

CATHOLIC MORALITY

A Course in Religion Book III

About This Series

Fr. John Laux, M.A. was a high school religion teacher who distilled the fruit of his many years of research and teaching into these fine high school religion books. At first glance, it might appear foolish to reprint books that were first published in 1928. But a reading of Fr. Laux's books will lay that thought to rest. For he had a rare talent of capsulizing the intricacies of our Catholic Faith and its theology into succinct, precise, learned and yet lively prose, that is at once truly interesting and that all can easily understand. He is profoundly intellectual, yet always clear and easy. His writing, while aimed at the high school student, remains challenging and informative to the college student and the adult Catholic as well. But further, Fr. Laux writes in an undated and almost undateable style, a style that is, one might say, classic and timeless, a style that truly befits his subject matter—the timeless teachings of our Ancient Church. For these reasons, the four books in this high school series are all works of rare genius, as also are his *Introduction to the Bible* and *Church History*, for they all possess these same qualities that make Fr. Laux such a pleasure to read and such a joy to study from.



Dürer

"Do ye manfully, and let your heart be strengthened,
all ye that hope in the Lord." (Ps. 30, 25)

CATHOLIC MORALITY

SIN, VIRTUE, CONSCIENCE, DUTIES TO GOD,
NEIGHBOR, ETC.

A Course in Religion
For Catholic High Schools and Academies

BOOK III

by

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Psychology, Villa Madonna College, Covington, Ky.

*“And Jesus said to him . . . Thou knowest
the commandments: Do not commit adultery,
do not kill, do not steal, bear not false witness,
do no fraud, honour thy father and mother.”*

—Mark 10:18-19

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A Word to the Teacher

The need of some systematic presentation of the truths of our Holy Religion to boys and girls of our American Catholic High Schools has been felt by Catholic educators for a long time. The manuals now in use have been found to be either too technical or too simple, and the problem has been to prepare a text that would suit the needs of the growing mind, and, while enlisting the interest of the pupils in acquiring a knowledge of religious truths, would at the same time encourage the practice of virtue and cultivate a love for the Church.

The present *Course in Religion for Catholic High Schools and Academies* is an attempt to solve this problem. The general arrangement of the course is based, as far as possible, on the division and order of the larger Baltimore Catechism. The catechetical form of presentation has been abandoned, because, in the opinion of prominent educators, "it is conducive to memory work rather than to reasoning, encourages inefficient teaching, and makes almost no appeal to the interest of the pupil."

For practical purposes the work has been divided into Four Parts, each of which is bound and paged separately and provided with copious helps for study and review, a table of contents and an index.

The First Part embraces the mystery of the Trinity, the work of Creation, Redemption, Sanctification, and Consummation. It is introduced by a brief treatment of the nature, necessity, sources, and qualities of Faith. The Second Part treats of the Means of Grace: the Sacraments, the Sacrifice of the Mass, Indulgences and Sacramentals. Part Three is devoted to General and Special Christian Moral; Part Four to Apologetics.

The writer suggests that every pupil be provided with a copy of the New Testament, to be used throughout the course; a Student's edition of the Missal, to be used in connection with Part Two; and the *Imitation of Christ* as supplementary material for Part Three. It is presupposed that there is a well-stocked Religious Book Shelf in every High School Library.

The concluding words of Father Drinkwater's preface to his excellent little book of religious instruction *Twelve and After* are applicable to every textbook in Religion: "Let us remind ourselves that religion is not a book-and-writing matter. Such instruction as this book contains is very useful and in some ways necessary; but there are things even more necessary, such as plenty of singing, corporate prayer, both liturgical and unliturgical, and opportunities for personal service, not to speak of the more individual and interior practice of religion. If these more essential things are well managed, then the intellectual instruction will have all the more meaning and fruit. It should become the raw material of Catholic ideals. We can but build up our altar stone by stone and arrange our wood upon it as carefully as may be, and then pray for the fire of the Lord to fall in acceptance of the offering."

A word to the teacher of religion. The purpose of the teaching of religion must be the same in all our schools from the grades to the university—to form *religious characters*, to train men and women who will be ready to profess their Faith with firm conviction and to practice it in their daily lives in union with the Church.

This obvious purpose of all religious teaching imposes a twofold duty on the teacher of religion in the High School: to give his pupils a *fuller and more profound grasp of Christian Doctrine*, and to lead them on to the *intelligent use* of the helps that have been given us to lead Christian lives.

It is idle to dispute, as is sometimes done, whether the training of the intellect is more important than the training of the heart and the will; the imparting of religious knowledge, than the formation of religious habits. Both are of supreme importance. The will follows the intellect; but the intellect is also powerfully influenced by the will. Ignorance may sometimes be bliss, but never in religious matters. Well-instructed Catholics may become backsliders, but their number is small in comparison with those who are lost to the Church because their ignorance of Catholic teaching made them easy victims of the purveyors of false science, shallow philosophy, and neo-pagan morality. Religion requires that the *whole* man worship God with all his faculties and acts. The intellect must *believe* that which is true concerning God—

Faith; and the *will* must be directed to *do* those actions which are right and to avoid those which are wrong—*Morals*.

Catholic Action is toay becoming a vital force throughout the world. The layman cannot effectively engage in Catholic Action unless he is well versed in the teachings of his faith and able at all times to explain and defend it. The type of layman, therefore, that is needed today is the type which Cardinal Newman asked for years ago when he said: "I want laymen, not arrogant, not rash in speech, not disputatious, but men who know their religion, who enter into it, who know just where they stand, who know what they hold and what they do not; who know their Creed so well that they can give an account of it; who know so much of history that they can defend it. I want an intelligent, well instructed laity. I wish you to enlarge your knowledge, to cultivate your reason, to get an insight into the relation of truth to truth; to learn to view things as they are; to understand how faith and reason stand to each other; what are the bases and principles of Catholicism. Ignorance is the root of bitterness."

The great Cardinal's ideal of the Catholic layman may never be fully attained, but it is certainly worth striving after. It is only through such pious and enlightened laymen and laywomen, working with their bishops and pastors, that Catholic Action can be truly successful. It is the chief duty of our Catholic Educational system to place on the battlefield an army of laymen, equipped to "fight the battles of the Lord."

THE AUTHOR.

