

THE TEN COMMANDMENTS OF NEW THOUGHT

By Dr. Janna Lewis

On first observation, the Ten Commandments found in the Bible seem totally inapplicable to New Thought. In fact, the entire Bible, when taken literally as many people do, is almost incomprehensible. The problem, at least from a New Thought point of view, is that the Bible is presented as though it is the 'word' of a God outside of and separated from us. But before we dispose of these scriptures as merely antiquated documents, let's take a look beneath the surface of the words.

When we can come to terms with the idea that God is not separate from ourselves, is in fact our total being, we can then begin to see the Bible as a record of our evolution. When the Bible reports God as "doing" something, it might be easier understood as man's conscious awareness of his own level of divinity. Therefore, Moses, the main character in this 'commandment' drama, can best be understood as an enactment of God, or, as we currently term it, an *experience* of God.

The Ten Commandments, in the literal interpretation, are considered to be religious and moral imperatives or directives spoken by God to Moses after Moses (with divine intervention) had led his people out of Egypt and out of slavery. It is important to know that the exact interpretation from the Hebrew and Greek is the Ten Statements, not Ten Commandments. This in itself is very revealing for it would be impossible to have free will while acknowledging a God who *commands* (authoritatively orders; exercises a dominating influence over) anything. Therefore let's assume, for the sake of adventure, that God made *statements* to Moses (Moses' consciousness was elevated through God-inspiration). Now let's turn to Charles Fillmore for further enlightenment. His brilliant and inspirationally written *Metaphysical Bible Dictionary* gives us another glimpse into the depths of these *statements* when it interprets the name Moses as meaning *drawing out, extracting*, and the name Egypt as signifying *the darkness of ignorance*. It would seem that man/woman is coming out of the darkness of a consciousness limited to the material senses, and is awakening to divine Truth via a spiritual infusion called The Ten Statements.

Another important point is that these *statements* were literally depicted as 'carved in stone'. In our modern vernacular, that would mean - unchangeable. It seems that Moses (as God-inspiration) must have known that many written manuscripts would be lost (or changed to fit the need of the moment) – either through misunderstanding, neglect or actual intent; therefore, we can assume that these particular *statements* were of supreme importance and needed to be preserved intact. In actuality, God (through the elevated awareness of Moses) was handing down moral laws (righteous laws that when followed would keep mankind free from error and guilt and allow him spiritual fulfillment), as well as Universal laws (laws that are fundamentally true to their deepest core). These Ten Statements, then, are laws that not only *should not* be broken (moral truths), but *could not* be broken (Universal Truths). Let's take a look at these statements one at a time.

THE FIRST COMMANDMENT (STATEMENT)

*I am the Lord thy God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.
You shall have no other gods before me.*

(Exodus 20:2,3).

This is the most basic of principles extolled in every denomination of New Thought: *There is a God, and this God is the source and creator of everything – Is Everything. This God, in and through everything, is indestructible, all-powerful and absolute. This God is the inspiration within our continuous onward and upward movement toward our increasingly greater good.*

In this first *commandment* God *states* that He is Lord (Moses/mankind recognizes his own lord-ship). There is a great deal implied in this statement: Not only is a lord someone of rank or high position, it is someone to whom service and obedience are due. So, besides being a benefactor (bringing us out of the darkness of the bondage of ignorance - represented by Egypt), a lord (elevated understanding) is also responsible for helping us find (become aware of) our personal good (God). And further more, being lord suggests power and authority, so much power, in fact, that merely by holding on to the belief we can shed our ignorance, the darkness of an unenlightened state of mind. And, as we are drawn out of this darkness we will also shed the shackles that have bound us to the belief that we are physical beings separated from God.

Thou shalt have no other gods before me is a statement on the Moral level that we should not place our jobs, material possessions or relationships before our Spirituality. On the Universal level, however, this is a statement in the lack of evil. God, through man's consciousness, is not demanding recognition of Itself as the highest and best God available; God is *stating* a fact. Actually, God is *being* a fact: It is impossible for there to be two all-powerful Gods; they would destroy each other. There has been much argument over this statement. It has been said that evil does exist because it can be seen and felt (war, sickness, crime, poverty, etc). When we cling to our illnesses and our mental/emotional/physical pains we are, in fact, allowing them to have power over us – we are giving them godhood status in our lives. It is only when we recognize them as stepping stones that we have chosen (sometimes on a less than conscious level) for our own growth-awareness that they begin to have true value and meaning.

