

## LECTURE XXXV.

### SECOND TABLE. (9th and 10th COMMANDMENTS.)

#### SYLLABUS.

1. What is the general scope of the 9th Commandment, and what the duties required, and sins forbidden under it? See  
Thornwell on Truth. Pascal's Provincial Letters.
2. On what is the duty of speaking truth grounded, and how does its practical importance appear?
3. Define the sin of speaking evil of ones' neighbor, and argue.
4. Is it ever lawful to deceive?
5. What the scope and meaning of the 10th Commandment, and what are the duties required and sins forbidden under it?
6. What evidence of the divine mission of Moses in the character of the Decalogue?
7. What doth every sin deserve at God's hands? See  
Anselm, *Cur Deus Homo*, pt. i, ch. 21. See, on the whole, Larger Cat., Qu. 143-152. Ridgeley (same Qu). Turretin, Loc. xi, Qu. 20-23, and Qu. 26. Green's Lect., 54-58. Calvin's Inst., bk. ii, ch. 8, § 47-51. Hodges' Theol., pt. iii, ch. 19, § 13, 14. Bp. Hopkins on the 9th and 10th Commandments.

**WE** hold that the general scope of the Ninth Commandment is to enjoin the virtue of Truth, as represented, according to the usual method of the Decalogue, under the capital duty of fidelity in public witness-bearing. This precept "requireth the maintaining and promoting of truth between man and man, and of our own and our neighbour's good name, especially in witness-bearing." It "forbiddeth whatsoever is prejudicial to truth, or injurious to our own or our neighbour's good name."

The duty of veracity is founded on the nature and importance of God's will enjoining truth. Truth may be said to be the using of signs by which we express or assert anything, conformably to our belief of the real state of the thing spoken of.

All the practical concerns of man's life are with the real state of things. Fictitious informations are, to us, naught, or worse than naught. They may fatally betray us into mistake; they cannot be the grounds of any beneficial or successful action. On the real state of the markets depends the merchant's profits. On the real power of the medicine depend the physician's success and the sick man's restoration. On the real nature of vegetable laws depends the reward of the farmer's toil. In every conceivable concern of man it is truth, the communication which is in accordance with reality, that is useful. Accordingly our Maker has endued us with a mental appetite of which truth is the natural food. The statement on which we cannot rely gives no pleasure. True, another faculty than the

understanding, the fancy, finds its appropriate pleasure in fiction. But here also a tribute is paid to the truth; for in order that the fictitious may give any pleasure to the fancy, even, it must be truth-like.

Now veracity is the observance of truth in our communications. Its importance appears from the fact that almost all man knows is derived from communication. The whole value of the statements we receive is in their truth. If they are false they are naught, or worse than naught. The usefulness of communicated knowledge to us, depends, therefore, wholly on our confidence in its truth. Every lie helps to destroy that confidence. Just so far as we perceive lies prevail, so far the value of communicated knowledge to us is destroyed. Should we reach that state when no trust could be put in the veracity of any fellow-man, all such knowledge would, to us, virtually, cease to exist. But to what a state would this reduce us? We proudly call the brutes dumb; indicating that it is man's gift of speech mainly, which separates us from beasts. It is this which enables us to receive facts and ideas besides our own. The wise teach the ignorant. The skill of each generation does not die with it; but it is communicated to the next. Knowledge is handed down, until our generation finds itself endowed with the accumulated experience of all previous ones. It is this which makes our civilization. But if all reliance upon communicated knowledge is destroyed, we are reduced to a state of savage ignorance, but little above that of the higher animals. We should know nothing but what we had ourselves seen and experienced; because we could trust nothing else. Education would be impossible; for how can knowledge be communicated when truth is banished? We must continue to exist in that infantile ignorance in which the child begins life, except so far as our own unaided efforts might instruct us, at the cost of suffering and perhaps of destruction. The advance which each individual made in such a condition, would wholly die with him; his son must begin life as he did, an ignorant savage, and run the same contracted round of puny, misdirected progress, and in his turn die, carrying all his knowledge to the grave with him. The latest generation would live in the same savage ignorance with the earliest. Religion would be as impossible as education; and all its blessings and consolations equally unknown; for religion cannot exist without trust. Each one of you would be an insulated, helpless, wretch, more completely deprived of society than the gregarious herds. He who deals in falsehood does what in him lies to bring his race to this degraded and miserable state. If all men should be false like him, and in all their communications, this state would be actually reached.

