

## LECTURE XXXI.

### THE FIRST TABLE. (COMMANDMENTS 1st, 2nd, 3d.)

#### SYLLABUS.

1. What does the First Commandment enjoin? What does it forbid?
2. Discuss, against Papists, the worship of saints, angels and relics.
3. What does the Second Commandment forbid and enjoin?
4. Discuss, against Papists, the lawfulness of image-worship.
5. What does the Third Commandment forbid and enjoin? Are religious vows and oaths, imposed by magistrates, lawful? See

Shorter Catechism, Qu. 44-56. Larger Cat., Qu. 100-114. Turretin, Loc. xi, Qu. 7-12. Dick, Lect. 103. Calvin's Inst., bk. ii, ch. 8, § 13-27. Dr. Green's Lectures on Sh. Cat., 37-41. Council of Trent Decree, Session xxv. (Strietwolf, Vol. i, p. 93, &c.) *Catechismus Romanus, Pii V*, pt. iii ch. 2, Qu. 3-14, and pt. iv, ch. 6 on 2nd Question. "Historical Theology," by Dr. Wm. Cunningham, ch. 12.

**I**N the exposition of the precepts, I do not propose to detain you with those ordinary particulars which you may find in your catechisms and text-books. I would, once for all, refer you to those authorities, especially for answers to the question, what each commandment especially enjoins and prohibits. My chief aim, in the few, disjointed discussions which time will allow, is to enter into a few of the more disputed and more important questions of morals and ecclesiastical usage, which now agitate society and the Church.

1. The affirmative and negative obligations of the 1st Commandment all depend upon the great truth of God's exclusive unity, which we have proved from reason and Scripture. The duty of "having Him for our God" may be said to be the summary of almost all the commands of love, reverence and obedience, which so abound in the Scriptures. But we may say that includes especially, under the general idea of rendering Him all the affection and service which our nature, His character, and our relations to Him require; the following: The duty, (a) of loving Him supremely. (See Matt. xxii : 37). (b) Of regulating all our moral acts by His revealed will. Matt. xxviii : 20. (c) Of owning and acknowledging Him publicly. Josh. xxiv : 22. (d) Of promoting His cause and glory in all suitable ways. 1 Cor. x : 31. (e) Of rendering to Him such acts of religious worship as He may see fit to demand. Ps. xxix : 2. (f) Of thanking Him for His benefits. Ps. cvi : 1. (g) Of trusting to His promises. Is. xxvi : 4. (h) Of submitting to His chastisements. 1 Pet. v : 6. (i) Fearing His anger. Ps. lxxxvi : 11. (j) Repenting of having sinned against Him, Acts xvii : 30, and in short, (k) Choosing Him as the portion and eternal inheritance of our souls. Ps. lxxiii : 25 ; xvii : 15.

The most current breach of this commandment in nomi-

Sin of Idolatrous Affections.

nally Christian communities, is doubtless the sin of inordinate affections. Scripture brands these as idolatry, or the worshipping of another than the true God, especially in the case of covetousness; (Eph. v : 5; Col. iii : 5; Job xxxi : 24-28.) and parity of reasoning extends the teaching to all other inordinate desires. We conceive formal idolatry, as that of the Hindoo, a very foolish and flagrant thing; we palliate this spiritual idolatry of passions. God classes them together, in order to show us the enormity of the latter. What then is it, that constitutes the "having of God for our God?" It includes, (a) Love for Him stronger than all other affections. (b) Trusting Him, as our highest portion and source of happiness. (c) Obeying and serving Him supremely. (d) Worshipping Him as He requires. Now that thing to which we render these regards and services, is our God, whether it be gold, fame, power, pleasure, or friends.

Rome's worship of saints and angels is founded on her assertion of their heavenly mediation for us, which she asserts, against 1 Tim. ii : 5. You will find this error discussed and refuted in your Senior year, when we come to treat and defend the sole mediation of the Lord Jesus Christ. I shall now anticipate that conclusion, as the basis of my denial of the worship of creatures; only adding that, if you feel curiosity concerning Rome's defence of it, you may find her arguments in the places cited from the documents of the Council of Trent.

