

## XVI. - Gnostic Exposition of the Decalogue.

Let the Decalogue be set forth cursorily by us as a specimen for gnostic exposition. The number "ten."

**That ten is a sacred number**, it is superfluous to say now. And if the tables that were written were the work of God, **they will be found to exhibit physical creation. For by the "finger of God" is understood the power of God, by which the creation of heaven and earth is accomplished; of both of which the tables will be understood to be symbols. For the writing and handiwork of God put on the table is the creation of the world.**

**And the Decalogue, viewed as an image of heaven, embraces sun and moon, stars, clouds, light, wind, water, air, darkness, fire. This is the physical Decalogue of the heaven.**

And the representation of the earth contains men, cattle, reptiles, wild beasts; and of the inhabitants of the water, fishes and whales; and again, of the winged tribes, those that are carnivorous, and those that rise mild food; and of plants likewise, **both fruit-bearing and barren. This is the physical Decalogue of the earth.**

And the ark which held them will then be **the knowledge of divine and human things and wisdom.**

**And perhaps the two tables themselves may be the prophecy of the two covenants. They were accordingly mystically renewed, as ignorance along with sin abounded.** The commandments are written, then, doubly, as appears, **for twofold spirits, the ruling and the subject.** "For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh." ([Gal 5:17](#))

**And there is a ten in man himself: the five senses, and the power of speech, and that of reproduction; and the eighth is the spiritual principle communicated at his creation; and the ninth the ruling faculty of the soul; and tenth, there is the distinctive characteristic of the Holy Spirit, which comes to him through faith.**

Besides, in addition to these ten human parts, the law appears to give its injunctions to sight, and hearing, and smell, and touch, and taste, and to the organs subservient to these, which are double - the hands and the feet. **For such is the formation of man.** And the soul is introduced, and previous to it the ruling faculty, by which we reason, **not produced in procreation;** so that without it there is made up the number ten, of **the faculties by which all the activity of man is carried out.** For in order, **straightway on man's entering existence, his life begins with sensations.** We accordingly assert that **rational and ruling power is the cause of the constitution of the living creature;** also, that this, **the irrational part, is animated, and is a part of it.** Now the vital force, in which is comprehended the power of nutrition and growth, and generally of motion, **is assigned to the carnal spirit,** which has great susceptibility of motion, and **passes in all directions through the senses and the rest of the body, and through the body is the primary subject of sensations.** But the power of **choice, in which investigation, and study, and knowledge, reside, belongs to the ruling faculty.** But all the faculties are placed in relation to one - **the ruling faculty: it is through that man lives, and lives in a certain way.**

**Through the corporeal spirit, then, man perceives, desires, rejoices, is angry, is nourished, and**

grows. It is by it, too, that **thoughts and conceptions advance to actions. And when it masters the desires, the ruling faculty reigns.**

The commandment, then, "Thou shalt not lust," says, **thou shalt not serve the carnal spirit, but shall rule over it;** "For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit," ([Gal 5:17](#)) **and excites to disorderly conduct against nature;** "and the Spirit against the flesh" exercises sway, in order that the conduct of the man may be according to nature.

Is not man, then, rightly said "to have been made in the image of God?" - **not in the form of his [corporeal] structure;** but inasmuch as God creates all things by the Word ( $\lambda\omicron\gamma\omega\sigma$ /logos), and the man who has become **a Gnostic performs good actions by the faculty of reason** ( $\tau\omicron\lambda\omicron\gamma\iota\kappa\omega\varsigma$ /to logic), properly therefore the **two tables** are also said to mean the commandments that were given to the **twofold spirits**, - those communicated before the law to that which was created, and to the ruling faculty; and the movements of the senses are both copied in the mind, and **manifested in the activity which proceeds from the body.** For apprehension results from both combined. **Again, as sensation is related to the world of sense, so is thought to that of intellect.** And actions are twofold - **those of thought, those of act.**

~Clement- Stromata Book VI Vol. 2