So, in this first commandment/statement, we are being instructed on two levels of thinking. On one level we learn to recognize the less-than-pleasant aspects of our lives as being our choices made in the darkness of ignorance (of our true Nature), but convertible into challenges that will lead us to a higher awareness. Ultimately it is God's desire that we be led back to God (our longing for God-recognition). On another level we learn that once we have elevated our consciousness we will recognize that God is all there is, and All-There-Is contains no evil. This belief holds all the power necessary to heal ourselves. In the words of Ernest Holmes, "We believe in the incarnation of the Spirit in us, and that all people are incarnations of the One Spirit." It follows from this, of course, that since there is no evil in God, there can be no evil

THE SECOND COMMANDMENT (STATEMENT)
You shall not make unto yourself any graven images . . .
(Exodus 20:4)

This commandment is closely related to the first one (and is actually included in the first one in many religions). Graven images are those things we idealize, be they property, concepts, or people. As I mentioned in the last commandment, we make gods of our illnesses by giving them power over us. We make gods of our TV. personalities, sports heroes, even our gurus. We make gods of our high powered cars and fancy houses, or high ranking positions in our businesses. This is not to say we shouldn't strive to be our best and do our best. Nor does it mean there is

anything wrong with worldly possessions - since we believe that God is in and through everything. It does mean that God is Spirit, and Spirit is all there is. Spirit, therefore, is the substance within everything, giving it its value; the value is not in the *thing*, itself. Spirit has no corporeal form; when we confine God to a certain form, we are attempting to make a 'graven image' of God. God is making us aware, through this higher-consciousness statement of Moses, that to put value in something over and above (or instead of) our spirituality can only diminish our perception of our spirituality. God is All-There-Is. It will never work to try to have just a part of God, or pretend that God is less than All. Finding contentment in the present as well as the future means recognizing our Real Nature, our own god-ness.

THE THIRD COMMANDMENT (STATEMENT)

You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain
(Exodus 20:7)

This is truly another of those ideas that, by its very nature, has to be a statement of Truth, and not a commandment. To take something 'in vain' suggests *futility or ineffectualness*. It means *without success*. It implies something *empty or hollow, without worth or significance*. None of these things can be associated with the NAME of God. Name means NATURE - the inherent character or basic constitution of a person or thing; its essence. We are also told here that the very *nature* of God is our lord, our higher consciousness as defined earlier. We know through our learning and through our actual experiences that the nature of God is anything but 'empty' or 'without worth'. Ernest Holmes tells us that "The Universal Spirit, which is God, operates through a Universal Mind, which is the Law of God; and that we are surrounded by this Creative Mind which receives the direct impress of our thought and acts upon it."

We believe, in fact, that we are exact *experiences* of this creative mind. What this means is that when we direct our attention to the nature of God (Goodness, Love, Perfection, Abundance) as our higher thoughts and prayers, and when we believe in this Nature and express through this Nature, making positive statements such as I AM healthy and I AM happy, then great things happen - we get what we ask for - actually, we **are** what we ask for. The **I AM** is God in **US**; it is God's nature as expressed through us, as us. (When I first wrote that statement, I wrote it as 'The **I AM** is God in **USE**.' Before I could correct my typo, I had this zing go through me at the truth embedded in my Freudian slip.) So, this Third Commandment/Statement means that if we should connect God's name with a negative condition, for instance when we say 'I AM sick' or 'I AM unhappy', we are using God's name in vain - to express a quality that is not a part of God's nature. It is not in God; it is not in us.

