

QUESTION 122

The Precepts that Pertain to Justice

Next we have to consider the precepts of justice. And on this topic there are six questions: (1) Are the precepts of the Decalogue precepts of justice? (2) Is the first precept of the Decalogue appropriately handed down? (3) Is the second precept of the Decalogue appropriately handed down? (4) Is the third precept of the Decalogue appropriately handed down? (5) Is the fourth precept of the Decalogue appropriately handed down? (6) Are the other six precepts of the Decalogue appropriately handed down?

Article 1

Are the precepts of the Decalogue precepts of justice?

It seems that the precepts of the Decalogue (Exodus 20:1-17) are not precepts of justice:

Objection 1: As *Ethics 2* says, “The lawmaker’s intention is to make the citizens virtuous with respect to every virtue.” Hence, *Ethics 5* says, “The law issues commands about all the acts of all the virtues.” But the precepts of the Decalogue are the first principles of the whole divine Law. Therefore, the precepts of the Decalogue do not pertain to justice alone.

Objection 2: What pertains to justice, it seems, are mainly the *judicial* precepts, which, as was established above (*ST 1-2*, q. 99, a. 4), are divided off from the *moral* precepts. But as is clear from what was said above (*ST 1-2*, q. 100, a. 3), the precepts of the Decalogue are *moral* precepts. Therefore, the precepts of the Decalogue are not precepts of justice.

Objection 3: The law mainly hands down precepts about acts of justice that involve the common good, e.g., precepts concerning public offices and other things of this sort. But there is no mention of these things in the precepts of the Decalogue. Therefore, it seems that the precepts of the Decalogue do not properly pertain to justice.

Objection 4: The precepts of the Decalogue are divided into two tablets corresponding to love of God and love of neighbor, which pertain to the virtue of charity. Therefore, the precepts of the Decalogue pertain to charity rather than to justice.

But contrary to this: Justice alone seems to be the virtue through which we are ordered toward the other. But we are ordered by all the precepts of the Decalogue toward the other, as is clear from going through them one by one. Therefore, it seems that all the precepts of the Decalogue pertain to justice.

I respond: The precepts of the Decalogue are the first precepts of the Law and natural reason immediately assents to them as manifestly obvious (*et quibus statim ratio naturalis assentit sicut manifestissimis*). Now the notion of a *debt*, which is required for a precept, is obvious in the case of justice, which is ordered *toward the other*, since in those things that look *toward himself* it seems at first glance that a man is master of himself and that he is permitted to do anything, whereas in those things that have to do with the other, it is manifestly obvious that a man is obligated to the other to render to him what he owes him. And so the precepts of the Decalogue had to pertain to justice.

Hence, the first three precepts have to do with acts of [the virtue of] religion, which is the most important part of justice, and the fourth precept has to do with the act of [the virtue of] piety, which is the second part of justice, whereas the other six precepts are given for acts of [the virtue of] justice taken in general, which is observed among equals.

Reply to objection 1: The law intends to make all men virtuous, but it intends this in a certain order—so that, more specifically, it first hands down to them precepts about those things in which, as has been explained, the character of a *debt* is more obvious.

Reply to objection 2: The *judicial* precepts are certain specifications (*quaedam determinationes*) of the moral precepts insofar as moral precepts are ordered toward one’s neighbor, just as the *ceremonial* precepts are likewise certain specifications of the moral precepts insofar as the moral precepts are

ordered toward God. Hence, neither the judicial nor the ceremonial precepts are contained in the Decalogue. Still, they are specifications of the precepts of the Decalogue and so they do indeed pertain to justice.

Reply to objection 3: Things that involve the common good have to be regulated in different ways in accord with human diversity. And so they had to be placed not among the precepts of the Decalogue, but among the judicial precepts.

Reply to objection 4: The precepts of the Decalogue belong to charity as an end—this according to 1 Timothy 1:5 (“The end of the precept is charity”). But they belong to justice insofar as they are immediately about acts of justice.

