

FROM THE LORD'S WORD

Old Testament

“[I]f you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be a special treasure to Me” (Exodus 19:5).

“All that the Lord has spoken we will do” (Exodus 19:8).

And God spoke all these words, saying, I am the Lord your God.
You shall have no other gods before My face.
You shall not take the name of the Lord Your God in vain.
Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy.
Honor your father and your mother.
You shall not murder.
You shall not commit adultery.
You shall not steal.
You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.
You shall not covet your neighbor's house.
You shall not covet your neighbor's wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant,
nor his ox, nor his donkey, nor anything that is your neighbor's.
(from Exodus 20:1-17)

“The Lord spoke to you out of the midst of the fire. You heard the sound of the words, but saw no form; you only heard a voice. So He declared to you His covenant which He commanded you to do, that is, the Ten Commandments; and He wrote them on two tablets of stone (Deuteronomy 4:13).

“Observe and obey all these words which I command you, that it may go well with you and your children after you forever, when you do what is good and right in the sight of the Lord your God” (Deuteronomy 12:28).

“Obey My voice, and do according to all that I command you; so shall you be My people, and I will be your God” (Jeremiah 11:4).

Lead me in the Your truth and teach me,
For You are the God of my salvation;
All the paths of the Lord are mercy and truth,
To such as keep His covenant and His testimonies.
(Psalm 25:5, 10)

The mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting
On those who fear Him,
And His righteousness...to such as keep His covenant,
And to those who remember His commandments to do them.
(Psalm 103:17, 18).

New Testament

Whoever breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven (Matthew 5:19).

“You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets” (Matthew 22:37-40).

“Blessed are those who hear the word of God and keep it!” (Luke 11:28)

“Whoever comes to Me, and hears My sayings and does them, I will show you whom he is like: He is like a person building a house, who dug deep and laid the foundation on the rock.... But he who heard and did nothing is like a person who built a house on the earth without a foundation.... And the ruin of that house was great” (Luke 6:47-49).

“He who does the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be clearly seen, that they have been done in God” (John 3:21).

“If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed, and you shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free” (John 8:31-32).

“If you love Me, keep My commandments. He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me. If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word. He who does not love Me does not keep My word” (John 14:15, 21, 23-24).

“This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one’s life for his friends. You are My friends if you do whatever I command you” (John 15:12-14).

I am He who searches the minds and hearts. And I will give to each one of you according to your works (Revelation 2:23).

Blessed are those who do His commandments (Revelation 22:14).

The Heavenly Doctrine

Divine Laws

The Ten Commandments were promulgated from Mount Sinai by Jehovah Himself in a miraculous way to make known that these laws are not only civil and moral laws, but also Divine laws. Acting contrary to them is not only doing evil to the neighbor, that is, to a fellow citizen and society, but is also sinning against God. By their promulgation by Jehovah from Mount Sinai, these laws were made also laws of religion (see *True Christian Religion* 282).

Such great holiness and power were in that law [the Ten Commandments], because it was the complex of all things of religion (*True Christian Religion* 286).

He who lives according to the commandments is conjoined with the Lord. For the commandments teach life and also give life, and thus open the way to heaven, and the sight to the Lord (*Arcana Coelestia* 8767).

To do these commandments from religion purifies the internal person, opens heaven, admits the Lord, and makes a person as to his spirit an angel of heaven (*Apocalypse Explained* 902:6).

Spiritual life is acquired solely by a life according to the commandments in the Word. These commandments are given in a summary in the Decalogue, namely, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet the goods of others. These commandments are the commandments that are to be done, for when a person does these his works are good and his life becomes spiritual, because so far as a person shuns evils and hates them, so far he wills and loves goods. But let it be known, that *a person must do these commandments from religion, because they are commanded by the Lord*. If he does them from any other consideration whatever, for instance, from regard merely to the civil law or the moral law, he remains natural, and does not become spiritual. For when a person acts from religion he acknowledges in heart that there is a God, a heaven and a hell, and a life after death. But when he acts merely from the civil and moral law, he may act in the same way, and yet in heart may deny that there is a God, a heaven and a hell, and a life after death. And if he shuns evils and does goods it is only in an external form, and not in an internal form (*Apocalypse Explained* 902:1, 3, emphasis added).

Keeping the Covenant

“[K]eeping the covenant” means to live according to the commandments, thus in good (see *Arcana Coelestia* 8767).

Since a “covenant” is the conjunction of the Lord with people by love, it follows that it is also by all things that pertain to love, which are the truths of faith, and are called precepts. For all precepts are founded on the one Law, to love the Lord above all things and the neighbor as oneself. Therefore the tables on which were written the Ten Commandments, are called the “Tables of the Covenant” (see *Arcana Coelestia* 1038:5).

