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## Doctrinal Theology.

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### ANTHROPOLOGY.

#### ETHICS.

##### I. THE MORAL LAW.

Sin is, according to the definition given in the Scriptures, the transgression of the law, ἀνομία,<sup>1)</sup> the departure or deviation from the law, as righteousness is conformity with the law. Thus also the prophet says: "*We have SINNED, and committed iniquity, and have done wickedly, and have rebelled, even BY DEPARTING FROM THY PRECEPTS and from thy judgments.*"<sup>2)</sup> Thus every transgression of the law is sin, and likewise nothing is sin which is not a transgression of the law. "*Where no law is there is no transgression.*"<sup>3)</sup> Hence, also, "*by the law there is knowledge of sin.*"<sup>4)</sup> This is true everywhere. Even in civil legislations crimes and misdemeanors presuppose law in the true sense of the term in the province of human justice. The violation of a mere semblance of law is not truly an offense, and when what has been enacted by a legislative body has failed of recognition in the courts because of its inconsistency with the funda-

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1) 1 John 3, 4.

2) Dan. 9, 5.

3) Rom. 4, 15.

4) Rom. 3, 20.

mental law, the constitution of the state or country, an act committed in transgression of such putative statutes is not condoned but declared a lawful act. Here, too, where there is no law there is no transgression of the law. But while the violation of a secular law is a crime, a transgression of the divine law is sin.

Law is the published will of the lawgiver, and the first requirement of the law is that it should be known by those who are under the law. Ignorance of the law is no excuse and does not exculpate the transgressor of the law but is itself an offense against the law. This, of course, presupposes that the law is really law, not the will of the lawgiver as inherent in his mind, but promulgated to those whom the law concerns, and in such a way that all *can* know the law, just as in other things that which all may know is public, even though actually unknown to some or many. And now God has manifested his will or published his law in the most effectual manner conceivable, when in the very act of creation he inscribed his law into the heart of man. Thus it is that man never existed without a knowledge of the law. Nor was the first positive law short of this essential, since God expressly said to man, "*Of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil thou shalt not eat of it.*"<sup>1)</sup> This special commandment of God was also present to the woman's mind as she was being tempted to transgress the manifest will of God.<sup>2)</sup> And even after the fall the law of God is still manifest in the human heart. "The Gentiles, which have not the Mosaic law, do by nature the things contained in the law, showing *the work of the law written in their hearts.*"<sup>3)</sup> That this knowledge of the law is imperfect in natural man under sin does not exonerate man when in his natural ignorance he fails to conform his acts with the entire norm of righteousness originally inscribed in the human heart. Here, too, the law having been once

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1) Gen. 2, 17.

2) Gen. 3, 3.

3) Rom. 2, 14. 15.

promulgated to its entire extent, ignorance is not an excuse. That the will of God as expressed in the natural law has been partially obliterated in the human heart is not of God but a consequence of sin for which man is responsible. And here, too, ignorance of the law is itself a violation of the law.

The first publication of the law was, however, most appropriate and in accordance with the wisdom of God, not only with reference to the subjects for whom the law was intended, but also with regard to the purpose for which the law was given.

Righteousness is conformity, sin is non-conformity, with the law, and the law is the will of the lawgiver published as the authoritative norm of the state, disposition, relations and acts of all those who are under the law. This is the nature of law everywhere. Where there is no lawgiver with legislative authority there is and can be no law. Again, where there is a lawgiver it is his will which constitutes the law. It is not his opinion, his understanding, but his will, the determining power of his mind. In an absolute monarchy the will of the monarch, in whom the legislative authority is vested, is the law of the realm. In the State of Missouri, where the legislative authority vests in the people of the State, the will of the people is the law of the State, and the proper form of enacting a law is: "*Be it enacted by the people of the State of Missouri,*" etc. To doubt whether a certain enactment be the will of the legislative power is to doubt the validity of what is purported to be a law, just as to doubt the legislative authority of a monarch or of a body politic is to doubt the validity of all the legislative enactments of such power, and to deny the one is to deny the other, as to establish the one is to establish the other.

Again, the will of the lawgiver, in order to be law, must be duly published as law or as an authoritative norm whereby the state, disposition, relations, and acts of those who are under the law shall be determined. Law is not the will of the legislator as inherent in himself, but as pub-

lished or rendered cognizable to those who are under the law. But here it should be noted that the publication of the law does not necessarily imply its being brought to the knowledge of all, but only its being made knowable to all whom it concerns. Thus to inscribe a statute upon a tablet to be concealed in a hidden place would not constitute the publication of a law. While the mode of publication may vary, its essence must always be some act or process whereby the will of the lawgiver is made freely accessible to the subjects, whether this be a public announcement by a crier, or an exhibition in writing at a public place, or a publication in a published statute-book or the session acts of a legislature. But when the law has been published it becomes the duty of all whom it concerns to learn what the law says.

Again, it is of the very nature of a law that it is binding upon all those and only those whom it concerns. A law of the United States is binding upon all those who are domiciled or reside or sojourn within the confines of this country or in any place considered part and parcel of its territory or subject to its legislative authority, while on the other hand the laws of this country are not binding upon the subjects of a foreign power while within the territory of that power. And, furthermore, the stringency of a law implies that the state, disposition, relations and acts of those who are subject to the law shall be determined according to such law to the extent to which the law is law or to which the lawgiving power would have the subject determined by its will. Thus the civil status of a person is determined by the law of his or her domicil, and an act performed in violation of a law where that law is in force is an unlawful act subjecting its perpetrator to the penalty of the law.

