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On the Laws

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On the Laws, Excerpts

By Francisco Suarez

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Chapter 17

Whether there are other effects of the law outside of those four

1. Let us inquire into the sufficiency of the previously given enumeration; and the reason for doubt is, whether law customarily produces many other effects. Firstly, the laws tax the prices of many things. Secondly, they appoint the mean in the matter of virtue. Thirdly they give the form of contracts, wills, etc. And as they determine essential things, just so acts done differently are not valid. To these effects pertain also the abrogation of contracts, the disqualification of people from certain contracts and offices. The fourth is to change the ownership of things. The fifth is to revoke the laws. The sixth is to give benefits and bestow a profit; for truly punishment does not pertain less to the law. For human life is governed by reward and punishment, as Isidore [of Seville] formerly said.

Chapter 19

Explication of some scriptural testimony which the heretics abuse

9. Whence in the first example that law was given in order for men to practice obedience, submission, humility, and other virtues, just as Augustine rightly noted (*On Genesis*) of the precept imposed on our first fathers: it is fitting, he said, that man is restrained by something, that being virtuous he merits obedience. To which he added, however, that the threat was not because man in his state of the power of perfection needed it, but on account of other reasons, such as to emphasize the gravity of the precept on the observation of which the good of all nature hung and to check the inconstancy of free will that can abandon the whole of the perfection of grace and depart from it, as was done; and therefore it is not unjust to make threats and make use of them, but the authors cited before say only that it was not laid down principally for them nor is it the chief motive for them to behave justly. The same can be applied to the law of circumcision, and with less difficulty, because it was given on the occasion of sin and for its cure.

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