

There are two other factors that increase the charity one already has. The **first** is the heart's separation from earthly things. For the heart cannot be perfectly directed towards disparate things. So no one can love God and the world. Therefore, the more our heart is removed from love of earthly things, the more it is settled in divine love. So Augustine says in the *Book of 83 Questions*: "What poisons charity is the hope of gaining or retaining temporal things. What nourishes it is the diminishing of cupidity. What perfects it is the elimination of cupidity, because the root of all evils is cupidity." So whoever wants to nourish his charity should concentrate on reducing cupidity. Cupidity is the love of acquiring or receiving temporal things. The beginning of reducing it is to fear the Lord. He alone cannot be feared without some love. And this is the reason religious orders were instituted, so that in and through them the human heart can be drawn away from earthly and corruptible things and lifted up to divine things. This is symbolized in the passage (2 Mac 1:22): "The sun shone, which previously had been under a cloud." The sun, that is, the human intellect, is under a cloud when it is fastened on earthly things, but it shines out when it is removed and taken away from the love of earthly things. Then it shines, and then divine love grows in it.

The **second** factor helping love to grow is firm patience in adversity. For it is clear that when we carry heavy burdens for the sake of the one we love, love itself is not destroyed, but rather grows (Sg 8:7): "Many waters," that is, many tribulations, "could not extinguish charity." And therefore holy men who put up with adversities for the sake of God are more firmly rooted in his love, just as a craftsman loves more the work and put more effort into it. And that is why the more sufferings the faithful endure for God's sake, the more they are raised high in his love (Gen 7:17): "The waters", that is, tribulations, "multiplied and the ark", that is, the Church or the soul of the just man, was lifted high."

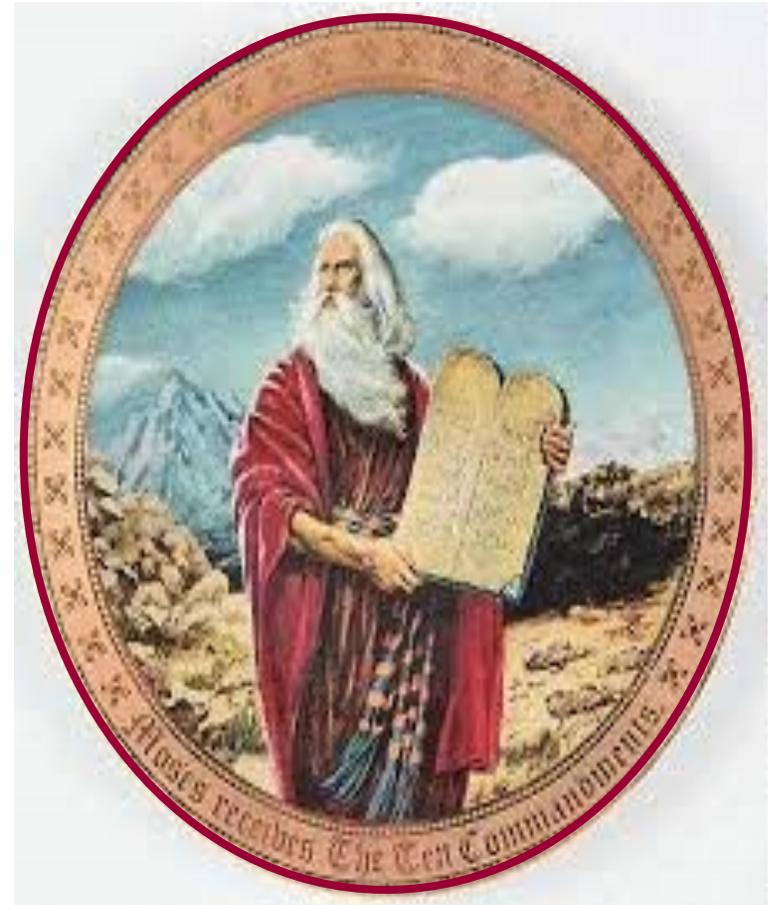
THE LAW OF GOD **THE TEN COMMANDMENTS**



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The Ten Commandments

Prologue



THE LAW OF GOD

The Ten Commandments or Decalogue (10 words) was given by God on Mt. Horeb (also known as Mt. Sinai) to Moses around 1280 BC. They are the core of the moral teachings of Israel and have come down to Christianity as part of Divine Revelation. The Church in commenting on the Commandments sees in them the totality of the negative and positive moral law, the things we should not do, as well as the things we should do. This is to say, they embody the entire natural law, what reason can discover of morality from the nature of the world and man. However, as St. Thomas Aquinas noted, not every society, much less every man, discovers the entire natural law, so God has revealed it in the Commandments so it could be known with certainty by all men, of every society, and every age.