To deny that God is the authoritative legislator of all his creatures would be a denial of his divinity. He is the Lord Supreme, and his will is the will of infinite righteousness and justice and holiness, conformity with which is the first duty of all his subjects. A deviation from his sover-

eign will is an insurrection in his kingdom. Hence it is expressly stated in the Scriptures that man is held to *do the will* of God, the *will* of the Father in heaven.<sup>1)</sup> Above God there is no law. He is his own moral norm, determining his own acts in full conformity with himself. Neither can any moral standard rightfully claim moral recognition when in conflict with the sovereign will of God, and all legislative authority must be ultimately derived from him. Thus civil governments are endowed with legislative authority, inasmuch as *by him kings reign and princes decree justice;*<sup>2)</sup> *he setteth up kings;*<sup>3)</sup> and *the powers that be are ordained of God.*<sup>4)</sup> On the other hand the church is not equipped with legislative power, and therefore can not rightfully establish laws binding upon its members, the only authoritative standard and rule of life in the church being God's own word as published in the Scriptures.

In this, too, the divine law is law as above defined; it is the established will of the lawgiver, not the will of God as tantamount to his divine essence, or as hidden in the inscrutable depths of his counsels. When God created man he also made known to him his holy will, establishing his law in the heart of man. Man being an intelligent and rational creature, endowed with a will of his own, his con-created righteousness of necessity presupposes his knowledge of the will of God, conformity with which was to be his righteousness. The heavenly luminaries and all the mul-

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1) Matt. 7, 21: "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven." Matt. 12, 50: "For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother." 1 Thess. 4, 3: "For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication." Hebr. 10, 36: "For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise." Hebr. 13, 21: "(The God of peace) make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is well-pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen."

2) Prov. 8, 15.

3) Dan. 2, 21.

4) Rom. 13, 1.

titude of beings in the vegetable and animal kingdoms were also created very good, being what and as they should be according to their Maker's will. But this conformity was not the obedience of intelligent and rational beings. Hence there is no moral law for an oak-tree or a lion and a lamb, and no righteousness, properly speaking, in any of these creatures. Man, however, came into being with the power of voluntarily conforming the affections of his heart, the direction of his will, and all his acts as voluntary acts to the sovereign will of God as an intelligent person, and hence his righteousness is in its full concept conclusive evidence of man's knowledge of the will of God, a knowledge which would have been impossible without a promulgation or communication of such will of God to primeval man. And again, since man was not to become righteous after he had entered into his personal life, but was righteous from the very beginning of his existence, being created very good in con-created righteousness, his knowledge of the will of God must also have been concreated in him. God published his law to man by inscribing it upon the tablets of his heart in the very act of man's creation. Thus we learn from the Mosaic record that Adam, when united with the woman whom God had made to be a helpmeet unto him was not for a moment in doubt what the proper relation between him and her should be. The law of God by which this relation should be regulated and the dispositions and acts thereto pertaining should be determined was perfectly clear to the mind of primeval man.<sup>1)</sup> And even after many generations the Apostle says that the work of the law is written in the hearts of men,<sup>2)</sup> and that the law thus made known to them also serves the purpose of the law determining the acts of those who are subject to the law, so that even the Gentiles, which have not the Mosaic written law, *do by nature the things contained in the law.*<sup>3)</sup> Why by nature? Because

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1) Gen. 2, 23—25.

2) Rom. 2, 15.

3) Rom. 2, 14.

the law of God or what remains thereof after the obliterating influence of sin is in man's heart by nature, handed down by natural propagation from our first parents, to whom the same law was made known in the act of creation.

This mode of publication is itself a wonderful manifestation of the wisdom of God, whereby he employs the most appropriate means for the achievement of his ends. No finite understanding would have devised a way to bring the law to the knowledge of those and all those whom it concerns as effectually as that of engraving it with the hand of omnipotence in the very heart of every individual man so that he may at all times and everywhere by day and by night have and behold the law of his God within him, ever ready to be applied as the moral norm of all his acts, all the decisions of his will, however sudden they may be. And furthermore, as the moral law was not to be the rule of life in our first parents only, but to all their progeny, God in his wisdom and goodness made this manifestation of his holy will an inheritance to be handed down from generation to generation, not subject to the special will of the progenitor, but in the very course of nature, that parent and child alike should do by nature the things contained in the law, being by what had thus been made a part of their nature a law unto themselves.<sup>1)</sup> And this natural law as inscribed in man's heart really and truly asserts itself as law, as a demand made with sovereign authority upon all those who are under the law, not by choice of their own, but by divine ordinance, not by influence brought to bear upon them in riper years, but from the beginning of their personal existence and from the first dawn of personal consciousness.

The wisdom of God, however, further appears in the mode of the manifestation of his holy will in the natural law in another respect. St. Paul says that the Gentiles

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1) Rom. 2, 14.

show the work of the law written in their hearts. He does not say "the law," but τὸ ἔργον τοῦ νόμου, "the work of the law."<sup>1)</sup> The natural law in the heart of man is not a codified law, a νόμος τῶν ἐντολῶν, law composed in formulated commandments, a summary of precepts. The natural law is the manifestation of the will of God concerning every conceivable act of man, a norm whereby everything that a man may do or forbear is determined as to its ethical quality. Where a code of formulated statutes is to serve as a rule of action or being the question will frequently arise whether a certain act would come under a certain statute, and the application of the rule is largely dependent upon the will of the agent. Such is not the case with the natural law. The wisdom of God has so constituted man that in his heart there is an authoritative standard which, where it is not ignored, will of itself rate under a moral point of view whatever in man may be a matter of moral consideration. That in his present state man is no longer a fully reliable moral censor of himself and his acts is due to the depravity of his nature in consequence of the fall and the ravages of sin in the race and the individual, whereby the moral standard in the soul of man is largely disfigured and obliterated, and the consequence is that man fails to perform a great many works which in his state of primeval rectitude would have been suggested and demanded by his moral nature, and again commits a great many acts from which he would have willingly abstained in accordance with the dictates of his heart and the will of God therein made manifest for every purpose but for the deterioration consequent to sin. Even in the natural life of the individual the divine handwriting may by repeated and often repeated violations be more and more eradicated, so that where in earlier years a certain work of the law was still clearly inscribed it is in later years no longer discernible.

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1) Rom. 2, 15.



