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## PERVERTED DEMOCRACY AND RELIGIOUS EDUCATION.

What are the God-given functions of civil government? We answer: Civil government, whether monarchical or democratic, is instituted by God not only for the material, but also for the moral welfare of its citizens. "Righteousness"—civic righteousness—"exalteth a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people." Prov. 14, 34. Hence in the *locus classicus* on civil government, Rom. 13, 1—7, civil authorities are called God's ministers for them that do good, but revengers to execute wrath on them that do evil. When civil powers therefore issue and enforce laws that suppress all manner of lawlessness and vice, they are discharging a divine function and protecting that civic righteousness—the *justitia civilis*—that alone exalteth a nation. Where government suffers vice and immorality to go unpunished, even connives at public turpitude, there the State as well as the Church cannot thrive, but will finally perish. Hence Christians are enjoined 1 Tim. 2, 1—3 earnestly to pray for all them that have authority in civil matters over them, that they may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty. Says Luther (St. Louis Ed., IX, 922): "In the first place, pray for the civil magistrates. For the world needs nothing so much as a strict civil government. The world cannot be governed with the Gospel, for the Word is insufficient and too limited, it apprehends but a few; scarcely one among a thousand accepts it. Therefore you cannot establish secular government through it. . . . Where civil government does not strictly enforce its office, there every one will grab

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## MATERIALS FOR THE CATECHIST.

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### *THE FIFTH COMMANDMENT.* Qu. 45—48.

#### *III. Regard for Human Life.* Qu. 46b. 48.

A. "It is to be observed that not only he who does evil to his neighbor is guilty of violating this commandment, but he also who can do him good, anticipate, prevent, defend, and save him, so that no bodily evil or harm happen to him, and yet does it not." (L. C., 417.)— In Is. 58, 7 "hiding from" means "dodging," "not doing." "God properly calls all those murderers who do not afford counsel and help in distress and danger of body and life, and will pass a most terrible sentence upon them in the last day, as Christ Himself has announced, as He shall say (Matt. 25, 42 ff.): 'I was an hungred,' etc. That is, you would have suffered Me and Mine to die of hunger, thirst, and cold, would have suffered the wild beasts to tear us to pieces, or left us to decay in prison or perish in distress. What else is that but to reproach them as murderers and bloodhounds? For although you have not actually done all this, you have nevertheless, so far as you were concerned, suffered him to perish in

misfortune. It is just as if I saw some one struggling in deep water or one fallen into the fire, and could extend to him the hand to save him and pull him out, and yet refused to do it. Would I not appear even in the eyes of the world a murderer and a criminal? Therefore it is God's ultimate purpose that we suffer harm to befall no man, but show to every one love and all good." (L. C., 418.)—We have seen before that in a prohibition the contrary acts are implied as injunctions. Luther has summed up the injunctions in the words "helfen und foerdern in allen Leibesnoeten." The physical life and welfare, then, of human beings is to be made a matter of concern to us by this commandment.

B. What it means to render *help* in distress everybody knows, and the story of the Good Samaritan illustrates this beautifully, Luke 10, 33 f. Abraham's rescue of Lot, Gen. 14, 12 ff., affords another illustration.<sup>15)</sup> Feeding the hungry, housing the homeless, clothing the naked, Is. 58, 7;<sup>16)</sup> Matt. 25, 31 ff.,<sup>17)</sup> are helpful acts in bodily needs.

15) "In the misfortunes which came upon him, Lot must suffer the retribution for his misdeeds towards Abraham. But Abraham rewards his ingratitude with self-sacrificing magnanimity.—Abram, the man of peace of the previous chapter, the yielding child of peace, is instantly changed into a lion when the report comes to him that Lot, his brother, is a captive. One citizen of the kingdom of God is of so great importance in his esteem that he will attack a whole victorious army with his little band, and venture his own life and the lives of his servants upon the issue."

16) "It is well to observe that in vv. 6 and 7, which would describe the fasting that is well-pleasing to God, the prophet says nothing more of bodily mortification. He only names the works of righteousness toward the oppressed (v. 6), and beneficence toward the poor and needy. But one must not understand that he positively rejects fasting; when he says: 'Is not that a fasting I choose?' he assumes that there will be fasting. What follows: 'to loose,' etc., only says what should be combined with fasting, in contrast with the conduct of the Israelites in this respect. Nevertheless the prophet lays the chief stress just on the works mentioned in vv. 6, 7. He assumes that the practise of these works also costs a sacrifice either of bodily substance, or of inward resignation and subduing uncharitable inclinations. He that subdues the flesh to the will in this wise, practises the true 'afflicting of the soul.'"