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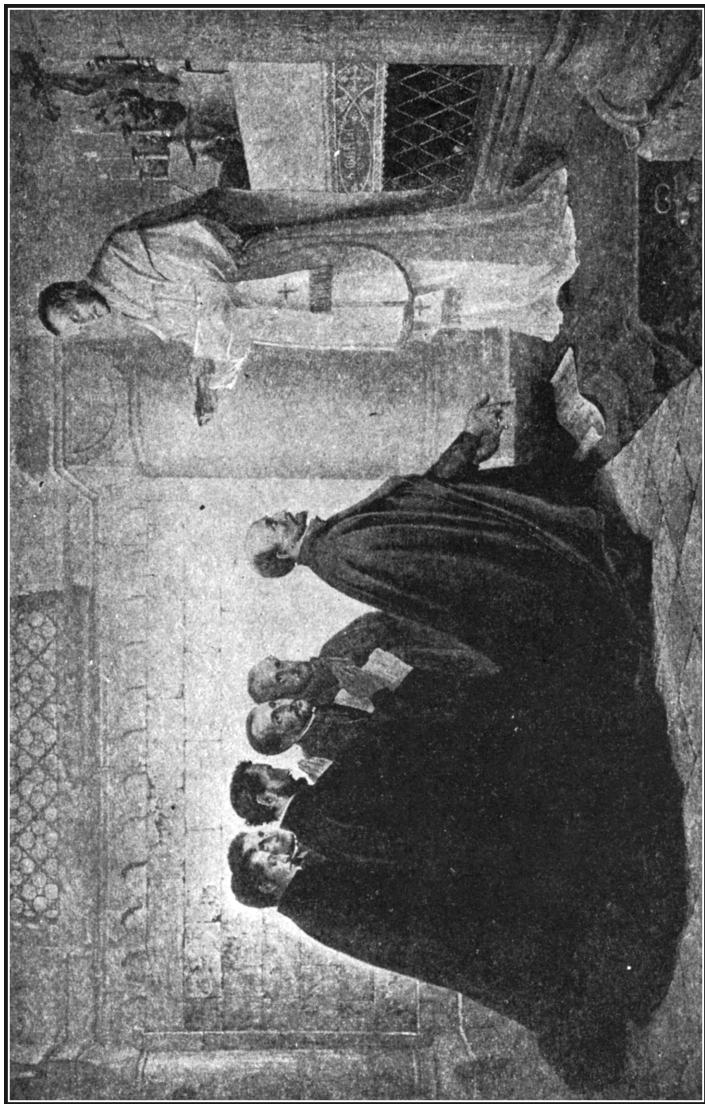
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CATHOLIC MORALITY

A Course in Religion
Book III



Baummeister

ST. IGNATIUS AND HIS COMPANIONS RENOUNCE THE WORLD

SECTION I

GENERAL MORAL

Introduction

I. GOD'S WILL THE END OF LIFE

What Is the Meaning and Purpose of Life?—This is the all-important question for every human being; for what will all the world beside profit us if we miss the whole purpose of our existence, if we fail to attain our true destiny?

1. Both reason and revelation tell us that God is the author and the last end of our life. Being creatures of God, the work of His hands, we belong to him absolutely. "In Him we live and move and are" (Acts 17,28). The last end of man can be nothing else but God from whom he came, "for of Him, and by Him, and in Him are all things (Rom. 11,36). Hence the purpose of our life is *to do the will of God*, as it is written in indelible characters in every human heart, as it was proclaimed on Sinai and on the Mount of the Beatitudes, as it is manifested in the duties of our state and calling, and as it is made known to us by those who share in God's authority here on earth in the family, the State and the Church.

But our submission to God's holy will must not be founded on servile fear; it must be a voluntary, loving and generous self-surrender to His will. Our service must be the service of a soldier who unhesitatingly carries out the commands of his general; but also the service of a child that sees in God his loving Father and his greatest benefactor.

2. This ideal of perfect harmony between the human will and the divine will is realized in the life of the *God-Man Jesus Christ*. He came on earth, as He Himself tells us, simply to glorify His Father and to do His will. He speaks of His Father's will as His food and drink, as the atmosphere He breathes, as His unfailing consolation. His whole life from the Crib to the Cross was one act of obedience to His heavenly Father. In His life and death He fulfilled most perfectly what the Angels

proclaimed in their Christmas message: "Glory to God in the highest." Hence He could say on the eve of His Passion: "I have glorified Thee on the earth, I have finished My work Thou gavest me to do; and now glorify Thou Me, O Father, with Thyself" (John 17,4).

Christ is, therefore, the bright and shining example for all who seek to attain their life's purpose in its "height and breadth and depth", and thus to lay the foundation of their own *perfect happiness*; for true happiness can be found only in seeking God's honor and glory by doing His will. "God asks no service from us," says a wise and holy man, "which does not promote our highest welfare, and no glory in which we, His creatures, do not share. God seeks His glory in our happiness."

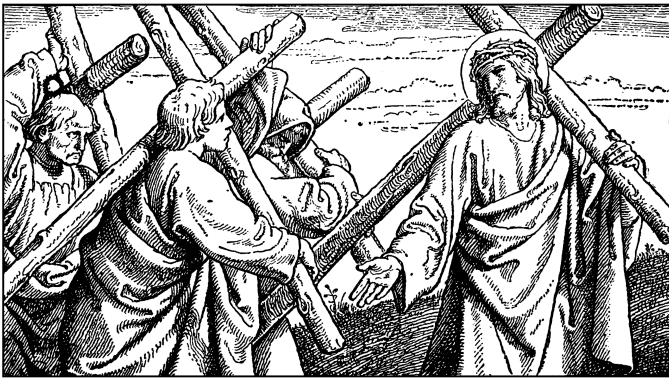
Hence the simple words which we find on the first page of the little Catechism express the highest wisdom: "*We are in this world to do the will of God and thereby to gain everlasting happiness in Heaven.*"

2. GOD'S WILL THE BASIS OF MORALITY

1. To give glory to God by doing His holy will: this is the end, the purpose of human life. All our actions should be directed to this end. Every action that brings us nearer to this end is a *good action*; every action, on the other hand, that leads us away from this end, is a *bad action*. Because "only one is good, God" (Mark 10,18), all morality, all moral goodness is based on Him; only that is good which corresponds to His holy will. But God is also the Creator, the Lord of heaven and earth, and therefore He alone can impose His will on mankind, from Him alone comes all moral obligation.

2. That our actions are morally good or morally bad according as they agree or disagree with the divine will, is clearly taught in Scripture. "Not every one that saith to Me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven, but he that doth the will of My Father who is in Heaven, he shall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven" (Matt. 7,21). "If thou wilt enter into life," Christ said to the rich young man, "keep the commandments" (Matt. 19,17). For the Son of God Himself the will of God is the rule of life and action. "Did you not know that I must be about My Father's business?" he said to His Mother, who had gently upbraided Him for remaining behind in the temple.

3. For the Apostles, too, the fulfillment of the divine will is the only rule of action. "Be not conformed to this world," St. Paul tells the Romans, "but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that ye may find out *what is the will of God*, what is good, well-pleasing and perfect" (Rom. 12,2). It is his earnest and unceasing prayer that his converts "may be filled with the knowledge of the will of God, that they may walk worthy of God in all things" (Col. 1,9-10). St. John calls those liars who say they know God, but do not keep His commandments. "But he that keepeth His word, in him in very deed the love of God is perfected" (1 John 2,5).



