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Doctrinal Theology.

ANTHROPOLOGY.

ETHICS.

I. THE MORAL LAW.

Sin is, according to the definition given in the Scriptures, the transgression of the law, ἀνομία,¹⁾ 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.*"²⁾ 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.*"³⁾ Hence, also, "*by the law there is knowledge of sin.*"⁴⁾ 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-

1) 1 John 3, 4.

3) Rom. 4, 15.

2) Dan. 9, 5.

4) Rom. 3, 20.

Exegetical Theology.

THE PROOF TEXTS OF THE CATECHISM

WITH A

PRACTICAL COMMENTARY.

(Continued.)

THE SEVENTH COMMANDMENT.

Eph. 4, 28: "*Let him that stole, steal no more: but rather let him labor, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth.*"

The English form, *him that stole*, is not a precise rendering of the original, which is not *ὁ κλέψας*, the aorist, but *ὁ κλέπτων*, the present participle, which describes one who is in the habit of or practises stealing. The Apostle here evidently refers to such as were before their conversion given to theft, a sin very extensively practised in the days of Paul by people throughout all the strata of society, from the highest civil and military officers down to the slave and the beggar in the streets, while, on the other hand, honest toil was very generally looked upon as being unworthy of a free man. The Apostle, on the contrary, teaches his readers that one who has come from out of the ungodly world must abandon the occupation of a thief and earn an honest living by honest labor, as behooves a Christian. And this admonition is very pertinent in our day, when the acquisition of gain by a multitude of ways and means other than honest labor is again rampant in the world, while honest toil in the sweat of the brow is looked upon as an evil and a misfortune. It is this unwillingness to labor and to be content with honest earnings which also in our time makes thieves of many, men and women, young and old, thieves of many kinds, robbers

and burglars, swindlers and gamblers, speculators and usurers, and those who live and fatten on the toil and sweat of others. Such disposition and the practises springing therefrom are unworthy of a Christian to-day as they were in the days of St. Paul.

But still another inducement to theft is indicated in our text; it is want and poverty, the lack of the necessaries of life. And a Christian should not only be himself honest, but also do what he can to keep his neighbor from dishonesty or from temptation thereto by *giving to him that needeth*. It should be noted, however, that what is given to the needy should also be honestly acquired. It will not do to steal from the rich in order to give to the poor, or to give alms from the profit made by any illicit trade. And no trade benefits a Christian which is not *working the thing which is good*, labor which redounds to the temporal and spiritual benefit of our neighbor and upon which a Christian may consistently ask God's blessing from on high.

Hab. 2, 6: "*Woe unto him that increaseth that which is not his! How long? And to him that ladeth himself with thick clay.*"

This is an imprecation upon all those who enrich themselves at the cost of others. The prophet would warn those who are apparently successful in accumulating wealth, while in fact their increase is not their own. Thus when the usurer exacts interest upon loans regardless of profit or loss accruing from the use of the loan, demanding and taking profit where no profit has been made or even where loss has been sustained by the debtor in the use of the loan, he takes that which is not rightfully his own, and though by usurious gain he may largely increase his wealth, the prophet cries out, Woe unto him! How long will he enjoy what he has thus acquired? Even though he remain in possession of his ill-gotten wealth, he has only burdened his soul with a heavy weight, as one who has laden himself with thick

clay, and the time will come when he would fain be rid of his encumbrance.

1 Thess. 4, 6: "*That no man go beyond and defraud his brother in any matter: because that the Lord is the avenger of all such.*"

The infinitives, *ὑπερβαίνειν* and *πλεονεχτεῖν*, are syntactically connected with *τοῦτο γάρ ἐστιν θέλημα τοῦ θεοῦ*, *for this is the will of God*, v. 3. In the preceding context the Apostle has inculcated the will of God that Christians should abstain from sins against the sixth commandment, vv. 3—5, and he now enjoins the seventh commandment as likewise the will of God. The verb *ὑπερβαίνειν*, *to go beyond, to exceed proper bounds*, is the general term, which is, then, specified by *καὶ πλεονεχτεῖν*, *to defraud, to enrich oneself at the cost of another*. The seventh commandment draws a sacred line about our neighbor's property, a line where honesty ceases and dishonesty begins. Beyond this line we must never go, neither by open theft nor by unfair dealings in business. That the brother, the fellow Christian, is here named does not imply a license to practise dishonesty on such as are not brethren, but makes it a special point to warn against taking advantage of the fraternal trust and confidence with which a brother may and should deal with a brother in Christ. And though the unsuspecting brother may not be nor ever become aware of a fraud practised upon him by a brother, the day of reckoning will come; for *the Lord is the avenger of all such*. This warning should be most earnestly heeded among Christians. It is a disgrace to the name of Christ that Christians should by dishonest dealings of their brethren be induced to deal or trade with those who are without.

