

Intention has the power of drawing all actions under its sway, so that any good works done with a **bad intention** are turned into bad works (Lk 11:34): “If your eye”, that is, your intention, “is evil, your whole body will be dark;” that is, the totality of your good works will be dark. Therefore, in whatever we do our intention should be set on God. The Apostle says (1 Cor 10:31): “Whether you eat or drink or do any other thing, do all for the glory of God.”

But a **good intention** is not enough, but there must also be a good will, which is indicated by the term “soul”. For it often happens that someone acts with a good intention, but to no avail, because a good will is missing. For example, someone may steal to feed the poor; his intention is right, but he is lacking the requisite good will. So no evil can be excused because it is done with a good intention (Rm 3:8): “Those who [say we] say ‘Let us do evil so that good may come’ are justly condemned.” **A good will** accompanies an intention when the will itself harmonizes with the divine will, and that we ask every day: “Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.” And (Ps 39:9): “I delight to do your will, my God.” That is why it is said “with all your soul.” For the soul is often used in Scripture for the will, as in (Heb 10:38): “If he shrinks back, my soul”, that is, my will, “has no pleasure in him.”

But sometimes a good intention and good will are present, but there is some **sin in the intellect**. Therefore the whole intellect must be given to God. The Apostle says (2 Cor 10:5): “taking every intellect [thought] captive to obey Christ.” For many do not sin by deed, but they like to think much about sins. Against them it is said (Is 1:16): “Remove the evil of your thoughts [deeds].” There are also many who trust in their own wisdom and refuse to accept the Faith; such are not giving their minds to God. Against them it is said (Prov 3:5): “Do not rely on your own perception.”

But that is not enough. One must give God all one’s power and strength (Ps 58:10 Vulgate): “I will guard my strength with you.” For there are some who use their strength to sin, thereby displaying their power. Against these it is said (Is 5:22): “Woe to you who are heroes at drinking wine, valiant men at mixing strong drink.” Others show their power or strength to hurt their neighbors, whereas they should have displayed it by helping them (Prov 24:2): “Rescue those who are being taken away to death; hold back those who are stumbling to the slaughter.” So to love God, the following must be given to God: intention, will, mind and strength.

THE LAW OF GOD THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

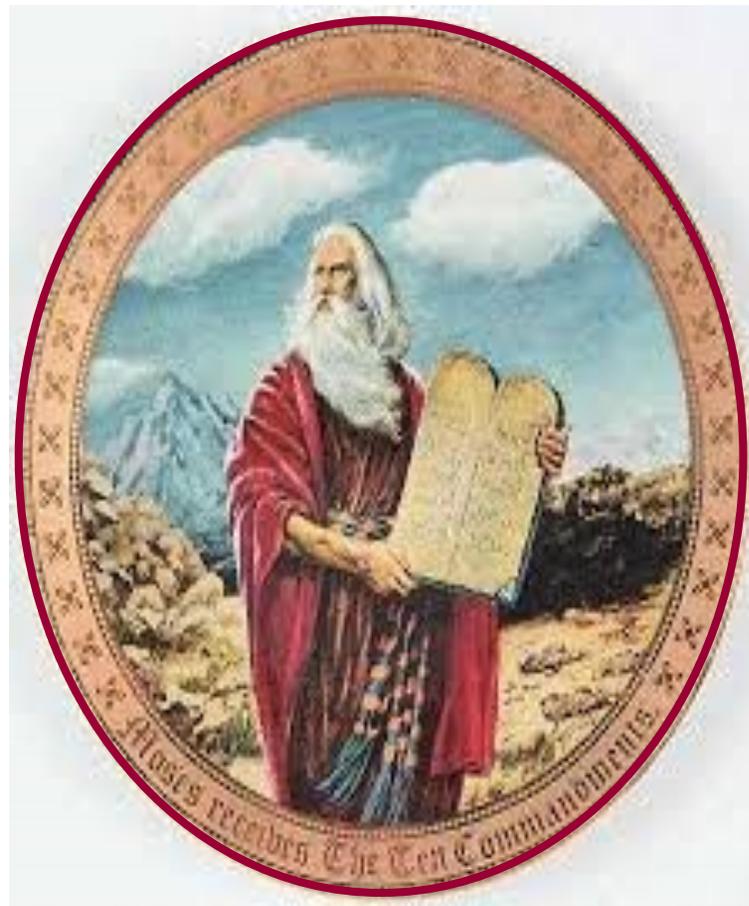


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The Ten Commandments

Prologue 1 (Love of God)



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 1 (Love of God)

Before his passion, the doctors of the Law asked Christ which was the greatest and first commandment. He said (Mt 22:37): "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul and all your mind; this is the greatest and first commandment." And it is truly the greatest, most noble and most beneficial of all the commandments, as has been adequately shown. For in this commandment all the other commandments are fulfilled.

But to fulfill this commandment of love perfectly, four things are required. The **first** is the recollection of the divine benefits, because all that we have, whether our soul or body or exterior things, we have them all from God. Therefore we must serve him with all this and love him with a perfect heart. A man would be extremely ungrateful if, after thinking of all the benefits he received from someone, he did not love him. With this in mind, David said (1 Chronicles 29:14): "All belongs to you. What we received from you we give to you." Therefore in his praise it is said (Sir 47:10): "With all his heart he praised the Lord, and loved the God who made him."

The **second** is consideration of the divine excellence. For God is greater than our hearts (1 Jn 3); so if we serve him with our whole heart and strength we still fall short (Sir. 43:32-33): "When you praise the Lord, exalt him as much as you can, for he will surpass even that. When you exalt him put forth all your strength and do not grow weary, for you cannot praise him enough."

The **third** is renunciation of worldly and earthly things. For it is a big offense against God to equate him with anything else (Is 40:18): "To whom can you compare God?" We liken other things to God when we love temporal and corruptible things along with God. But this is altogether impossible. So it is said (Is 28:20): "The bed is too short to stretch out in it, and the covering is too short to wrap oneself in it." There the heart of man is compared to a cramped bed and a short cover. For the human heart is cramped with regard to God, so that when you take into your heart things other than him you push him out. For he cannot endure any bed-fellow in the soul, just like a husband with a wife. And so he himself states (Ex 20:5): "I, Yahweh your God am a jealous God." For he does not want us to love anything as much as him or besides him.

The **fourth** is complete avoidance of sin. For no one can love God when he is living in sin (Mt 6:24): "You cannot serve God and mammon." So, if you are living in sin, you do not love God. But that man who loved God said (Is 38:3): "Remember how I walked before you faithfully with a perfect heart." Also Elijah said (1 Kg 18:21): "For how long will you go on limping with two opinions?" As a lame person bends this way and that, so a sinner wavers between sinning and seeking God. Therefore the Lord said (Joel 2:12): "Turn to me with all your heart."

But against that command, two kinds of people sin: (1) those who avoid one kind of sin, such as unchastity, while falling into another, such as usury. But they are still condemned, because "whoever offends in one point is guilty of breaking the whole law" (Jm 2:10). (2) Then there are those who confess some sins, and not others, or they split their confession between two or more confessors. But these do not merit, and rather sin by doing so, because they intend to deceive God and they are making a rift in the sacrament.

Against the first group someone said, "It is unholy to hope for half-pardon from God." As for the second group (Ps 61:9): "Pour out your hearts before him," because in confession all is to be revealed.

It has now been shown that man must give himself to God. Now we have to see what is in him that he owes to God. Man owes God four things: his **heart**, his **soul**, his **mind** and his **strength**. And so it is said (Mt 22:37): "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind and all your strength." The "heart" here stands for **intention**.