THE CALL OF CHRIST

"If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me." (Matt. 16, 24)

3. CATHOLIC MORAL SCIENCE

That part of the science of religion which teaches us how to direct our actions to God, our last end, is called *Catholic Ethics* or *Catholic Moral Science*. It is based on Christian principles and draws its conclusions from divine revelation.

As a part of the Christian doctrine—the doctrine of the things we must do, *doctrina faciendorum*—it is confided to the keeping of the Catholic Church. Hence the Catholic Church can, in virtue of the divine assistance granted to her, infallibly define what is good and what is bad, what is permitted and what is forbidden.

The general principles of morality are common to all men; but Christian moral differs essentially from purely natural moral:

a) Christian moral directs man to a *supernatural end*, which can be attained only by supernatural means, based upon faith and grace;

b) It holds out *motives* for right conduct of which unaided reason is either totally ignorant or has only an imperfect knowledge;

c) It establishes most of its conclusions on *divine revelation*, while natural moral derives its principles from the native power of reason alone;

d) It offers *means* of which natural moral knows nothing. Hence Catholic moral is incomparably more sublime, far-reaching, certain, and effectual than merely natural morality. The history of mankind shows that "morality lives by faith and dies by infidelity." "What Greek culture did for the intellect, Christ did for morality: the human race owes its *moral power* to Him" (CHAMBERLAIN).

Catholic Moral is divided into "General" and "Special". General Moral treats of the *conditions of morality* and of *moral good and moral evil*; Special Moral *applies the general principles of morality* to the various circumstances of individual and social life.

The *conditions of morality* are freedom of will, law, and conscience: *freedom* is the basis, *law* is the *external*, and *conscience* the *internal norm of morality*.

SUGGESTIONS FOR STUDY AND REVIEW

1. What is the purpose of our life? Briefly explain your answer. How does the *Our Father* answer this question?
2. What kind of submission to God's will should we cultivate? Are we children or slaves of God?
3. Was ever a human will in perfect harmony with the divine will? Would not such a Person be a perfect model for us? Show how the God-Man Jesus Christ is such a model.
4. When are our actions good? When are they bad? Prove your answers from Holy Scripture.
5. What is the science called which teaches us how to direct our actions to God?
6. How is Christian Moral divided? What does each division treat of?
7. What are the *conditions* of morality? If you had no free will, could you perform a *moral act*; that is, an act for which you could be held responsible?
8. *Reading: Imitation of Christ*, Bk. III, ch. 9, "That all things must be referred to God as the final end."

CHAPTER I

Conditions of Morality

A. FREE WILL

1. *Nature of Free Will*

When the youthful Hercules' education was completed, he set out to seek his fortune. He had not gone far before he met two beautiful women, Kakia (Vice) and Arete (Virtue) by name, who immediately entered into conversation with him. Each offered to be his guide, but bade him choose which he preferred to follow. Kakia promised him riches, ease, honors, and pleasure; Arete warned him that in her wake he would be obliged to wage incessant war against evil, to endure hardships without number, and spend his days in toil and poverty. Silently the hero pondered for a while over these so dissimilar offers, and then, mindful of the instructions he had received, rose from his seat by the wayside, and, turning to Arete, declared himself ready to obey any command he might choose to give him.

This parable is called *Hercules' Choice*: it is an apt illustration of what we mean by *free will*.

1. Free Will or Moral Freedom is the power of determining our own acts; the power of acting or not acting, of doing one thing or another as we please. Hercules made use of his free will when he determined to follow Arete; he might have followed Kakia, but he chose to follow Arete.

But *why* did Hercules determine to follow Arete? Both Arete and Kakia presented something *good or desirable* to him and thereby gave him *motives soliciting his will*. He weighed the motives and then made his choice. Free will implies not choice *without* motive, but choice *between* motives. If there is only *one* motive within the range of intellectual vision, the act of the will in such circumstances is not *free*, but *necessary*. A choice without *any* motive would be irrational and impossible (Maher).

2. Free Will Presupposes Knowledge.—We are responsible for an action only in so far as we know it to be morally good or bad. Hence we cannot be held responsible for what we do during sleep, in a state of unconsciousness, or during a fit of insanity. Hence, too, children who have not attained the age of discretion are not responsible for their acts. But we must not forget that

the seeds of good or bad habits can be sown in earliest childhood. "As the twig is bent, the tree's inclined."

3. We can will only what we know; but our will often influences our intellect. Love and hate, sympathy and antipathy easily darken our understanding and mislead our judgment. The wish is only too frequently the father to the thought, as Shakespeare says; and love is proverbially blind. We readily believe what we *wish* to believe. "He who denies the existence of God," says St. Augustine, "has some reason for *wishing* that God did not exist."

4. The power to commit sin does not belong to the essence of moral freedom; for this power presupposes a lack of knowledge: he who sins seeks his happiness in something which is not a real good; he puts a false god in the place of the true God. Hence the more strenuously we combat our evil inclinations and set our mind and will on what is truly good and beautiful, the *freer* we become. "Where the Spirit of God is, there is liberty," says St. Paul (2 Cor. 3,17); and Our Lord declares to the Jews: "If you continue in My word, you shall be My disciples indeed, and *you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free*" (John 8,31). The blessed in Heaven, who see the Eternal Truth face to face, cannot sin any more.

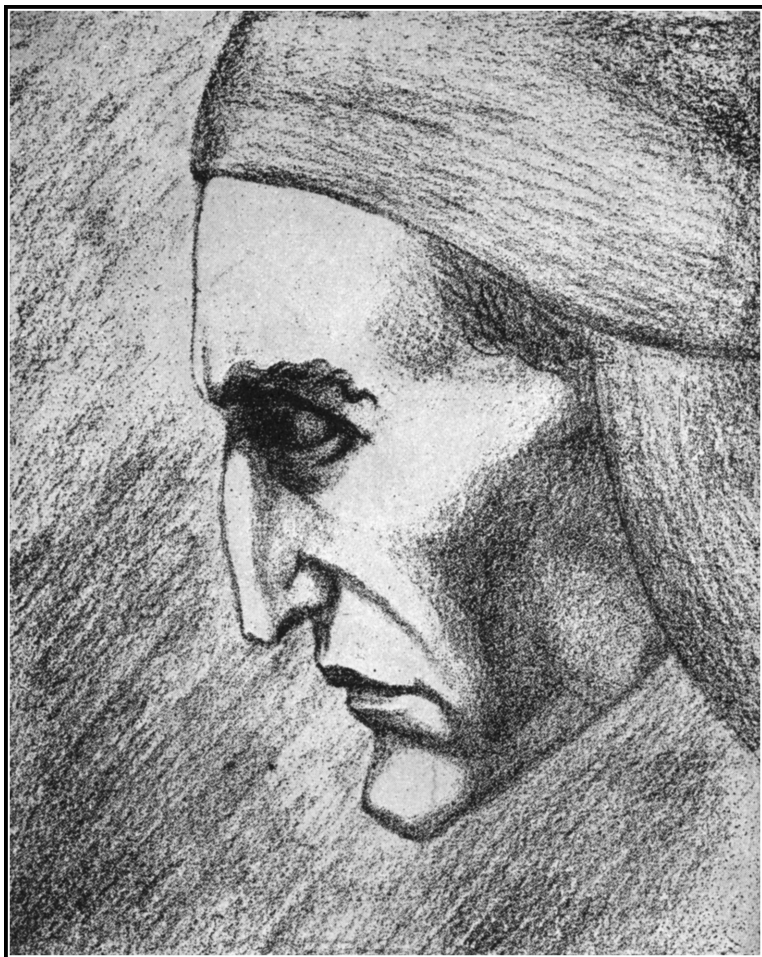
The one sole wished-for Good is there,
And everything defective elsewhere found,
In it is perfected beyond compare.

