

The Law of God is the Will of God

IN PSALMS and the Old Testament, the "Law" of God means much more than the Ten Commandments and those rites for worship and conduct in Leviticus which were abrogated by the New Testament. The Law is *The Torah*, the first five books of the Bible, the Pentateuch, that is, the historical books: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy.

THE WILL OF GOD

In **Psalm 119** [118 in the Vulgate], "Law" and its various synonyms are to be **understood in the widest sense** of revealed teaching as handed on by the prophets. This psalm was one of the most remarkable monuments of the Israelitic devotion to Divine Revelation, to the Will of God and His plan.

The 176 verses of Psalm 119 were a little easier to memorize with a new letter of the 22 in the Hebrew alphabet to start each of the 22 groups, each of 8 verses: Aleph, Beth, Ghimel, Daleth... ABGD... (note: G, not C). In his Bible translation (not used here), Msgr Ronald Knox used our ABCD... for the 22 sets of 8 verses each, neatly omitting QXYZ.

Each verse except for v. 122 has one of the words used in the Torah. In our *Liturgy of the Hours*, the Grail Version has *law, will, ways, precept, rulings, commands, decrees, statutes*.

In the Jerusalem Bible, these are: *decree, precept, statute, commandment, promise, word, judgement, way*.

ALL THESE WORDS remind us of the Will of God for us in Christ's new and everlasting Covenant in His Church.

In the Vulgate Latin, verses 1-8 are:

- ¹ alleluia **ALEPH** beati immaculati in via qui ambulant in lege Domini
- ² beati qui scrutantur testimonia eius in toto corde exquirent eum
- ³ non enim qui operantur iniquitatem in viis eius ambulaverunt
- ⁴ tu mandasti **mandata** tua custodire nimis
- ⁵ utinam dirigantur viae meae ad custodiendas **iustificaciones** tuas
- ⁶ tunc non confundar cum perspexero in omnibus **mandatis** tuis
- ⁷ confitebor tibi in directione cordis in eo quod didici **iudicia** iustitiae tuae
- ⁸ **iustificaciones** tuas custodiam non me derelinquas usquequaque

The RSV has: *law, testimonis, precepts, statutes, commandments, ordinances, statutes*, in each group of 8 verses:

1 ALEPH: Blessed are those whose way is blameless, who walk in the law of the LORD

² Blessed are those who keep his testimonies, who seek him with their whole heart,

³ who also do no wrong, but walk in his ways!

⁴ Thou hast commanded thy precepts to be kept diligently.

⁵ O that my ways may be steadfast in keeping thy statutes!

⁶ Then I shall not be put to shame, having my eyes fixed on all thy commandments.

⁷ I will praise thee with an upright heart, when I learn thy righteous ordinances.

⁸ I will observe thy statutes; O forsake me not utterly!

9 BETH: How can a young man keep his way pure? By guarding it according to thy word.

¹⁰ With my whole heart I seek thee; let me not wander from thy commandments!

¹¹ I have laid up thy word in my heart, that I might not sin against thee

¹² Blessed be thou, O LORD; teach me thy statutes!

¹³ With my lips I declare all the ordinances of thy mouth.

¹⁴ In the way of thy testimonies I delight as much as in all riches.

¹⁵ I will meditate on thy precepts, and fix my eyes on thy ways.

¹⁶ I will delight in thy statutes; I will not forget thy word.

17 GHIMEL: Deal bountifully with thy servant, that I may live and observe thy word. ¹⁸ Open my eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law. ¹⁹ I am a sojourner on earth; hide not thy commandments from me! ²⁰ My soul is consumed with longing for thy ordinances at all times. ²¹ Thou dost rebuke the insolent, accursed ones, who wander from thy commandments; ²² take away from me their scorn and contempt, for I have kept thy testimonies. ²³ Even though princes sit plotting against me, thy servant will meditate on thy statutes. ²⁴ Thy testimonies are my delight, they are my counselors.