Article 2

Is the first precept of the Decalogue appropriately handed down?

It seems that the first precept of the Decalogue is not appropriately handed down (*non convenienter tradatur*):

Objection 1: A man is more obligated to God than to his carnal father—this according to Hebrews 12:9 (“How much more will we obey the Father of spirits and live?”). But the precept of piety, by which one’s father is honored, is put in the affirmative, since it says, “Honor your father and your mother” (Exodus 20:12). Therefore, *a fortiori*, the first precept of religion, by which God is honored, should have been put in the affirmative, especially because an affirmation is prior to a negation.

Objection 2: As was said above (a. 1), the first precept of the Decalogue pertains to [the virtue of] religion. But since religion is a single virtue, it has a single act. But in the first precept there are three acts that are prohibited. For first it says, “You shall not have strange gods before me” (Exodus 20:3), and, second, it says, “You shall not make a graven image for yourself” (Exodus 20:4), and, third, it says, “You shall not worship them or adore them” (Exodus 20:5). Therefore, the first precept is not appropriately handed down.

Objection 3: In *De Decem Chordis* Augustine claims that the vice of superstition is ruled out by the first precept. But as was explained above (q. 92, a. 2), there are many other harmful superstitions besides idolatry. Therefore, it is not enough for idolatry alone to be prohibited.

But contrary to this is the authority of Sacred Scripture.

I respond: It pertains to the law to make men good. And so the precepts of the Law had to be ordered according to the ordering of the process by which a man is made good (*praecepta legis ordinari secundum ordinem generationis qua homo fit bonus*).

Now in the ordering of this process one has to focus on two things:

(a) The first is that *the first part is made first (quod prima pars primo constituitur)*—in the way that in the generation of an animal the heart is made first and in the case of a house the foundation is made first. Now in the case of the goodness of the soul, the first part is the *goodness of the will*, as a result of which a man makes good use of every other sort of goodness. But the goodness of the will has to do with its object, which is the end. And so in an individual who was to be prepared by the Law for virtue, it was first necessary to lay a sort foundation, as it were, of religion, through which a man is appropriately ordered toward God, who is the ultimate end of the human will.

(b) The second thing to focus on in the ordering of the process is *the removal of contraries and impediments*, in the way, for instance, that a farmer first cleans up his field and afterwards scatters the seeds—this according to Jeremiah 4:3 (“Break up again your fallow ground, and do not sow upon thorns”). And so with respect to religion, a man first had to be prepared in such a way as to exclude the impediments to true religion. But the main impediment to religion is a man’s adhering to a false

god—this according to Matthew 6:24 (“You cannot serve both God and mammon”). And so in the first precept of the Law the worship of false gods is excluded.

Reply to objection 1: Even concerning religion there is one affirmative precept posited, viz., “Remember to keep holy the Sabbath day” (Exodus 20:8). But what had to be given first were the negative precepts by which the impediments to religion would be removed. For even though an affirmation is naturally prior to a negation, still, as has been explained, in a process of generation the negation, by which impediments are removed, is prior. And as Dionysius points out in *De Caelestia Hierarchia*, chap. 2, because of our inadequacy, it is especially in divine matters that negations are preferred to affirmations.

Reply to objection 2: There are two ways in which the worship of strange gods is carried out among various individuals:

There are those who worship certain creatures as gods without making images; hence, Varro claimed that for a long time the ancient Romans worshiped their gods without likenesses. And this sort of worship is prohibited by the first precept when it says, “You shall not have strange gods.”

On the other hand, among others there was a worship of false gods under certain images. And it was appropriate to prohibit both (a) the making of the images themselves when it says, “You shall not make a graven image for yourself,” and (b) the worshiping of the images themselves when it says, “You shall not worship them, etc.”

Reply to objection 3: All the other types of superstition proceed from a pact entered into either tacitly or expressly with the demons. And so all superstitions are understood to be prohibited when it says, “You shall not have strange gods.”