DANTE, *Paradiso*, 33

2. Free Will in the Light of Faith and Reason

1. That man has the power of free choice or free will is clearly taught in Holy Scripture.—Moses said to the children of Israel: "I call Heaven and earth to witness this day, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: *choose* therefore life" (Deut. 30,19). Everlasting glory is promised to him "who could have transgressed, who could do evil things, and hath not done them" (Eccles. 31,10). Jesus wept over Jerusalem and lamented: "Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how often would I have gathered together thy children, as the hen doth gather her chickens under her wings, and *thou wouldst not*" (Matt. 23,37).

2. The Church has ever championed the freedom of the will against all its opponents.—Against the so-called Reformers of the 16th century, who denied human liberty, the Council of Trent solemnly declared: "If any one says that the free will of man does not co-operate in any way with the grace of God, and that it can not resist the grace of God, but, like a lifeless thing is merely passive, let him be anathema" (Sess. 6, Can. 5-6).



Immel

DANTE

3. The freedom of the will is also vouched for by the consciousness of each individual and by the common sense of mankind.

a) The very fact that our will acts upon motives; that it waits till it sees a reason for acting; that it passes from one insufficient reason to another till it finds an adequate reason for deciding, proves that it is master of its actions.

b) *Duty, obligation, responsibility, reward, and punishment*—words found in the languages, literatures, and laws of all times—all imply *moral freedom*. “If we *ought* to abstain from a forbidden gratification no matter how pleasant it would be to us, if we are to be *responsible* for our deliberate consent to it, if we are *deserving of reward* for resisting it, then assuredly we must be possessed of free will, we must be capable of yielding, just as well as of refusing to yield.”

c) All men make a distinction between certain acts done *deliberately* and *freely* and similar acts done *indeliberately*. The whole social system is based on the assumption that the normal person has free will. The state makes laws *for* its citizens. It makes laws *about* animals, not *for* them.

d) The *legal trial* is based on the assumption that man is free and responsible. The fact that the legal trial is to be found in every state in every age, indicates that it is natural for man to believe in free will. If a man can only do what he *must*, if he has no more liberty than a machine, why should he be subjected to trial and punishment? We do not punish an automobile for running over a child, but we do punish a reckless driver.

3. *Hindrances to Free Will*

1. **Free Will is one of God's most splendid gifts to man.**—

Through his free will man has the wonderful power, unique in all the visible creation, of directing his actions according to his good pleasure. It is this wonderful power that makes him a moral agent, that makes him king and lord of creation, and of all creatures most like to God.

“Supreme of gifts, which God, creating, gave
Of His free bounty, sign most evident
Of goodness, and in His account most prized
Was *liberty of will*—the boon wherewith
All intellectual creatures, and them sole,
He hath endowed.”

DANTE, *Paradiso*, 5.

2. Hindrances to Free Will.—But this “supreme gift” of moral freedom is given to us, not as a perfect possession, but as a *power* or *faculty* which we must develop and make as perfect as possible. This task of training and strengthening the will is all the more difficult because of the many obstacles that have to be overcome both from within ourselves and from without.

a) Among the hindrances to free will *concupiscence* takes the first place. By concupiscence we mean the rebellion of our lower against our higher nature, of the flesh against the spirit. Since the fall of our first parents our nature is drawn toward the things of sense, as iron is drawn by the magnet. St. Paul calls this inclination to evil “the law of the members,” the law of gravitation, as it were, of our fallen nature, which draws the will down into the sphere of sin, and which cannot be completely and lastingly overcome unless the will of man and the grace of God form an offensive and defensive alliance against it. All merely natural means are insufficient.

Concupiscence lessens our liberty and our responsibility; but if we deliberately excite our passions, we are all the more to blame.

b) Another hindrance to free will is *ignorance*. The exercise of free will presupposes that we *know* what we are doing. We can will only what we know. If we do not know and cannot know that our actions are evil, we do not consent to evil, and cannot be blamed for our actions. In this case our ignorance is said to be *invincible*. But if we suspected that our action was wrong, our ignorance is called *vincible*, and we are to blame for our action; still “the less the knowledge, the less the blame.”

c) *Fear* of a grave present or future evil lessens our liberty, but it does not take away our liberty unless it is so intense that we do not know what we are doing; in this case we are not responsible for our actions. A man who perjures himself because he has been threatened with death, is not blameless, but he is less to blame than if he had perjured himself deliberately.

Grave fear, if unjustly caused with a view to bringing marriage about, has always been regarded by the Church as an impediment that makes marriage null and void; it is even probable that this cause nullifies marriage by the natural law.

d) If *violence* is used to make us do wrong, and we refuse our consent, we are not responsible; but if we give partial consent, we are partially to blame. We must remember that only *external*

acts can be forced from us; the will as such is beyond the reach of physical violence. The will is an inviolable shrine.

e) Good or bad actions repeatedly performed become *habits*, i.e., we perform them with greater ease, regularity and satisfaction: they become a second nature to us. If we seriously try to overcome bad habits, we disown them, as it were, and any acts that spring from them indeliberately are not really imputable to us.

f) Natural propensities to evil arising from *hereditary taint* lessen the voluntariness of the action just as passion does; but these propensities are not as a rule so strong as to make what in itself is mortally sinful only venial. The struggle against vice is more difficult for those who have inherited some evil propensity, but as long as they are in their right senses they can resist with the help of God's grace, if only they make use of the proper means.

B. LAW

The will of God is the end of life. If we do God's will, we shall infallibly attain our life's purpose—eternal happiness in the possession of God. But how do we know what is the will of God? How is God's will manifested to us? God must have provided some safe and certain rule to direct man's actions towards their last end. That rule we call the *moral law*. It is the means appointed by God by which man may attain his last end.

The will of God, therefore, considered as the rule, norm, or standard of our actions is called *law*. God has revealed Himself as our law-giver in two ways: by the *natural law* and by the *positive divine law*.

1. The Natural Law

The Natural Law is that law which God has written in the heart of man; in other words, it is the light of natural reason by which we discern what is good and what is evil; what is to be done and what is to be left undone; what leads to our last end, and what draws us away from it; what is in accordance with the will of God, and what is contrary to it.

