:15 ESV then the father of the young woman and her mother shall take and bring out the evidence of her virginity to the elders of the city in the gate.

Deu 25:7 ESV And if the man does not wish to take his brother's wife, then his brother's wife shall go up to the gate to the elders and say, 'My husband's brother refuses to perpetuate his brother's name in Israel; he will not perform the duty of a husband's brother to me.'

Amo 5:12 ESV For I know how many are your transgressions and how great are your sins-- you who afflict the righteous, who take a bribe, and turn aside the needy in the gate.

Amo 5:15 ESV Hate evil, and love good, and establish justice in the gate; it may be that the LORD, the God of hosts, will be gracious to the remnant of Joseph.

Zec 8:16 ESV These are the things that you shall do: Speak the truth to one another; render in your gates judgments that are true and make for peace;

The appellate courts were at the porch of judgment at the king's palace.

1Ki 7:7 ESV And he made the Hall of the Throne where he was to pronounce judgment, even the Hall of Judgment. It was finished with cedar from floor to rafters.

Court was held publicly. The concept of closed courts in non-biblical and goes against the principals of open justice contained in scripture.

Job makes reference to court procedure as well.

Job 31:35 ESV Oh, that I had one to hear me! (Here is my signature! Let the Almighty answer me!) Oh, that I had the indictment written by my adversary!

Written charges and records were thus an early aspect of court procedure in order to fix the fine points of evidence and testimony.

Contempt of court was forbidden as long as the court was godly in nature.

Exo 22:28 ESV "You shall not revile God, nor curse a ruler of your people.

Radical rejections of the courts authority were punishable by death.

Deu 17:12-13 ESV The man who acts presumptuously by not obeying the priest who stands to minister there before the LORD your God, or the judge, that man shall die. So you shall purge the evil from Israel. (13) And all the people shall hear and fear and not act presumptuously again.

Witnesses had to take an oath before testifying.

Exo 22:10-11 ESV "If a man gives to his neighbor a donkey or an ox or a sheep or any beast to keep safe, and it dies or is injured or is driven away, without anyone seeing it, (11) an oath by the LORD shall be between them both to see whether or not he has put his hand to his neighbor's property. The owner shall accept the oath, and he shall not make restitution.

The oath was a conditional curse, with a specified penalties for violation.

Lev 6:1-7 ESV The LORD spoke to Moses, saying, (2) "If anyone sins and commits a breach of faith against the LORD by deceiving his neighbor in a matter of deposit or security, or through robbery, or if he has oppressed his neighbor (3) or has found something lost and lied about it, swearing falsely--in any of all the things that people do and sin thereby-- (4) if he has sinned and has realized his guilt and will restore what he took by robbery or what he got by oppression or the deposit that was committed to him or the lost thing that he found (5) or anything about which he has sworn falsely, he shall restore it in full and shall add a fifth to it, and give it to him to whom it belongs on the day he realizes his guilt. (6) And he shall bring to the priest as his compensation to the LORD a ram without blemish out of the flock, or its equivalent for a guilt offering. (7) And the priest shall make atonement for him before the LORD, and he shall be forgiven for any of the things that one may do and thereby become guilty."

Cases could be appealed to the highest court in the land, to Moses, the judges of the nation, or the king.

1Ki 3:9 ESV Give your servant therefore an understanding mind to govern your people, that I may discern between good and evil, for who is able to govern this your great people?"

Indeed the most important function of the chief magistrate or authority in a nation was, in Biblical law, the duty to function as a final court of appeals. We can't understand the true greatness of Solomon and his reign without recognition of this fact. King Solomon

pleased God by desiring, above all else, to be a wise chief justice of Israel.

1Ki 3:5-15 ESV At Gibeon the LORD appeared to Solomon in a dream by night, and God said, "Ask what I shall give you." (6) And Solomon said, "You have shown great and steadfast love to your servant David my father, because he walked before you in faithfulness, in righteousness, and in uprightness of heart toward you. And you have kept for him this great and steadfast love and have given him a son to sit on his throne this day. (7) And now, O LORD my God, you have made your servant king in place of David my father, although I am but a little child. I do not know how to go out or come in. (8) And your servant is in the midst of your people whom you have chosen, a great people, too many to be numbered or counted for multitude. (9) Give your servant therefore an understanding mind to govern your people, that I may discern between good and evil, for who is able to govern this your great people?" (10) It pleased the Lord that Solomon had asked this. (11) And God said to him, "Because you have asked this, and have not asked for yourself long life or riches or the life of your enemies, but have asked for yourself understanding to discern what is right, (12) behold, I now do according to your word. Behold, I give you a wise and discerning mind, so that none like you has been before you and none like you shall arise after you. (13) I give you also what you have not asked, both riches and honor, so that no other king shall compare with you, all your days. (14) And if you will walk in my ways, keeping my statutes and my commandments, as your father David walked, then I will lengthen your days." (15) And Solomon awoke, and behold, it was a dream. Then he came to Jerusalem and stood before the ark of the covenant of the Lord, and offered up burnt

offerings and peace offerings, and made a feast for all his servants.

