

On the Commandments of God

Q. 1125. Is it enough to belong to God's Church in order to be saved?

A. It is not enough to belong to the Church in order to be saved, but we must also keep the Commandments of God and of the Church.

Q. 1126. Are not the commandments of the Church also commandments of God?

A. The commandments of the Church are also commandments of God, for they are made by His authority and under the guidance of the Holy Ghost; nevertheless, the Church can change or abolish its own commandments, while it cannot change or abolish the commandments given directly by God Himself.

Q. 1127. Which are the Commandments that contain the whole law of God?

A. The Commandments which contain the whole law of God are these two: 1st. Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, with thy whole soul, with thy whole strength, and with thy whole mind; 2nd. Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.

Q. 1128. Why do these two Commandments of the love of God and of our neighbor contain the whole law of God?

A. These two Commandments of the love of God and of our neighbor contain the whole law of God because all the other Commandments are given either to help us to keep these two, or to direct us how to shun what is opposed to them.

Q. 1129. Explain further how the two commandments of the love of God and of our neighbor contain the teaching of the whole ten commandments.

A. The two commandments of the love of God and of our neighbor contain the teaching of the whole ten commandments because the first three of the ten commandments refer to God and oblige us to worship Him alone, respect His name and serve Him as He wills, and these things we will do if we love Him; secondly, the last seven of the ten commandments refer to our neighbor and forbid us to injure him in body, soul, goods or reputation, and if we love him we will do him no injury in any of these, but, on the contrary, aid him as far as we can.

Q. 1130. Which are the Commandments of God?

A. The Commandments of God are these ten:

1. I am the Lord thy God, who brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. Thou shalt not have strange gods before me. Thou shalt not make to thyself a graven thing, nor the likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or in the earth beneath, nor of those things that are in the waters under the earth. Thou shalt not adore them, nor serve them.
2. Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain.
3. Remember thou keep holy the Sabbath day.
4. Honor thy father and thy mother.
5. Thou shalt not kill.
6. Thou shalt not commit adultery.
7. Thou shalt not steal.
8. Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor.
9. Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's wife.
10. Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's goods.

Q. 1131. What does the first commandment mean by a "graven thing" or "the likeness of anything" in heaven, in the earth or in the waters?

A. The first commandment means by a "graven thing" or "the likeness of anything" in heaven, in the earth or in the waters, the statue, picture or image of any creature in heaven or of any animal on land or in water intended for an idol and to be worshipped as a god.

Q. 1132. Who gave the Ten Commandments?

A. God Himself gave the Ten Commandments to Moses on Mount Sinai, and Christ our Lord confirmed them.

Q. 1133. How and when were the Commandments given to Moses?

A. The Commandments, written on two tables of stone, were given to Moses in the midst of fire and smoke, thunder and lightning, from which God spoke to him on the mountain, about fifty days after the Israelites were delivered from the bondage of Egypt and while they were on their journey through the desert to the Promised Land.

Q. 1134. What do we mean when we say Christ confirmed the Commandments?

A. When we say Christ confirmed the Commandments we mean that He strongly approved them, and gave us by His teaching a fuller and clearer knowledge of their meaning and importance.

Q. 1135. Was anyone obliged to keep the Commandments before they were given to Moses?

A. All persons, from the beginning of the world, were obliged to keep the Commandments, for it was always sinful to blaspheme God, murder, steal or violate any of the Commandments, though they were not written till the time of Moses.

Q. 1136. How many kinds of laws had the Jews before the coming of Our Lord?

A. Before the coming of Our Lord the Jews had three kinds of laws:

1. Civil laws, regulating the affairs of their nation;
2. Ceremonial laws, governing their worship in the temple;
3. Moral laws, guiding their religious belief and actions.

Q. 1137. To which of these laws did the Ten Commandments belong?

A. The Ten Commandments belong to the moral law, because they are a compendium or short account of what we must do in order to save our souls; just as the Apostles' Creed is a compendium of what we must believe.

Q. 1138. When did the civil and ceremonial laws of the Jews cease to exist?

A. The civil laws of the Jews ceased to exist when the Jewish people, shortly before the coming of Christ, ceased to be an independent nation. The ceremonial laws ceased to exist when the Jewish religion ceased to be the true religion; that is, when Christ established the Christian religion, of which the Jewish religion was only a figure or promise.

Q. 1139. Why were not also the moral laws of the Jews abolished when the Christian religion was established?

A. The moral laws of the Jews could not be abolished by the establishment of the Christian religion because they regard truth and virtue and have been revealed by God, and whatever God has revealed as true must be always true, and whatever He has condemned as bad in itself must be always bad.