

THEOLOGICAL QUARTERLY.

VOL. XXIII.

OCTOBER, 1919.

No. 4.

THE SILENT SUFFERER.

In His great passion our Savior endured unspeakable agony, but rarely spoke. When He did open His mouth, it was to pray to His Heavenly Father, to warn and comfort His friends, to bear testimony to the truth, or to make intercession for His enemies. He began His suffering in the Garden of Gethsemane on Thursday evening, and ended it on the cross in the late afternoon of the next day. During these long hours He submitted to cruel and inhuman treatment without one word of resentment or complaint. He heard the taunts and jeers, and the false accusations of His enemies, and said nothing. "Neither was guile found in His mouth: who, when He was reviled, reviled not again; when He suffered, He threatened not." 1 Pet. 2, 22, 23. It even happened that He positively refused to speak. Although Christ spoke on certain occasions, still He appears throughout His great passion as the Silent Sufferer.

The silence of Jesus is most remarkable. It is very unusual. Why did He suffer in silence? How shall we be benefited by it? Let us study this aspect of Christ's suffering.

Christ was silent because His silence was foretold by the prophets. "The Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world," John 1, 29, must by His silence resemble the lamb of the Mosaic sacrifice, which was dumb when it was brought to the slaughter. The Messiah must not only be "a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief," but also a man of silence. He must bear His intense torture without complaint. He must not cry, nor bewail His hard lot. He must not revile those that revile

WHY DID LUTHER CHANGE THE TEN COMMANDMENTS?

This is the question which the Louisiana District Conference propounded to me to be answered at this session. It would have been an easy task for me to give the desired information if I could have asked Luther personally concerning his reasons for changing the form of the commandments. Although I lived in Germany for eighteen years, I never had a chance to meet him. Yet, there is a way to get the desired information. I shall endeavor to answer the question in hand by consulting Luther's writings.

Readers of the Old Testament are well aware of the fact that there is a difference between the wording of the Ten Commandments as they are recorded by Moses, Exodus 20, and the form of some commandments in Luther's Catechism. Not only the adult members of our congregations, but also the school-children take notice of it. Hence the question arises, Why did Luther change the Ten Commandments?

That there must be good reasons for it will be readily

admitted by those who know how Luther defended the Bible against all who added to it, or took away from it, or twisted and perverted its words. But, to come to the point, Which are the reasons? We may state them briefly in the following three sentences:—

I. The Ten Commandments and all other laws of the Old Testament revealed by God and published through Moses were given to the people of Israel and are therefore binding only on the Jews.

II. The Ten Commandments concern us Christians only in so far as they conform with, and express, the natural law which God in the creation has written into man's heart.

III. Since Luther wrote the Catechism for Christians, he adopted the wording of the Ten Commandments required by the conformity with the natural law which is binding on all men.

Now, in taking up each sentence in its turn, the conference is requested to kindly insert the good points which the writer of this paper has omitted.

I.

The Ten Commandments and all other laws of the Old Testament revealed by God and published through Moses were given to the people of Israel and were therefore binding only on the Jews.

In this sentence we maintain that neither the Ten Commandments nor any other laws of the Old Testament are binding on a Christian for the reason that they were given by God through Moses *to the people of Israel*, for, as a revealed law, the Ten Commandments have been imposed only on the chosen people of the Old Covenant, the Jews.

Thus we read Ex. 19, 3—5: "Moses went up unto God, and the Lord called unto him out of the mountain, saying, Thus shalt thou say to the house of Jacob, and tell the children of Israel: Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto Myself. Now, therefore, if ye will obey My voice indeed, and keep My

covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto Me above all people; for all the earth is Mine."

Here the Lord Himself says to *whom* He spoke when giving the Law, namely, to the people that should be His own before all nations. And Ex. 20 He addressed the people to whom He gave the Ten Commandments in these words: "I am the Lord, thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage." The whole chapter, Ex. 20, refers only to Israel; for Moses did not lead all the world to the mountain, but only Israel.