This moral norm in the heart of man bears the character of law in still another respect. It is not only an authoritative injunction or prohibition of what is right or wrong, but it has also connected with such injunction or prohibition the menace of commensurate penalty to be inflicted upon the violators of the will of a righteous and just lawgiver, who is able and ready to enforce his law and to mete out justice where it has been transgressed. The natural law does not rate an unlawful act as imprudent but as sinful, and also according to the natural law the wages of sin is death. Hence the fear of death under the consciousness of sin also among those who had not the written law with its menaces expressed, and not any such text as "*The soul that sinneth it shall die.*"<sup>1)</sup> In this respect, too, the Gentiles, as St. Paul says, are a law unto themselves in the real and true sense of the word.

Thus, then, the natural law is indeed the law of God to man, God's holy and unalterable will revealed and made known to man as the authoritative rule whereby man should be ethically determined for all time and under all circumstances. Man was made not for solitary existence but to replenish the earth and to associate with others of his kind in a multitude of relations, in the family as husband and wife, parent and child, brothers and sisters, superiors and inferiors, in the various stations of social life, in the enjoyment of property and honor, and in the performance of the manifold duties peculiar and incidental to the various relations and stations, conditions and environments of life. Having created him with this destination God made provision that man in all his generations should, according to his Creator's will, lead a holy and quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty, in righteousness and holiness. Thus the manifestation of God's holy will inscribed in man's heart is the law of God to man, binding upon all,

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1) Ezek. 18, 20. Cf. Ezek. 33, 18. Rom. 6, 23.

and at the same time designated to promote and secure the happiness and peace of all in their proper relations to himself and to each other. Under this law all men are to this day. Wherever this law is observed even in its outward works, conformity with this divine rule results in the welfare of individuals and communities. In the measure in which this law of God determines the ways of men there are faithful husbands and dutiful wives, obedient children, peaceable families and neighborhoods, economic prosperity, and peace in the security of life and property and honor, while the numberless woes and sighs and tears and loud lamentations among men are due to the various violations of the law of God, which asserts itself as the divine law even among those who are utterly ignorant of the written law as such. Hence even the Gentiles are in the Scriptures described as *the children of disobedience*.<sup>1)</sup> All men being under this law, all the world, having transgressed and daily transgressing its precepts, is guilty before God.<sup>2)</sup> And, again, this moral law, perfect as it came from the lawgiver, is to this day the only law binding upon all men. Whatever besides and beyond the natural law was ever published as divine law was never intended for all men. The Mosaic law with its political and ceremonial statutes was never intended for any but the people of Israel, nor for them throughout all ages, but only to the fulness of time, to serve peculiar purposes. It was never the will of God that all men should observe the sabbath, even as it never was ordained that all men should be circumcised. Nor was the Mosaic law substituted for the natural law, and when the Old Testament dispensation came to its close and its statutes were no longer binding even upon the children of Abraham according to the flesh, the natural law, and only that, was still in power, as it had been before and during the order of things established by the Mosaic law. The abrogation

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1) Eph. 5, 6. Col. 3, 6.

2) Rom. 3, 19.

of the ceremonial and political law of Israel does not imply a change of will in God, but the will of God comprised both the establishment and abrogation of that order of things, and their continuation beyond the period fixed by the will of God is not in obedience to, but at variance with, the divine will. The same God who by Moses said: *Remember the sabbath day to keep it holy,*<sup>1)</sup> and, *Keep the sabbath day to sanctify it, as the Lord thy God hath commanded thee. Six days shalt thou labor, etc.,*<sup>2)</sup> and published a multitude of statutes concerning meat and drink, also said by St. Paul, *Let no man judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or the new moon, or of the sabbath days.*<sup>3)</sup> Being divine statutes, those statutes of the Old Testament church and state were certainly binding upon the members of that people with all the stringency of divine laws and under the penalty of such laws, but only and exclusively within the limits, temporal and otherwise, within which they had been established. And even the Mosaic decalogue was and is binding beyond those limits only inasmuch as it is a codification of the natural law and with the exclusion of all those elements which were not comprised in the *ἔργα τοῦ νόμου* inscribed in the heart of man by the Creator's hand in the beginning of time. Hence, though the Sinaitic tablets bore the commandment concerning the sabbath day as we find it recorded in Moses, the Augsburg Confession very properly says: "*The Scripture, which teacheth that all the Mosaic ceremonies can be omitted after the Gospel is revealed, HAS ABROGATED THE SABBATH, and yet because it was requisite to appoint a certain day that the people might know when they ought to come together it appears that the church did for that purpose appoint the Lord's day: which for this cause also seemed to have been pleasing, that men might have an example of Christian liberty, and might know that THE OBSERVATION NEITHER OF THE SABBATH DAY NOR*

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1) Exod. 20, 8.

2) Deut. 5, 12 ff.

3) Col. 2, 16.

OF ANOTHER DAY WAS OF NECESSITY.”<sup>1)</sup> When God, after his work of creation was completed, rested on the seventh day and blessed and sanctified it as a day of *his* holy rest, this was not a legislative act, and there is nothing either explicitly or implicitly stated in the Mosaic record indicating that thereby God established the seventh day as a day of rest to man to be observed by him according to the expressed will of God. On the other hand, the enactment of Sinai was a legislative act, and when God there proposed to establish a legal day of rest to Israel after the toil of their servitude in the land of Egypt had come to its close,<sup>2)</sup> he certainly could not have chosen a more appropriate day than that on which he himself had rested from all his work, sanctifying and blessing it as a day of rest to him, just as the Apostolic church could not have chosen a more appropriate day, not as a legal holiday, but as a day of public worship, than the day on which the Lord was risen from the dead after the age of types and shadows was over and the last paschal lamb, also commemorative of Israel’s liberation from the land of bondage, had been consumed on the eve of the great fulfillment prefigured by the easter rites dating from the eve of Israel’s exodus.