Article 3

Is the second precept of the Decalogue appropriately handed down?

It seems that the second precept of the Decalogue is not appropriately handed down:

Objection 1: The precept, “You shall not take the name of your God in vain,” is expounded in the following way in a Gloss on Exodus 20:7: “That is, you shall not think that the Son of God is a creature,” through which an error contrary to the Faith is prohibited. And Deuteronomy 5:11 (“You shall not take the name of your God in vain”) is expounded as follows: “Namely, by attributing the name of God to wood and stone,” and what is prohibited through this is a false profession, which is an act of unbelief (*infidelitas*) as well as an error. But unbelief is prior to superstition, just as faith is prior to religion. Therefore, this precept should have been placed before the first precept, in which superstition is prohibited.

Objection 2: The name of God is taken for many purposes, e.g., to praise, to work miracles, and, in general, for all the things that are said or done by us—this according to Colossians 3:17 (“Everything that you do, in word or in deed, do in the name of the Lord”). Therefore, the precept by which one is forbidden to take the name of God in vain is more general than the precept by which superstition is prohibited. And so it should have been placed before this latter precept.

Objection 3: In Exodus 20 the precept is explained: “You shall not take of the name of your God in vain, that is, by swearing to nothing” (*iurando pro nihilo*). Hence, it seems that what is prohibited by the precept is *vain* swearing, i.e., swearing which lacks *judgment* (*quae est sine iudicio*). But what is more serious is *false* swearing, i.e., swearing which lacks *truth* (*quae est sine veritate*), and *unjust* swearing, i.e., swearing which lacks *justice* (*quae est sine iustitia*). Therefore, the latter types of swearing should have been prohibited by this precept.

Objection 4: Blasphemy, or anything that is done by word or deed to vilify God, is a much more

serious sin than perjury. Therefore, blasphemy and other sins of this sort should instead have been prohibited by this precept.

Objection 5: There are many names of God. Therefore, it should not have been said in a non-specific way, “You shall not take the name of your God in vain.”

But contrary to this is the authority of Sacred Scripture.

I respond: In the case of someone who is being prepared for virtue, it is necessary to remove from him impediments to true religion before grounding him in true religion. Now there are two ways in which something is opposed to true religion:

(a) in one way, *through excess*, viz., when what belongs to religion is given undeservedly to someone else, and this involves *superstition*;

(b) in a second way, *through a lack of reverence*, viz., when God is disdained, and this, as was established above (q. 97, introduction), involves the vice of *irreligion*.

Now *superstition* impedes religion because God is not being held up for worship. But an individual whose mind is tied up in undeserved worship cannot at the same time undertake an appropriate worship of God—this according to Isaiah 28:20 (“The bed is narrowed, so that one or the other falls out of it”—i.e., either the true God or the false god falls out of the man’s heart—“and a small covering cannot cover both”).

On the other hand, religion is impeded by *irreligion* because God, after He has been held up [for worship], is not honored. But holding God up for worship is prior to honoring Him once He has been held up. And so the precept by which superstition is prohibited is placed before the second precept, which prohibits perjury, something that pertains to irreligion.

Reply to objection 1: These expositions are mystical. By contrast, a literal exposition is the one found in Deuteronomy 5: “You shall not take the name of your God in vain, i.e., by swearing to what is not.”

Reply to objection 2: Not just any way of taking the divine name is prohibited by this precept; instead, what is prohibited properly speaking are those ways by which the divine name is taken to confirm human words in the manner of an oath, since this sort of taking of the divine name is very frequent among men.

However, it can be understood as a consequence that any sort of disordered taking of the divine name is prohibited. And it is on this understanding that those expositions that were mentioned above proceed.