It may be shown in another light that the liar is the enemy

Lies Destroy Confidence. of God and man, by considering the effect of his vice on our mutual confidence. The intercourse of human business is but a countless series of implied engagements. Unless we can trust the fidelity of those whom we must employ, co-operation is at an end. If you cannot trust the postman who contracts to carry your letters, the conductor who guides the vehicle in which you ride, the pilot who steers your ship, the agent who transacts your business, the cook who engages to dress your food, you can neither write, nor ride, nor sail, nor eat, nor conduct any trade. Government would be at an end, because the ruler could not trust his agents and officers, and his power would be limited to his own presence. In short, if confidence is destroyed then all the bands which unite man with his fellow are loosed: each man must struggle on unaided by his fellows, as though he were the sole forlorn remnant of a perishing race. Confidence is as essential also, to all the social affections which shed happiness on the heart, as to the utilities of our outer life. It is the basis of friendship and love. To mistrust is to despise. To trust, to be trusted with unshaken faith, is the charm of domestic love.

Falsehood upturns Affection. Were there no truth then, every fellow-man would be your enemy; you would be insulated from your kind; every social affection would take its flight from the earth. Man would be reduced to a solitary miserable savage, "whose hand would be against every man and every man's hand against him." Even the animals must, in a certain sense, keep faith with each other, in order to make their gregariousness possible. Even savages must cultivate fidelity to truth within some narrow limits; or else the extermination of their scanty existence would speedily follow.

Indeed the conditions of savage society are sufficient illustrations of my conclusions; for when you examine into the causes of its barbarism, when you detect why savages are, compared with civilized men, few, poor, wretched, insecure and unfurnished with all the blessings which ameliorate life; you perceive that it is because falsehood and unrighteousness have made trust, mutual aid, and instruction almost impossible among them. They remain such, only because they cannot trust each other. Savagery is simply sin; and most notably the sin of lying.

Truth in Order to all Morality. Not only is veracity a virtue, but truth is, in a certain sense, the condition of all other virtues. Hence it is that in many places of the Bible, truth is almost synonymous with righteousness. The "man that doeth truth" is the man that does his duty. The godly man is "he that speaketh the truth in his heart." To "execute the judgment of truth" is to execute righteous judgment. This language is profoundly accurate. The motive of

every act which has moral quality must be a reasonable one; and truth, as we know, is the appointed light of the understanding. I mean that no man does a truly virtuous act unless he has an intelligent reason for doing it. But how can the mind see a reason unless it finds it in some truth? Consider, farther, that all the inducements to right actions are in the truth; but all the inducements to wrong acts are false. Error and sin are kindred evils, as truth and holiness are handmaid and mistress. Truth is the instrument by which the Holy Ghost sanctifies the soul. John xvii : 17. Thus we find its most exalted value in this, that it is the means of redemption for a ruined world. It is as beneficent as falsehood is mischievous. The one is our guide to heaven; the other leads to hell.

There is a world just such as the liar would make this: where falsehood reigns and where confidence is unknown. There, in its fiery lake, all liars have their part. The ruler of this world is he who "was a liar from the beginning and the Father of it." There, to deceive and be deceived is the universal rule, and therefore mistrust sits brooding over every heart, and scowls in every look. Each one beholds in every other an object of fear and scorn, and feels an equal scorn for himself, because he knows himself as false as they. In the midst of myriads each suffering heart is alone, for it finds no other breast on which it can repose. Hostility and solitude separate each wretch from his fellows, and the only society is the reciprocations of reproaches and injuries. Hell is but the complete and universal reign of falsehood, and the tendency of every lie is to reduce our world to it.