From the fact that the law of Moses was given to *the people of Israel only*, we conclude justly that it concerned only the Jews. And since it was binding only on the Jews, it is not binding on the Christian. We reason correctly therefore when we say:—

The laws of Moses were binding only upon the Jews; we Christians are no Jews; hence, the laws of Moses are not binding on the Christians.

Our opponents of the Reformed Church, who consider the law of Moses as binding on Christians must reason somewhat like this:—

The laws of Germany were made for the German nation; the Americans do not belong to the German nation: *ergo*, the Americans are bound to keep the laws of Germany.

It requires only a little common sense to see the falseness of such reasoning.

But let us consult Luther on this point. He writes: "Now I speak as a Christian to Christians; for Moses was sent only to the Jewish people and does not at all concern the heathen and Christians. We have the Gospel and the New Testament; if they prove from them that pictures are to be abolished, we shall follow them. But if they want to make Jews of us by Moses, we will not permit it. And here we lay the foundation from St. Paul, (who writes) 1 Tim. 1, 9: 'Knowing this that the Law is not made for the righteous man' (which a Christian is). And Peter says, Acts 15, 10: 'Why tempt ye God

to put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples, which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear? But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved even as they.' With this passage (just as St. Paul does with his) St. Peter abolishes for the Christians the entire Moses with all his laws. Yea, you will say that is true enough of the ceremonies and the *judicialia*, that is, what is taught of the external service of God and the civil government. I make answer: I know very well that this is an old distinction commonly made, but from misunderstanding, because from the Ten Commandments flow all the other commandments of Moses and hang on it." (Erlanger Edition, 29, 150, cited in the Synodical Report of the Michigan District, 1889, p. 63.)

Again, Luther writes: "The Law of Moses, which henceforth is not binding on us, concerns the Jews. For the Law is given only to the people of Israel, and Israel has accepted it for itself and its descendants. And here the heathen are excluded, although they have home laws in common with the Jews, as, that there is a God, that no one should insult anybody, that one should not commit adultery nor theft, and the like, which all is written in their hearts by nature, and have not heard it down from heaven as the Jews. Therefore this whole text does not concern the heathen. . . . We will not any longer have Moses for a ruler or lawgiver, yea, God Himself will not have it. Moses was a mediator and lawgiver of the Jewish people only; to them he gave the Law. Thus we must stop the mouths of factious spirits who say, Thus says Moses, there it is written by Moses, and the like, by replying, Moses does not concern us. If I accept Moses in one commandment, I must accept the entire Moses. From this would follow: If I were to accept Moses as a master and lawgiver, I would have to be circumcised, to wash clothes according to Jewish custom, to eat, drink, and dress like them, and to observe all those customs which the Law commanded them to observe. Therefore we will not hold on to Moses nor accept him. Moses is dead, his rulership had an end when Christ

came, and he no longer serves us. But that Moses is not binding on the heathen we may prove conclusively from Exodus, where God Himself says: 'I am the Lord, thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.' From this text it follows clearly that also the Ten Commandments do not concern us; for, indeed, He has not brought us out of Egypt, but only the Jews. . . . If, now, somebody directs you to Moses with his commandments, then say, Go to the Jews with your Moses! I am no Jew; do not molest me with Moses. If I accept Moses in one part, says St. Paul to the Galatians, then I am bound to keep the whole Law. *For not one little dot in Moses does concern us.*" (Erl. Ed. 33, 8—10; cited in Synodical Report of Mich. Dist., 1889, pp. 64. 65. Compare also Luther's Exposition of the Ten Commandments from the 19th and 20th chapters of Exodus, preached at Wittenberg 1528, cited in the Syn. Rep. of the Cal. and Oregon. Dist., 1894, pp. 25—27.)

II.

The Ten Commandments concern us Christians only in so far as they conform with and express the natural law which God in the creation has written into man's heart.

In so far, then, as the Ten Commandments conform with the Law written into all men's hearts and are a repetition and explanation of it, we accept them and regard them as a great benefit, because the natural law has been very much blurred and obscured by sin.