Reply to objection 3: One is said to ‘swear to nothing’ (*pro nihilo iurare*) when he swears to that which is not (*iurat pro eo quod non est*), and this pertains to *false* swearing, which, as was explained above (q. 98, a. 1), is in its main instance called *perjury*. For when an individual swears to what is false, his swearing is vain in its own right, since it does not have the support of the truth. On the other hand, when an individual swears without judgment out of some sort of levity, then if he swears to what is true, there will be vanity not on the part of the oath itself, but only on the part of the one who swears it.

Reply to objection 4: Just as what is first proposed to an individual who is being instructed in some science are certain general teachings, so, too, in the precepts of the Decalogue, which are the first precepts, the Law, in preparing a man for virtue, proposed—either by prohibiting or by commanding—things that are wont to occur most commonly in the course of human life. And this is why the precepts of the Decalogue prohibit perjury, which occurs very frequently, instead of blasphemy, which it is more rare for a man to fall into.

Reply to objection 5: Reverence is owed to the names of God because of the thing signified, which is one, and not by reason of the words that do the signifying, which are many. And so the Law said in the singular, “You shall not take the name of your God in vain,” because it does not matter which name of God perjury is committed under.

Article 4

Is the third precept of the Decalogue appropriately handed down?

It seems that the third precept of the Decalogue, viz., the one about the sanctification of the Sabbath, is not appropriately handed down:

Objection 1: This precept, understood in a *spiritual* sense (*spiritualiter intellectum*), is a *general* precept, since, as Ambrose says in commenting on Luke 13:14 (“The ruler of the synagogue, angry that He had healed on the Sabbath ...”), “The Law prohibits not the healing of a man on the Sabbath, but the doing of servile works, i.e., the burdening of oneself with sins.” However, according to its literal sense it is a *ceremonial* precept; for Exodus 31:13 says, “See that you keep my Sabbath, because it is a sign between me and you in your generations.” But the precepts of the Decalogue are *spiritual* precepts and *moral* precepts. Therefore, this precept is inappropriately placed among the precepts of the Decalogue.

Objection 2: As was established above (*ST* 1-2, q. 101, a. 4), the ceremonial precepts of the Law include *sacred things*, *sacrifices*, *sacraments*, and *observances*. Now it was not just sacred days that fell under *sacred things*, but also sacred places and sacred vessels and other things of this sort. Similarly, there were many sacred days besides the Sabbath. Therefore, with all the other ceremonial precepts having been left aside, it was inappropriate that mention should be made only of the observance of the Sabbath.

Objection 3: If anyone transgresses a precept of the Law, he sins. But in the Old Law there were some who transgressed the observance of the Sabbath without sinning, e.g., those who were circumcising their little boys on the eighth day and the priests working in the temple on the Sabbath. And given that Elijah had journeyed to Horeb, the mountain of God, for forty days (3 Kings 19:8), it follows that he traveled on the Sabbath. Similarly, when, as we read in Joshua 6:14-15, the priests carried the ark of the Lord around for seven days, they are likewise understood to have carried it around on the day of the Sabbath. Again, Luke 13:15 says, “Do not each of you [on the Sabbath day] loose his ox or his ass and lead them to water?” Therefore, this precept is inappropriately placed among the precepts of the Decalogue.

Objection 4: The precepts of the Decalogue are also to be observed under the New Law. But in the New Law this precept is not observed, either with respect to the day of the Sabbath or with respect to the Lord’s day, on which men cook their food and travel and fish and do many other things of this sort. Therefore, the precept concerning the observance of the Sabbath is inappropriately handed down.

But contrary to this is the authority of Sacred Scripture.

I respond: When, in the way that has been explained (aa. 2-3), the impediments to true religion had been removed by the first and second precepts of the Decalogue, what followed was the positing of the third precept, through which men would be given a foundation in true religion.