25 DALETH: My soul cleaves to the dust; revive me according to thy word! ²⁶ When I told of my ways, thou didst answer me; teach me thy statutes! ²⁷ Make me understand the way of thy precepts, and I will meditate on thy wondrous works. ²⁸ My soul melts away for sorrow; strengthen me according to thy word! ²⁹ Put false ways far from me; and graciously teach me thy law! ³⁰ I have chosen the way of faithfulness, I set thy ordinances before me. ³¹ I cleave to thy testimonies, O LORD; let me not be put to shame! ³² I will run in the way of thy commandments when thou enlargest my understanding!

33 Teach me, O LORD, the way of thy statutes; and I will keep it to the end. ³⁴ Give me understanding, that I may keep thy law and observe it with my whole heart. ³⁵ Lead me in the path of thy commandments, for I delight in it. ³⁶ Incline my heart to thy testimonies, and not to gain! ³⁷ Turn my eyes from looking at vanities; and give me life in thy ways. ³⁸ Confirm to thy servant thy promise, which is for those who fear thee. ³⁹ Turn away the reproach which I dread; for thy ordinances are good. ⁴⁰ Behold, I long for thy precepts; in thy righteousness give me life!

41 Let thy steadfast love come to me, O LORD, thy salvation according to thy promise; ⁴² then shall I have an answer for those who taunt me, for I trust in thy word. ⁴³ And take not the word of truth utterly out of my mouth, for my hope is in thy ordinances. ⁴⁴ I will keep thy law continually, for ever and ever; ⁴⁵ and I shall walk at liberty, for I have sought thy precepts. ⁴⁶ I will also speak of thy testimonies before kings, and shall not be put to shame; ⁴⁷ for I find my delight in thy commandments, which I love. ⁴⁸ I revere thy commandments, which I love, and I will meditate on thy statutes.

49 Remember thy word to thy servant, in which thou hast made me hope. ⁵⁰ This is my comfort in my affliction that thy promise gives me life. ⁵¹ Godless men utterly deride me, but I do not turn away from thy law. ⁵² When I think of thy ordinances from of old, I take comfort, O LORD. ⁵³ Hot indignation seizes me because of the wicked, who forsake thy law. ⁵⁴ Thy statutes have been my songs in the house of my pilgrimage. ⁵⁵ I remember thy name in the night, O LORD, and keep thy law. ⁵⁶ This blessing has fallen to me, that I have kept thy precepts.

57 The LORD is my portion; I promise to keep thy words.

⁵⁸ I entreat thy favor with all my heart; be gracious to me according to thy promise. ⁵⁹ When I think of thy ways, I turn my feet to thy testimonies; ⁶⁰ I hasten and do not delay to keep thy commandments. ⁶¹ Though the cords of the wicked ensnare me, I do not forget thy law. ⁶² At midnight I rise to praise thee, because of thy righteous ordinances. ⁶³ I am a companion of all who fear thee, of those who keep thy precepts. ⁶⁴ The earth, O LORD, is full of thy steadfast love; teach me thy statutes!

65 Thou hast dealt well with thy servant, O LORD, according to thy word. ⁶⁶ Teach me good judgment and knowledge, for I believe in thy commandments. ⁶⁷ Before I was afflicted I went astray; but now I keep thy word. ⁶⁸ Thou art good and doest good; teach me thy statutes. ⁶⁹ The godless besmear me with lies, but with my whole heart I keep thy precepts; ⁷⁰ their heart is gross like fat, but I delight in thy law.

⁷¹ It is good for me that I was afflicted, that I might learn thy statutes. ⁷² The law of thy mouth is better to me than thousands of gold and silver pieces.

⁷³ Thy hands have made and fashioned me; give me understanding that I may learn thy commandments. ⁷⁴ Those who fear thee shall see me and rejoice, because I have hoped in thy word. ⁷⁵ I know, O LORD, that thy judgments are right, and that in faithfulness thou hast afflicted me. ⁷⁶ Let thy steadfast love be ready to comfort me according to thy promise to thy servant. ⁷⁷ Let thy mercy come to me, that I may live; for thy law is my delight. ⁷⁸ Let the godless be put to shame, because they have subverted me with guile; as for me, I will meditate on thy precepts. ⁷⁹ Let those who fear thee turn to me, that they may know thy testimonies. ⁸⁰ May my heart be blameless in thy statutes, that I may not be put to shame!

