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“ALWAYS LET YOUR CONSCIENCE BE YOUR GUIDE”

WAS JIMINY CRICKET RIGHT?

SISTER MARIA PHILOMENA, M.I.C.M. - SBC CONFERENCE - OCTOBER 7, 2011

We have to be educated for happiness. (Brother Francis, M.I.C.M.)

The foundations of morality are the correct understanding of reality. For example, you can give a child a basket and say, “Don’t hit it, don’t drop it, don’t sit on it, etc.,” but you could say, “It contains eggs.” If the child understands the nature of eggs, he will understand these [other] things automatically. (Brother Francis, M.I.C.M.)

Do not treat your conscience with contempt, for it always advises you to do what is best. It sets before you the will of God and the angels; it frees you from the secret defilements of the heart; and when you depart this life it grants you the gift of intimacy with God. (St. Maximos the Confessor)

After God, let us have our conscience as our mentor and rule in all things, so that we may know which way the wind is blowing and set our sails accordingly. (St. John Climacus)

He who lives in evil is punished in hell prematurely, being pierced by the conscience (St. John Chrysostom)

The life of the Christian has three distinguishing aspects: deeds, words and thought. Thought comes first, then words, since our words express openly the interior conclusions of the mind. Finally, after thoughts and words, comes action, for our deeds carry out what the mind has conceived. So when one of these results in our acting or speaking or thinking, we must make sure that all our thoughts, words and deeds are controlled by the divine ideal, the revelation of Christ. For then our thoughts, words and deeds will not fall short of the nobility of their implications. (St. Gregory of Nyssa)

Conscience is the chamber of justice. (Origen)

The conscience should not be evaded, since it tells us inwardly how to live in conformity to God’s will, and by severely censuring the soul when the mind has been infected by sins, and by admonishing the erring heart to repent, it provides welcome counsel as to how our defective state can be cured. (St. Philotheos of Sinai)

O faithful conscience, delicately pure, how doth a little failing wound thee sore!
[O dignitosa coscienza e netta, Come t’ e picciol fallo amaro morso.]
(Dante—Purgatorio—III, 8)

So may heaven's grace clear away the foam from the conscience, that the river of thy thoughts may roll limpid thenceforth, [Se toso grazia risolve le schiume Di vostra coscienza, si che chiaro Per essa scenda della mente il fiume.] (Dante—Purgatorio—XIII, 88)

There would be less sin if man could take an arm's length view of the object of sin, and could be prevailed upon to see not only its most pleasant side, but its most heinous side. To kneel down in body or in spirit is to place ourselves in the best frame of mind for understanding things as they are. To make an object the matter of prayer is necessarily to make it the object of reflection. Even the delay caused by our prayer will remove the object to arm's length in time if not in space. If we allow it to crowd upon us, it will end by prevailing. Its weight and size will be exaggerated. But to pray about it will focus its many rays and narrow it to its true dimensions. We shall make it an object of reflection rather than of impulse, of reason rather than emotion. (Father Vincent McNabb—The Science of Prayer)

Make reason your guide. (Solon—c. 600 BC)

There is no witness so dreadful, no accuser so terrible as the conscience that dwells in the heart of every man. (Polybius, c. 208-126 BC, History, bk. XVIII, 43).

Wisdom entereth not into a malicious mind, and science without conscience is but the ruin of the soul. (Francois Rabelais, c. 1494-1553, Gargantua and Pantagruel, bk. II, 8)

He that loses his conscience has nothing left that is worth keeping.
(Caution, c. 1645, The Holy Court)

Trust that man in nothing who has not a conscience in everything.
(Laurence Sterne, 1713-1768, Tristram Shandy, bk 17)

Conscience is a sacred sanctuary where God alone may enter as judge. (Felicite R. Lamennais)

A peace above all earthly dignities, /A still and quiet conscience. (Shakespeare—Henry VIII)

My conscience hath a thousand several tongues, and every tongue brings in a several tale, and every tale condemns me for a villain. (Shakespeare—Richard III)

Go to your bosom; Knock there, and ask your heart what it doth know.
(Shakespeare—Measure for Measure)

The disease of an evil conscience is beyond the practice of all the physicians in the world.
(Gladstone)

Labor to keep alive in your breast that little spark of celestial fire called conscience.
(George Washington)

The conscience is the sacred haven of the liberty of man. (Napoleon Bonaparte)