Solomon, by providing a godly and practical wisdom as judge in all cases appearing before him, ensured thereby that the final court of appeals in Israel would be a court of justice. The result was a great confidence amongst the peoples and a prosperity under the conditions of justice.

Even though arrests could be made on the Sabbath trials were held only during other days of the week.

Num 15:32-36 ESV While the people of Israel were in the wilderness, they found a man gathering sticks on the Sabbath day. (33) And those who found him gathering sticks brought him to Moses and Aaron and to all the congregation. (34) They put him in custody, because it had not been made clear what should be done to him. (35) And the LORD said to Moses, "The man shall be put to death; all the congregation shall stone him with stones outside the camp." (36) And all the congregation brought him outside the camp and stoned him to death with stones, as the LORD commanded Moses.

The right to a speedy trial, to justice without delay, was not only a feature of the public hearings of the court, but also stressed, as an instrument of sound administration, by Artaxerxes in his orders to Ezra.

Ezr 7:26 ESV Whoever will not obey the law of your God and the law of the king, let judgment be strictly executed on him, whether for death or for banishment or for confiscation of his goods or for imprisonment."

This order brought together Persian authority and law with Hebrew law and tradition.

Since in Biblical law the function of the state is to be the ministry of justice, the highest office in the state was inseparable from justice and the courts. Administration, now most closely associated with the highest office in a state, was then a function reserved to officers of the king, members of the harem, eunuchs and others.

The basic functions of the chief officers of the land, whether a judge in the earlier era, or a king later, were twofold, to be a military leader, and to be the chief justice of the country. The military office was not a constant one and could be delegated as in the case of David with Joab.

Moses was the chief justice of Israel, a judge. The tribal leaders were various administrative heads of the nation; their "federal union" under Moses and Joshua was essentially military and judicial. They were under one law, and Moses was the chief justice of that federal union as well as its supreme commander. The military functions Moses delegated to Joshua; the legal responsibilities Moses himself discharged.

Samuel, as chief justice, made a circuit of the entire country annually to bring justice to the people, to ensure the right to appeal by making appeal immediately available.

1Sa 7:16-17 ESV And he went on a circuit year by year to Bethel, Gilgal, and Mizpah. And he judged Israel in all these

places. (17) Then he would return to Ramah, for his home was there, and there also he judged Israel. And he built there an altar to the LORD.

The judge was not an impartial referee but a partisan champion of the law of God, actively concerned with bringing Yehovah's justice to bear on every situation.

2Ch 6:23 ESV then hear from heaven and act and judge your servants, repaying the guilty by bringing his conduct on his own head, and vindicating the righteous by rewarding him according to his righteousness.

The judgment of the court

The judgments of the court in Biblical law are of two kinds: first, judgments of money and property, to make restitution, and, second, judgments upon the person, from corporal to capital punishment. It is important to recognize that in Biblical law the judgments are the judgments of God.

Deu 1:17 ESV You shall not be partial in judgment. You shall hear the small and the great alike. You shall not be intimidated by anyone, for the judgment is God's. And the case that is too hard for you, you shall bring to me, and I will hear it.'

The judgment of the court is the judgment of God whenever faithfully delivered. Because the court is so closely identified with the activity of God, the judges themselves are referred to as "gods" in scripture.

Psa 82:1 ESV A Psalm of Asaph. God has taken his place in the divine council; in the midst of the gods he holds judgment:

Judges are the congregation of Yehovah. They are an assembly of men He has called to represent Him in justice; through them, God gives judgment or justice. If the court fails to give the judgment of God by its apostasy from God, it will inevitably give the judgment of men in terms of satanic principals of independence and lawlessness.

Judges by their offices are made into gods, and sons of God.

Psa 82:6 ESV I said, "You are gods, sons of the Most High, all of you;

By their failure to render the judgment of God, they shall perish.

Psa 82:7 ESV nevertheless, like men you shall die, and fall like any prince."

The plea of Asaph in the face of false judges is this:

Psa 82:8 ESV Arise, O God, judge the earth; for you shall inherit all the nations!

