

QUESTION 44

The Precepts that Pertain to Charity

Next we have to consider the precepts or commandments that pertain to charity (*praecepta caritatis*). And on this topic there are eight questions: (1) Should precepts be given concerning charity? (2) Is there just one precept, or are there two? (3) Are two precepts sufficient? (4) Is it appropriate to command that God be loved with one's whole heart? (5) Is it appropriate to add "and with one's whole mind, etc."? (6) Can this precept be fulfilled in this life? (7) Was it appropriate to give the precept, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself"? (8) Does the ordering of charity fall under the precept?

Article 1

Should any precepts be given concerning charity?

It seems that no precepts should be given concerning charity:

Objection 1: As was explained above (q. 23, a. 8), since charity is the form of the virtues, it imposes a mode on the acts of all the virtues concerning which precepts are given. But as is commonly said, "The mode is not contained in the precept." Therefore, precepts should not be given concerning charity.

Objection 2: Charity, which is poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, makes us free, since, as 2 Corinthians 3:17 says, "Where the Holy Spirit is, there freedom is." But obligation, which arises from precepts, is opposed to liberty, since it imposes necessity. Therefore, precepts should not be given concerning charity.

Objection 3: As is clear from what was said above (*ST* 1-2, q. 100, a. 9), charity is the most important of all the virtues toward which the precepts are ordered. Therefore, if precepts are given concerning charity, then they ought to be posited among the most important precepts, which are the precepts of the Decalogue. But they are not posited there. Therefore, no precepts are to be given concerning charity.

But contrary to this: What God requires of us falls under a precept. But as Deuteronomy 10:12 says, God requires of a man "that he love Him." Therefore, precepts are to be given concerning the love of charity, i.e., concerning the love of God.

I respond: As was explained above (*ST* 1-2, q. 100, a. 5), 'precept' involves the notion of what is owed. Therefore, something falls under a precept to the extent that it has the character of what is owed. Now there are two ways in which something is owed, viz., (a) *in its own right (per se)* and (b) *because of something else (per aliud)*.

What is owed *in its own right* in each case is that which is the end, since the end has the character of something good in its own right, whereas what is owed *because of something else* is that which is ordered toward the end. For instance, for a physician what is owed in its own right is that he bring about healing, whereas what is owed because of something else is that he dispense medicine in order to bring about healing.

Now the end of the spiritual life is that a man be united with God, which is brought about through charity; and everything that belongs to the spiritual life is ordered toward this as its end. Hence, in 1 Timothy 1:5 the Apostle says, "The end of the commandment is charity from a pure heart, a good conscience, and an unfeigned faith." For all the virtues whose acts precepts are given for are ordered either (a) toward purifying the heart of the agitations of the passions, as in the case of the virtues that have to do with the passions, or at least (b) toward having a good conscience, as in the case of the virtues that have to do with operations, or (c) toward having upright faith, as in the case of those things having to do with divine worship. And those three things are required in order to love God. For an impure heart is drawn away from the love of God by passions that incline it toward earthly things, and a bad conscience

makes one bristle at God's justice because of the fear of punishment, whereas a feigned faith draws one's affections toward what it imagines about God, thus deviating from the truth about God.

Now in the case of each thing, what exists in its own right is more important than what exists because of something else. And so, as Matthew 22:38 says, "the greatest commandment" has to do with charity.

Reply to objection 1: As was said above when we were discussing the commandments (*ST* 1-2, q. 100, a. 10), the mode of love does not fall under the precepts that are given concerning the other acts of the virtues; for instance, the commandment 'Honor your father and your mother' does not include that this should be done out of charity. However, the act of loving does fall under special precepts.

Reply to objection 2: The obligation imposed by a commandment is opposed to freedom only in someone whose mind has been turned away from what is commanded, as is clear in the case of those who keep the commandments only out of fear. However, the precept of love can be fulfilled only by one's own will, and so it is not in tension with freedom.

Reply to objection 3: All the commandments of the Decalogue are ordered toward the love of God and the love of one's neighbor. And so the precepts of charity did not have to be numbered among the commandments of the Decalogue, but were included in all of them.

Article 2

Did two precepts have to be given concerning charity?

It seems not to be the case that two precepts had to be given concerning charity:

Objection 1: As has been explained (a. 1), the precepts of the law are ordered toward virtue. But as is clear from what was said above (q. 23, a. 5), charity is a single virtue (*una virtus*). Therefore, only one precept had to be given concerning charity.

Objection 2: In *De Doctrina Christiana* 1 Augustine says that charity loves only God in our neighbor. But we are sufficiently ordered toward loving God by the precept 'You shall love the Lord your God'. Therefore, it was unnecessary to add another precept concerning the love of neighbor.

Objection 3: Diverse sins are opposed to diverse precepts. But as long as someone does not fail to love God, he does not sin by failing to love his neighbor—to the contrary, Luke 14:26 says, "If you come to me and do not hate your father and your mother, you cannot be my disciple." Therefore, the precept concerning love of God is not a different precept from the precept concerning love of neighbor.

Objection 4: In Romans 13:8 the Apostle says, "One who loves his neighbor fulfills the law." But the law is fulfilled only by observing all the commandments. Therefore, all the commandments are contained in the love of neighbor. Therefore, the one commandment concerning love of neighbor is sufficient. Therefore, there should not be two precepts concerning charity.

But contrary to this: 1 John 4:21 says, "This commandment we have from God, that one who loves God should love his brother as well."

I respond: As was explained above when we were discussing the commandments (*ST* 1-2, q. 91, a. 3), precepts in the law behave like propositions in the speculative sciences, in which the conclusions are virtually contained within the first principles. Hence, one who knew the principles perfectly in all their power would not have to have the conclusions proposed to him separately. But since not everyone who has cognition of the principles is capable of seeing whatever is virtually contained in the principles, it is necessary for the sake of such individuals that in the sciences the conclusions be deduced from the principles.

