

LESSON TWENTY-NINTH.

ON THE COMMANDMENTS OF GOD.

310 Q. 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.

WE call some commandments the commandments of God and others the commandments of the Church. We do so only to distinguish the commandments that God gave to Moses from those that the Church made afterwards. They are all the commandments of God, for whatever laws or commandments the Church makes, it makes them under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, and by God's authority. It would be a mortal sin to break the commandments of the Church, just as it would be to break the commandments of God. You must remember that the ten commandments always existed from the time of Adam, but they were not written till God gave them to Moses. You know that it was always a sin to worship false gods, to blaspheme, to disobey parents, to kill, etc.; for you know Cain was punished by God for the murder of his brother Abel (Genesis iv.), and that took place while Adam was still alive.

Before the coming of Our Lord the Israelites, or God's chosen people, had three kinds of laws. They had the civil laws for the government of their nation—just as we have our laws for the people of the United States. They had their ceremonial laws for their services in the temple—as we

have our ceremonies for the Church. They had their moral laws—such as the commandments—teaching them what they must do to save their souls. Their civil laws were done away with when they ceased to be a nation having a government of their own. Their ceremonial laws were done away with when Our Lord came and established His Church; because their ceremonies were only the figures of ours. Their moral laws remained, and Our Lord explained them and made them more perfect. Therefore we keep the commandments and moral laws as they were always kept by man. Fifty days after the Israelites left Egypt they came to the foot of Mount Sinai (Exodus xix.). Here God commanded Moses to come up into the mountain, and in the midst of fire and smoke, thunder and lightning, God spoke to him and delivered into his hands the ten commandments written on two tablets of stone.

Every day while the Israelites were travelling in the desert God sent them manna—a miraculous food that fell every morning. It was white, and looked something like fine rice. It had any taste they wished it to have. For instance, if they wished it to taste like fruit, it did taste so to them; but its usual taste was like that of flour and honey (Exodus xvi.).

I said there is no difference between the ten commandments of God and the six commandments of the Church; and there is no difference as far as the sin of violating them is concerned. But they differ in this: the Church can change the commandments it made itself, while it cannot change those that God Himself gave directly.

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

A. The Commandments which contain the whole law of God are these two: first, thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, with thy whole soul, with thy whole strength, and with thy whole mind; second, thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.

“As thyself”—that is, as explained elsewhere, with the

same kind, though not necessarily with the same degree, of love. First we must love ourselves and do what is essential for our own salvation, because without our co-operation others cannot save us, though they may help us by their prayers and good works. Next to ourselves nature demands that we love those who are related to us in the order of parents, children, husbands, wives, brothers, etc., and help them in proportion to their needs, and before helping strangers who are in no greater distress.

* 312 Q. 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.

Of the Ten Commandments the first three refer to Almighty God and the other seven to our neighbor. Thus all the commandments may be reduced to the two of the love of God and of the love of our neighbor. The first commandment says you shall worship only the true God; the second says you shall respect His holy name; and the third says you shall worship Him on a certain day. All these are contained therefore in this: Love God all you possibly can, for if you do you will keep the first three of the commandments. The fourth says: Honor your father—who in the sense of the commandment can also be called your neighbor—that is, respect him, help him in his needs. The fifth says do not kill him; namely, your neighbor. The others say do not rob him of his goods; do not tell lies about him; do not wish unjustly to possess his goods and do not covet his wife. Thus it is clear that the last seven are all contained in this: Love your neighbor, for if you do you will keep the last seven commandments that refer to him.

313 Q. 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.

* 314 Q. Who gave the Ten Commandments?

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