THE FOURTH COMMANDMENT (STATEMENT)

Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.
(Exodus 20:8)

This is one of those statements that have both literal as well as metaphysical value. We get very caught up in our secular lives, busy doing and getting. And when we have done too much, gone too far, our bodies and minds become quite literally too tired to be open to the re-freshment of God's Presence. The metaphysical interpretation of the Sabbath is *rest*. So we are instructed to rest and to keep this restful state devoted to goodness and righteousness (a holy state). But there is a deeper meaning in this Fourth *Statement*, a meaning that goes beyond a direct order.

This is a statement of fact: When we rest our minds (remain in communion with God) our outer life reflects this peace and the barriers cease to exist between our spiritual and our secular lives; God becomes the whole of our existence on all levels and the holy Sabbath (rest) exists within us. It is in this way that we grow to understand the Truth of the New Thought statement: *Wherever we are, God is, and all is well.*

THE FIFTH COMMANDMENT (STATEMENT)

Honour your father and your mother

(Exodus 20:12)

No one will argue with the literal value of this statement. Most of us have been taught from childhood to honor our parents. And for most of us this isn't merely a moral obligation, but an aspect intrinsic to child/parent love.

On a deeper level, the level of Universal Truth, God is our parent, what we often refer to as the Father/Mother-God. God as *parent* represents the dual nature of mankind, being both masculine and feminine, the giving and the receiving aspects of human nature, and we are true reflections (children) of this whole, unified God. The Father is Wisdom, the Knowing (mental) part of God, and the Mother is Love, the Feeling (emotional) part of God. In humans these aspects are often referred to as 'right-brain' and 'left-brain' activity. When we allow our individual natures to get out of balance – too much thinking without enough doing, or too much emotion without the balance of reason, we create chaos in our world. Ernest Holmes says that “. . . Heaven is within us, and that we experience It to the degree that we become conscious of It”. Heaven is the presence of God within man, the Christ-consciousness; this is the whole unified God. And to the extent that we are aware of this wholeness of God, we can experience Its wonder. So, in this commandment/statement, God-consciousness through Moses is telling us that we must love both aspects of ourselves; the mother/father, masculine/feminine which is our true nature, and we must love and honor them equally in order to remain balanced and happy.

SIXTH COMMANDMENT (STATEMENT)

You shall not kill.

(Exodus 20:13)

This commandment is another of those that must be realized on more than one level; more than a mere commandment of moral law, it is an emphatic statement of a Universal Law at its most fundamental stage. In the realm of Spirit, nothing can be killed because all is Spirit and Spirit cannot die. Since this seems only too apparent, I believe that God is suggesting another level of understanding (inspiring higher awareness). It is obvious that this statement must be taken literally in the physical as well as metaphysical realm in order to live in today's world. On either level, physical or metaphysical, the fact that it is a moral law means that it carries legal as well as karmic connotations that will have to be dealt with at some time. God has imbued our lives with personality, character, values, and physical attributes. For another to try to take that life – in any manner – would be to dishonor the God-essence of the individual, and that includes the maligning (killing) of a person's character, name, nature or physical being. These are all God-given attributes and what we do to someone else we do to ourselves – and vice-versa (karmic consequences). But the deepest cut is that ultimately what we do to ourselves or someone else,

we do to God who is our true essence. When we wear that awareness for a while, it has a tendency to promote a greater Love for all humans, both as beings and as becomings.

THE SEVENTH COMMANDMENT (STATEMENT)

You shall not commit adultery.

(Exodus 20:14)

We are all aware of the moral nature of this commandment/statement. To adhere to it as our daily standard of conduct is tantamount to personal purity and needs no further explanation on that level. On another level of thought, adulterate means to corrupt or debase or make impure by the addition of a foreign or inferior substance or element. It is important to understand the meaning of ‘impure substances’ as used here. Impurities begin in our thoughts, so this is a statement of fact that by raising our thoughts to the level of God/Self-realization we can maintain a level of consciousness that can not be diluted by such impurities that might be contained in otherwise more worldly thoughts and emotions. Throughout the Old Testament, adultery and idolatry were often used interchangeably, so this Seventh Statement is strongly linked with the First and the Second in which we were told the error of worshiping the false gods of bodily pleasures and appetites.

THE EIGHTH COMMANDMENT (STATEMENT)

You shall not steal.