“Just as the education of nerve and sinew is vital to the excellent athlete and education of the mind is vital to the scholar, education of the conscience is vital to the truly proactive, highly effective person. Training and educating the conscience, however, requires even greater concentration, more balanced discipline, more consistently honest living. It requires regular feasting on inspiring literature, thinking noble thoughts and, above all, living in harmony with its still small voice.” (Stephen Covey)

“I believe that correct principles are natural laws, and that God, the Creator and Father of us all, is the source of them, and also the source of our conscience. I believe that to the degree people live by

this inspired conscience, they will grow to fulfill their natures; to the degree that they do not, they will not rise above the animal plane.” (Stephen Covey)

A brave man hazards life, but not his conscience. (Friedrich von Schiller)

A clear conscience is far more valuable than money. (Filipino Proverb)

A good conscience is better than a big wage. (Jamaican Proverb)

A clear conscience shines not only in the eyes. (Lebanese Proverb)

A guilty conscience is a lively enemy. (Indian Proverb)

A guilty conscience needs no accuser. (English Proverb)

Clear conscience never fears midnight knocking. (Chinese Proverb)

There is no pillow so soft as a clear conscience. (French Proverb)

Conscience is as good as a thousand witnesses. (Italian Proverb)

Conscience is the nest where all good is hatched. (Welsh Proverb)

Conscience is what tells you not to do what you have just done. (Spanish Proverb)

Conscience: man’s moral medicine chest. (Mark Twain)

Conscience is the root of all true courage; if a man would be brave let him obey his conscience. (James Freeman Clarke)

Conscience is the voice of the soul, as the passions are the voice of the body. No wonder they often contradict each other. (Jean Jacques Rousseau)

Conscience is the window of our spirit, evil is the curtain. (Doug Horton)

Conscience: The inner voice which warns us that [S]omeone is looking. (Henry Louis Mencken)

If a dog will not come to you after having looked you in the face, you should go home and examine your conscience. (Woodrow T. Wilson)

Money is a bottomless sea, in which honor, conscience, and truth may be drowned. (Ivan Kozlof)

Nothing is more powerful than an individual acting out of his conscience, thus helping to bring the collective conscience to life. (Norman Cousins)

The paradoxical and tragic situation of man is that his conscience is weakest when he needs it most. (Erich Fromm)

There is no witness so terrible and no accuser so powerful as conscience which dwells within us. (Sophocles)

A good conscience is a continual Christmas. (Benjamin Franklin)

Before I can live with other folks I've got to live with myself. The one thing that doesn't abide by majority rule is a person's conscience. (Harper Lee)

Conscience is our magnetic compass; reason our chart. (Joseph Cook)

The voice of conscience is so delicate that it is easy to stifle it; but it is also so clear that it is impossible to mistake it. (Madame de Stael)

The opposite for courage is not cowardice, it is conformity. Even a dead fish can go with the flow. (Jim Hightower)

A lot of people mistake a short memory for a clear conscience. (Doug Larson)

The harder the conflict, the more glorious the triumph. What we obtain too cheap, we esteem too lightly; it is dearness only that gives everything its value. I love the man that can smile in trouble, that can gather strength from distress and grow brave by reflection. 'Tis the business of little minds to shrink; but he whose heart is firm, and whose conscience approves his conduct, will pursue his principles unto death. (Thomas Paine)

Oh! think what anxious moments pass between The birth of plots, and their last fatal periods, Oh! 'tis a dreadful interval of time, Filled up with horror all, and big with death! (Joseph Addison—Cato—act I, sc. 3)

Oh, Conscience! Conscience! man's most faithful friend, Him canst thou comfort, ease, relieve, defend; But if he will thy friendly checks forego, Thou art, oh! woe for me, his deadliest foe! (George Crabbe—Struggles of Conscience)

Be this thy brazen bulwark, to keep a clear conscience, and never turn pale with guilt. [Hic murus aeneus esto, Nil conscire sibi, nulla pallescere culpa.] (Horace—Epistles—I, 1, 60)

A conscience without God is like a court without a judge. (Alphonse de Lamartine)

A quiet conscience makes one so serene. (Lord Byron)

Conscience: A small, still voice that makes minority reports. (Franklin P. Adams)

He will easily be content and at peace, whose conscience is pure. (Thomas a Kempis)

We cannot live better than in seeking to become better, nor more agreeably than in having a clear conscience. (Socrates)