1. That there is such a law is clear from Sacred Scripture.

St. Paul says of the heathens that they "are a law unto themselves", and that they "show that the demands of the law are *written in their hearts*, their conscience bearing witness to them" (Rom. 2,14-15). They are a law to themselves because they

know of themselves what is good and what is evil; reason is to them the herald of the eternal law of God.

The *pagans* themselves bear witness to the truth of the words of St. Paul. Socrates declared before the judges who condemned him to death that he would rather give up liberty and life itself than become a traitor to the dictates of the moral law. In his oration *pro Milone* Cicero says: "There exists a genuine and absolute law, right reason conformed to nature, universal, unchangeable, eternal, whose voice teaches us the good it commands, and turns us away from the evil it forbids. To ignore it is to trample under foot one's very nature, and to inflict upon oneself by that alone the most cruel punishment, even though one should escape all the chastisements imposed by human justice." Juvenal, the Roman satirist, echoes these words when he says: "By the verdict of his own breast no guilty man is ever acquitted."

The superiority of the unwritten moral law over all man-made laws is beautifully expressed by Sophocles, the greatest dramatist of antiquity. Against the command of her uncle, King Creon of Thebes, Antigone buries the body of her brother Polynices. She is caught in the act and brought before the king:

Creon (to Antigone). Knew'st thou our edict that forbade this thing?

Antigone. I could not fail to know. You made it plain.

Creon. How durst thou then transgress the published law?

Antigone. I thought not thy commandment of such might
That one who is mortal thus could overbear
The *infallible, unwritten laws of Heaven*.
Not now or yesterday they have their being,
But everlastingly, and none can tell
The hour that saw their birth. I would not, I,
For any terror of a man's resolve,
Incur the God-inflicted penalty
Of doing them wrong.

Antigone transl. by CAMPBELL.

"Two things," says Kant, "fill the soul with an ever renewed admiration and reverence: the starry heavens above me, and the immutable prescriptions of the moral law within me."

2. The subject-matter of the natural law is: (a) the primary precepts of morality, (b) the immediate conclusions, and, (c) the remote conclusions drawn from the primary precepts.

a) There are *three primary precepts of morality* corresponding to man's relation to God, to himself, and to his neighbor: We should worship God, we should control our sensual appetites, we should not do to others what we would not have them do to us.

A fourth might be added: Thou shalt honor thy father and thy mother. No normal person can be ignorant of these fundamental principles.

b) The *immediate conclusions* from these primary precepts are the *Ten Commandments*, with the exception of the Third. These conclusions are reached by a process of reasoning so simple as to be within the powers of the most illiterate.

c) In regard to the *remote conclusions*, such as the indissolubility of marriage, the unlawfulness of private revenge for bloodshed, and the like, ignorance is possible and excusable.

3. The natural law is the foundation of all other laws.—

Every law that contradicts the natural law is unjust and not binding in conscience. Since the natural law flows from the Eternal Law, that is, from the Divine Reason and Will, it is *binding on all men* independently of time or place or circumstances; it cannot be abrogated, nor can any part of it be changed, nor can any one be dispensed from it. There is no double standard of morality, one for the strong and another for the weak, one for the rich and another for the poor, one for the learned and another for the unlearned, one for the superior and another for the inferior.

4. But may not God, the Author of the natural law, change it if He so desires? May He not dispense anyone whom He may choose to dispense? We answer: To say that God could change the natural law or dispense from it, would imply that God could contradict Himself, would imply that certain actions were good or bad simply because He commanded or forbade them, and not that He commanded or forbade them because they were *intrinsically*, that is, in themselves, of their very nature, good or bad.

2. The Positive Divine Law

More clearly and fully than by the Natural Law God has made His will known by supernatural revelation, especially in the Old and New Testaments. This revealed law is called the *Divine Positive Law*.

1. Divine positive laws are necessary to man (a) in order to explain the natural law, especially those parts of it which are not so readily known and understood by reason alone; (b) because God gave man a supernatural destiny and therefore had to regulate man's actions so that he might be able to attain that destiny.

2. The divine positive law is divided into the *Law of the Old* and the *Law of the New Testament*; or simply, into the

Old and the New Law. The *Old Law* is subdivided into (a) the *Patriarchal* and (b) the *Mosaic Law*.

a) Even before the Fall God gave a positive law to our first parents: "Of the tree of knowledge of good and evil thou shalt not eat" (Gen. 2,8). After the Fall He imposed the *Law of Labor* on mankind: "In the sweat of thy face thou shalt eat bread till thou return to the earth out of which thou wast taken" (Gen. 3,19). To Noe and his sons He said after the Deluge: "Flesh with blood thou shalt not eat. Whosoever shall shed man's blood, his blood shall be shed" (Gen. 9,4-6). On the children of Israel He laid the law of Circumcision.

b) The Mosaic Law is divided into *ceremonial*, *judicial*, and *moral* precepts. The ceremonial precepts had reference to the system of religious worship established by God under the Old Law; the judicial regulated the civil government of the chosen people, and when the old dispensation gave place to the new at the coming of Christ both ceased to have binding force. But Christ by no means abolished the moral precepts contained in the Mosaic Law; on the contrary, He set His seal upon them, perfected them and promulgated them anew for all time. "Do not think," He said, "that I am come to destroy the law or the prophets. I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill" (Matt. 5,17).

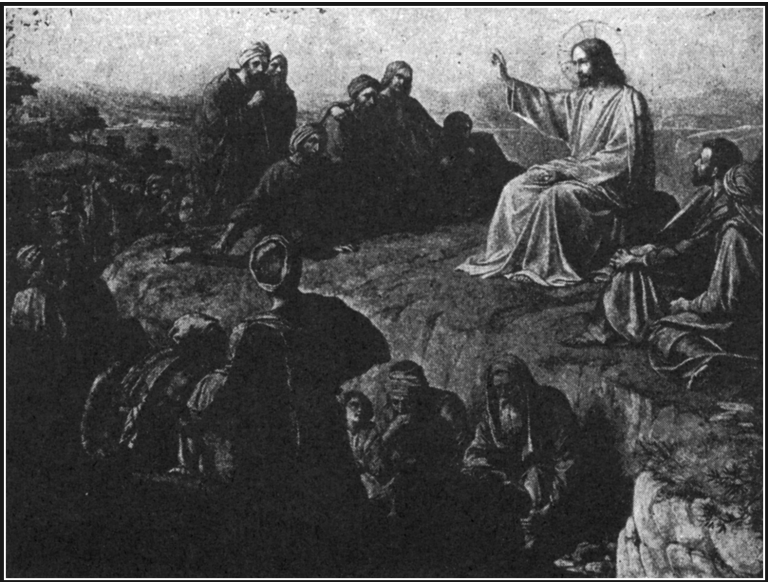
3. The New Law.—In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus, the Lawgiver of the New Testament, emphasized the necessity of the inward holiness and corrected some false interpretations of the Old Law, which were current among the Jews of His time. He developed what was implicitly contained in the moral precepts of the Decalogue (Ten Commandments), and He added to the precepts *Counsels of Perfection*, which He proposed as the ideal of the Christian life. He calls His commandment of love new, not because that great commandment did not bind under the Old Law, but because He urged it anew, gave us new motives to practice it, especially His own divine example and wish.