Something shall now be said about how conjunction is effected by means of the commandments of the Decalogue. A person does not conjoin himself to the Lord, but the Lord alone conjoins a person to Himself, and this He does by a person's *knowing, understanding, willing, and doing these commandments* (*Apocalypse Explained* 1027:2).

When a person through the last six commandments conjoins himself to the Lord as if of himself, the Lord then conjoins Himself to a person through the first three commandments, which are that a person must acknowledge God, must believe in the Lord, and must keep His name holy (see *Apocalypse Explained* 1027:3, 4).

That "covenant" means conjunction with the Lord through the reception of Divine truth by the understanding and will, or by the heart and soul, that is, by love and faith, and that this conjunction is effected reciprocally (*Apocalypse Explained* 701:4).

Two Tables

The Ten Commandments contain everything concerning doctrine and life, not only everything which concerns God, but also everything which concerns people. That is why the law was written on two tablets, one dealing with God, the other with people (*True Christian Religion* 287:2).

Since the first tablet of the Ten Commandments contains in summary form the whole of love to God, and the second tablet contains the whole of love towards the neighbor, it follows that they contain the whole of doctrine and life. A look at the two tablets makes it plain that they are so linked that God from His tablet has a person in view, and a person in his turn from his has God in view. Thus there is a reciprocal viewing, such that on God's part He never fails to keep a person in view and perform the actions needed for his salvation. And if a person accepts and does the things laid down in his tablet, the link becomes reciprocal (*True Christian Religion* 287:2).

It is known that the Law promulgated from Mount Sinai was written upon two tables, one of which related to God and the other to people. In the hands of Moses they were one table, the writing on the right side of which related to God, and that on the left to people. When presented to the eyes of people the writing on both sides was seen at the same time—one side was in view of the other, like Jehovah talking to Moses and Moses to Jehovah, face to face. This was done in order that the tables so united might represent the conjunction of God with people and the reciprocal conjunction of people with God (see *True Christian Religion* 456).

The first table includes all things pertaining to love to God, which are, primarily, that a person should acknowledge the one God, the Divinity of His Human, and the holiness of the Word, and that God is to be worshiped through the holy things that proceed from Him. The second table includes all things pertaining to love towards the neighbor, its first five commandments all things pertaining to action, which are called works, and the last two all things pertaining to the will, thus to charity in its origin. For in these it is said, "Thou shalt not covet," and when a person does not covet what belongs to his neighbor, he wishes well to him (see *True Christian Religion* 456).

This is the reason why there are two tables of the Decalogue, one relating to God and the other relating to people. God works unceasingly that a person may receive what is in his own table. But if a person does not do the things that are in his table he does not receive with acknowledgment of heart the things that are in God's table. And if he does not receive them he is not conjoined. Therefore those two tables were so joined together as to be one, and were called the tables of the covenant, for covenant signifies conjunction (*Divine Providence* 326:7).

Commandments for Heaven and Earth

The Ten Commandments are not only for those who are on the earth, but also for those who are in the heavens. For all the truths which are from the Lord, are not only for people, but are also at the same time for the angels, since they come through heaven and thus pass over to earth (see *Arcana Coelestia* 8862).

The Ten Commandments state things as have been known everywhere on the earth such as that parents are to be honored, that murder, adultery, and theft are not to be committed, and that no one should bear false witness. Yet Jehovah Himself came down and promulgated them out of fire which burned even to the heart of heaven. From this it can be seen that these commandments contain in their bosom more things than appear in the letter, namely, such things as are at the same time for the heavens (*Arcana Coelestia* 8862:2).

The Ten Commandments are rules both for those in the world and for those in heaven. The literal or external sense is for those in the world, the spiritual or internal sense for those in heaven (*Arcana Coelestia* 8899).

The Commandments Have a Deeper Meaning

Unless the Ten Commandments also contained internal things, they would never have been declared on Mount Sinai by means of so great a miraculous event. It was because those commandments in both senses were to be of service to person's life... that they came down out of heaven on Mount Sinai by means of so great a miraculous event—being declared and heard in heaven in the internal sense and declared and heard on earth in the external sense. Take, for example, the words that those who honored their parents would have their days prolonged upon the land. By 'parents' the angels in heaven perceived the Lord, and by 'land' His kingdom, which those who worship Him in love and faith would possess for ever as sons and heirs. People on earth however understood parents by 'parents', the land of Canaan by 'the land', and years of life by 'the prolonging of their days'. By 'do not steal' angels in heaven perceived that they were not to take anything away from the Lord or to ascribe any righteousness and merit at all to themselves. People on earth however understood that they were not to steal. From this it is clear that these commandments are true in both senses. Or take the commandment 'not to murder'; angels in heaven perceived that they were not to hate anyone nor to destroy any good and truth existing with another. But people on earth perceived that friends must not be murdered. And so it is with all the other commandments (*Arcana Coelestia* 2609:1-2).