17) Heubner points out that "the acts of love named in vv. 35, 36 are not such as require merely an outlay of money, but such as involve also the sacrifice of time, strength, rest, comfort, etc. On the other hand,

C. Luther's "foerdern" has been rendered "befriend." Literally, it means "to advance" a person. It is an act that goes beyond the rendering of immediate help urgently required. It is continuing the first direct help by mediate agencies. The difference between "helping" and "befriending" can be shown from the various acts of the Good Samaritan: he "helped" the unfortunate traveler when he bound up his wounds to ease the pain, conveyed him as carefully as possible to the inn, and tended him during the rest of that day and night; he "befriended" him when he engaged the service of the innkeeper for his ward.

D. "This has special reference to our enemies. For to do good to our friend is but a miserable heathen virtue, as Christ declares it. *Matt. 5, 46.*" (L. C., 418.)

1. We are not at all to regard the person of him who needs our help, but consider simply our brother in distress, *Is. 58, 7.*<sup>18)</sup> Any other consideration will at once feed the spirit of selfishness in us.

2. The test whether we have mastered our heart to this extent comes when we must render aid to our enemy, *Rom. 12, 20.* In such instances the genuineness of our Christianity is on trial. By overcoming our natural dislike we prove

a. That we are the children of the God who is impartially good to all and extends His bounties also to the evil, *Matt. 5, 44, 45.*

b. That we have separated our charities from that of mercenary worldlings, *Matt. 5, 46 f.*<sup>19)</sup>

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Webster and Wilkinson justly observe on v. 36 that the assistance to the sick and prisoners here is not healing and release, which only few could render, but visitation, sympathy, attention, which all can bestow. But whatever good they did, was done in faith and in humility, and consequently the product of divine grace. For charity is the daughter of faith, and faith is the gift of the Holy Spirit, who unites us to Christ." (Lange-Schaff.) — The Christian diaconate, inner mission, city mission, prison and hospital mission, etc., may read its program here.

18) The words "that thou hide not thyself from thy flesh" are "a trace of the broad, evangelical spirit that reigns in our passage. To the question, Who is my neighbor? the answer is given here: Every one who is of thy flesh. The answer does not run: every one who is of thy nation, or tribe (*Luke 10, 29 ff.*). Thus our prophet here, too, rises far above theoretic narrowness. (*Comp. Jas. 1, 27.*)" (Lange-Schaff.)

19) "The Lord appeals to the example of His Father, in order to show the nature and universality of highest love; while the publicans and

c. That we have confidence that love can overcome even the stubborn heart of our enemies, Rom. 12, 20 b. The "coals of fire" heaped on the head of our enemy are a strong figure to describe the penetrating pain of remorse and shame that is visited on the enemy by our helpful acts.<sup>20</sup> David's treatment of Saul at Hachilah is a case in point.

3. Reconciliation with an adversary, Matt. 5, 25, belongs under this head. The "adversary" is the legal accuser who hales one before the judgment-seat. That was the custom in the Orient. To "agree" with him means to show a disposition to stop the quarrel and compose the difference.

E. All this requires that "patient, gentle heart" of which Luther spoke before. The true friends and lovers of the Fifth Commandment are:

1. The *eleemones*, Matt. 5, 5, "they who suffer in love, or love in patience; they who in the strength of love, boldly yet meekly, meekly yet boldly, bear injustice, and thereby conquer."

2. The *præcis*, Matt. 5, 7. "They are the meek, who, having formerly been on the defensive, have now taken the offensive. The *meek* bear the injustice of the world; the *merciful* bravely address themselves to the wants of the world."

3. The *eirenopoioi*, Matt. 5, 9, not only those who are peaceably inclined, but who exert themselves to establish and maintain peace.

F. Eulogies of our Lord on the conduct of such people:

1. One has been pronounced already, when in the Sermon in the Mount He called them "blessed," *makarioi*, Matt. 5, 5. 7. 9. His statements are indeed paradoxes: men of the world do not so regard these people, but rather consider them foolish weaklings and sad fanatics. But Jesus says, such people are the real lords of the earth, v. 5. The patient, after all, rule in every society. Moreover, they receive many a comfort in return for the comfort which they minis-

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the heathen exemplify the egotism and narrow-mindedness of a selfish community—a sin of which the Pharisees also were guilty, and which they sought to invest with the halo of special sanctity." (Lange-Schaff.)

20) Various explanations of the "coals of fire" are recorded in Lange-Schaff *ad locum*. The best, which is also Luther's, is: "Thou wilt prepare him for the pain of penitence," for "a religious and moral crisis. He will bend his head as if fiery coals lay on it." (Hodge: "You will be taking the most effectual means of subduing him." Alford: "You will be taking the most effectual vengeance." But this thought is foreign to the context, which, in the preceding verse, requires us to lay aside all thoughts of vengeance.)

tered, v. 7. And lastly, they are adorned with the splendid title of "the sons of God": they are the true representatives and exponents of the religion of God and His Christ.

2. The other eulogy God will pronounce on these people at the last judgment, Matt. 25, 34—40. Their surprise at the greeting which they receive from the Lord shows that all their acts of charity were performed in a spirit of self-forgetfulness, as if they had been quite natural acts, like breathing, of which they took no account. D.

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