The admixture of Mosaic elements in the written decalogue of Sinai is not, however, the only difference between the law written on the stone tablets and the law written on the tablets of the human heart. The commandments as they were promulgated on Sinai also inasmuch as they comprised precepts of the moral law binding upon all men were νόμοι τῶν ἐντολῶν, formulated statutes, each of them a summary of the corresponding manifestations of the divine will in the

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1) Art. XXVIII.

2) Deut. 5, 15: “And remember that thou wast a servant in the land of Egypt, and that the Lord thy God brought thee out thence through a mighty hand and through a stretched out arm: therefore the Lord thy God commanded thee to keep the sabbath day.”

natural law. In these statutes the moral law was codified in such a way as to afford in brief legislative statements a summary rule and standard to be applied to various states and dispositions, relations, and acts, which by their nature and circumstances would come under such rules to be determined by such standards. They are not new laws, but only the old law in a new form. Whatever is of the moral law and binding upon all men in the Sinaitic decalogue is not new, and whatever is new in these commandments is not of the moral law nor binding upon all men. Like the natural law the moral precepts codified on Sinai are of universal application and cover the various spheres of human life and action, but in a summary way, determining all the states and acts pertaining to the same category. Thus, when the sixth commandment says, "*Thou shalt not commit adultery*," this is an injunction of chastity upon the married and the unmarried, in relation and disposition, in desire and word and deed, though one gross sin of unchastity only is explicitly named. It is the same with all other commandments of the moral decalogue. The inscription of the Mosaic tablets is, furthermore, not the only reduction of the natural law to written characters and to formulated commandments and statutes. Wherever in the Scriptures of Moses and the Prophets, the Apostles and Evangelists, in words recorded from the lips of Christ and the precepts embodied in the epistles of St. Paul, God manifests his holy will as a rule of life and conduct to all men, we have before us in well defined legal statements re-statements of that which God manifested in man on the day of his creation and the remnants whereof are still written in the hearts even of the Gentiles. And it is precisely the deteriorated state of the natural law in the hearts of men in consequence of sin which has prompted God in his wisdom and goodness again and again to manifest his holy and unalterable will where it may now be read more distinctly in the written word of God than in the defaced inscription in

the hearts of men. Thus we have a great variety of moral precepts in the various epistles of St. Paul, of which the Apostle says, "*The things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord.*"<sup>1)</sup> But these written precepts found throughout the length and breadth of the Old and the New Testament are, all of them, in some way summary statements of the divine will applicable to, and normative of, all those concrete cases which may at any time and anywhere come under such particular rule, and binding in all cases thus covered by the rule. The rule itself is in itself stringent and authoritative. Neither is any man at liberty either to apply the rule or to lay it aside where the nature of the case to be determined is such as to bring it under the rule. But a misapplication of the rule where it does not apply is just as truly a violation of the will of God as a failure to apply the rule where it should apply. The difficulty which we sometimes find in determining a particular case according to the written law is not due to a lack of clearness in the law, but to a lack of willingness on our part to apply the law, or of our discernment of the essentials or circumstances of the case to be determined by the law. The precept, "*Thou shalt not steal,*" is sufficiently clear; but the question whether a certain act comes under the category of theft or stealing may not be sufficiently clear to our intellectual vision to determine the case as a matter of conscience according to the divine standard concerning mine and thine. The injunction, "*Husbands, love your wives,*" is sufficiently clear and determined, and that malicious desertion is a violation of this precept is out of question; but it may be questionable whether in a certain case desertion has been actually committed, and, consequently, whether in that case a certain party to the case stands censured by the divine injunction.

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1) 1 Cor. 14, 37.

## II. CONSCIENCE.

When God made man, he did not make him only potentially a moral being, even as man was not potentially but actually a living soul, as he came from his Creator's hand. Moral life as well as physical and intellectual life is to a certain extent spontaneous. There was in primeval man not only a knowledge of the will of God, but also a natural readiness to apply such knowledge as an ethical norm for the determination of his will. There is in man not only a knowledge, but also a spontaneous acknowledgment of the law, a human *yea* and *amen* to the divine: "*Thou shalt!*" Man is not only a selfconscious, but also a conscientious being. Conscience in man is the natural aptitude and readiness of the human mind, whereby the ethical relation between his disposition and conduct and an acknowledged moral norm is spontaneously suggested to man's consciousness. Conscience is not the moral norm itself, not the divine law or any other law; but it is the disposition to bear witness to the law and its demands, its authoritativeness and stringency, to suggest to the human will the dictates of a superior moral norm. The statements of the human conscience are not original or in themselves authoritative, not a voice of God in man, but in the nature of the testimony of a witness. Thus St. Paul says of the Gentiles that their conscience *bears witness*.<sup>1)</sup> This testimony of man's conscience must be distinguished from the work of the law written in his heart, as it is also distinguished by St. Paul, and it is precisely this writing in the human heart, the law as it has been made known to man by his Creator, whereto man's conscience bears witness. Man might, and in many cases would, ignore the inscription in his heart, but for the testimony of the witness in his bosom, who spontaneously, without, and even in spite of,

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1) Rom. 2, 15. Συμμαρτυροῦσης αὐτῶν τῆς συνειδήσεως.

the action of the will, points to the law, testifying to its demands, its authoritativeness as a superior norm, its stringency as a moral norm, the transgression of which must bring upon the transgressor the penalty of the law, commensurate with his responsibility and the nature of his sin and the majesty of the Lawgiver.

In the first place, then, conscience sustains the law as a statement concerning the moral quality of an act contemplated or committed. When Eve was tempted by Satan to eat of the forbidden tree, the suggestion of this sinful act elicited the spontaneous action of her conscience whereby the woman was prompted to apply to this act the norm by which it was morally determined as an evil act.<sup>1)</sup> Conscience by this function places every act in its ethical category according to the divine "Thou shalt" or "Thou shalt not," so that man *can* not only know it to be right or wrong, having in him the norm whereby he *may* determine his acts, but actually *does* know this peculiar act to be either in conformity or at variance with that norm. This is the primary function of conscience upon which all its other functions are based. When a man is about to do or has done that which is according to the law, his conscience will raise its approving voice and say, 'This is good and right; and when he is about to do or has done what is contrary to the law, his conscience will raise its voice of disapproval and say, 'This is evil, this is sin.