⁸¹ My soul languishes for thy salvation; I hope in thy word. ⁸² My eyes fail with watching for thy promise; I ask, "When wilt thou comfort me?" ⁸³ For I have become like a wineskin in the smoke, yet I have not forgotten thy statutes. ⁸⁴ How long must thy servant endure? When wilt thou judge those who persecute me? ⁸⁵ Godless men have dug pitfalls for me, men who do not conform to thy law. ⁸⁶ All thy commandments are sure; they persecute me with falsehood; help me! ⁸⁷ They have almost made an end of me on earth; but I have not forsaken thy precepts. ⁸⁸ In thy steadfast love spare my life, that I may keep the testimonies of thy mouth.

⁸⁹ For ever, O LORD, thy word is firmly fixed in the heavens. ⁹⁰ Thy faithfulness endures to all generations; thou hast established the earth, and it stands fast. ⁹¹ By thy appointment they stand this day; for all things are thy servants. ⁹² If thy law had not been my delight, I should have perished in my affliction. ⁹³ I will never forget thy precepts; for by them thou hast given me life. ⁹⁴ I am thine, save me; for I have sought thy precepts. ⁹⁵ The wicked lie in wait to destroy me; but I consider thy testimonies. ⁹⁶ I have seen a limit to all perfection, but thy commandment is exceedingly broad.

⁹⁷ Oh, how I love thy law! It is my meditation all the day. ⁹⁸ Thy commandment makes me wiser than my enemies, for it is ever with me. ⁹⁹ I have more understanding than all my teachers, for thy testimonies are my meditation. ¹⁰⁰ I understand more than the aged, for I keep thy precepts. ¹⁰¹ I hold back my feet from every evil way, in order to keep thy word. ¹⁰² I do not turn aside from thy ordinances, for thou hast taught me. ¹⁰³ How sweet are thy words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth! ¹⁰⁴ Through thy precepts I get understanding; therefore I hate every false way.

¹⁰⁵ Thy word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path. ¹⁰⁶ I have sworn an oath and confirmed it, to observe thy righteous ordinances. ¹⁰⁷ I am sorely afflicted; give me life, O LORD, according to thy word! ¹⁰⁸ Accept my offerings of praise, O LORD, and teach me thy ordinances. ¹⁰⁹ I hold my life in my hand continually, but I do not forget thy law. ¹¹⁰ The wicked have laid a snare for me, but I do not stray from thy precepts. ¹¹¹ Thy testimonies are my heritage for ever; yea, they are the joy of my heart. ¹¹² I incline my heart to perform thy statutes for ever, to the end.

¹¹³ I hate double-minded men, but I love thy law. ¹¹⁴ Thou art my hiding place and my shield; I hope in thy word. ¹¹⁵ Depart from me, you evildoers, that I may keep the commandments of my God. ¹¹⁶ Uphold me according to thy promise, that I may live, and let me not be put to shame in my hope! ¹¹⁷ Hold me up, that I may be safe and have regard for thy statutes continually! ¹¹⁸ Thou dost spurn all who go astray from thy statutes; yea, their cunning is in vain. ¹¹⁹ All the wicked of the earth thou dost count as dross; therefore I love thy testimonies. ¹²⁰ My flesh trembles for fear of thee, and I am afraid of thy judgments.

¹²¹ I have done what is just and right; do not leave me to my oppressors. ¹²² Be surety for thy servant for good; let not the godless oppress me. ¹²³ My eyes fail with watching for thy salvation, and for the fulfilment of thy righteous promise. ¹²⁴

Deal with thy servant according to thy steadfast love, and teach me thy statutes. ¹²⁵ I am thy servant; give me understanding, that I may know thy testimonies! ¹²⁶ It is time for the LORD to act, for thy law has been broken. ¹²⁷ Therefore I love thy commandments above gold, above fine gold. ¹²⁸ Therefore I direct my steps by all thy precepts; I hate every false way.