Now religion involves giving worship to God. But just as in the Scriptures divine things are handed down to us under the similitudes of certain corporeal things, so, too, exterior worship is given to God through a sensible sign. And since a man is induced into *interior* worship, which consists in prayer and devotion, more by the interior movement of the Holy Spirit, a precept of the Law had to be given concerning *exterior* worship in accord with a sensible sign. And because the precepts of the Decalogue are, as it were, certain primary and general principles of the Law, what is commanded in the third precept of the Decalogue is the exterior worship of God under the sign of a common benefit that belongs to everyone, viz., to represent the work of the creation of the world, from which God is said to have rested on the seventh day, and as a sign of this the seventh day is mandated to be made holy, i.e., to be set aside to be free for God (*idest deputanda ad vacandum Deo*). And this is why in Exodus 20:2, with the precept about the sanctification of the Sabbath having first been set forth, a reason is assigned: “because God made heaven and earth in six days, and on the seventh day He rested.”

Reply to objection 1: The precept concerning the sanctification of the Sabbath, understood in its *literal signification* (*litteraliter intellectum*), is partly *moral* and partly *ceremonial*. It is a *moral* precept to the extent that a man assigns a certain time of his life to be free for divine things. For there is a natural inclination in man to assign time to every necessary thing, e.g., the refreshment of the body, sleep, and other things of this sort. Hence, according to the dictate of reason, a man likewise assigns a time for spiritual refreshment by which the man's mind is refreshed in God. And so having some assigned time to be free for divine things falls under a moral precept. On the other hand, insofar as this precept determines a specific time as a sign of the creation of the world, it is a *ceremonial* precept.

Similarly, it is likewise ceremonial in its *allegorical signification*, insofar as it prefigured Christ's rest in the tomb, which occurred on the seventh day. And, again, as regards its *moral signification*, insofar as it signifies a cessation of every sinful act and the mind's resting in God, on this score it is in some sense a general precept. Again, it is *ceremonial* as regards its *anagogical signification*, i.e., insofar as it prefigures the rest that belongs to the enjoyment of God that will exist in heaven.

Hence, the precept concerning the sanctification of the Sabbath is placed among the precepts of the Decalogue insofar as it is a *moral* precept and not insofar as it is a *ceremonial* precept.

Reply to objection 2: The other ceremonies of the Law are signs of *particular* effects of God. But the observance of the Sabbath is a sign of a *general* benefit, viz., the production of all creatures. And this is why it was more appropriate for it to be posited among the general precepts of the Decalogue than for any other ceremonial precept of the Law.

Reply to objection 3: There are two things that have to be taken into account in the observance of the Sabbath.

One of them is, as it were, the *end*, and this is that a man be free for divine things. This is signified in the fact that it says, "Remember to make holy the day of the Sabbath," for in the Law those things are said to be 'made holy' which are applied to divine worship.

The other is *the cessation of works*, which is signified when it is added, "On the seventh day of the Lord God, you shall not do any work." And how to understand this 'work' becomes clear from the explanation of Leviticus 23:35: "You shall not do any servile work on that day."

Now *servile work* (*opus servile*) comes from *servitude* (*servitudo*), and there are three kinds of servitude:

(a) One is the servitude by which a man serves sin—this according to John 8:34 ("Whoever sins is a slave to sin"). And on this score every work of sin is called a servile work.

(b) The second kind is the servitude by which a man serves a man. But as was explained above (q. 104, aa. 4-5), one man is a servant of another not with his mind but with his body. And so on this score what are called servile works are bodily works in which one man serves another.

(c) The third kind is servitude with respect to God. And on this score a work of worship, which involves serving God, could be called a servile work.

However, if 'servile work' were understood in this last sense, then it would not be prohibited on the Sabbath day, since this would be contrary to the end of the Sabbath observance. For a man abstains from other works on the Sabbath day in order to free himself for works that pertain to serving God. And so it is that, as John 7:23 says, "If a man receives circumcision on the Sabbath, in order that the Law of Moses might not be broken ..." And so it is that as Matthew 12:5 says, "On the Sabbath day the priests in the temple violate the Sabbath"—that is, they do corporeal work on the Sabbath—"and yet are without sin." And so, likewise, the priests who carried the ark around on the Sabbath did not transgress the precept about the observance of the Sabbath. Similarly, neither is the exercise of any spiritual act contrary to the observance of the Sabbath; hence, a Gloss on Numbers 28:9 says, "Smiths and craftsmen of this sort rest on the Sabbath day, but the reader or teacher of the divine Law does not stop working, and yet the Sabbath is not defiled—just as the priests in the temple violate the Sabbath and are without sin."