If we weigh these things we shall see the grounds of that practical truth, that the virtue of veracity is the foundation of all right character. Says the French proverb. *Qui dit menteur dit aussi larron*. And a more infallible proverb asserts that "If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man." (Jas. iii : 2). Hence a sacred regard for truth should be inculcated on the young especially; and they should be taught to regard lying as the inlet of all vice and corruption.

In thus illustrating the usefulness and importance of the practice of veracity, I do not intend to rest its obligation on that ground. These facts are merely subordinate to the argument. They illustrate, but do not constitute, the obligation. And even for this use, their chief value is, that they are instances under a general truth, leading us to it. That proposition is, that truth is natural to man's soul. It is the appointed *pabulum animæ*. As the eye craves light, so the mind loves the truth. It is the natural instinct of the mind, undebauched by a sinful experience, to credit what is told it by any rational fellow-creature; and it requires the bitter experience of deceptions often repeated to curb this tendency. While we are limited to the sphere of philosophy and natural theology then, we find the

obligation to truth in these fundamental facts, which reveal the will of the Creator as it is impressed on the constitution of the soul. "To those therefore, who would ask: Why am I bound to speak the truth? I would briefly answer: Because it is the law of our nature: it is the fundamental *datum* of conscience, a command of God impressed upon the moral structure of the soul." It follows hence that the obligation is universal, and is not conditioned, as Paley intimates, on any implied promise given by the speaker. When we pass from philosophy to revelation, we find a still broader and deeper foundation for the obligation to truth, in the nature of that God "who cannot lie," who is the "God of truth." His precepts are the sure and sufficient rule of our duty. He has told us that "every liar is abomination in His sight," and has required us to speak truth one to another.

Every right habit of action (*consuetudo*) implies a right disposition (*habitus*) of will. This general law should be enough to convince us of another great fact, which is too often overlooked in ethical discussions of this duty: that there is a virtue of truthfulness, back of the practice of veracity, and the source of it, which we are bound to possess. This is the love of truth for its own sake. The virtue in its last analysis is not a habit qualifying the actions and words, but an active principle qualifying the will itself. Just as in any other class of moral acts, the act is moral simply because of the active principle which is regulative thereof. No more is needed than to state the truth. And this truth dissolves, at a touch, the vain assertion that the intelligence acts by its necessary logical laws and therefore irresponsibly to the conscience. On the contrary, the intelligence acts always under strict responsibility to the conscience; and man is responsible for his mental beliefs.

The sin of slander, or backbiting, where the assertions of evil in our neighbour are false, is understood. Its malignity is great, as it assails him in a point very dear to him—his good name—and is usually attended with vile adjuncts of secrecy and treachery. Jas. iii : 6, 7. But it is not so well understood that it is often a sin of evil speaking to repeat true accusations against our neighbour. There are times when the cause of virtue demands that ill-conduct shall be denounced. And when such occasions arise, the virtuous man will not be afraid to speak out. But it is a sin against our erring neighbour to give unnecessary currency to his faults. "Charity rejoiceth not in iniquity." The fact that our neighbour has truly sinned does not place him outside the pale of charity, nor does it entitle us to inflict on him any unnecessary injury or pain. Moreover, the recital of evil, true or false, has a natural tendency to familiarize the soul with it, to defile the memory and imagination, and to habituate the mind and conscience to wrong. It is, especially to the young,

3. Evil Speaking,  
What?

a real misfortune to have to hear of that which is morally foul. This mischief should never be causelessly wrought by detailing sins, no matter how true, without necessity.