That conscience in its primary function is not the voice of God, but the voice of the human heart and mind, bearing witness to another voice which may or may not be divine, appears when we observe that conscience often performs its function in such a way that it can not be the voice of God, since what it says is not true but untrue, approving what is sinful or disapproving what is good. When Paul persecuted the disciples at Jerusalem and assisted in the

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1) Gen. 3, 3.



murder of Stephen, he did it with an approving conscience. In reference hereto he says, "*I verily thought with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth, which things I also did in Jerusalem: and many of the saints did I shut up in prison, having received authority from the chief priests; and when they were put to death, I gave my voice against them.*"<sup>1)</sup> And yet we hear him say that he had served God from his forefathers with pure conscience.<sup>2)</sup> Saul of Tarsus was one of those, of whom Christ had told his disciples, "*The time cometh, that whosoever killeth you, will think that he doeth God service.*"<sup>3)</sup> Thus Luther's conscience approved of and dictated to him the monastic duties and the blasphemous masses for the quick and the dead which he performed with the utmost zeal and conscientious exactness while an inmate of his monastery at Erfurt and a sojourner at Rome; and to-day it is the conscientious papist who, with the sanction and under the promptings of his conscience not only abstains from meat on fastdays, but dishonors God and Christ, his Savior, by idolatrous worships. Again, the honest temperance fanatic is, and endeavors to put others, under the constraint of his conscience, which decries as sinful the use of wine as a beverage. That in all these cases it is really the voice of conscience which determines the will is furthermore substantiated by the fact that, as we shall see, the primary function which it exercises in such cases is followed up by all the secondary functions, of which we shall speak later on. Being an *erring* conscience, it can not be the voice of God, who can not err. Its statements are falsehoods; and God can not lie. But why are they falsehoods? Because the erring conscience performs its functions according to a false norm, false moral standards, false doctrines, false traditions, false prejudices, man-made laws, contrary to the will of God, but arrogating to themselves superior, even

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1) Acts 26, 9. 10.

2) 2 Tim. 1, 3.

3) John 16, 2.

divine authority. Giving testimony to and upholding these false norms the dictates of conscience will necessarily be false and remain persistently false, until the false norm, which has usurped the place of a true norm of right and wrong, has been removed. This is the only proper cure for an erring conscience, and until such cure has been wrought, the voice of conscience, though erring, must be respected. Luther very earnestly warned the fanatics at Wittenberg, who would induce those who were under monastic vows to set them aside before they were enlightened on the nature of such vows. He would not permit the sacrament in both kinds to be urged on those who might yet receive the cup under conscientious scruples because of a lack of proper instruction concerning the sacrament. For this lack of knowledge an erring conscience is described as *weak*, when St. Paul writes: "*There is not in every man that knowledge: for some with conscience of the idol unto this hour eat it as a thing offered unto an idol; and their conscience being weak is defiled.*"<sup>1)</sup> Thus, also, the Apostle distinguishes between *him who has the knowledge*, and *him whose conscience is weak*.<sup>2)</sup> This weakness is a consequence of sin, a deterioration of the human mind by the evil power which darkened the understanding and puts the will under constraint where it should be free, or emancipates it where it should be ruled by the law of God, and by this norm only.

This norm, being law, is the authoritative will of the Lawgiver and binding upon all who are under the law. The law does not say, "Thou mayest," but "Thou shalt." On the other hand, the law does not put the mind under duress, but imposes a moral obligation. And when conscience speaks it bears witness to the law as *law*, obligating him who is subject to the law to will and to act in obedience to and conformity with the law. The *obligating* function of conscience, the assertion of the stringency of the law, is its first *second-*

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1) 1 Cor. 8, 7.

2) 1 Cor. 8, 10.

ary function, whereby it follows up its primary statement, testifying to man, that according to the law he is bound to do or forbear what in the exercise of its primary function it has defined as in accordance or at variance with the law. In this secondary function, too, conscience operates spontaneously and persistently, never leaving it an open question whether an act which it has put down as sinful should or should not be performed. This secondary function is, furthermore, also exercised by the erring conscience. The false norm having once established itself in the place of the true norm and usurped its dignity, conscience will not only determine the ethical character of an act according to this norm, but also assert the stringency of the false norm, making its false dictates binding upon the soul, imposing upon the subject the duty of doing that which is wrong and abstaining from that which is right. And this is the fearful predicament of a man with an erring conscience, that under its influence he will sin whatever he may do or forbear, according to the false statements of his erring conscience or in spite of them. For by obeying his conscience when it makes sin a duty, the Roman Catholic worshiper of saints certainly sins; and again, if contrary to the dictates of his conscience he neglects his prayers to Mary and Joseph, he also sins, inasmuch as to act against the voice of conscience is sin.

But sin is the unlawful act of a responsible agent, and it is in the very nature of the law that it is directed to subjects morally responsible for their acts. And here again conscience bears out the law, testifying also to the responsibility of the transgressor, *imputing* to him the guilt of his transgression. This is another secondary function of conscience. When Cain was first reminded of his sin he endeavored to decline the responsibility for his brother's life and for the blood which cried against him from the ground.<sup>1)</sup>

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1) Gen. 4, 10.