Lev. 19, 35. 36: "*Ye shall do no unrighteousness in judgment, in meteyard, in weight, or in measure. Just balances, just weights, a just ephah, and a just hin, shall we have: I am the Lord your God.*"

The previous text enjoins us from all manner of dishonesty in matters of property and business. The present text deals more particularly with commercial transactions. Weights and measures are standards of quantity. *Ephah* was a dry measure of about $1\frac{1}{10}$ bushel; *hin*, a liquid measure of about a gallon and a half. To change or manipulate weights or measures to the disadvantage of a customer is not smartness but *unrighteousness*. The same is true of all other commercial standards, such as coins, brands, grades, etc. Though these standards are fixed and maintained by the will of men, they must not be tampered with in violation of fairness and honesty. For when God, demanding just balances and weights, etc., adds the words, "*I am the Lord your God,*" he would thereby lead us to understand and remember that these human standards are under his divine surveillance, and that he will call to account those who abuse them for dishonest purposes.

Lev. 25, 36: "*Take thou no usury of him, or increase; but fear thy God, that thy brother may live with thee.*"

Usury is the exaction of interest on loans, generally on money, regardless of profit or loss accruing from the use of the loan. It is certainly fair that the owner should share the profit resulting from the use of his property; but it is just as certainly unfair that he should demand profit where no profit has been made and even where loss has been sustained by the debtor in the use of the loan. The creditor who demands and exacts interest where no increase has come to his money while in his creditor's hands, takes that which is not his, but his neighbor's. The plea that interest thus exacted was stipulated by contract only says that the contract itself was unfair and usurious. This form of illicit gain is not restricted to loans of money. The text distinguishes between *usury*, where money is loaned, and *increase*, where provisions and other goods are to be returned in greater quantity. Even though such usurious trans-

actions be sanctioned by human laws, as by a legal rate of interest, the usurer is not justified. *Fear thy God*, says the Lord in the text, and the day of reckoning will be a day of wrath also for usurers. Besides, usury is also in a temporal way a source of evil in human society, bringing poverty and woe upon the victims of usurers. This is indicated by the words, *That thy brother may live with thee*. The prohibition of usury in Israel was one of the provisions whereby the preservation of the people and the prosperity of the various families from generation to generation was to be secured and the enrichment of the few at the cost of the many prevented. In our day the troubles which confront us in commercial and industrial life are largely owing to the sin and evil of usury.

Jer. 22, 13: "*Woe unto him that buildeth his house by unrighteousness, and his chambers by wrong; who uses his neighbor's services without wages, and giveth him not for his work.*"

This text is very plain and very timely. The relation between an employer and an employee is a moral relation regulated by the will of God. The builder of a house may employ laborers to perform the work necessary for or incidental to the erection and furnishing of the edifice, and while others perform such work, he is properly the builder of the house. It is for *him that buildeth his house* to determine who shall perform the work according to the contract or contracts upon which he may agree by his free consent. The work performed by the employee is *service*, and he who serves must not presume to dictate and to enforce his will regardless of the rights of others and especially of the employer. And yet the employer, *he that buildeth his house*, is a responsible agent, responsible to God, and *when he uses his neighbor's service without wages, and giveth him not for his work, he buildeth his house by unrighteousness and his chambers by wrong*. Wages is the

fair consideration or recompense for services rendered, and the full amount of such wages, when duly earned, belongs to the laborer, and to withhold his wages from the laborer is just as truly theft as to take his earnings out of his pocket after he has received them. Such unrighteousness and wrong is all the more damnable when the employer is rich. This is indicated by the subsequent context: "That saith, I will build me a wide house and large chambers, and cutteth him out windows; and it is ceiled with cedar, and painted with vermilion. Shalt thou reign, because thou closest thyself in cedar?" This is a portraiture of the overbearing rich man, who in his pride haughtily disregards the just claims of his laborer, a counterpart of many employers of our day, individuals and corporations, who crush and grind out the very life of the poor employees as if there were no God in heaven who cries out, "*Woe unto him that buildeth his house by unrighteousness,*" etc.

2 Thess. 3, 10: "*If any would not work neither should he eat.*"

This was a Jewish proverb based upon Gen. 3, 19 and adopted by St. Paul in his oral instruction and in his epistle as a true saying. It is God who gives us our daily bread; but he has so ordained that he would give us what we need as the proceeds of honest labor. Meanwhile God has not bound his hand by this ordinance any more than by any other. He gives food and raiment to many who are unable to work, as he feeds the sparrows and clothes the lilies. Hence the text does not say, *If any DO not work*, but, *If any WOULD not work*, εἴ τις οὐ θέλει ἐργάζεσθαι, *neither should he eat*. The able-bodied man who is unwilling to work must not expect that God will feed him, while he who is unable to work need not fear that God will let him starve.