Many Christian moralists have held that there are intentional deceptions which are not breaches of the ninth commandment, and are innocent in God's sight. They describe these, as the cases where the person deceived had no right to know; and where the result of the deception was righteous and beneficial; as when a robber or murder is misled away from his victim by an innocent deception; or where a defensive army deceives an invader by stratagems. Their arguments are chiefly these; that the parties deceived, in such cases, being engaged in a wicked design, have no right to the benefits of veracity as between man and man: That the best men, as Joshua, Washington, &c., when commanders of armies, made adroit use of stratagems; and the common conscience of mankind approves, and would count it morbid conscience and insane quixotry, to refuse such means of defence: That many instances are recorded, of Bible saints as Abraham, Moses, Joshua, &c., who prosperously employed concealment and stratagems, (see for instance, Joshua viii : 3, &c.) and that there are even cases in which God or Christ seems to do the same, as in the assumption of a human body, Gen. xviii : 2. in the walk to Emmaus, Luke xxiv : 28. They add, also, that the consistent enforcement of the opposite doctrine would many times be suicidal and preposterous.

There are however, those who hold that absolutely "no lie is of the truth." They admit indeed, that it is a man's privilege, where no right exists to demand information of him, to keep silence, or use concealment. But they assert that, if he employs any signs by which it is usually understood information is conveyed, he must employ them absolutely according to reality; and that in no case can he intentionally produce a deception, without the sin of lying. They argue in general, that the opposite license proceeds upon a utilitarian theory of obligation. But this theory is false, and as no finite mind can correctly judge the whole utility or hurtfulness of a given declaration in its ulterior consequences, no practical basis or rule of obligation would be left at all. To the instances of deception in war, by great patriots, and their approval by the world, they reply, that good men are imperfect, and commit errors; and that the public conscience is unhealthy. To the instances of Bible-saints, they say with justice, that often the errors of good men are recorded for our instruction, when they are by no means sanctioned. As to the instances claimed, from the acts of the Messiah, concealment is not deception; His appearance in human form, without at first disclosing His divinity, was not a *suggestio*

4. Are all Deceptions Lies? Negative Argument.

Affirmative Argument

*falsi*, but only a concealment of His nature until the suitable time. So, His seeming to design a journey farther than Emmaus was a mere question propounded to the disciples. As to the inconveniences of absolute truth, sometimes extreme, they point to the obligations laid upon the martyrs, and remind us, that it is no rare thing for Christ to require of us obedience rather than life. In fine, they urge that on any other ground than theirs, no tenable or consistent rule remains; and we have a mere 'point of honour' requiring us to speak truth under certain contingencies, instead of a fixed rule of moral obligation.

It must be confessed, that the reasons of the latter party are more honourable to the divine authority, and more elevating and safe, than those of the former. The replies given to a part of their arguments are also valid. I would add that it is of perilous tendency and obviously erroneous, to represent one's obligation to speak truth as only correlated to the hearer's right to receive a true communication. Man could never be safely trusted to judge for himself when his fellow man had that right. Indeed, on that basis, human declarations would be practically worthless; for the hearer must always remember that the speaker's word can only be accepted as conveying truth, provided he secretly judges the hearer to be entitled to it; and of this proviso there can be no assurance not encumbered with the same fatal condition. Again, it is very far from being a general truth, that our duties are only correlated to the rights of their objects. Thus, I may be under a high obligation (to God) to bestow alms on my undeserving enemy. And this suggests the still stronger answer; that God, and not the hearer, is the true object on whom any duty of veracity terminates. God always has a right to expect truth of me, however unworthy the person to whom I speak.