(Exodus 20:15)

This is another of those statements on how we should quite literally be treating our fellow human beings, and it has long been considered an integral part of the Golden rule. Nobody wants their possessions stolen, and for the most part no one steals from another. This type of stealing can be carried a step further to encompass the theft of freedom from individuals and the usurpation of free-will from those under the power of another. But what was the God-consciousness level in this message about stealing? Is this a statement that we quite literally could not steal from each other because everything already belonged to every one (as in All are One)? Very probably. Does this commandment/statement mean that there truly is nothing, no-thing, to steal? This time, most certainly. We need to remember that all that we possess, whether it is material wealth, physical health, good working conditions, beauty, and/or gracious personality are gifts from God – but not in the sense we might think. God does not give us a good job, nor does God give us a healthy body. What God has given us is It’s Self. God is Mind, Consciousness. And since God is All There Is, our individual consciousness is God-consciousness. Consciousness means being aware – usually of something within ourselves. This means that our individual consciousness, as a gift from God, is awareness of our God-Self. This is the only gift God has given us; it is the only gift we will ever need, and it can never be stolen. But what about our lifestyles, our homes, our cars, our possessions, you might ask. Haven’t we always been taught that these are gifts from God? Yes, we have. And they are. But not, as I said before, in the usual manner of gifts. When we can realize that what appears as our material good, that which seems to be of human value, is actually created through the unfolding, the revealing, the blossoming of our own state of consciousness, we will begin to understand why it can never be stolen; why it is the only gift we will ever need; and why it would be impossible to envy or desire another’s possessions. This is

how we arrive at the conclusion that what we can conceive and believe, we can have. God gave us God-consciousness in the form of individual consciousness – how we use it is up to us.

THE NINTH COMMANDMENT (STATEMENT)
You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.
(Exodus 20:16)

Quite obviously we should not lie; that's a forgone conclusion. Why is slightly more complex. In New Thought, we believe that we create with words; words have power. We also believe that through our lineage from Divine Spirit, we are all One; therefore, what I say about another will most assuredly come home to rest on my own pillow. Emmet Fox explains it in another way when he says: “. . . the fundamental meaning of this commandment . . . is that you always express what you are. You cannot be one thing and express another.” He means that we cannot continue to lie, to permanently ‘bear false witness’ about another because the other's true colors, if they aren't already, will soon become apparent. On the other hand, so then will ours; it can't help but to become apparent that it is we who are false, not the person we have attacked. And Jesus admonished us to judge not, because to do so will undoubtedly bring judgment down on our own heads; we get back exactly what we give out. On another, deeper, level we can conclude that from the same lineage of Divine Spirit that makes us one with All, comes the assurance of our own Divinity; therefore, to speak of anyone in terms that would signify something less than the perfection in which they were created would be a lie.

THE TENTH COMMANDMENT (STATEMENT)
You shall not covet . . . anything that is thy neighbor's.
(Exodus 20:17)

Coveting is painful, whether it's your neighbor's goods, your neighbor's spouse, or your neighbor's level of spirituality. Coveting brings disappointment, mental enslavement, and despair; it can lead to anger, hatred, and aggressive behavior which will, in turn, lead to further regret and despondency. It is a vicious cycle and, worse yet, it is completely meaningless. As pointed out in the Eighth Commandment, we can not have what another has because what any one person possesses has come to him through his own conscious awareness of who he is – an individual with God-consciousness. Besides which, coveting implies a belief in lack (they have something, so I don't have it) and since God is Supply and we are channels of this supply through our own God-consciousness, the only lack would be in the level of our personal awareness. We need only look to ourselves, not to our neighbor for that which we desire.

So ends the list of The Ten Statements given by God through Moses. Having said all that and taken many words to do it, I'll just make one last observation: There are really only Two Commandments. When asked which was the greatest commandment, Jesus had an answer ready even though he knew this to be a trick question. If Jesus were to presume to question even one of God's great commandments, it could be (and was) very detrimental to his well-being. But his answer could not be faulted. He said, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like unto it, you shall love your neighbor as yourself” (Mat. 22:37-39). It is from this teaching that we learn LOVE is the key to LIFE.