The Bible gives two versions of the Ten Commandments, in essential content identical, one in Exodus and another in Deuteronomy. The enumeration of the commandments (which is number one, which is two etc.) are traditional and neither contained in the texts nor obvious. The Catholic Church has traditionally used the Deuteronomy account and followed the division of the text given in the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Scriptures made by second century BC Jews in Egypt and used by the early Church as its Old Testament. The Anglican Church and the Lutheran Church also use this account. The other Reformation churches use the Exodus listing, and adopted the Jewish enumeration of the Hebrew text. The Commandments are probably best known from the traditional formulas used in catechesis.

Commentary is by Saint Thomas Aquinas. By universal consent, Thomas Aquinas is the preeminent spokesman of the Catholic tradition of reason and of divine revelation. He is one of the great teachers of the medieval Catholic Church, honored with the titles Doctor of the Church and Angelic Doctor.

Prologue

By: Saint Thomas Aquinas

Three things are necessary for man to be saved: (1) knowledge of what is to be believed, (2) knowledge of what is to be desired, and (3) knowledge of what is to be done.

The first is taught in the Creed, where knowledge of the articles of faith is given; the second is in the Lord's Prayer; the third is in the Law.

A fourfold law

Here we are concerned with knowledge of what is to be done, and with regard to this there is a fourfold law:

of someone when he acquires a right to his property. So also charity acquires for us a right to the inheritance of God, which is eternal life, because, as it is said (Rm 8:16-17): "The Spirit himself gives testimony to our spirits that we are the sons of God. And if we are sons, we are also heirs, heirs of God, co-heirs with Christ." And (Wis 5:5): "See how they are numbered among the sons of God."

How to get and increase charity

So much for the benefits of charity. It now remains to work hard to acquire it and hold onto it. But we must realize that no one can possess charity on his own, but it is the gift of God alone. So John says (1 Jn 4:10): "Not as if we loved God, but he first loved us." That is, he does not love us because we first loved him, but the fact that we love him is brought about in us by his love. We should also realize that, although all gifts are from the Father of lights, that gift of charity surpasses all other gifts. For all the others can be had without charity and the Holy Spirit, but with charity the Holy Spirit necessarily must also be had. The Apostle says (Rm 5:5): "The charity of God is poured out in our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us." Whether we talk of the gift of tongues or of knowledge or of prophecy, any of them can be had without grace and the Holy Spirit.

In spite of the fact that charity is a divine gift, to possess it requires a disposition on our part. So it should be known that there are two requisites for acquiring charity and two others for increasing the charity one already possesses. This is clear from human experience. For if we hear good things about someone, we are fired up to love him. So when we **hear the words of God**, we are fired up to love him (Ps 98:140): "Your word is fire-tested, and your servant loves it." Likewise (Ps 104:19): "The word of the Lord fire-tested him." Therefore the two disciples, burning with divine love, said (Lk 24:32): "Weren't our hearts burning within us when he spoke on the way and opened the Scripture for us?" And in Acts 10 it is written that while Peter preached the Holy Spirit fell on those listening to the divine word. And it often happens in preaching that those who come with a hard heart are fired with divine love because of the preaching message.

The **second** requisite is continual thinking about good things (Ps 38:4): "My heart became hot within me." So if you want to acquire divine love, meditate on good things. Someone would have to be very hard if, after thinking about the divine favors he received, the dangers he avoided and the happiness promised him by God, he is not fired with divine love. Augustine said: "It would take a hard-hearted man who, even if he doesn't want to show love, would refuse to repay it." And on a general level, just as bad thoughts destroy charity, so good thoughts acquire, nourish and conserve it. So we are commanded (Is 1:16): "Remove the evil of your doings [Vulgate: thoughts] from my sight. And (Wis 1:3): "Perverse thoughts separate one from God."

penance is not necessary.” But we should observe that no one really loves if he is not really repentant. For it is clear that the more we love someone, the more we are sorry if we offend him. And this is one effect of charity.

Another effect of charity is that it causes illumination of the heart. As Job (37:19) says: “We are all wrapped in darkness.” For we often do not know what to do or desire. But charity teaches everything necessary for salvation. Therefore it is said (1 Jn 2:27): “His anointing teaches you about everything.” And that is because where there is charity, there is the Holy Spirit, who knows everything and leads us onto the right way, as said in Psalm 142. Therefore it is said (Sir 2:10 Vulgate): “You who fear God, love him, and your hearts will be enlightened,” that is, to know what is necessary for salvation.