But as there is no heavenly mediation of angels or saints, we argue the more, that no intelligent worship can be paid them, without idolatry. (a) Arguments against Saint Worship. Because there are no examples nor precepts for it in the Bible. The honour due superiors is social and political; between which and religious worship, there is a fundamental difference. In all the cases cited by Rome, of the worshipping of creature-angels, there was only a hospitable and deferential obeisance to persons supposed to be dignified strangers and human beings. Where there was worship proper, it was always the Angel of the Covenant, the Son of God, who was worshipped. Compare Gen. xviii : 2, and xix : 1, with Gen. xviii : 22, 23, we learn that of the persons to whom Abraham did social obeisance as respectable guests and human beings, the one to whom Abraham actually prayed, was the Jehovah-Christ; and the others were creature-angels in human form. But the student is referred to the argument on the pre-existence of Christ, Lect. xvii; where it is proved that all these cases of worship of the "angel," were cases of homage offered to Christ.

(b) Inspired saints and creature-angels are represented in every case, as repudiating proper religious worship, when attempted towards them, with holy abhorrence. See Matt. iv : 10; Acts xiv : 13-15; Rev. xix : 10; xxii : 9.

Rome herself acknowledges, (Cat. Rom. Pt. III, Ch. 2, Qu. 4, or Pt. IV, Ch: 6, Qu. 3), it would be idolatry to worship creatures with the same sort of worship paid to God. Here then, their doctors bring in their distinction of *λατρεία* and *δουλεία* to justify themselves. This distinction is utterly vain and empty. Because first, the usage neither of classic nor biblical Greek justifies it; nor that of the primitive Fathers. The one word, as much as the other, is used of the worship peculiar to God Himself. See Matt. vi : 24; 1 Thess. i : 9, &c. The Galatians are rebuked for having served those who by nature are no Gods. (Ch. iv : 8), *ἔδουλεύσατε*. If then the *δουλεία* of the New Testament is that of Rome, the case is decided. But let us see how they distinguish their *δουλεία*. Here we say, second: that it is religious worship. This is proved by its being rendered in Church (God's house), at the altar, in the midst of their liturgies, on God's holy day, and mixed with God's own worship. This confusion at least is unpardonable. Third: in practice they do not limit themselves to *δουλεία* but ask of the saints, and especially of Mary, gifts most essentially divine; not intercession merely, but protection, pardon, sanctification, victory over death. Here see Romish Breviaries, *passim*; and the *Stabat Mater*. Daniel's Thesaurus Hymnolog, vol. 2, p. 133. Streitwolf, *Libri Symbolici*, vol. 2, p. 343, &c. Fourth, even if only intercession were asked, the *δουλεία* would still imply in the saints omnipresence, omniscience, infinite goodness, and such-like divine attributes. To evade this crushing objection, some Romish doctors have advanced their figment of the *Speculum Trinitatis*. They imagine that the saints, blessed with the beatific vision of God, see reflected in His omniscience whatever He sees, at least of the wants and petitions of the Church. But besides the fatal lack of Scriptural warrant, this figment is absurd. For to see an overwhelming multitude of objects at once, in a mirror, reflected, will confound a finite mind as much as to see them directly. And besides, the figment contradicts Scripture, Matt. xxiv : 36; John xv : 15; 1 Cor. ii : 11.

Rome's saint- and angel-worship is but baptized paganism, and like all other, it tends to degrade the worshipers. Hence, the importance of the prohibition of idolatry. Nothing but infinite perfection should be the object of religious worship. The reverence and admiration which worship implies invest every quality of the object worshiped with sanctity. Blemishes are always reproduced in the votaries. The worship of an imperfect object is therefore the deification of defects. Rom. i : 25, 26; Ps. cxv : 8. But the more the worshiper is corrupted, the more degraded will be the divinities which he will construct for himself out of his defiled heart, until the vile descent is realized which St. Paul describes in Rom. i : 22, 23.