Yet the sober mind cannot but feel that there is an extreme, to which the higher view cannot be pushed. I presume that no man would feel himself guilty for deceiving a mad dog in order to destroy him, or for misleading an assassin from his victim, when helpless otherwise, to prevent murder. But it is more important to say, that, in at least a few cases, as in Joshua viii : 2, God Himself authorized a designed deception for the purpose of punishing the guilty. As His authorizing Joshua to exterminate the Amorites proves that all killing is not murder, so, does not His authorizing him to deceive them prove that all deception is not lying? Hence, I would offer, with diffidence, another statement of the matter, which may be found to contain the reconciliation of the difficulty. Under what circumstances is killing by man no murder? Is not human life sacred, and the property of the Maker alone? The law answers: Man may kill, when the guilty life is forfeited to God, and He authorizes man to destroy it, as His agent. So, I conceive, extreme

purposes of aggression, unjust and malignant, and aiming at our very existence, constitute a forfeiture of rights for the guilty assailant. During the dominancy of his active malice, they dehumanize him as to his intended victim: his life is forfeited to the superior right of self-defence. That right emerges, and the man attacked innocently slays the assailant. By the rule that the greater includes the less, may he not also deceive him for a righteous purpose? One advantage of this view is, that it gives this right of deception only in the extreme case, where life is maliciously assailed. And the argument is not the same we discarded, which made the duty of veracity correlative only to the hearer's right to truth. For my plea is; this assailant not only has no right to it, he is out of the category of beings to whom truth is relevant, for the time. He is not a rational man, but a brute. It may be asked with much force: has this outlaw for the time being, a right to truth, after he has forfeited the right to existence? Does not the greater forfeiture include the less? Is he not, *pro tempore*, in the category of a beast of prey? But the moment he is disabled from aggression, or turns to a better mind, his rights to truth revive, as do his claims on our charity and forbearance. Hence, while the good man will righteously deceive his invading enemy with stratagems, the moment a flag of truce appears, or his enemy is disabled and captured, he is bound to act with as perfect sincerity as towards his bosom friend. I would add, in guarding this concession, that if an innocent man makes a vow, promise, or engagement to his unrighteous assailant, under whatever violent threat, or other inducement, he is bound to the faithful performance of that engagement, unless the thing promised is *sin per se*. For the engagement was voluntary; he had the option of choosing to make it or endure the threatened evil. The good man is one who "swaereth to his own hurt, and changeth not." Ps. xv: 4.

Rome, as we saw, having suppressed the 2nd Commandment, divides the 10th in order to make out the requisite number. Her 9th Commandment is, "Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's house;" and her 10th, "Neither shalt thou desire his wife," &c. Her plea is, that houses are typical of property; and wives of those things which excite sensual desire. The 9th Commandment, therefore forbids covetousness; the 10th, lust and appetite. But unfortunately, the "ox and ass," obvious "property" are in the latter part; and in Deut. v: 21, where Moses recites the Decalogue literally, he puts the wife first, and the property second. There is no basis for the distinction. For what is property craved by sinners? Only for its instrumentality to satisfy some appetite or sensual desire. The general unity of the subject, besides, proves that it was one command.

5. Popish Division of 10th Commandment.

It may be said, in brief, that this command finds the key-note of its exposition in the text: "Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life." The five commands of the second table cut off the streams of transgression; this deals with the fountain head. The others forbid wrong volitions; this forbids concupiscence, as tending thereto. In the 10th Commandment, then, we have the crowning spirituality of the Law; thus making it complete, and every way worthy of God, and adapted to man as a rational free agent.

In closing this subject I would offer two remarks. The first is upon the admirable comprehension, wisdom, and method of the Decalogue. We have here ten simple and brief precepts, each one commending itself to the natural conscience of the most unlearned, simple in word, few in number, unostentatious in arrangement. When we first look at them, we are inclined to think that, while they are very true and good, there is nothing very wonderful; that they are obvious things which any good man might utter, and to a much greater number than ten. But when we examine them in detail, we find that they are the heads of all the branches of man's duty, arranged with the most logical order, presenting nothing superfluous, and yet, with all their brevity, omitting nothing of all the vast circle of human duty! How clear their purity and justice! How amazing their comprehension! What completeness! Let human ingenuity hunt out some branch of human duty which is omitted. It cannot. In these ten words, we have a system of morality more wise and complete than human wisdom ever devised. Now, we ask, whence did Moses get these ten words? A man of an unlearned and pastoral race, educated in the learned follies of Egypt, whose theology and morals, as they are revealed to us by Herodotus and the modern decyphers of their monuments, show an impurity and puerility utterly opposite to the Bible, goes into a waste desert, and after forty years, comes forth with this strangely wise and perfect law! Whence did he get it? There is but one rational account—that given by the Bible—that it was written for him by the finger of God. Unless Moses was an inspired man, then he has produced a miracle of wisdom more incredible than all the difficulties of inspiration.