Ps. 37, 21: "*The wicked borroweth and payeth not again.*"

The Psalmist in the preceding and the subsequent context exhibits the difference between the godly and the

wicked and shows that true happiness and prosperity is the lot of the former and not of the latter. Thus, also, in the 21 verse he points out the difference between these two classes of men saying, *The wicked borroweth and payeth not again, but the righteous showeth mercy and giveth.* There is no true prosperity with the ungodly. What they have is not sufficient to them; the property of others is in their hands and they frequently can not do without it; and when they should repay what they have borrowed they are either unwilling or unable to refund what they owe. It is different with the godly and righteous. While they do not take and keep what rightfully belongs to others, they give from what is theirs, and are not thereby impoverished but are still in condition to show mercy. Thus do the wicked and the godly differ in the administration of this world's goods.

Prov. 29, 24: "*Whoso is partner with a thief hateth his own soul.*"

A Christian should not only shun the sin of theft in any form as a sin committed by himself, but should also beware of partaking in such sin when and where it is committed by others. Even secular courts will hold the accomplice responsible with the principal perpetrator of an unlawful act, and the laws of those who are not able to kill the soul are not in this respect more stringent than the law of Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell. A Christian who becomes a partaker in transactions whereby his neighbor is deprived of his rightful property, though he be only a silent partner or a sharer in such illicit gain, risks the loss of his soul.

Matt. 5, 42: "*Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away.*"

This text is taken from Christ's exposition of the law in the Sermon on the Mount. The connection in which the words stand with the previous context indicates that

the Lord would here teach us to administer what is entrusted to us of this world's goods without selfishness. Man in his natural depravity is inclined to assert his right of possession regardless of the wants of others, and his natural selfishness is apt to be increased by every increase of wealth. Here, then, Christ teaches us that in our stewardship we should duly consider our neighbor's wants according as circumstances may permit or demand, giving where a gift, lending where a loan may be called for and proper.

Prov. 19, 17: "*He that hath pity upon the poor lends to the Lord; and that which he hath given will He repay him again.*"

This is an injunction and a promise combined. The injunction is that we should have pity upon the poor, not only by kind dealings and words, but also by giving to them according to our means and their need. This is indicated by the parallelism of the members of this text, according to which *having pity upon the poor* and *giving* belong together. The promise lies in the parallel statements, *Lends unto the Lord* and *He will pay him again*. This promise is not given in order that we should give to the poor merely to secure greater returns from the Lord, but to indicate how well pleasing our good stewardship in disposing of our temporal goods is in the sight of God, and to render us all the more cheerful in the exercise of benevolence as we remember whence all temporal blessings come.

Hebr. 13, 16: "*But to do good, and to communicate, forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.*"

This is a much needed admonition. Men, and also Christians, are not very apt to forget their opportunities for increasing their income and enjoying what they possess. But we are apt to be unmindful of the occasions and opportunities for Christian beneficence and even to take it with a bad grace when others remind us of what we are pleased to

forget. And hence this admonition is again coupled with a reference to the estimate which God places on our acts of benevolence. He looks upon them as sacrifices, that is, as offerings given, not to the poor and needy among our fellowmen or fellow-Christians, but to the Lord God himself, who is well pleased with such sacrifices, and places them on our record for the day of reckoning, when he will before men and angels give us credit for every one of them, saying, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me." Matt. 25, 40.

THE EIGHTH COMMANDMENT.

Zech. 8, 17: "*Let none of you imagine evil in your hearts against his neighbor.*"

In the previous context the Prophet enjoins works of righteousness according to the eighth commandment, v. 16, "*These are the things that ye shall do; speak ye every man the truth to his neighbor; execute the judgment of truth and peace in your gates.*" In the continuation of his admonition he speaks of things prohibited by the same commandment: "*And let none of you imagine evil in your hearts against his neighbor; and love no false oath: for all these are things that I hate, saith the Lord.*" The injunction in v. 16 implies that to speak the untruth and to execute deceitful judgment is sin. But according to our text God also hates transgressions of the eighth commandment committed in our hearts. To imagine evil against our neighbor is an absolute or relative violation of the truth, since what we do not *know*, but *imagine*, may be or is untrue, and he who loves his neighbor as himself will not hold him guilty of evil unless on full and sufficient proof. To assume or imagine to our neighbor's discredit what *may* be false implies a disregard of truth as well as of the love we owe our neighbor, and is in the context placed on the same line with loving a false oath.