Jesus declared that the judges are those unto whom the word of God came, and scripture cannot be broken.

Joh 10:35 ESV If he called them gods to whom the word of God came--and Scripture cannot be broken--

The Bible is a book, among other things, for the organization of civil society in terms of the word of Yehovah. It is attempting to break scripture to deny its civil application, or the role of judges under God; and to limit its application to the church and purely personal piety is surely heresy.

The test of the judges as sons of God is to do the work of God, to dispense justice in terms of God's law-word. The

test of Jesus himself is similar. He does the work that the Father ordained for him.

Joh 10:37-38 ESV If I am not doing the works of my Father, then do not believe me; (38) but if I do them, even though you do not believe me, believe the works, that you may know and understand that the Father is in me and I am in the Father."

In both cases the test is the same. A false Messiah would not do the work ordained by God in His word, the Bible; because Jesus came in the perfect fulfillment of the prophetic word, he and none other is the Messiah of God the Father. Similarly a false judge will not function as a son of God, to render justice strictly in terms of God's law-word, whereas a godly judge will render judgment only in those terms.

The judgments of God in His word must become the judgments of His people. Only as a people are recalled to God and His order can they expect benefits of that order. According to Solomon:

Pro 29:18 ESV Where there is no prophetic vision the people cast off restraint, but blessed is he who keeps the law.

Vision here is equated with keeping the law. God's law is a total law; it isn't limited to a segment of creation such as man's private life, his church life, or any other partial area. When men, in terms of Yehovah's law, deliver the judgments of Yehovah in their homes, churches, schools, vocations, and in the state, then too the courts will deliver the judgments of Yehovah's total law.

Perfection

A declaration in the law reads:

Deu 18:13 ESV You shall be blameless before the LORD your God,

This is restated by Jesus in the sermon on the mount.

Mat 5:48 ESV You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

We aren't told to do something we can't do. We are told that Noah was perfect.

Gen 6:9 ESV These are the generations of Noah. Noah was a righteous man, blameless in his generation. Noah walked with God.

Abraham was called to be perfect.

Gen 17:1 ESV When Abram was ninety-nine years old the LORD appeared to Abram and said to him, "I am God Almighty; walk before me, and be blameless,

In Psalms there is reference made to the perfect man.

Psa 37:37 ESV Mark the blameless and behold the upright, for there is a future for the man of peace.

David declared he would behave wisely in a perfect way.

Psa 101:2 ESV I will ponder the way that is blameless. Oh when will you come to me? I will walk with integrity of heart within my house;

The Old Testament words translated as "perfect" mean upright, having integrity, blameless, and the New Testament words have the meaning of mature, complete. There is no reference here to

sinlessness. This is a state we will never reach as human beings.

We can be blameless in terms of God's purpose but we will never be faultless. The influence of pietism has been an important one in modern history, and it has borne false witness concerning God's requirements. It's emphasis on sinless perfection has in fact begotten sin. Where men expect a sinless perfection of other men, they are readily led into a sinful intolerance of human frailties.

There is a low level of tolerance with children, neighbors, husbands, wives, friends, and associates. Instead of solving problems this kind of perfectionism aggravates them. Giving an exaggerated emphasis on human frailties is to bear false witness concerning them.

The law here is plain-spoken:

Gal 6:2 ESV Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.

This has reference very clearly to our faults and weaknesses.

Gal 6:3-5 ESV For if anyone thinks he is something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself. (4) But let each one test his own work, and then his reason to boast will be in himself alone and not in his neighbor. (5) For each will have to bear his own load.

We all need correction from time to time, but much of the time, we must live together mindful of our common frailties and work together to gain that maturity which comes from seeking first the kingdom of God and His righteousness.

Mat 6:32 ESV For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all.

Our greatest strength is thus in what is termed "perfection" and which means maturity in terms of god's purpose which gains God's blessing even amidst serious troubles. Maturity is the ability to grow in terms of our experiences and to use them to draw closer to God's purpose for us.

Without that maturity, no cause can survive. Without the ability to grow in terms of a goal, no cause can endure merely by rooting out the subversive elements. The salt that has lost its savor is good for nothing but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men. (Mat. 5:13)

There is no divine protection for men and nations who lose their calling and savor. In fact, there is no escaping judgment:

Amo 5:19 ESV as if a man fled from a lion, and a bear met him, or went into the house and leaned his hand against the wall, and a serpent bit him.

Obey ALL the law. Do no harm to your neighbor and be a truthful and faithful servant of the one True God.

Amen Yehovah!