Deep within his conscience man discovers a law which he has not laid upon himself but which he must obey. Its voice, ever calling him to love and to do what is good and to avoid evil, tells him inwardly at the right moment: do this, shun that. For man has in his heart a law inscribed by God. His dignity lies in observing this law, and by it he will be judged (cf. Rom. 2:15-16). His conscience is man's most secret core, and his sanctuary. There he is alone with God whose voice echoes in his depths. By conscience, in a wonderful way, that law is made known which is fulfilled in the love of God and of one's neighbor (cf. Mt. 22:37-40; Gal. 5:14). (Vatican II—Gaudium et Spes—Paragraph 16)

The judgment of conscience is a practical judgment, a judgment which makes known what man must do or not do, or which assesses an act already performed by him. It is a judgment which applies to a concrete situation the rational conviction that one must love and do good and avoid evil. This first principle of practical reason is part of the natural law; indeed it constitutes the very foundation of the natural law, inasmuch as it expresses that primordial insight about good and evil, that reflection of God's creative wisdom which, like an imperishable spark (*scintilla animae*), shines in the heart of every man. But whereas the natural law

discloses the objective and universal demands of the moral good, conscience is the application of the law to a particular case; this application of the law thus becomes an inner dictate for the individual, a summons to do what is good in this particular situation. Conscience thus formulates moral obligation in the light of the natural law: it is the obligation to do what the individual, through the workings of his conscience, knows to be a good he is called to do here and now. The universality of the law and its obligation are acknowledged, not suppressed, once reason has established the law's application in concrete present circumstances. (John Paul II—*Veritatis splendor*—August 6, 1993—Paragraph 59)

[D]ivine revelation must be considered morally necessary so that those religious and moral truths which are not of their nature beyond the reach of reason in the present condition of the human race, may be known by all men readily with a firm certainty and with freedom from all error.

(Pius XII—*Humani Generis*—August 12, 1950—Paragraph 3)

[This paragraph is footnoted: *Conc. Vatic. D.B., 1876, Cont. De Fide cath., cap. 2, De revelatione.*]

Then too, in order to be saved, we must keep the commandments of God and of the Church. For it is not enough merely to believe that we might be saved, we must also love. “If you love me keep my commandments,” Christ said. (John 14:15) Therefore, the Church, through its visible head, must also teach us how to live. On this point of moral authority, the true Church of Christ has always insisted on a most elevated code of ethics: the indissolubility of marriage, purity of morals, justice and charity, forbidding, as Christ himself did forbid, even evil thoughts. The moral teaching of the Church is not strictly a part of revelation, since man ought to know by the law of his conscience how to live righteously. But because of our fallen nature the voice of conscience easily becomes dulled, and eventually it can become perverted. Therefore, the Savior of men did dwell, in many of His sermons, on how His disciples were to conduct themselves in their land of exile. Due to the crystal clarity of the Scriptures in the Old, and more especially in the New Testament, the Popes who have governed the Church for these two thousand years have seldom found it necessary to place anathemas on teachings contrary to Christian morality, for there were not many men so bold and audacious as to challenge the traditions on these points. But when there were enough who did not refrain from so doing (and they are legion today), the papal authority had to stamp out the contagion. Thus we have the decrees of Pope Innocent XI (March 4, 1679) which condemned from the Chair of Peter perverse moral practices, including the murdering of infants in the womb during any stage of pregnancy. *Humanae Vitae*, the encyclical of Pope Paul VI, though lacking anathemas, was unquestionably infallible teaching, for it reechoed the traditional position of the true religion on that subject, which always held that birth control was morally evil.

In summary: Papal infallibility conveys to us the very means of salvation — that is a knowledge of what we are to believe by faith, and how we are to live in obedience and charity. The Vicar of Christ, therefore, is the supreme lawgiver on earth, for his decrees are conducive not merely temporal peace, but to eternal life. And no man need answer to His Maker on the Day of Judgment for having erred in any other fields but those of faith and morals.