Eph. 4, 25: "*Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbor: for we are members one of another.*"

The word *wherefore* refers to the previous context which is a general admonition to "*put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness;*" and our text is the first of a series of special exhortations under this head, and teaches us that lying is inconsistent with righteousness and true holiness and must therefore be put off as a work of the old man, and that one of the foremost endeavors of every one who would put on the new man must be to speak the truth with his neighbor. But while lying is thus seen to be wholly inconsistent with the new man within us, it is incompatible also with the relation we hold among each other as Christians; "*for we are members one of another.*" It is unnatural for the members of the body to deceive each other instead of doing by one another according to their true and actual wants, whatever these may be. Thus, also, it is unnatural for Christians to deceive each other, a denial of their relation with one another and with Christ, their common head. And note that the Apostle says, "*SPEAK the truth.*" To withhold the truth where it should be spoken is also a species of falsehood.

Prov. 19, 5: "*A false witness shall not be unpunished, and he that speaketh lies shall not escape.*"

It is of the very nature of a lie that it would go in the guise of truth and thus conceal its nature. A false witness, in order to be heard and believed, will naturally claim credit as a true witness, and a liar's first and fundamental endeavor is to deceive by his falsehood. But though man may be deceived and allow a false witness to go unpunished, God is not deceived and will visit also the liar's sin upon the sinner, and in God's judgment no false plea or testimony will avail; He will bring to light the hidden things of darkness. 1 Cor. 4, 5.

Prov. 11, 13: "*A talebearer revealeth secrets: but he that is of a faithful spirit concealeth the matter.*"

Those who reveal a neighbor's secret sins will often endeavor to justify themselves by the plea that what they have said is true, and they know it to be true. But this is no valid defense. To divulge a neighbor's hidden sin is not truthfulness, but the work of a *faithless heart*; for *he that is of a faithful spirit concealeth the matter*, that is, *keeps it secret*. Other people's secrets should not be looked upon as being at our free disposal, but as a sacred trust which should be conscientiously and faithfully guarded and kept as what it is, a trust not to be faithlessly betrayed.

James 4, 11: "*Speak not evil one of another, brethren.*"

The Apostle does not say, "Do not lie against one another," but *μὴ καταλαλεῖτε ἀλλήλων*, *do not speak against one another, to each other's damage*. Even the truth may be spoken in bad faith, and a statement concerning our neighbor, though true in substance, when made with evil intent (*κατὰ*), is sinful, a sin which has blasted the good name of many a man and woman. Besides, experience teaches that those who speak evil of a brother are rarely very scrupulous in point of truthfulness. It is but natural that he who would damage his brother by evil reports should endeavor to give color to his statements even at the cost of truth in order to achieve his evil purpose.

Luke 6, 37: "*Judge not, and ye shall not be judged: condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned.*"

The key to this admonition is in the previous context, "*Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful,*" v. 36. *Κρίνειν*, *to judge*, is, here, *to sit in judgment*, while *καταδικάζειν*, *to condemn*, is *to pronounce guilty*. In both cases what is prohibited is a violation of the injunction: Be merciful. Our disposition should not be to mete out justice to the brother who has sinned, but to look upon

him as one whose weakness appeals to our compassion and to whom we should stoop with an earnest desire to help him. This is God's disposition toward us, though He is the supreme judge and a consuming fire, who will in his time judge and condemn those who have unmercifully judged and condemned others. Besides, those who judge and condemn where they should show mercy will in most cases set aside both justice and mercy. As a rule the brother who has sinned is not even given a hearing by these self-constituted judges, but is judged and condemned without as much as a semblance of a fair trial, and his good name may be damaged beyond repair before he even knows what is going on.

Matt. 18, 15: "*If thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone.*"

Here our Lord shows us the proper way of exercising mercy on the brother who has sinned. To show mercy to the sinner is not to ignore his sin or to consider or call good that which is evil. The proper person, however, to speak to concerning a brother's sin is not his neighbor, nor his enemy, but *himself*. "*Ἐλεξον αὐτόν*, says Christ, lead him to know and acknowledge the sinfulness of what he has done. But do not publish his sin; tell him his fault *between thee and him alone*. If this rule were more carefully observed among us, there would be less backbiting and slander among Christians. And the fault lies not with the talebearer only, but also with those who lend him their ear. When any one comes to us with an evil report concerning a brother, we should promptly refuse to hear him, but *tell him his fault* and admonish him to do as Christ here directs us to do.