Luther writes: "We will regard Moses as a teacher, but we will not regard him as our lawgiver unless *he conforms with the New Testament and the natural law.*"

Now the question arises, What belongs to the natural law which is binding on all men?

In the first place, this is pointed out in Christ's explanation that on the two commandments demanding love towards God and to our neighbor hang all the Law and the prophets, Matt. 22, 36—40, and that the Law and the prophets are com-

prised in the words, "All things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them, for this is the Law and the prophets." Matt. 7, 12. Whatever, then, is included in this summary and chief commandment, that, according to Christ's explanation, belongs to the natural law which is binding on all men.

Secondly, there is another way to learn whether a law belongs to the natural law or not, which is, to see whether God reproaches the transgression of a certain law also by the heathen as a sin and an abomination in His sight. Whenever the transgression of a law on the part of the heathen is reproached by God, then that law belongs to the natural law which is binding on all men. So, for example, God threatened to cast out the nations of Canaan on account of their sins against the Sixth Commandment. Lev. 18, 24. 25. Also Deut. 18, 12 we read: "Because of these abominations" (referring to witchcraft) "the Lord, thy God, doth drive them out from before thee."

Finally, a law in the Old Testament is to be known as belonging to the natural law when that law is repeated and confirmed in the New Testament as one that is also binding on Christians.

The Ten Commandments, except the Third Commandment, are almost literally repeated in the New Testament. The *First* Commandment, Matt. 4, 10: "Thou shalt worship the Lord, thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve." And 1 Cor. 10, 14: "Flee from idolatry." The *Second*, Matt. 5, 34: "Swear not at all, neither by heaven, for it is God's throne." The *Fourth*, Eph. 6, 1—3: "Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. Honor thy father and mother, which is the first commandment with promise, That it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth." The *Fifth*, Matt. 5, 21—26: "Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill." The *Sixth*, Matt. 5, 27—32: "Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery," etc. The *Seventh*, 1 Cor. 6, 10: "Nor thieves,

nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God." The *Eighth*, Rom. 1, 30. 32: "Backbiters, haters of God, spiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things," etc. Jas. 4, 11: "Speak not evil one of another," etc. The *Ninth* and *Tenth*, Rom. 7, 7: "Thou shalt not covet." Rom. 13, 9: "Thou shalt not covet."

But what became of the *Third* Commandment in the New Testament? Is it entirely eliminated from the Decalog? By no means. It is true that this commandment is stripped of all things belonging to the ceremonial law, namely, the observance of a certain day and strictly resting from all work. The spiritual sense, however, of this commandment has not been abolished, but will remain valid until Judgment Day. Even in the Old Testament the kernel and essence of this commandment was not the bodily rest on the Sabbath, but sanctification. And this consisted chiefly therein that the people assembled to meditate on the great deeds of God; and thus this day was appointed for public worship, as we learn from Lev. 23, 3, where we read: "The seventh day is the Sabbath of rest, an holy convocation," that is, the assembling of multitudes for the worship of God. And this is even now required of all Christians and is expressed in passages such as these: "He that is of God heareth God's words." "He that heareth you heareth Me." "Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together." "Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly."

The passage referring to the *making* of images Luther omitted in the First Commandment since it concerned only the Jews. And the *worshipping* of images is included in the words: "Thou shalt have no other gods before Me."

Therefore, if we cannot prove (1) that a certain commandment, at the creation of man, was written into the heart and thus is known to man by nature, or (2) that God denoted a commandment as one whose transgression He will punish in all men without distinction, or (3) that this commandment is quoted in the New Testament as binding, then it does not belong to the natural law.

III.

Since Luther wrote the Catechism for Christians, he adopted the wording of the Ten Commandments required by the conformity with the natural law which is binding on all men.

That Luther wrote the Catechism for Christians is self-evident and needs not be proved. He wanted to give a short summary of the Christian doctrine, and therefore eliminated from the Ten Commandments whatever does not concern the Christians. Hence, the form of the commandments in our Catechism is a great advantage over all other Catechisms, which do not eliminate those things that concern only the people of Israel.

New Orleans, La.

D. MEIBOHM.