By contrast, other works that are called servile in the first or second way are contrary to the

observance of the Sabbath insofar as they impede a man's dedication to divine things. And since a man is kept from divine things more by a sinful work than by a non-sinful work (*opus licitum*), even if it is corporeal, it follows that someone who sins on a feast day acts in a way that is more contrary to this precept than someone who does a non-sinful corporeal deed. Hence in *De Decem Chordis* Augustine says, "It would be better for a Jew to do something useful on his farm than to be factious at the theater, and it would be better for their women to be making linen on the Sabbath than to be dancing shamelessly all day long in their celebrations of the new moon." However, one who commits a venial sin on the Sabbath is not acting against this precept, since a venial sin does not exclude holiness.

Again, corporeal works that do not belong to the worship of God are called 'servile' to the extent that they belong properly to servants, whereas insofar as they are common to both servants and free men, they are not called 'servile'. Now anyone, whether servant or free, is in a case of necessity obligated to provide not only for himself but also for his neighbor, mainly in matters that pertain to bodily safety—this according to Proverbs 24:11 ("Rescue those who are being led to death")—but, secondarily, even to avoid a loss of property—this according to Deuteronomy 22:1 ("You shall not see your brother's ox or sheep go astray and pass by, but you shall lead it back to your brother"). And so a bodily work that involves conserving the well-being of one's own body (*pertinens ad conservandam salutem proprii corporis*) does not violate the Sabbath, since it is not contrary to the observance of the Sabbath that one should eat and do other things of this sort by which the well-being of his body is preserved (*quibus salus corporis conservatur*). It is for this reason that, as we read in 1 Maccabees 2:41, the Maccabees did not defile the Sabbath when they fought in their own defense on the day of the Sabbath; nor did Elijah when he fled from the sight of Jezebel on the day of the Sabbath. And it is likewise because of this that in Matthew 12:1 our Lord excuses his disciples, who were picking ears of corn on the day of the Sabbath out of the necessity that they were experiencing. Similarly, a bodily work that is ordered toward someone else's bodily well-being is not contrary to the observance of the Sabbath. Hence, in John 7:23 our Lord asks, "Are you angry with me because I have healed a whole man on the Sabbath?" Again, even a bodily deed that is ordered toward avoiding the imminent loss of an exterior thing does not violate the Sabbath. Hence, in Matthew 12:11 our Lord asks, "What man is there among you who, having a sheep that falls into a pit on the Sabbath day, will not take hold of it and lift it up?"

Reply to objection 4: The observance of the Lord's day in the New Law succeeds the observance of the Sabbath not by force of a precept of the Law, but by the Church's decision and the custom of the Christian people. Nor, again, is an observance figurative in the way that the observance of the Sabbath was under the Old Law. And so there is not so restrictive a prohibition on working on the day of the Lord as on the day of the Sabbath, but instead certain works are permitted on the day of the Lord which were prohibited on the day of the Sabbath, such as cooking food and other things of this sort. And even in the case of certain prohibited works it is easier to get a dispensation because of necessity under the New Law than it was under the Old Law, because the figure involves confessing a truth that one must not overlook even slightly, whereas the works considered in their own right can change depending on the time and place.

Article 5

Is the fourth precept of the Decalogue appropriately handed down?

It seems that the fourth precept, the one about honoring one's parents, is not appropriately handed down:

Objection 1: This precept involves [the virtue of] piety. But just as [the virtue of] piety is a part of [the virtue of] justice, so, too, are [the virtue of] respectfulness (*observantia*), [the virtue of] gratitude

(*gratia*), and the other virtues spoken of above (cf. q. 80). Therefore, it seems that a specific precept about piety should not have been given, since no precept was given about the other virtues.