Ps. 50, 16. 19—22: "*Unto the wicked God saith, Thou givest thy mouth to evil, and thy tongue frameth deceit. Thou sittest and speakest against thy brother; thou slanderest thine own mother's son. These things hast thou done,*

and I kept silence; thou thoughtest that I was altogether such a one as thyself: but I will reprove thee, and set them in order before thine eyes. Now consider this, ye that forget God, lest I tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver."

The *wicked* here is not one who has openly renounced religion and godliness, but one who is wicked at heart while he declares God's statutes and takes his covenant in his mouth. v. 16. Having charged him with sins against the seventh and the sixth commandments, he, with more words, reprimands him for his various offenses against the eighth commandment. *שְׁלַח פִּה בְּרָעָה* is *to let loose the mouth in evil*, as a reckless driver will let his horse rush along unchecked, when he should keep the reins in a firm and steady hand. Thus the tongue when it is not guarded and checked will rush headlong in evil ways. The imagery changes in the following words, *Thy tongue knitteth deceit*. This is the painstaking tongue, occupied in laying its threads with evil intent, as subtle slanderers are apt to do, choosing their words deliberately and often doing greater damage with what they intimate than by what they actually say. The 20 verse, *Thou sittest . . . mother's son*, is a portraiture of the talebearer who sits down and fills up the ears and hearts of his listeners with his slanderous gossip, sparing no one, not even his brother, though he be a brother by whole blood, having not only the same father, but also the same mother. The following verses describe God's attitude toward such sins. God is longsuffering, and the slanderer may pursue his evil way for a long time, even to his hoary old age. But let him beware. The time will come when he will have to answer for what he may have long ago forgotten; for God keeps a record of every slanderous word, and the punishment of the evil tongue will be fearful; for the slanderer sins not only against his neighbor, but also against God, whose commandment he has set aside.

Prov. 31, 8. 9: "*Open thy mouth for the dumb in the cause of all such as are appointed to destruction. Open thy mouth, judge righteously, and plead the cause of the poor and needy.*"

The dumb in this text are not only those who are physically unable to speak, but all those who are not able to plead their own cause or make their own defense. The בְּנֵי חַלְוִיָּה, *children of perdition*, are those who are in imminent danger of perishing. So then, when evil tongues assail the good name and fame of our neighbor, while he is, because of his absence or for some other reason, unable to defend himself, we should not listen in silence, but open our mouths and defend him as best we can. Again, while the wealthy generally find no difficulty in securing justice and more than justice and an advocate to plead their cause, the poor are often at a disadvantage in court and out of court. Hence we should deem it a special duty to *plead the cause of the poor and needy*, especially where they are in danger of being unjustly dealt with in court or out of court.

1Pet. 4, 8: "*Charity shall cover the multitude of sins.*"

In Prov. 10, 12 we read, "*Hatred stirreth up strife: but love covereth up all things,*" and the verse from which our text is taken reads, "*Above all things have fervent charity among yourselves: for charity shall cover the multitude of sins.*" The parallelism between the two texts is evident. In both instances the neighbor is supposed to have offended, and not only once, but variously and repeatedly. In both instances the sins of the offender are looked upon as so many occasions, not for hatred which stirreth up strife, but for the exercise of love, fervent love. And this exercise of love should not consist in ignoring a brother's sin or making light of it. But knowing that our brother has sinned, we should not stir up strife on that account or bruit his sin abroad; for that would not be love but hatred toward him. On the contrary, true love will

do what can be done toward keeping a brother's offenses from the knowledge of others who have no business to know of them. And this course should not only be pursued when a brother's sins are few, but all the more when they are manifold; for in such case he will be all the more in need of our protecting love. But to cover a *multitude* of sins requires *fervent charity*. The fulfillment of the eighth commandment is eminently a work of love according to the sum of the second table, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself."

1 Cor. 13, 7: "*Charity believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.*"

The Apostle would not say in these words that love is credulous and readily indulges in vain expectations and does not feel when it is ill-treated. But what he would say is that love is not suspicious, but trusting and confiding and unwilling to injure a brother by assuming what is to his discredit. Love does not readily fear that a brother will do evil, but rather hopes that he will do what is proper while there is any foundation for such hope. And even where a brother has offended us, charity will not induce us to put the worst construction on what he has done and to fear that he will offend us still more grievously in the future, but readily believes what he or others may have to say in extenuation of his offense, and hopes that he will make good his promises of doing better in the future. On the contrary, suspicion and distrust concerning our neighbor's doings or intentions, and a lack of hopefulness for his reform, will chill and finally exterminate what little love we may have entertained towards him. A. G.

(To be continued.)