The only really new moral precepts found in the New Law are such as follow from the truths which Christ made known to us, and from the institution of the Sacraments. We are under moral obligation to believe explicitly in the Blessed Trinity, the Incarnation, and the other articles of the Christian faith, and to receive Baptism, the Holy Eucharist, and the other Sacraments instituted by Christ (Slater).



Hoet

THE LAW OF THE OLD TESTAMENT
The Giving of the Ten Commandments



Schumacher

THE LAW OF THE NEW TESTAMENT
The Sermon on the Mount

3. Human Positive Laws

In order that the divine law may be made known to men till the end of time and applied to suit the changing conditions of time and place, the Eternal Lawgiver has appointed representatives among men and given them a share in His legislative power. Hence the power exercised by parents over their children and by the Church and the State over their subjects comes from God; it is a participation in the divine authority.

1. Parental authority is expressly proclaimed in the Fourth Commandment. It embraces the whole life of the child. Its object is the corporal and intellectual, the temporal and eternal welfare of the child.

2. The Catholic Church has received from her divine Founder full and independent authority to make laws binding on all her children in matters which pertain to religion and the salvation of souls. "Whatsoever you shall bind upon earth, shall be bound also in Heaven" (Matt. 18,18). The Apostles knew that they possessed this power and exercised it. At the Council of Jerusalem they solemnly declared: "It hath seemed good to the Holy Ghost and to us, to lay no further burden upon you than these necessary things . . ." (Acts 15,28).

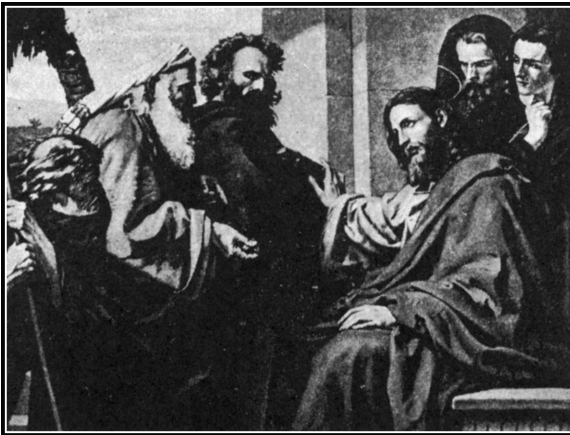
The laws of the Church bind only those who have been baptized. One who has been validly baptized, but belongs to a non-Catholic denomination, is strictly speaking, bound to observe the laws of the Church, but he is as a matter of fact dispensed from them as long as he remains in error without any fault of his.

3. Scripture teaches most clearly that the power of the State to make laws is also derived from God.—In a public interview Christ told the Jews: "Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's" (Matt. 22,31). Obedience to the civil authority, to an edict of the Emperor Augustus, marks the beginning of Christ's earthly life, and one of His last utterances concerned the divine origin of all human authority. "Thou shouldst not have any power against Me," He said to Pilate, "unless it were given thee from above" (John 19,10).

St. Peter echoes the words of Christ: "Fear God; honor the king . . ." and St. Paul says: "Let every soul be subject to the higher authorities; for there is no authority that is not from God, and the existing authorities are appointed by God. Wherefore he



“Amen I say to you, whatsoever you shall bind upon earth, shall be bound also in heaven; and whatsoever you shall loose upon earth, shall be loosed also in heaven.” (Matt. 18, 18)



Ciseri

“Render therefore to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar’s; and to God, the things that are God’s.” (Matt. 22, 21)

that opposeth the authorities resisteth the ordinance of God; and they that resist shall bring upon themselves a judgment" (Rom. 13,1-3).

C. CONSCIENCE

Law is the expression of God's will. It is the external norm or rule of our actions. It is by knowing and *applying* law to our individual actions that we attain our final end. This is done by *Conscience*.

1. Conscience, therefore, is the connecting link between law and particular acts.—It is the *application* of the natural law to our thoughts, words, and deeds. It is the *judgment* passed by our reason on the moral worth of our actions already done, being done, or to be done in the future.

The process by which we arrive at this judgment is as follows: Our mind recognizes the primary principles of the natural law as true and binding on all; our mind also knows the conclusions drawn from these principles; our conscience applies this knowledge to a particular act. For example, the natural law tells me that evil must be avoided and that theft is an evil act; from these premises my conscience concludes: Therefore it is not lawful for thee to make off with this hat or this pair of shoes which belongs to another.

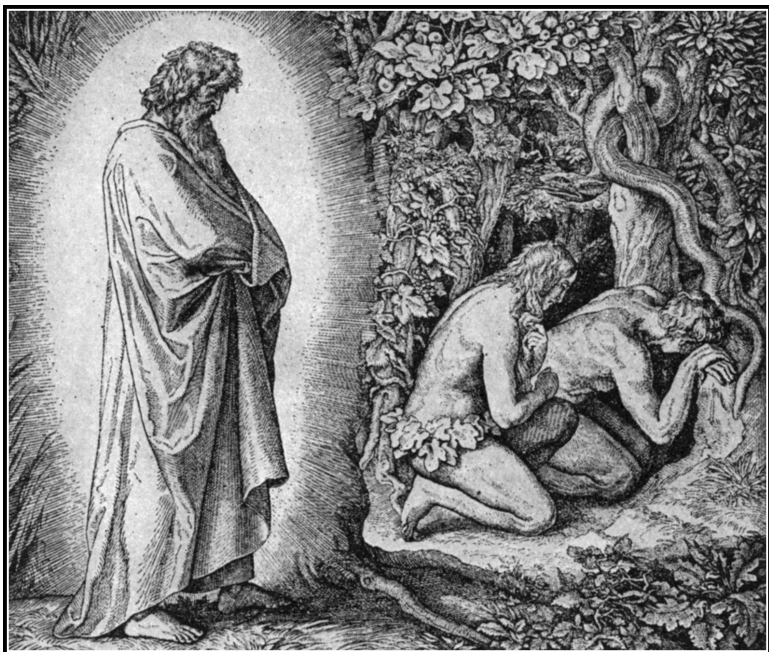
When there is question of obeying a positive law our conscience is formed as follows: I must obey all who command me with lawful authority. The Church commands me with lawful authority to receive Holy Communion at Easter time or to abstain from meat on Fridays. Therefore I must receive Holy Communion at Easter time and abstain from meat on Fridays. The drawing of this conclusion, or the conclusion itself, is called the *dictate of conscience*.