Objection 2: As was explained above (q. 101, a. 1), piety gives honor not only to one's parents but also to one's country, to one's other blood relatives and to the friends of one's country. Therefore, it was inappropriate to make mention only of honoring one's father and mother.

Objection 3: One's parents are owed not only the reverence of honor, but also sustenance. Therefore, it is insufficient to command only the honoring of one's parents.

Objection 4: It sometimes happens that those who honor their parents die suddenly and, on the contrary, that those who do not honor their parents live a long life. Therefore, it was inappropriate to add to this precept the following promise: "in order that your days may be long on the land ..." (Exodus 20:12).

But contrary to this is the authority of Sacred Scripture.

I respond: The precepts of the Decalogue are ordered toward love of God and love of neighbor. But among our neighbors we are especially obligated to our parents. And so immediately after the precepts that order us toward God, a precept is given that orders us toward our parents, who are the *particular* principle of our existence, just as God is the *universal* principle. And so this precept has a sort of affinity to the precepts of the first tablet.

Reply to objection 1: As was explained above (q. 101, a. 1), [the virtue of] piety is ordered toward rendering what is owed to one's parents, and this applies to everyone in general. And that is why, among the precepts of the Decalogue, which are general precepts, it is more appropriate to posit something having to do with piety than something having to do with the other parts of justice, which look to more specialized sorts of debt.

Reply to objection 2: Something is owed to one's parents before one's country or blood relatives, since it is by the fact that we are born of our parents that our blood relatives and country belong to us. And so, since the precepts of the Decalogue are the first precepts of the Law, a man is ordered more toward his parents by those precepts than toward his country or toward his blood relatives.

Still, in this precept, which is about honoring one's parents, it is understood—in the sense in which a secondary precept is included in the principal precept—that whatever pertains to rendering a debt to any person is being commanded.

Reply to objection 3: The honor of reverence is due to one's parents insofar as they are his parents. But as was explained above (q. 101, a. 2), sustenance and certain other things are owed to one's parents by reason of some accident, e.g., their being poor or something else of this sort. And since what is *per se* is prior to what is *per accidens*, it follows that among the first precepts of the Law, i.e., the precepts of the Decalogue, what is specifically commanded is honoring one's parents. Yet in this—as in something that is principal—sustenance and whatever else is owed to one's parents is understood to be commanded.

Reply to objection 4: The longevity that is promised to those who honor their parents is not only with respect to the future life, but also with respect to the present life—this according to the Apostle in 1 Timothy 4:8 ("Piety is profitable for everything, holding out the promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come"). And it is reasonable to say this. For one who is grateful for a benefit merits, in accord with a certain congruence, that the benefit be preserved for him. But the benefit of bodily life is one that we have, after God, from our parents. And so an individual who honors his parents merits the preservation of his life, whereas an individual who does not honor his parents deserves, as an ingrate, to be deprived of his life.

However, since, as has been explained (*ST* 1-2, q. 114, a. 10), present goods and evils do not fall under merit or demerit except insofar as they are ordered toward future remuneration, it follows that sometimes—in accord with the hidden rationale of God's judgments, which look especially to future remuneration—some who are pious with respect to their parents are suddenly deprived of life, whereas

others who are impious with respect to their parents live for a longer time.

Article 6

Are the other six precepts of the Decalogue appropriately handed down?

It seems that the other six precepts of the Decalogue are not appropriately handed down:

Objection 1: It is not sufficient for salvation that an individual should not harm his neighbor; instead, it is required that he should render what is owed to him—this according to Romans 13:7 (“Render to all what is due them”). But in the last six precepts he is forbidden only to inflict harm on his neighbor. Therefore, these precepts are not appropriately handed down.