With his subterfuge, "*Am I my brother's keeper?*"<sup>1)</sup> he endeavors to meet this very function of his conscience which charged him with what he had done. And as there are degrees of responsibility and, accordingly, different degrees of guilt, conscience performs this imputing and accusing function with various degrees of intensity. Of course, this secondary function is also based upon the exercise of the primary function of conscience. Conscience will not impute guilt where it knows of no sin committed. But having once stamped an act as sinful it will proceed to assess the guilt of such sinful act upon the sinner in due consideration of his responsibility. And as there are degrees of responsibility and, correspondingly, degrees of guilt, the assessment of conscience, its rating of the sinner's guilt may be higher or lower according to the degree of his responsibility. For these reasons the pangs of conscience will be more severe when a deed has been committed with the full knowledge of its sinfulness or after unheeded warnings and in the absence of extenuating circumstances. And here again it must be remarked that this function of conscience, too, is performed where the primary function was exercised according to a false norm by an erring conscience. The papist experiences pangs of an evil conscience when he has eaten meat on a fast-day just as truly and spontaneously as a Lutheran will be charged by his conscience with the sin of having denied his faith by kneeling to the host for fear of illtreatment, or as a Lutheran child feels pangs of conscience when it has told a lie. It is but natural that man, when thus accused by his conscience, will endeavor to exonerate himself, at least in a measure, by various pleas in extenuation of his guilt, such as ignorance, evil influences from without, as the example of evil associates or the greater guilt of accomplices. But by his endeavors he will frequently expose himself to the objections of his own better

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1) Gen. 4, 9.

judgment, and thus it is, that, as St. Paul says, man's thoughts will accuse or excuse one another when his conscience has borne or is still bearing witness in his heart.<sup>1)</sup> But whatever the outcome of such endeavors to barter with an accusing conscience may be, they can never result in what may be called a good conscience where sin has been committed, as long as man has been in a degree a responsible agent, accountable for his acts before the law and the sovereign power which enforces the law and executes judgment.

That the law must be enforced and that punishment must follow the transgression of the law is also recognized by man's conscience, and this recognition leads to still another secondary function of conscience. The law demands that the transgressor should be punished. This demand of the law is also sustained by conscience wherever in the exercise of its primary function it has put its ethical estimate upon an act performed or about to be performed. This is, on the one hand, the warning or menacing voice of conscience, which threatens the sinner with the penalty of the sin. It was the voice of conscience which reminded Eve not only of the divine command: "*Ye shall not eat of it,*" but also of the menace: "*Lest ye die,*" and Satan endeavored to hush this warning voice by the assurance: "*Ye shall not surely die.*"<sup>2)</sup> When Adam heard the voice of the Lord in the garden he was afraid.<sup>3)</sup> Why was he afraid? Because he knew that punishment must follow his sin. Thus, also, when Cain was convinced of his sin and guilt he said, "*My punishment is greater than I can bear. Behold, thou hast driven me out this day from the face of the earth; and it shall come to pass, that every one that findeth me shall slay me.*"<sup>4)</sup> Cain knew, and his conscience told him, that by his sin he had merited death; for the wages of sin is death, according to the law which says, "*The soul that sinneth it shall die.*"

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1) Rom. 2, 15.

3) Gen. 3, 10.

2) Gen. 3, 3. 4.

4) Gen 4, 13. 14.

Hence it is that *the wicked flee when no man pursueth*.<sup>1)</sup> A remarkable portraiture of a menacing and accusing conscience we have in one of Juvenal's Satires, where the poet describes the fearful mental state of a certain Spartan, who had for a time contemplated the denial of a deposit entrusted to his keeping, and who, though he had permitted better counsels to prevail and returned the money to the depositor's heirs, was by his conscience charged with the evil intentions he had entertained. Under the qualms of his evil conscience he is harassed day and night; he loses sleep and appetite; he trembles at every flash of lightning and clap of thunder, and when the storm is over he fears that the next may be his death; he does not even venture to offer sacrifice, knowing that every victim is more worthy of life than he.<sup>2)</sup> And Moses describes

1) Prov. 28, 1; cf. Lev. 26, 36: "The sound of a shaken leaf shall chase them; and they shall flee, as fleeing from the sword; and they shall fall when none pursueth."

2) Juvenal, Sat. XIII, 196—235:

"Poena autem vehemens, ac multo saevior illis,  
Quas et Caditius gravis invenit aut Rhadamanthus,  
Nocte dieque suum gestare in pectore testem.  
Spartano cuidam respondit Pythia Vates:  
Haud impunitum quondam fore, quod dubitaret  
Depositum retinere, et fraudem jure teneri  
Jurando: quaerebat enim quae Numinis esset  
Mens: et an hoc illi facinus suaderet Apollo.  
Redidit ergo metu, non moribus; et tamen omnem  
Vocem adyti dignam templo veramque probavit,  
Extinctus tota praviter cum prole domoque,  
Et quamvis longa deductis gente propinquis.  
Has patitur poenas peccandi sola voluntas.  
Nam scelus intra se tacitum qui cogitat ullum,  
Facti crimen habet. Cedo, si conata peregit?  
Perpetua anxietas, nec mensae tempore cessat;  
Faucibus ut morbo siccis, interque molares  
Difficili crescente cibo. Sed vina misellus  
Exspuit: Albani veteris pretiosa senectus  
Displicet. Ostendas melius, densissima ruga  
Cogitur in frontem, velut agri ducta Falerno.  
Nocte brevem si forte indulsit cura soporem,

the troubled conscience, saying, "Thy life shall hang in doubt before thee; and thou shalt fear day and night, and shalt have no assurance of thy life: in the morning thou shalt say, Would God it were even! and at even thou shalt say, Would God it were morning! for the fear of thine heart wherewith thou shalt fear."<sup>1)</sup> This punishment of conscience is pictured in the Greek tragedies and personified in the Erinyes and Furies of Mythology. That the evil conscience raises its menacing voice also where the sin committed was a hidden sin witnessed by no human eye is again owing to the nature of the law, which asserts itself as the will of an omniscient and almighty God, and to the nature of conscience which bears witness to the full extent of the law. And inasmuch as the law is a norm permanently inscribed in man's heart, it is applied by the human conscience also in imaginary cases or under the mere contemplation of a sinful act, and thus the menacing conscience is a warner, who with upraised finger cries, Beware, beware! The eye of the Lawgiver is upon thee! Woe to the transgressor! Hence the sigh of relief when the warning