2. We do not need to prove that we have a conscience.—

All who have the use of reason *know that they have a conscience*. "Let no one," says St. John Chrysostom, "pretend to ascribe the neglect of virtue to ignorance or say he has no guide or no one to show the way. We have a competent teacher, namely, *conscience*, of whose aid no one is deprived. For the knowledge of what is to be done and what is to be left undone is in man *from the day in which he is formed*."

The deepest well-spring of conscience is, therefore, God Himself, the Author of our nature. In our conscience He manifests Himself as our *Lawgiver* and our *Judge*: as our Lawgiver who commands or forbids an act; as our Judge who after the act has been done decides whether it deserves blame or praise, punishment

or reward. Hence conscience is justly called the *voice of God* in man.



Schnorr

Adam and Eve, stricken in conscience, try to hide from God

3. The word conscience does not occur in the Old Testament or in the Gospels. In its place Our Lord uses the words *heart* and *interior light*. "A good man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is good, and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth that which is evil; for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh" (Luke 6,4). The heart, that is, the conscience, is according to Christ, the birthplace of good and evil. In a striking similitude He shows the necessity and the importance of conscience for morality: "The light of thy body is thy eye. If thy eye be single thy whole body shall be lightsome. If then *the light that is in thee* be darkness, the darkness itself how great shall it be?" (Matt. 6,22-23). What the eye is for our body, the interior light is for our moral life. Where this light does not shine, there is no morality, nor good nor evil; all is darkness and night. But by the bright flame of the interior light we see the way which we must go, the pitfalls and obstacles and dangers which we must avoid.

St. Paul introduced the word conscience into the Christian vocabulary. He found it in use both among the Greeks and the Romans (Gr. *suneidesis*, Lat. *conscientia*). He tells us that it forms a part of every man's moral equipment. "The gentiles," he says, "show the work of the law written in

their hearts, their *conscience* bearing witness to them" (Rom. 2,15).

But St. Paul not only introduced the word conscience into the Christian vocabulary, he also gave it a Christian meaning: the conscience of the Christian is a *conscience whose rule and standard is the will of God*. Our conscience can err—there is such a thing as an erroneous conscience—but if the will of God is the measure of our conscience, if we form our conscience "in Christ and in the Holy Ghost," it is an infallible guide of right conduct. "I speak the truth *in Christ*, I lie not, *my conscience bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost*" (Rom. 9,1).

4. We distinguish several kinds of conscience.—

a) A *true conscience* speaks the truth; it tells what is truly right and truly wrong. It is a genuine Echo of the voice of God.

b) A *false or erroneous conscience* tells us that something that is really wrong is right, and something that is really right is wrong. We may be to blame for this error or not; if we are to blame, our conscience is said to be *culpably erroneous*; if we are not to blame, it is said to be *inculpably erroneous*.

c) If our conscience, whether it speaks the truth or not, speaks with assurance, without a suspicion of error, and its voice carries conviction, we are said to have a *certain conscience*.

d) If our conscience has nothing definite to tell us about the goodness or badness of an action, it is called a *dubious or doubtful conscience*. To doubt is to suspend judgment. Hence a doubtful conscience is one that does not function.

5. We are always bound to follow a certain conscience, even if false or erroneous. "All that is not from conscience," says St. Paul, "is sin" (Rom. 14,23). The reason is clear. We are judged by God according as we do good or evil. Our merit or demerit is dependent on our responsibility. We are responsible only for the good or evil we *know* we do. But knowledge and certainty come from a certain conscience. Therefore, if we disobey a certain conscience, we make ourselves responsible. A Protestant who is fully convinced that it is a sin to hear Mass or to speak to a priest would undoubtedly commit sin by so doing.

No authority, ecclesiastical or civil, can make it lawful for us to do what our conscience condemns as *certainly wicked*. "God Himself can not make it lawful for a man to act against his own conscience, because to do so without sin is a contradiction in terms."

6. We are never allowed to act with a doubtful conscience.—We must clear up the doubt before acting. I am uncertain, for

example, whether a person has paid me a debt which he owed me. May I while in this frame of mind exact payment from him? Certainly not; for in this case I would be equally as ready to do wrong as right.

We are bound to *form our conscience* with great care. If we have serious grounds for suspecting that our conscience is erroneous, we are strictly obliged to look well into the matter. We are bound to take all reasonable means, such as good and honest people do take when there is danger of offending God. We ought to pray for light and consult others, who are more learned or prudent than we are. If after that our ignorance cannot be overcome, it is plain that we are not responsible for the error into which we have fallen.

7. The best means for cultivating and perfecting our conscience are —

- a) To practice *truthfulness* in word and deed;
- b) To *repress* those passions which tend to stifle the voice of conscience, especially *pride* and *impurity*;
- c) To *examine our conscience* every evening before retiring to rest;
- d) To go to *confession* frequently;
- e) To make a *retreat* from time to time.

On the excellent fruits of daily self-examination Benjamin Franklin writes in his *Autobiography*: "Conceiving that daily examination would be necessary, I contrived the following method for conducting that examination. I made a little book, ruling each page so as to have seven columns, one for each day of the week, marking each column with a letter for the day. I crossed these columns with thirteen red lines, marking the beginning of each line with the first letter of one of the virtues, on which line, and in its proper column, I might mark by a little black spot every fault I found upon examination to have been committed respecting that virtue upon that day. . . . Conceiving God to be the fountain of wisdom, I thought it right and necessary to solicit His assistance for obtaining it; to this end I formed the little prayer, which was prefixed to my tables of examination for daily use. . . . I entered upon the execution of this plan for self-examination, and continued it with occasional intermissions for some time. I was surprised to find myself so much fuller of faults than I had imagined, but I had the satisfaction of seeing them diminish. I was often almost ready to give up the attempt . . . for something that pretended to be reason was every now and then suggesting to me that such extreme nicety as I exacted of myself might be a kind of foppery in morals. . . . But, on the whole, tho' I never arrived at the per-

fection I had been so ambitious of obtaining, but fell far short of it, yet I was by the endeavor a better and a happier man than I otherwise should have been if I had not attempted it."

By making use of these natural and supernatural means we shall secure for ourselves the inestimable blessing of a *true conscience*, whose judgment is always in accordance with the will of God; of a *watchful conscience*, which detects and signals the approach of evil, no matter under what disguise it may appear; of a *tender conscience*, which fears to offend God in the slightest degree; and we shall thus build up in our hearts a kingdom of peace and joy.

"*In this I myself also endeavor to have always a conscience without offense towards God and towards men*" (St. Paul, Acts 24,16).

"*Have a good conscience and thou shalt ever have joy*" (*Imitation of Christ*, II, 6).

D. COLLISION OF RIGHTS AND DUTIES

Christ commanded His Apostles to preach the Gospel. The Sanhedrin "charged them not to speak at all, nor to teach in the name of Jesus." The Apostles decided that they "ought to obey God rather than men," and continued to announce the good tidings of salvation in spite of threats and scourging and imprisonment.

