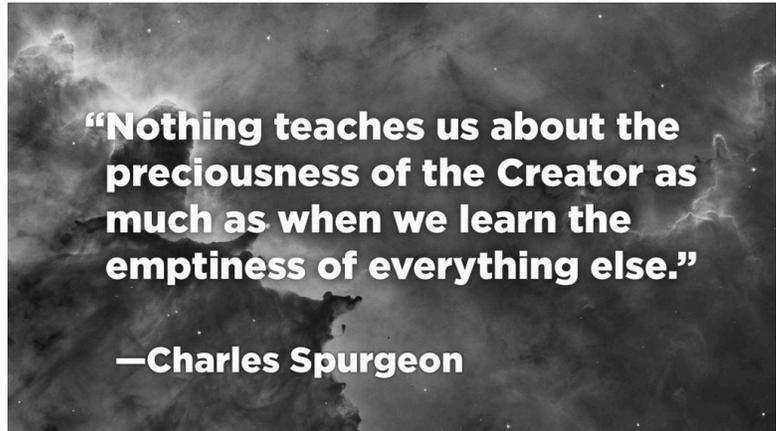


Orthodoxy - Worship God Only

New City Catechism Q.9: What does God require in the first, second, and third commandments?

Answer: First, that we know and trust God as the only true and living God. Second, that we avoid all idolatry and do not worship God improperly. Third, that we treat God's name with fear and reverence, honoring also his Word and works.

It is the LORD your God you shall fear. Him you shall serve and by his name you shall swear. You shall not go after other gods, the gods of the peoples who are around you. - Deuteronomy 6:13-14



These first three commands teach us the following: The God revealed in the Bible is to be the exclusive object of our worship, the ultimate object of our love and desire. He is to be worshiped by us according to who he is, not who we want him to be. We are not to worship false gods or worship him falsely. When we speak of God with our words and lifestyle we are to fully respect and honor who he is.

The gods of the people are all around you. They are the cultural air you breath. They demand that you worship them. They offer great rewards for your fear and obedience, and threaten you for not needing them. The gods of the people even find a way to influence your faith in and worship of the true and living God. They are the gods of romantic love, social and political success and power, money and it's cousins profit, pleasure and comfort. These gods tell their people what life is all about, and how without these gods life loses all significance and meaning. These gods become our goals. We imagine, 'Life will only have meaning and I will be significant if I get _____.'. When these gods find their way into the faith, hope, and love of those who claim allegiance to the one true and living God, their prayers, goals, and way of life personally and corporately are distorted. Acceptance, joy, peace, power, significance and meaning - wholeness - is no longer found in the true and living God and what he's done for them, but in what they need him to do for them for their best life now. We worship God because we believe he should provide us with comfort by providing the relationship or job that we think is necessary for our comfort. Good things become ultimate things as the gods of the people triumph in the hearts of the people who bear the image of the true and living God. Even religious people then reject God as he is, making for themselves other gods that become what they think the true God ought to be. And this leads to false worship.

God has created us with a desire that only he can fulfill. That desire is a desire for him. One reason there is so much anxiety in our lives and the lives of those around us is because we're always trying to change who God is or replace him with something else - the gods of the people. In these first three laws God commands us to put him, his worship, his Word and works where he reveals himself, at the center of our lives. He does this in love for us that we may find his wholeness to fill our lives. He does this to be our peace, our joy, our significance, and our comfort. God has also sent his only Son to fulfill this law for us. Our hearts and lives in this world are corrupted and destroyed by having other gods - idolatry. No one will be justified before God by works of the law, but only by faith in Jesus Christ. And those who are justified by faith in Jesus Christ we will no longer live for ourselves, but Christ will live in them, and his life in them will be for the pleasure of God in this law. Not a perfect life, but one of repentance and faith toward God and his pleasure.