*Δουλεία* also Idolatrous.

Moral effects of Creature-Worship.

As the first commandment fixes the object, so the second fixes the mode of religious worship. Under  
 3. Scope of Second Commandment. that most extreme corruption of mode which consists in image-worship, all erroneous modes of homage to the true God even, are prohibited. It may be said in general, that this commandment requires those acts and modes of worship for the true God which He hath required of us in His word, and prohibits all others. What Protestants call will-worship is forbidden, on these obvious grounds: God is infinite, and, in large part, inscrutable to creature minds. It is His prerogative to reveal Himself to us, as He has done. If we form surmises how He is to be honoured, they will be partially erroneous; for error belongs to man. Hence (as experience too fully confirms), the offering of worship of human invention to God has always dishonoured Him, and corrupted the worshippers. Our Saviour, therefore, expressly condemns it. *Matt. xv : 9.*

The doctrine of Rome concerning the use of images in worship, with its defence, may be seen in the  
 4. Image Worship. *Rom. Cat., Pt. III, Ch. 2, Qu. 9-14 inclusive.* You will there remark the curious arrangement which makes our second commandment a part of, or appendix to the first, and usually prints it with small type. While this claims some little patristic countenance, its object is undoubtedly to depreciate this command. As the number of ten precepts is too well fixed to be called in question, Rome attempts to make it up by dividing the 10th, without shadow of valid reason, as we shall see.

Rome grants (*Qu. 12*) that the Deity should not be represented by any shape, because immense and inconceivable. To concede thus much, indeed, was unavoidable; the prohibitions are so plain. But to excuse her image-worship, *Qu. 13th* teaches that the making of images of persons of the Trinity is no wrong, for this, when correctly understood, is no attempt to represent the Divine essence; it only expresses the property and actions which the Scriptures give the Persons. Thus, the Father is represented, in supposed imitation of *Daniel vii : 9*, as a hoary old man; the Son in a human figure; and the Holy Ghost, after *Matt. iii: 16*, as a dove. The idea of trinity in unity is usually represented as a luminous triangle.

To this evasion I reply, are not the Persons very God? Is not their essence one, and properly divine? How, then, can it be right to picture them, and wrong to picture Deity? If we may use the image of the Person, because it is designed to represent some act or property of it, why not of the Deity? Indeed, the luminous triangle is an attempt to represent the latter.

Rome urges also that to figure or picture objects of wor-

God's Example no  
Rule to Us. ship cannot be wrong, because God has done it. He appears as a man in Gen. xviii, and in Gen. xxxii : 24; as an angel in Exod. iii : 2; as a shekinah, 2 Chron. vii : 1. The Holy Ghost appears as a dove, Matt. iii : 16. God also commanded the cherubim to be placed in the most sacred part of the oracle, at the very part towards which the High Priest directed his worship. God also directed Moses to make a brazen serpent and elevate it upon a pole. Numb. xxi : 8.

Now, the general and sufficient answer to this is, that God's doing a thing Himself is no warrant whatever for us to presume on imitating Him. May we kill people at will, because He slays some thirty millions annually? His precepts are our rule, not the acts of His own sovereignty, which His incommunicable attributes properly render unique and inimitable. The representations which God has seen fit to make of Himself to one and another prophet were temporary, not permanent, occasional—yea, rare—presented only to the prophet's own private eye, not to the Church customarily; and they were, after all, phantasmata, impressed on the prophet's imagination in ecstatic vision—not actual, material constructions, like the idols of men. Chiefly, as visions, they were true, for they were to the prophets symbols of some special presence of God, and God was in some way specially present then and there. But these figures, when used by Papists, are symbols of no such truth; for God has not authorized them to expect any special presence where they exhibit the images. They are therefore false, while God's visions were true.