Another effect of charity is to produce perfect joy in man. For no one really has joy without being in charity. For anyone who desires something is not happy or joyful or satisfied until he gets it. In temporal things something not possessed can be desired, but when possessed it can be despised and cause boredom. But that is not so in spiritual things, for one who loves God has him, and therefore the spirit of one who loves and desires him is satisfied in him. For “whoever remains in charity remains in God and God in him,” as is said in 1 John 4:16.

Another effect of charity is perfect peace. Temporal things can often be desired, but when they are possessed, the spirit of the one who desired them is not satisfied, but after getting one thing, he desires another (Is 57:20): “The heart of the wicked man is like a rough ocean which cannot be quiet.” And (*ibid.*): “There is no peace for the wicked, says the Lord.” But that does not happen with love of God. For whoever loves God has perfect peace (Ps 118:165): “Great peace to those who love your law; nothing can make them stumble.” And that is because only God can fill our desire. For God is greater than our heart, as the Apostle says, and therefore Augustine says in Book I of his *Confessions*: “You made us for you, Lord, and our heart is not at rest until it rests in you.” And (Ps 102:5): “He fills your desire with good things.”

Another effect of charity is to give man great dignity. For all creatures serve the divine majesty— since they were all made by him—as manufactured goods serve their maker. But charity turns a slave into a free man and friend. So the Lord said to the Apostles (Jn 15:15), “I no longer call you slaves/servants... but friends.” But was Paul not a slave, like the other Apostles who described themselves that way? In answer, we must distinguish two kinds of servitude. The first is that of fear, and that is painful and no meritorious. For anyone who refrains from sin only because of fear of punishment does not merit because of this, but is still a slave. The second kind of servitude is that of love. If someone acts not from fear of judgment but from divine love, he is not acting like a slave, but like a free man, because he does so voluntarily. Therefore he says: “I no longer call you slaves.” And why? the Apostle answers (Rm 8:15): “You did not receive the spirit of servitude again in fear, but you received the spirit of adoption of children.” For there is no fear in charity, as is said (1 Jn 14), since fear is penal, but charity makes us not only free people but also sons, so that we can be called sons of God, as it is said (1 Jn 3). For an outsider becomes the adopted son

The first is the law of nature, and that is nothing other than the light of the intellect planted in us by God, by which we know what should be done and what should be avoided. God gave this light and this law in creation. But many believe that they are excused by ignorance if they do not observe this law. Against them the Prophet says in Psalm 4:6: “Many say: who will show us good things?”—as if they do not know what they should do. But he replies (v. 7): “The light of your face, Lord, is stamped on us”—that is, the light of the intellect, through which we know what should be done. For no one is ignorant that what he would not like to be done to himself he should not do to others, and similar norms. Yet, though God gave man this law of nature in creation, the Devil has sown in man another law on top of it, that of concupiscence. For in the first man, to the extent that the soul was subject to God, keeping the divine precepts, his flesh was also subject in all things to the soul or reason. But after the Devil by his suggestion drew man away from the observance of the divine commands, his flesh likewise became disobedient to reason. The result is that, although man may wish good according to reason, nevertheless by concupiscence he tends to the contrary. That is what the Apostle says (Rm 7:23): “But I see another law in my members, fighting the law of my mind.” Thus frequently the law of concupiscence corrupts the law of nature and the order of reason. And therefore the Apostle adds (*ibid.*): “...captivating me in the law of sin, which is in my members.”

(2) Because the law of nature was destroyed by the law of concupiscence, man needed to be brought back to the works of virtue and drawn away from vice, and for that the law of Scripture was necessary. But note that man is drawn from evil and led to the good from two motives. The first is fear, for the first and strongest motive for avoiding sin is the thought of the pains of hell and of the final judgment. Therefore it is said (Sir 1:16): “The beginning of wisdom is the fear of the Lord,” and (1:27), “The fear of the Lord drives away sin.” Although someone who avoids sin because of fear is not yet just, nevertheless his justification begins there. In this way man is drawn away from evil and led to good through the law of Moses, while those who transgressed it were punished by death—(Heb 10:28): Anyone who violates the law of Moses, without any mercy at the testimony of two or three should die.”

(3) But because that method was insufficient, and the law given by Moses which drew people from evil by fear was insufficient, in that it restrained the hand but did not restrain desire, therefore there came another way of restraining from evil and inducing people to good—that is the method of love. Thus there was given the law of Christ, that is, of the Gospel, which is the law of love.