Our Catechism, while recognizing the greater gravity of some sins than others, by reason of their aggravations, teaches us that, "Every sin deserveth God's wrath and curse, both in this life and that which is to come." The exceeding demerit of sin, and its desert of eternal and grievous punishment is a doctrine which meets with obstinate resistance from sinners. It is urged that to make the desert of any sin such is to revive the old

Its Scope.

6. Decalogue only from God.

7. What does every Sin Deserve.

Stoic absurdity, of the equality of all sins ; for if the lesser sin is punished eternally, and so infinitely, the greater cannot be punished more. The answer is, that infinities are by no means all equal ; as we have shown.

To clear this awful truth of the desert of sin, from the cavils of unbelief, I would observe, first, that sinful men are in a most unlikely attitude to judge correctly between themselves and God, in this matter. They naturally desire to break the law. Our emotions always blind the judgment to the objects which are opposed to their current. They are condemned by the law of God, which fact produces a natural jealousy of it. They have their moral judgments brutified by the universal habitude and example of sinning, amidst which they live. It would be almost a miracle, if there were not, under these circumstances, a perversion of the moral judgments here.

But affirmatively the ill-desert of sin is infinite, because of the excellence, universality, and practical value of the law broken by it. Because of the natural mischievousness of sin to the sinner himself ; as was illustrated when I spoke of Adam's first transgression. Because of the Majesty and perfections of the Law-giver assailed by transgression. Because sin is committed against mercies and blessings so great. Because it violates so perfect a title to our services, that of creation out of nothing. And last, because it is so continually multiplied by transgressions.

Men deny the demerit and guilt of sin, because they are so in the habit of attempting to measure transgression as the civil magistrate does, insulated from all its attendants and sequels. Does the court, for instance, indict a man for murder ? The act is considered by itself, and the court does not concern itself with antecedent character, or with results, save as they throw light on the intention or evidence. Now men mislead themselves by these examples, as though an omniscient God could, or would judge sins against himself in this partial, fragmentary way. In denying the gravity of sin against God, they seem to have before them some such case as this : Here is one actual sin committed by a man, which God is to judge, as expressive of no moral state preëxisting in the man ; as destined to breed no repetitions, as exercising no influence to form a vicious habit in the agent's soul, and as carrying no consequence into his own immortal character or those of his fellows. The caviller seems to think the question is : Has God declared a single act, thus insulated, by itself worthy of eternal penalty ? I reply, that neither the caviller nor I know anything of that question. For in fact, God can never have such a case to judge, because it can never arise. Every case which He has to judge is that of a sinner, not of a sin : and in weighing any one act, the omniscient mind will, of course, look at it as it really occurs, with all its antecedents, connections, and consequences. Is it an oath ?

God sees in it, first, a specific breach of the 3d Commandment ; then, an expression of pre-existent sentiments of wilfulness, irreverence, levity or malice, in the profane man : then thirdly, an evil influence on spectators, to be propagated, unless grace intervene, forever : fourth, a confirming influence, intensifying the wicked temper and habit ; and last, a natural tendency involving a series of increasing profanities forever. In a word, God, as final and omniscient judge, has to judge each sinner as a concrete whole, and each transgression as index, part, and cause, as well as fruit, of a disease of sin, a deadly, spiritual eating cancer, whose tendency is to involve an immense evil, eternal death. Thus judged, sin is an infinite evil, and deserves an eternal penalty. One reason why God punishes forever is, that the culprit sins forever. God's point of view is, that this everlasting series of sins is the fruit of the first rebellion.