Objection 2: In these precepts what is prohibited are homicide, adultery, theft, and false testimony. But as is clear from what was determined above (cf. qq. 64-78), there are many other sorts of harm that can be inflicted on one’s neighbor. Therefore, it seems that precepts of this sort have not been appropriately handed down.

Objection 3: Concupiscence (*concupiscentia*) can be understood in two ways: (a) in one way, insofar as it is an act of the will, in the sense that Wisdom 6:21 says, “The desire (*concupiscentia*) for wisdom leads to the everlasting kingdom,” and (b) in a second way, insofar as it is an act of the sentient appetite (*actus sensualitatis*), in the sense that James 4:1 says, “Where do the wars and contentions among you come from? Are they not ... from the desires (*ex concupiscentiis*) that wage war in your members?” But the concupiscence that belongs to the sentient appetite is not prohibited by a precept, since if it were, then first movements would be mortal sins inasmuch as they would be contrary to a precept of the Decalogue. Similarly, the concupiscence that belongs to the will is not prohibited, since it is included in every sin. Therefore, it is inappropriate for any precepts that prohibit concupiscence to be posited among the precepts of the Decalogue.

Objection 4: Homicide is a more serious sin than adultery or theft. But there is no precept posited that prohibits the desire for homicide (*prohibitiva concupiscentiae homicidii*). Therefore, it is likewise inappropriate for there to be precepts that prohibit the desire for theft and the desire for adultery (*prohibitiva concupiscentiae furti et adulterii*).

But contrary to this is the authority of Sacred Scripture.

I respond: Just as through the parts of [the virtue of justice] a debt is rendered to certain determinate persons to whom a man is obligated for some special reason, so, too, through [the virtue of] justice properly speaking a debt is rendered in common to all persons. And so following the three precepts that pertain to [the virtue of] religion, by which a debt is rendered to God, and following the fourth precept, which is the precept belonging to [the virtue of] piety, by which a debt is rendered to one’s parents and in which is included every debt that is owed for some special reason, it was then necessary to posit the other precepts, which pertain to [the virtue of] justice properly speaking and which render a debt indiscriminately to everyone (*quae indifferenter omnibus debitum reddit*).

Reply to objection 1: A man is obligated in general (*communiter*) not to inflict harm on anyone. And so negative precepts by which harms that can be inflicted on one’s neighbors are prohibited as general harms had to be posited among the precepts of the Decalogue.

By contrast, those things that have to be given to one’s neighbors are given in diverse ways to diverse individuals. And so no affirmative precepts about these things had to be posited among the precepts of the Decalogue.

Reply to objection 2: All the other types of harm that are inflicted on one’s neighbors can be traced back to the harms that are prohibited by these precepts as harms that are more general and more central. For instance, all the harms that are inflicted on the person of one’s neighbor are understood to be

prohibited in [the prohibition of] homicide as something more general and more central. On the other hand, those harms that are inflicted on a person conjoined to one—and especially in the manner of sexual desire—are understood to be prohibited along with adultery. And those harms that have to do with losses inflicted on property are understood to be prohibited along with theft. Moreover, those harms that involve speech, such as detraction, blasphemy, and any others of this sort, are understood to be prohibited [along with] false witness, which is directly contrary to justice.

Reply to objection 3: What is prohibited by the precepts that prohibit concupiscence is not understood to be the first movement of concupiscence, which remains within the limits of the sentient appetite. Instead, what is prohibited directly is the consent of the will that is directed toward the deed or toward the pleasure.

Reply to objection 4: Homicide is not desirable in its own right (*secundum se non est concupiscibile*), but is instead terrible, since it does not of itself (*de se*) have the character of any good. By contrast, adultery has some character of a good, viz., being *pleasurable*, and theft likewise has the character of a good, viz., being *useful*. Now a good has of itself (*de se*) the character of something desirable. And so the desire to steal and the desire to commit adultery—but not the desire to kill—had to be prohibited by special precepts.