A triple difference should be noted between the law of fear and the law of love: (a) First, the law of fear makes slaves of its observers, whereas the law of love makes them free. For one who acts just out of fear acts as a slave, whereas one who acts out of love acts as a free person or a son. Thus the Apostle (2 Cor 3:17) says: "Where there is the spirit of the Lord, there is freedom," because such people are acting out of love like sons. (b) The second difference is that the observers of the first law were rewarded with temporal goods (Is 1:19): "If you are willing and hear me, you shall eat the goods of the land." But the observers of the second law are rewarded with heavenly goods (Mt 19:17): "If you want to enter life, observe the commandments," and (Mt 3:2): "Repent, because the kingdom of heaven is near." (c) The third difference is that the first law is heavy (Acts 15:10): "Why do you try to impose a yoke on our necks which even our fathers could not bear?" The second law, however, is light (Mt 11:30): "For my yoke is easy and my burden light;" and (Rm 8:15): "You did not receive the spirit of servitude again in fear, but you received the spirit of adoption of sons."

As has been said, there is a fourfold law: the first, the law of nature which God implanted at creation; the second the law of concupiscence; the third the law of Scripture, and the fourth, the law of charity and grace, which is the law of Christ. But it is clear that not all can sweat away to gain knowledge. Therefore Christ gave an abridged law which all can know, and no one can be excused from observing it because of ignorance. And that is the law of divine love. The Apostle says (Rm 9:28): "The Lord will issue a brief statement on the earth." But it should be realized that this law must be the rule of all human acts. We see that manufactured goods are good and right when they measure up to a standard. So also any human work is right and virtuous when it harmonizes with the standard of divine love, and when it is out of tune with this standard it is not good or right or perfect. For human acts to be good, they must harmonize with the standard of divine love.

Four effects of charity

At this point note that this law of divine love produces four very desirable effects in man: (1) **First** it causes spiritual life in him. For it is clear that what is loved is inside the lover. Therefore whoever loves God has him in himself (1 Jn 4:16): "Whoever remains in love, remains in God and God in him." It is also the nature of love that it transforms the lover into what is loved (Hos 9:10): "They became abhorrent, just like the things they loved." But if we love God, we become divine, because, as it is said (1 Cor 6:17): "Whoever sticks to the Lord becomes one spirit with him." Augustine says, "Just as the soul is the life of the body, so God is the life of the soul." And that is clear, because we say that the body lives through the soul when it performs living functions, such as action and motion; but when the soul leaves, the body neither acts nor moves. Likewise the soul acts virtuously and perfectly when it acts through charity, through which God dwells in it; but without charity it cannot act (1 Jn 3:14): "Whoever does not love remains in death." It should be noted, however, that anyone who has all the gifts of the Holy Spirit apart from love does not have life. Whether it is the gift of tongues or the gift of faith or any other, without charity they do not give life. For if a dead body is dressed in gold and precious stones, it nonetheless remains

dead. So this is the first effect of charity.

The **second** effect of charity is the observance of the divine commandments. Gregory says: "The love of God is never lazy. It does great things if it is there; if it refuses to work it is not love." So a clear sign of charity is promptness in carrying out the divine precepts. For we see lovers doing great and difficult things for the sake of their beloved (Jn 14:23): "If anyone loves me, he will keep my word." We should note that whoever keeps the law of divine love fulfills the whole law. Yet the divine commandments are twofold: Some are affirmative, and charity fulfills these, because the fulfillment of the law of commandments is love, by which the commandments are observed. Other commandments are prohibitive; charity also fulfills these, because it does not act perversely, as the Apostle says (1 Cor 13).

The **third** effect of charity is to be a bulwark against adversity. For no adversity hurts someone who has charity, but it is all converted into good use (Rm 8:28): "For those who love God, everything works together for good." Moreover, even adverse and difficult things seem easy to a lover, as we clearly see by observation.

The **fourth** effect of charity is that it leads to happiness. For eternal happiness is promised only to those who have charity. For everything without charity is insufficient (2 Tim 4:8): "After this a crown of justice awaits me, which the just judge will give me on that day, and not only to me, but to all who love his coming." Note that only a difference in charity, and not a difference in any other virtue, will make a difference in happiness. For many people were more abstemious than the Apostles, but they exceed all others in happiness because of the excellence of the charity. For they had the first fruits of the Spirit, as the Apostle says (Rm 8). So any difference in happiness comes from a difference in charity.

So the four effects of charity are evident.

Other effects of charity

Besides these, charity has some other effects which should not be passed over. (1) The **first** of these is the remission of sin. We see that in our human life. If someone offends another and later loves him intimately, the offended lets go the offence against him because of love. Likewise God forgives the sins of those who love him (1 Pt 4:8): "Charity covers a multitude of sins." He pointedly said "covers", because God does not see them as something to be punished. And, although he said "covers a multitude", nevertheless Solomon says (Prov 10:12) that "charity covers all offenses." The example of Mary Magdalene exemplifies this best (Lk 7:47): "many sins are forgiven her;" and the reason is given: "because she loved much." But someone may say, "Since charity is sufficient to wipe away sins,