

St Mary-the-Virgin, Kenton. Lent Course 2007

THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

SESSION 5: THE NINTH & TENTH COMMANDMENTS

Tuesday March 27th 10.00am; Wednesday March 28th 7.00pm

RECAP

- Seventh Commandment – ‘You shall not steal’
- Eighth Commandment – ‘You shall not bear false witness’
- sins that erode *and devalue* human life as God intended it, moving on to ...
- two final commandments that run together, dealing with different but complementary issues with deep spiritual ramifications
- they are brought together in the concept of concupiscence – a desire of lower appetites *contrary to reason* – St Paul – Galatians 5:16, 17 & 24; Ephesians 2:3 ‘rebellion of the flesh against the spirit’

THE NINTH COMMANDMENT (Ex 20:17)

‘You shall not covet ... your neighbour’s wife’ (CCC 2514–2533)

- Sixth commandment warns against adultery, and Jesus said that if a man looks at a woman lustfully, he has committed adultery with her in his heart – where is the difference?
 - Lust is morally destructive for oneself and one’s own family, and for the object of lust, irrespective of whether it is consummated – it has an inherent moral effect
- Not so much a difference as another complementarity – lust is an expression of impurity of heart, we are called as Christians to purity of heart
 - Matthew 5:8 – the sixth beatitude – ‘Happy the pure in heart: they shall see God’
 - Mark 7:21–22 ‘It is what comes out of a man that makes him unclean. For it is from within, from men’s hearts, that evil intentions emerge: fornication, theft, murder, adultery, avarice, malice, deceit, indecency, envy, slander, pride, folly. (cf Matthew 15:19)
- Purity of heart has three categories
 - charity; chastity (sexual rectitude); love of truth (orthodoxy of faith)
 - the heart is the seat of moral personality, both for good and for bad
- Human beings are psychosomatic creatures (*psyche* – mind; *soma* – body)
 - Gnostics & Manicheans (from whom St Augustine came), for example, insisted that the soul (which is good) is trapped in the body (which is bad) and what the body does

not affect the soul – this is contrary to Christian teaching, but is seen today – sex as a commodity and therefore other people as commodities to be consumed

- Gives rise to the argument that someone can have a sexuality and a ‘right’ to sexual expression that is contrary to Scripture and the teaching of the church – eg, homoeroticism (more accurate than homosexuality – ‘sex’ implies reproduction)
- In order to be pure of heart, one must allow oneself to be formed by moral law and virtue – charity, purity of intention, purity of vision, prayer – lust is the expression of all that is contrary to that

THE TENTH COMMANDMENT (Ex. 20:17)

‘You shall not covet your neighbour’s house ... or his servant, man or woman, or his ox, or his donkey, or anything that is his.’ (CCC 2534–2557)

- Desire is not of itself bad – hunger or thirst are physical desires for basic needs
 - Problem comes when desire is to satisfy a ‘want’ rather than a ‘need’ and becomes irrational – envy (the ‘diabolical sin’ – St Augustine)
 - St Gregory the Great wrote: ‘From envy are born hatred, detraction, calumny, joy caused by the misfortune of a neighbour, and displeasure caused by his prosperity’
- I want it ... I must have it ... I will do anything I can to get it – ie, an obsessive desire for an object that is *contrary to reason*
 - Breaks the seventh commandment – theft, by gathering property disproportionately to oneself to the detriment of others and self
- Making idols (false gods) not of images but of consumer goods and other material objects

QUESTIONS TO START DISCUSSION

- If someone (male or female) dresses provocatively and lust is provoked in someone else, whose is the greater sinfulness?
- In what ways do modern attitudes to ‘sexuality’ affect people’s lives and moral character in the long and the short term – is modern society more Gnostic/ Manichean than Christian?
- What void (if any) are people seeking to fill by being obsessed by shopping and consumerism, and by ‘consuming’ sex?