The carved Cherubim over the mercy-seat were not idols at all, but merely architectural ornaments, having, indeed a symbolical fitness, but no more objects of worship than the knops and lilies of the carving. The brazen serpent too, was a type, and not an object of worship. As well might the Papist bring as a plea, the fact that God has represented Christ by bread and wine. See Jno. iii : 14. Especially since the coming of the antitype, has this case not a shadow of force to excuse idolatry. That its worship was never permitted is clearly shown by 2d Kings xviii : 4; where we read that the good King Hezekiah, detecting the Jews in this error, had the identical serpent crushed, saying "it is brazen." ("It is but brass.") As to the picturing and worshipping of the man Jesus, the delineation of His human person has more shadow of reason, because He is incarnate. But there is no portrait or description of Christ, which is authentic. If there was, He is now, when glorified, wholly unlike it. Chiefly; an image could only represent His humanity, as distinguished from His divinity; and the former, thus abstracted, is no proper object of worship. The use of the crucifix in worship, therefore, tendeth to evil.

No Image-Worship  
in Scripture.

3. The Council of Trent urges that the image is not itself regarded as divine; but only as a visible representation, to assist the unlearned especially, in conceiving the real presence of the invisible. To this I reply: it is just the distinction which all the pagans make, except the most besotted. Does any one suppose that the acute Hindoo is so stupid as to mistake the lump of clay or wood, which yesterday was a clod or a stick, and which he saw helpless in the hands of the mechanic, for a true God? If charged with such folly, he makes precisely the Papist's reply: that he worships the invisible God through the help of the visible representation of Him. So answered the ancient idolaters to the primitive Christians. By adopting it, the Papist puts himself, where he properly belongs, in the pagan category. And this is the very sin which the Scriptures intend to prohibit. An examination of the sin with Aaron's calf, *Exod.* xxxii, of Micah's idolatry, *Judges* xvii: 3-13, and of the sin of Jeroboam, *1 Kings* xii: 28, &c., will show that in each case the criminal attempt was to worship the true Jehovah, unmistakably recognized by His incommunicable name, or as He who brought Israel out of Egypt, through an image supposed appropriate.

4. To worship the true God by an image is, then, the very thing forbidden, because such a representation is necessarily false. For, God being a spiritual, immense, and invisible Being, to represent Him as a limited material form, is a falsehood. To clothe Him with the form of any of His creatures, angelic, human, or animal, is the most heinous insult to His majesty. God is a Spirit, cognizable by no sense. To represent Him by a material, visible and palpable image or picture is a false representation. He is omnipresent. To draw or carve Him as bounded by an outline, and contained in a local form, belies this attribute. He is self-existent, and has no beginning. To represent Him by what His puny creature made, and what yesterday was not, belies His self-existence and eternity. He declares Himself utterly unlike all creatures, and incomprehensible by them. To liken Him to any of them is both a misrepresentation and insult. Hence, a material image of the Godhead, or of any Person thereof, is an utter falsehood. Papists used to be fond of saying: "Images are the books of the unlearned." We reply: they are books then, which teach lies only. The crowning argument against them, is that the Scriptures expressly forbid them; and equally plainly, base their prohibition on the fact that no image can correctly represent God. *Deut.* iv: 15, 16; *Is.* xl: 12-18; *Acts* xvii: 29. "Take ye therefore good heed unto yourselves; (for ye saw no manner of similitude on the day that the Lord spake unto you in Horeb, out of the midst of the fire), lest you

All Idolaters profess to look above the idol.

This the very Definition of Idolatry in Scripture Cases. God inimitable.

corrupt yourselves, and make you a graven image," &c.