¹²⁹ Thy testimonies are wonderful; therefore my soul keeps them. ¹³⁰ The unfolding of thy words gives light; it imparts understanding to the simple. ¹³¹ With open mouth I pant, because I long for thy commandments. ¹³² Turn to me and be gracious to me, as is thy wont toward those who love thy name. ¹³³ Keep steady my steps according to thy promise, and let no iniquity get dominion over me. ¹³⁴ Redeem me from man's oppression, that I may keep thy precepts. ¹³⁵ Make thy face shine upon thy servant, and teach me thy statutes. ¹³⁶ My eyes shed streams of tears, because men do not keep thy law.

¹³⁷ Righteous art thou, O LORD, and right are thy judgments. ¹³⁸ Thou hast appointed thy testimonies in righteousness and in all faithfulness. ¹³⁹ My zeal consumes me, because my foes forget thy words. ¹⁴⁰ Thy promise is well tried, and thy servant loves it. ¹⁴¹ I am small and despised, yet I do not forget thy precepts. ¹⁴² Thy righteousness is righteous for ever, and thy law is true. ¹⁴³ Trouble and anguish have come upon me, but thy commandments are my delight. ¹⁴⁴ Thy testimonies are righteous for ever; give me understanding that I may live.

¹⁴⁵ With my whole heart I cry; answer me, O LORD! I will keep thy statutes. ¹⁴⁶ I cry to thee; save me, that I may observe thy testimonies. ¹⁴⁷ I rise before dawn and cry for help; I hope in thy words. ¹⁴⁸ My eyes are awake before the watches of the night, that I may meditate upon thy promise. ¹⁴⁹ Hear my voice in thy steadfast love; O LORD, in thy justice preserve my life. ¹⁵⁰ They draw near who persecute me with evil purpose; they are far from thy law. ¹⁵¹ But thou art near, O LORD, and all thy commandments are true. ¹⁵² Long have I known from thy testimonies that thou hast founded them for ever.

¹⁵³ Look on my affliction and deliver me, for I do not forget thy law. ¹⁵⁴ Plead my cause and redeem me; give me life according to thy promise! ¹⁵⁵ Salvation is far from the wicked, for they do not seek thy statutes. ¹⁵⁶ Great is thy mercy, O LORD; give me life according to thy justice. ¹⁵⁷ Many are my persecutors and my adversaries, but I do not swerve from thy testimonies. ¹⁵⁸ I look at the faithless with disgust, because they do not keep thy commands. ¹⁵⁹ Consider how I love thy precepts! Preserve my life according to thy steadfast love. ¹⁶⁰ The sum of thy word is truth; and every one of thy righteous ordinances endures for ever.

¹⁶¹ Princes persecute me without cause, but my heart stands in awe of thy words. ¹⁶² I rejoice at thy word like one who finds great spoil. ¹⁶³ I hate and abhor falsehood, but I love thy law. ¹⁶⁴ Seven times a day I praise thee for thy righteous ordinances. ¹⁶⁵ Great peace have those who love thy law; nothing can make them stumble. ¹⁶⁶ I hope for thy salvation, O LORD, and I do thy commandments. ¹⁶⁷ My soul keeps thy testimonies; I love them exceedingly. ¹⁶⁸ I keep thy precepts and testimonies, for all my ways are before thee.

¹⁶⁹ Let my cry come before thee, O LORD; give me understanding according to thy word! ¹⁷⁰ Let my supplication come before thee; deliver me according to thy word. ¹⁷¹ My lips will pour forth praise that thou dost teach me thy statutes. ¹⁷² My tongue will sing of thy word, for all thy commandments are right. ¹⁷³ Let thy hand be ready to help me, for I have chosen thy precepts. ¹⁷⁴ I long for thy salvation, O LORD, and thy law is my delight. ¹⁷⁵ Let me live, that I may praise thee, and let thy ordinances help me. ¹⁷⁶ I have gone astray like a lost sheep; seek thy servant, for I do not forget thy commandments.

In our Divine Office, the 22 parts of Psalam 119 [118] are spread out in separate Hours in the 4 week cycle of Psalms.
This helps us to sustain our attention and devotion.