

THE COMMANDMENTS.

The First Commandments (concl.):

Thou shalt have no other god but Me.

1. The First Commandment forbids (1) idolatry, (2) irreligion, and (3) superstition.

2. *Idolatry* is worship given to creatures.

3. Under *irreligion* are included (1) sacrilege, (2) turning religion and its ministers into ridicule, and (3) habitual neglect of one's religious duties.

4. *Sacrilege* is profanation, with criminal intent, of what is sacred, and is a mortal sin. There are three kinds of sacrilege, viz. (1) *sacrilege of the person, e.g.*, assaulting or killing a priest or nun; (2) *sacrilege of the place, e.g.*, creating a disturbance inside a church, desecrating a grave; and (3) *sacrilege of the thing, e.g.*, making a bad confession or communion, stealing sacred vessels, damage in a church, handling relics disrespectfully, and so on.

5. Allied to sacrilege is *simony*, which is buying or selling sacred things and making a profit out of them because of their sacred character, e.g., selling a rosary for more than its cost price because it has been blessed. See page 21, para. 23 conclusion.

6. Under *neglect of one's spiritual duties* we may include, besides actual neglect, also reading bad books, sending children to non-Catholic schools when Catholic ones are available, and taking part in prayers of a false religion.

7. We are guilty of *superstition* whenever we attribute to certain events, words or acts effects not assigned to them by God, such as the healing of sick persons by incantations, fortune-telling by cards, etc.

8. The principal superstitions are *magic, witchcraft and belief in omens.*

9. *Magic* is the art of doing things out of the ordinary course of nature with the help of the devil.

10. *Witchcraft* is the art of causing injury to men and animals through the power of the devil.

11. To presage from some ordinary fact or event that something good or evil is going to happen is to be guilty of *beliefs in omens*. Thus it is a superstition to believe that certain days are lucky or unlucky or that thirteen at table means that one of the thirteen will die in the course of the year.

12. We are guilty of superstition also if we believe in fortune-telling or in divination of any kind.

13. Belief in the virtues of holy water or of any object blessed by the Church is not superstitious, because whatever beneficial effects we hope will follow from their use we expect from the almighty power of God and in virtue of the prayer said over them by the Church.

14. In the following extract from the Gospel we see Christ driving out the sellers and money changers trader from the temple because they were committing a sacrilege *of the place*:

« The Pasch of the Jews was at hand and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. And He found in the temple them that sold oxen and sheep and doves, and the changers of money sitting. And when He had made as it were a scourge of little cords, He drove them all out of the temple, the sheep also and the oxen, and the money of the changers He poured out and the tables He overthrew. And to them that sold doves He said: Take these things hence and make not the house of My Father a house of traffic. And His disciples remembered that it was written: « The zeal of thy house hath eaten me up! » (*John II, 13-17*)

Explanation of the Plate.

15. The principal picture represents the Israelites worshipping the golden calf in the desert. While Moses was absent holding converse with God on Mount Sinai, the Israelites, weary of waiting for him, asked Aaron, the High Priest, to make them a golden calf that they might worship it. Aaron did their bidding, and they prostrated themselves

before the idol and honoured it with prayers and dances. When Moses came down from the mountain bearing the Tables of the Law, he became so indignant at the sight of this idolatry, that he threw down the tables and broke them. (*Exod.* xxxii, 1-19.)

16. *In the small picture on the left* we see Heliodorus, a general of Seleucus, King of Syria, trying to seize the treasures collected in the temple at Jerusalem. As he was in the act of committing this sacrilegious robbery, he saw appear « a horse with a terrible rider upon him ». And the horse « ran fiercely and struck Heliodorus with his forefeet ». At the same time « there appeared two other young men, beautiful and strong, bright and glorious, and in comely apparel, who stood by him on either side and scourged him without ceasing with many stripes. And Heliodorus suddenly fell to the ground and they took him up covered with great darkness, and having put him into a litter they carried him out ». (*II Mach.* iii.)

17. It was the sin of superstition that Saul committed when he went to consult the witch of Endor. *In the small picture on the right* we see him with the witch standing over him. At his request that she should summon the spirit of Samuel, who had been dead some time, Samuel, by God's permission, appeared and informed him that he would be killed on the following day in battle with the Philistines. (*I Kings,* xxviii.)