(*The Slaves of the Immaculate Heart of Mary—The Infallibility of the Pope —Basic Facts About an Essential Dogma—Catholicism.org*)

See also:

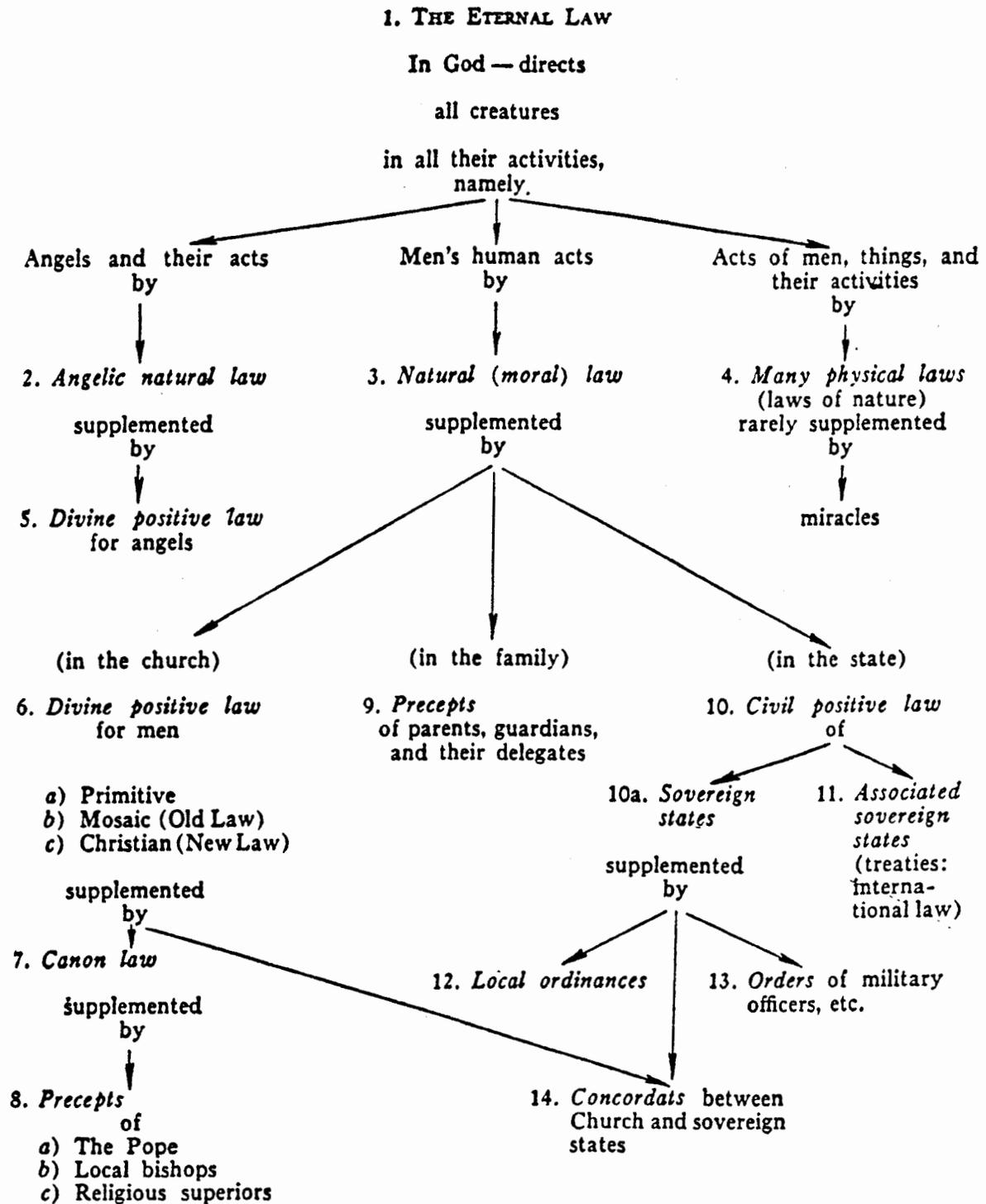
Going God's Way - The Church's Teaching on Moral Conscience
(http://www.cuf.org/Faithfacts/details_view.asp?ffID=109)

Forming Catholic Consciences (<http://www.cuf.org/FamilyResources/conscienceformation.asp>)

The Art of Forming the Conscience of a Child, by Fr. John A. Hardon, S.J.
(http://www.therealpresence.org/archives/Education/Education_002.htm)

Conscience: A Key to Salvation (<http://www.beginningcatholic.com/conscience.html>)

TYPES OF LAWS AND SOME OF THEIR RELATIONSHIPS



From the *Dictionary of Scholastic Philosophy*
 by Bernard Wuellner, S.J.
 The Bruce Publishing Company, 1956