The commandment regarding the worship of Jehovah, that is, the Lord, is the first and second, because it is the holiest. After it comes the commandment regarding the Sabbath, because in the highest sense the union within the Lord of the Divine Itself and the Divine Human is meant by it. The commandment about honoring parents follows, because love of the Lord is meant by it, and consequently the love of goodness and truth that come from the Lord (*Arcana Coelestia* 8899:2).

Cease to Do Evil and Look to the Lord

When a person shuns evils as sins he daily learns what a good work is, and the affection of doing good grows with him, and the affection of knowing truths for the sake of good. For so far as he knows truths he can perform works more fully and more wisely, and thus his works become more truly good. Cease, therefore, from asking in thyself, "What are the good works that I must do, or what good must I do to receive eternal life?" Only cease from evils as sins and look to the Lord, and the Lord will teach and lead you (*Apocalypse Explained* 979:2).

The means of salvation relate to these two essentials, that evils must be shunned because they are contrary to the Divine laws in the Decalogue, and there must be the acknowledgment that there is a God. This everyone can do provided he does not love evils. For the Lord is continually flowing into his will with power that he may be able to shun evils, and into his understanding with power that he may be able to think that there is a God. Nevertheless, no one can do the one without at the same time doing the other, for these two things are joined together like the two tables of the Decalogue, one of which relates to God and the other to man. The Lord in accordance with what is in His table enlightens everyone and gives him power. But a person receives power and enlightenment only so far as he carries out what is laid down in his table: before this, the two appear as if lying one upon the other and fastened with a seal; but as a person carries out what is in his table they are unsealed and opened (*Divine Providence* 329).

So far as a person refrains from evils and shuns and turns away from them as sins, good flows in from the Lord. But a person cannot refrain from evils by shunning and turning away from them of himself. . . . It must be the Lord, who is the Divine good and the Divine truth, who causes a person to shun them. Nevertheless, a person ought to shun evils as if of himself, for what a person does as if of himself becomes his and is appropriated to him as his own. What comes from the Lord to a person must be received by him, and it cannot be received unless he is conscious of it, that is, as if of himself. This reciprocation is a necessity to reformation. *This is why the Ten Commandments were given*, and why it is commanded in them that a person shall not worship other gods, shall not profane the name of God, shall not steal, shall not commit adultery, shall not kill, shall not covet the house, wife, or servants of others, thus that a person shall refrain from doing these things by thinking, when the love of evil allures and incites, that they must not be done because they are sins against God, and in themselves are infernal. So far, therefore, as a person shuns these evils so far the love of truth and good enters from the Lord. And this love causes a person to shun these evils, and at length to turn away from them as sins. And as the love of truth and good puts these evils to flight, it follows that a person shuns them not from himself but from the Lord, since the love of truth and good is from the Lord. If a person shuns evils merely from a fear of hell they are withdrawn; but goods do not take their place; for as soon as the fear departs the evils return (see *Apocalypse Explained* 971:2, emphasis added).

Loving the Lord

No one is in heaven or comes to it unless he acknowledges the Lord and loves Him. To love the Lord is not to love Him in respect to person but to live according to His commandments. . . . To love means also to be conjoined, for love is spiritual conjunction, and conjunction is effected by the reception of Divine truth in doctrine and in life (*Apocalypse Explained* 433).

In eight of the commandments of the Decalogue there is nothing said of love to God and love toward the neighbor; since it is not said that God should be loved, that His name should be hallowed, that the neighbor should be loved and consequently that he should be dealt with sincerely and uprightly. The reason why such things as relate directly to love and charity are not commanded, but only such things as are opposed to them are forbidden, is that so far as a person shuns evils as sins, so far does he will the goods that pertain to love and charity. The prime thing of love to God and the neighbor is not to do evil, and the second to do good (*True Christian Religion* 329).

That love and charity follow when by shunning evils what is commanded in the Decalogue is done is evident from the Lord's words in John: Jesus said, "He that hath My commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth Me and he that loveth Me shall be loved of My Father; and I will love him, and will manifest Myself to him: and We will make our abode with him" (14:21, 23). By commandments here the commandments of the Decalogue are particularly meant, which are that evils must not be done or lusted after, and that the love of people to God and the love of God toward people then follow as good follows when evil is removed (*True Christian Religion* 329:2).