You are familiar with the answer to our last head of inquiry, which says the third Commandment requireth the holy and reverent use of God's name, titles attributes, ordinances, word, and works; "and forbiddeth all profaning or abusing of anything whereby God maketh Himself known." The scope of this precept is to secure a reverential treatment of God and all that suggests Him, in our speech and other *media* of communication, with each other. Its practical importance is justified by what the Apostle James teaches us of the responsibility and influence of our faculty of speech. When you read his statements, and consider how fully experience justifies them; when you consider the large place which this power of communicating ideas fills in society, you will see why God has elevated the sanctification of the tongue into a place among the "ten words."

Every christian is familiar with the idea that this precept is meant to prohibit sins of profane cursing and swearing in all their forms. Among these abuses may also be classed all irreverent uses of Sacred Scripture; all heartless and formal worship, whether by praying or singing; all irreverence and levity in the house of God during the celebration of His worship or sacraments; all heed-ejaculations of His name and attributes; and most flagrantly, perjury. This, the crowning crime of this class, is a breach both of the third and ninth Commandments. It violates the obligations of truth; and also violates those of reverence in the most flagrant manner. An oath is an appeal to God for the sanction of the asseveration then made. It invokes all His attributes in the most formal manner, to act as umpires between the parties, and if the asseveration is falsified, to witness and avenge it. Where an oath is falsely taken, it is a heaven-daring attempt to enlist the Almighty in the sanction of the creature's lie; and is thus, either the most outrageous levity, or the most outrageous impiety, of which he can be guilty.

But we do not hold that the reverential occasional use of religious vows, or the serious taking of the oath from the civil magistrate, is a breach of this commandment. You are aware that the Quakers, and some other Christians hold all oaths unlawful. We base our view on the following reasons:

Moses expressly commands the people to swear by the name of Jehovah, whenever they did swear. Deut. vi : 13. This surely implies that there is a right and proper time to swear. The Israelites were carefully instructed how to swear. Levit. xix : 12. Oaths were appointed to be administered by Divine authority, in certain cases. Exod. xxii : 11; Numb. v : 19. Surely God would not require His people to sin! We

5. Scope of Third Commandment.  
Sins forbidden in it.  
Lawful Oaths and Vows not Forbidden.

find that God sware; and "because He could swear by no greater, He sware by Himself." His example is worthy of mention here, although we do not presume a right to make it our rule in every case. We find that the apostles also, and especially Paul, frequently appealed to God in oaths. Rom. i : 9; 2 Cor. i : 23; Gal. i : 20. These expressions involve all the essentials of an oath. But we have a more indisputable example. Jesus Christ took an oath, when it was tendered to Him by Caiaphas the High Priest, acting as an authorized (though a wicked) magistrate of his people. Matt. xxvi : 63, 64. When the Chief Priest said: "I adjure Thee (I swear Thee) by the living God," Christ, who had before refused to respond, immediately gave an affirmative answer, thereby taking the oath tendered Him. Let it be noticed, also, that in this He was acting in His human capacity. These New Testament examples also effectually estop the plea, untenable in all cases, that legislation given by Moses was corrected by Christ, so that the latter made things sins, which Moses made right. For all this was under the new dispensation, or at least after the utterance of the commands by Christ which furnish the argument of the Quakers.

Those commands are found in Matt. v : 34 and 37; Jas. v : 12. Their claim is, that these prohibitions are meant to forbid oaths under all possible circumstances; that the language is absolute, and we have no right to limit it. I reply, that if this view be pressed, all that is gained will be to represent Christ and Paul as expressly violating the new law. An understanding of the circumstances relieves the case. The Jewish elders had corrupted the third commandment by teaching that a man might interlard his common conversation with oaths, provided he did not swear falsely. They also taught that one might swear by anything else than the name of God, as his own head, or Jerusalem. Against these corruptions our Saviour's precept is aimed. In our common intercourse we are not to swear at all, because the suitable and solemn juncture is lacking. When that juncture is present, what more reasonable than the appeal to God; that God who is, by His omniscience and providence, the actual witness and umpire of all such declarations. But, in conclusion, it is a great abuse for the magistrate to multiply oaths on frivolous occasions.

Supposed Prohibition  
in New Testament.