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Et toto versata toro jam membra quiescunt,  
 Continuo templum, et violati Numinis aras,  
 Et (quod praecipuis mentem sudoribus urget)  
 Te videt in somnis. Tua sacra et major imago  
 Humana turbat pavidum, cogitque fateri.  
 Hi sunt qui trepidant, et ad omnia fulgura pallent,  
 Cum tonat, exanimis primo quoque murmure coeli;  
 Non quasi fortuitu, nec ventorum rabie, sed  
 Iratus cadet in terras, et vindicet ignis.  
 Illa nihil nocuit, cura graviore timetur  
 Proxima tempestas; velut hoc dilata sereno.  
 Praeterea lateris vigili cum febre dolorem  
 Si coepere pati, missum ad sua corpora morbum  
 Infesto credunt a Numine; saxa Deorum  
 Haec, et tela putant. Pecudem spondere sacello  
 Balantem, et lacribus cristam promittere galli  
 Non audent. Quid enim sperare nocentibus aegris  
 Concessum? Vel quae non dignior hostia vita?"

1) Deut. 28, 66. 67.

has been heeded, and the shudder at the thought of past peril averted by the fearful warner's timely call, Beware!

Again, on the other hand, God has also promised grace and every blessing to all that keep his commandments;<sup>1)</sup> and to these promises, too, conscience bears witness. Our church says, "Where it is considered and led to heart, that they are not human trifles, but commandments of divine majesty, who insists upon them with such earnestness, is angry with those who despise them, and will assuredly punish them, but on the other hand, will abundantly reward those who keep them, there will be a spontaneous impulse and a desire gladly to do the will of God."<sup>2)</sup> This spontaneous impulse is, again, the voice of conscience, sustaining and applying the law in its whole compass. Hence the gratification connected with the performance of every good deed, even in the absence of human witnesses and rewards of merit, when the left hand knows not what the right does.<sup>3)</sup> It is under the approval of conscience that virtue is its own reward.

But here, once more, the deteriorating influence of sin upon the human conscience must be noted. For even in the exercise of this most impressive and majestic secondary function conscience is liable to err and as an erring conscience to menace and to promise without a proper cause. Thus the conscientious papist is by his conscience held at awe of the anathema and excommunication of the Roman

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1) Exod. 20, 6: "And showing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments." Deut. 5, 10: "And showing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments." Deut. 7, 9: "Know therefore that the Lord thy God, he is God, the faithful God, which keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love him and keep his commandments to a thousand generations." Luke 10, 28: "And he said unto him, Thou hast answered right: this do, and thou shalt live." 1 Tim. 4, 8: "For bodily exercise profiteth little: but godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come."

2) Large Catechism, Part I, ad fin. M. p. 448.

3) Matt. 6, 3.



Pontiff and his minions, and the Mohammedan is prompted and impelled to shed the blood of Christians who refuse to embrace Mohammedanism, and is elated in view of his atrocious butcheries perpetrated in the cause of the "Prophet," by a conscience which not only stamps such acts as good and right, but also holds out temporal and eternal blessings to him who has been or will be zealous with fire and torch in the cause of his false religion.

The deterioration of conscience under sin does not, however, appear only in the faulty performance of the primary and secondary functions of conscience, but also in the neglect of the exercise of those functions, when conscience is silent where it should speak.

It has been, already, said that the various functions of conscience are performed spontaneously, very much as the senses of sight and touch operate spontaneously, without, and even in spite of, the promptings of the will. By energy of will a man may undergo a surgical operation or the tortures of the rack and the stake without wincing; but the pain inflicted is real pain. Thus also a man may set his will against the dictates of his conscience and shape his actions at variance with what he knows to be right; but his conscience does not take the witness stand only when summoned and called to testify, but urges its testimony even upon the unwilling mind and persists in its judgment even while it is being, or after it has been, overruled by the will. Yet it is equally true that, under the influence of sin, the spontaneous action of conscience is variously restricted and reduced. St. Paul speaks of the heathen of his day, as *having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart: who being past feeling have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness.*<sup>1)</sup> This

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1) Eph. 4, 18. 19.

blindness of heart is also and largely blindness of conscience, a diseased, deteriorated state or condition of the sense of moral vision, whereby conscience often fails to perceive what it should and as distinctly as it should. Again, what is in the English Bible rendered, *being past feeling*, is in the original text ἀπηλγηγότες, a "most significant word," made up of a form of ἀλγεῖν, *to feel pain*, and ἀπό. A blacksmith will, without pain, handle a coal or a hot iron which most people would drop with a yell. His hand has become callous, and the nerves of his palm and fingers have grown benumbed, by frequent contact with the hard and hot objects of the forge. Thus by persistent contact with particular sins, conscience also becomes callous, in a measure insensible to pain. The grocer's apprentice who is ordered to manipulate the scales to the customer's disadvantage will, at first, feel compunctions of conscience, and may refuse to obey orders. But let him yield and practice this form of dishonesty for a while, and it will grow into a habit with him which he will, by and by, practice as a matter of course and without a consciousness of wrong and a fear of divine displeasure. Even the continual intercourse with the dregs of society, or with a degenerate people, as is incidental to the callings of police officers and missionaries, is apt to blunt the moral sense. As in an individual, so also in an entire community or nation, the callousness of conscience with regard to certain prevalent sins may become characteristic. There are smuggling communities where generations have come and gone and plied their illicit trade without a fear of a higher power than the douaniers, and the wreckers on the Cornish coast would go straight from their churches, where they invoked divine blessings, to light their beacon fires whereby they would lure vessels to destruction that they might secure the plunder washed ashore. Throughout the Roman world, certain vices were not only prevalent, but looked upon as genteel and perfectly proper in polite society, and the most

repulsive lewdness was shamelessly, or even in the name of religion, practiced in the very sanctuaries of the gods. In our day, certain abominations of the theatrical stage, usurious and aleatory transactions in business, coercive measures employed by organized labor, crookedness in politics, and other sinful ways of modern society, are being so commonly practiced that they are very generally, even by many members of the churches, looked upon as ethically indifferent or even proper and expedient to the well-being of society and its members. Conscience has widely ceased to react against these violations of the moral law, and those who raise their voices against them are stared at in wonderment or rebuked as endeavoring to lay an arbitrary yoke upon the people's necks. This is a deeply deplorable state of things, which brings upon churches and nations a multitude of sins and their fearful consequences.