This example shows us what is meant by *collision of rights and duties*. We are sometimes confronted by two laws which we can not observe at the same time. Which one must be obeyed? The decision is not always easy. We have to care for our temporal as well as our eternal welfare, for the needs of our body as well as for the needs of our soul; we do not live for ourselves only, but we are also members of society; we have duties towards God and towards our neighbor, to our Church and to our country. Which of these duties takes precedence?

To answer this question we must remember that there is never any *real*, but only an *apparent* collision of rights and duties. "No man can serve two masters." The will of God, which cannot contradict itself nor demand what is impossible, never binds any of His creatures to observe two conflicting laws at the same time. In every case the lesser law must give place to the greater, the lower right or duty to the higher. Hence.

a) *The Natural Law takes precedence of any Positive Law.* I am allowed to work on Sundays in order to help some one in need, or to miss Mass in order to wait on a sick person;

b) *The Divine Law takes precedence of any Human Law.* We are never allowed to obey a human law if it commands something sinful; the martyrs disobeyed the Roman law which commanded them to sacrifice to idols.

c) *The claims of justice are higher than the claims of charity.* I must pay my debts before giving money to a charitable cause;

d) *Duties to which I am bound by my profession are higher than mere personal duties.* A policeman, a fireman, a doctor, a nurse, must run the risk of personal injury to health or life in order to save others.

e) *The salvation of our souls is a higher duty than the preservation of our life.* We cannot deny our faith in order to escape death.

SUGGESTIONS FOR STUDY AND REVIEW

A. FREE WILL

1. Show from the story of *Hercules' Choice* what we mean by Free Will. What is a *motive*? Can you act without a motive? Why do we say: "Free Will implies a choice between motives"? Give an example.
2. "Free Will presupposes knowledge." Explain this statement.
3. "Our will often influences our intellect." Explain this statement.
4. What does Holy Scripture say about Free Will?
5. What has the Church always taught about Free Will?
6. How can you prove that you have a Free Will?
7. Why is Free Will such a splendid gift of God to man?
8. Why must we train and strengthen our will?
9. Which is the chief hindrance to the exercise of our Free Will? How can we overcome this hindrance?
10. Name and briefly explain some other hindrances to Free Will. Can any one force you to commit sin? Why not?
11. "*Albert* neglected his studies when he was a medical student. In spite of warnings from professors and parents, he gave a great deal of time to amusements of all sorts. He managed to pass his examinations, but there were some important subjects of which he was ignorant. When he began to practice medicine, he soon found out his deficiencies. His prescriptions seemed to do more harm than good."

Is Albert responsible for the harm he does to his patients? Is his ignorance *vincible* or *invincible*? What must he do before he may be permitted to continue his practice of medicine?
12. *What is a Human Act?*—"When a man acts without a purpose, can we call his act a human act? No. Because he does not bring into play

those very faculties, intelligence and free will, which characterize him as a human being.

"What, then, do you call an act performed without a purpose; that is, performed without intelligence and free will?

"It is called simply an *act of the man*, but not a *human act*. This is the case whenever either knowledge or free will is wanting. Thus, when persons walk in their sleep, they do not perform human acts, because they do not *know* what they are doing. On the other hand, a person may stumble and fall. *He* really falls. He knows at the time that *he* is falling, but the *falling* is not the result of his free will; it is against his will. The act is not a human act. Again, a person may drink poison, thinking it to be pure water. He knows that he is drinking, and he drinks of his own free will. In so far, therefore, as the mere drinking is concerned, there may be said to be a human act. But he neither knows that he is *drinking poison*, nor does he will to *drink poison*. Hence his *drinking poison* is not a human act. He knows and wills the *drinking*, but not the *drinking poison*" (POLAND, S.J., *Fundamental Ethics*, Chicago: Loyola University Press, p. 12).

B. LAW

1. *The Natural Law*

1. How does God make known His will to us?
2. What do we understand by the Natural Law?
3. Prove that such a law exists. What other names are given to it?
4. What is the subject-matter of the Natural Law?
5. What are the three primary precepts of morality; that is, those precepts of which no normal person can be ignorant?
6. Which are the immediate conclusions from these primary precepts? Show how each of the Ten Commandments, except the Third, is a conclusion from one or other of the primary principles of morality. For example: "Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor" is a conclusion from the third primary precept: We should not do to others what we would not have them do to us.
7. A Roman law commanded all Roman subjects to offer sacrifice to the statues of the Roman emperors. Why was this law unjust and not binding in conscience?
8. Why cannot even God change the Natural Law or dispense from it?

2. *The Positive Divine Law*

1. What do we understand by a positive law? By a positive divine law?
2. Why are positive divine laws necessary to men?
3. How are the positive divine laws divided?
4. Give some examples of positive divine laws before Moses.
5. Which Mosaic Laws are no longer binding? Which Mosaic Laws did Christ perfect and confirm for all times?
6. Why is Christ called the Lawgiver of the New Testament?

7. Why did Christ call the commandment of love *His* commandment and a *new* commandment?
8. Which new moral precepts are found in the New Law? Would we be transgressing a command of Christ if we did not believe in the Mystery of the Blessed Trinity, or if we did not receive Holy Communion?

3. *Human Positive Laws*

1. Why are human positive laws necessary? Give examples.
2. Show that parents, the Church, and the State have been authorized by God to make laws.
3. Who is bound by the laws of the Church?

C. CONSCIENCE

1. What do we mean by Conscience?
2. How do we arrive at the "dictate of conscience"? Give an example.
3. Is the word conscience found in the Gospels? What words does Our Lord use for conscience?
4. What does St. Paul teach about conscience?
5. Why do we not need to prove that we have a conscience?
6. How does God manifest Himself in our conscience?
7. Distinguish and illustrate four kinds of conscience.
8. What kind of conscience must we always follow? Give an example.
9. Are we allowed to act with a doubtful conscience?
10. Which are the best means of cultivating and perfecting our conscience?
11. The Venerable Thomas à Kempis says: "Have a good conscience and thou shalt ever have joy." Comment on these words.
12. *Conscience the Interpreter of the Moral Law.*—"Implanted in us is a Moral Law whose incorruptible interpreter is Conscience. Of this I am as well aware as of my own existence. This monitor is, to some extent, innate in all men. The lowest member of the human race has *some* intuitive knowledge of the difference between right and wrong; and there is in him an instinctive feeling of obligation to do the former, rather than the latter. However callous criminals become, that inward voice still speaks within them; and after committing murder, deeds of excessive cruelty, and acts of base ingratitude, they are conscious of guilt.
 "This monitor does not entreat or argue with us; it *commands*. It says imperiously: 'This is right, that is wrong; do the former, do not do the latter.' As a free agent, I can disobey its mandate, but, though I do so, I well know I *ought* to have obeyed it."—STODDARD, *Rebuilding a Lost Faith*. (New York: P. J. Kenedy & Sons) p. 43.
13. We are sometimes confronted by two laws which we cannot observe at the same time. Which one must we obey? Illustrate your answer with examples.