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Commandments of Love (Day Three of "Seven Days with Pope Francis and The St. John's Bible")

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Commandments of Love

Paul N. Anderson

The Ten Commandments, given to Moses by God for the children of Israel to follow, are not primarily religious. Their concern is largely social, rooted in love, and all of them are relational in their thrust. Four Commandments address the human-divine relationship; six of them address human-to-human relationships. Nor are these calls to covenant faithfulness unique. While the codes of Moses and their stipulations in Exodus 20-24 deal with general principles and particular applications, the codes of the Babylonian King, Hammurabi—centuries earlier, in modern-day Iraq—also addressed over two hundred right ways of being and doing. And, the heart of the Law of Moses was summarized by Jesus—over a thousand years later, in modern-day Israel and Palestine—as the love of God and the love of neighbor: supreme human values. Even these commandments, though, are less of a contract and more of a covenant. Yes, things go better when people embrace respectfully the Ground and Source of our Being, and when they love and respect others as they would wish to be treated, themselves. But following the ways of God is not a transaction; it is a loving response to the ways of being and doing disclosed by a loving God. Indeed, authenticity, reverence, humility, hospitality, nonviolence, faithfulness, honesty, integrity, and dependability have their own rewards, and all of humanity is invited to embrace these values—that things might be well for all of God’s children. If people would live by these values, how much better off the entire world would be! In that sense, God’s ways are offered to humanity as an extension of God’s love, and in their embrace, that love, and our love for others, are actualized.



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