Akin to the callous conscience is the torpid or sleeping conscience of those who, under the influence of sin, have accustomed themselves to disregard the voice of conscience, not only as concerning certain prevalent or habitual sins, but in general, and in whom, as a consequence, conscience has in a measure retired from active service. When a man has adopted materialism for his religion, and the maxim, *Let us eat and drink; for to-morrow we die*,<sup>1)</sup> for his creed, his conscience, under the sway of materialism, becomes indisposed to perform functions which, when viewed in the light of this philosophy, are void of sense and consequence. If any man had become a thorough and fully consistent materialist, conscience in that man would have become dormant or extinct. But this is impossible in a rational being, and hence even the most torpid conscience is apt to be roused into very energetic activity, as in days of adversity or in the throes of death. In many cases, however, the torpor of conscience continues to the end, and this ac-

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1) 1 Cor. 15, 32.

counts for the seemingly serene and peaceful death of men and women who have lived for this world only and die without the hope of a life beyond. Such worldlings have, in this respect, degenerated far lower in the moral scale than the uncivilized heathen who dies with all the anguish of soul that a troubled conscience can engender. But since the worldling as such is unwilling to be disturbed in his carnal repose, he avails himself of every opportunity for making this world his Paradise, and hails with a warm welcome the works of a materialistic literature which may afford a Law and a Gospel and a Psalter for the religion of the flesh and render his sin-ridden conscience indisposed to the performance of its duty. On the other hand, such men are careful to avoid every opportunity of being enlightened by the power of truth, since that might disturb the slumbers of their conscience. Thus when Paul *reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled and answered, Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee.*<sup>1)</sup> We may be sure that the "convenient season" did not come, and Drusilla certainly concurred with her spouse in lulling his conscience back to its slumber in which it had been so inconveniently disturbed. And thus this form of deteriorated conscience is also a grievous thing, which has led multitudes to eternal perdition.

With this state of conscience we must not confound another condition, under which, though conscience is wide awake, its voice is unheard, because other voices and noises subdue the voice of the witness in man's heart. The din and turmoil of dissipation, the mad clamor of passion, the loud clatter of ambitious or avaricious pursuits, may, while they last, drown the testimony of conscience. When the competing and, for a time, prevailing noises have subsided, when the storm of passion is over, when fair and foul means

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1) Acts 24, 25.

have failed or succeeded in the acquisition of honor or wealth, when the carousals are over and music and laughter have died away, then the voice of the witness in man's bosom will testify, and the sinner will hear it as Adam and Eve heard the voice of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day.<sup>1)</sup> And the sinner fears this voice. Hence those who contemplate atrocious crimes often inflame their passions by intoxicating drink and other means; hence those who would overcome the voice of a guilt-laden conscience will often seek round after round of pleasure, or the excitement of wild speculation; hence the frequency of suicides, either subsequent to the committal of crimes, or after days and nights of profligacy and protracted dissipation. Thus Judas had, in spite of the Master's warnings, failed to hear the voice of his conscience while his soul was filled with the wicked plan he had concocted with the enemies of Jesus and the cravings of his avaricious heart. But when the foul deed had been accomplished, and he saw what it signified, and having in vain endeavored to rid himself of "the price of blood" in a way to ease or silence his clamoring conscience, he went and hanged himself.<sup>2)</sup>

All these deteriorations of conscience, though in various ways, result in its failure to achieve its proper purposes, and are not only due to sin, but also lead to sin, either *in defectu*, or *in excessu*. Yet conscience, even in its deteriorated state, is essentially conscience and must be so respected. There is, however, a difference between the consideration every man owes to his own conscience and that which one man owes to the conscience of another. The dictates of conscience, being ethical in their nature, promptings to do right in a particular instance, must in each instance be obeyed by him whose conscience so dictates. Again, every man is bound to respect every other

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1) Gen. 3, 8.

2) Matt. 27, 3—5.

man's conscience, but only as far as his own conscience will permit, and no man is bound or free to violate his own conscience in order to satisfy that of another. Paul was ready and willing to yield his liberty, but not his conscience, to a weak brother whose conscience, though without sufficient cause, objected to certain articles of food.<sup>1)</sup> Thus, also, religious liberty and freedom of conscience can not be claimed at the hands of or granted by the state absolutely and without any restriction. The rights of one citizen must cease where those of another begin. *Sic utere tuo, ut non laedas alienum*, is a fundamental principle of civil justice. And when the lawful interests of the few collide with the lawful interests of the many, the former must yield and the latter must prevail. According to these principles questions of religious liberty and freedom of conscience as all other civil rights must be equitably adjusted. A. G.

(To be continued.)

## THE SCRIPTURES, THE WORD OF PROPHECY.

### I.

Saint Peter terms the holy Scriptures the *word of prophecy*. 2 Pet. 1, 19—21.

The word *prophet* is taken from the vocabulary of ancient Greek religion, whence it passed into the language of Christianity, because it was adopted by the translators of the Septuagint and in the New Testament as the *equivalent* rendering of the Hebrew Nabi. Prophet is a compound word of *προ* and *φημι*. The Latin equivalent is *prae-dicare*, from which "Prediger" and preacher are derived. The *προ* is not to be taken in a temporal sense, "before," but rather in a local signification, "for," like in *προ-φάσις*, *pretext*. From the etymology of this word we learn that "prophet"

1) Rom. 14, 15; 20—23. 1 Cor. 8, 7. 8. 12. 13.