

Jumping the Fence

Written by The Light

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John writes: "Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law...Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God" (1 John 3:4, 2 John 9). Sin is here defined as a violating of God's will. The words, "the transgression of the law" are translated from a single word in the Greek text, and is correctly rendered in many versions with one word—lawlessness. This suggests sin to be conduct which violates the restraints imposed by law—in this case, God's law.

It is interesting to study the etymology of the english "transgress." It is derived from the Latin, trans, meaning "across," and gradi, meaning "to step." Thus, to transgress is to "step across." In this application, we step across God's will.

To illustrate, picture Christianity as a parcel of ground enclosed by a fence. The fence will represent the bounds of God's law, and the area within the enclosure as all that is lawful to engage in. As long as one remains within the bounds of law (the fence), he does not sin. However, if he transgresses the law, he "steps across" the fence (law) and sins in so doing. He has stepped across that which was intended to restrain; he is outside God's will.

This is precisely what the apostle referred to in 2 John 9: "Whosoever trans-gresseth and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God." This is revised, "He that goeth onward," and "All who go beyond," thus clearly teaching that man is not at liberty to live or worship any way he might choose.

The verb "transgresseth" (goeth onward) in the original Greek also carries the meaning "to progress." The boasts of so many religious people that they are "progressive," actually serve as a warning to the conscientious Christian. Progress can only be good when in the direction of Christ. This would return us to primitive New Testament Christianity, and would completely separate us from the modernistic and worldly trends of religion today. Since more is required of us than to be "honest and sincere," should we not be content to worship in harmony with what we can read in God's Book? An unpretentious desire to live and to labor within the framework of law is not only highly commendable, it is the only way for us to please our Maker. Solomon said, "There is a way that seemeth right unto man, but the end thereof are the ways of death" (Prov.

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14:12).