Now as was explained above (*ST* 1-2, q. 91, a. 3), in matters of action, wherein the precepts of the law direct us, the end has the character of a principle. But the love of God is the end toward which the

love of one's neighbor is ordered. And so for the sake of less capable individuals, who would not easily see that the one of these precepts is contained within the other, it is necessary to give not only a precept concerning the love of God, but also a precept concerning the love of neighbor.

Reply to objection 1: Even though charity is a single virtue, it nonetheless has two acts, one of which is ordered toward the other as its end. But precepts are given concerning the acts of the virtues. And so it was necessary for there to be more than one precept of charity.

Reply to objection 2: God is loved in one's neighbor as an end is loved in what is ordered toward the end. And yet, for the reason already explained, it was necessary that precepts be given explicitly for both.

Reply to objection 3: What is ordered toward the end has the character of something good from its relation to the end. And this is why receding from what is ordered toward the end has the character of something bad—and not for any other reason.

Reply to objection 4: The love of God is included in the love of neighbor in the way that an end exists in the means to the end, and vice versa. And yet, for the reason already explained, it was necessary that both precepts be given explicitly.

Article 3

Are two precepts concerning charity enough?

It seems that two precepts of charity are not enough:

Objection 1: Precepts are given concerning the acts of the virtues. But acts are distinguished by their objects. Therefore, since, as is clear from what was said above (q. 25, a. 12), there are four things a man ought to love out of charity—viz., God, himself, his neighbor, and his own body—it seems that there should be four precepts concerning charity. And so two are not enough.

Objection 2: The acts of charity include not only the act of elective love (*dilectio*), but joy (*gaudium*), peace (*pax*), and beneficence (*beneficentia*) as well. But precepts should be given concerning the acts of the virtues. Therefore, two precepts concerning charity are not enough.

Objection 3: Just as doing good belongs to a virtue, so, too, does turning away from evil. But we are induced to do good by the affirmative precepts and to turn away from evil by the negative precepts. Therefore, not just affirmative precepts, but also negative precepts should have been given concerning charity. And so the two precepts mentioned above are not enough.

But contrary to this: Matthew 22:40 says, “On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets.”

I respond: As was explained above (q. 23, a. 1), charity is a certain type of friendship. But friendship is with respect to another. Hence, in one of his homilies Gregory says, “Charity cannot be had among fewer than two individuals.” And it was explained above (q. 25, a. 4) how someone loves himself out of charity.

Now since love (*amor*) and elective love (*dilectio*) are of the good, whereas the good is either an end or a means to the end, it is fitting that two precepts should be enough concerning charity—more specifically, one by which we are induced to love God as the end, and another by which we are induced to love our neighbor because of God as the end (*propter Deum sicut propter finem*).

Reply to objection 1: In *De Doctrina Christiana* Augustine says, “Given that there are four things that are to be loved out of charity, no precepts had to be given for the second and fourth”—i.e., for love of self and love of one's own body—“since no matter how far a man falls away from the truth, he retains his love for himself and his love for his own body.”

However, the mode of this love has to be prescribed for man, so that he might love himself and his

body in a well-ordered way, and this is accomplished by his loving God and his neighbor.

Reply to objection 2: As is clear from what was said above (q. 28, a. 4 and q. 29, a. 3), the other acts of charity follow from the act of elective love (*ex actu dilectionis*) in the way that an effect follows from a cause. Hence, precepts concerning the other acts are virtually included in the precepts of love.

Still, because of those who are slower [to grasp this], one finds precepts that have been handed down explicitly concerning each of these other acts—concerning *joy* in Philippians 4:4 (“Rejoice in the Lord always”); concerning *peace* in Hebrews 12:14 (“Pursue peace with everyone”), and concerning *beneficence* in Galatians 6:10 (“While we have time, let us do good to everyone”). And as is clear to anyone who looks into the matter diligently, precepts concerning each of the parts of beneficence are found to be handed down in Sacred Scripture.

Reply to objection 3: Doing good involves more than avoiding evil. And so the negative precepts are virtually contained in the affirmative precepts.

Nonetheless, precepts are given explicitly against the vices opposed to charity. For instance, contrary to *hate* Leviticus 19:17 says, “You shall not hate your brother in your heart.” And against *acedia* Ecclesiasticus 6:26 says, “Do not be morose in her chains.” And against *envy* Galatians 5:26 says, “Let us not become desirous of vainglory, provoking one another, envying one another.” Against *discord* 1 Corinthians 1:10 says, “May all of you say the same thing, and let there be no schisms among you.” And against *scandal* Romans 14:13 says, “Do not put an obstacle or scandal in the way of your brother.”

Article 4

Is it inappropriate to command that God be loved with one’s whole heart?

It seems inappropriate to command that God be loved with one’s whole heart:

Objection 1: As is clear from what was said above (*ST* 1-2, q. 100, a. 9), a precept does not contain the mode of the virtuous act. But the phrase “with all one’s heart” designates a mode of loving God. Therefore, it is inappropriate to command that God be loved with one’s whole heart.

Objection 2: As *Physics* 3 says, what is whole and complete (*totum et perfectum*) is lacking in nothing. Therefore, if it is part of the precept that God be loved with one’s whole heart, then if someone does something that does not pertain to loving God, he is acting against the precept and consequently committing a mortal sin. But a venial sin does not pertain to the love of God. Therefore, a venial sin will be a mortal sin—which is absurd.

Objection 3: To love God with one’s whole heart belongs to perfection, since, according to the Philosopher, *whole* (*totum*) and *perfect* (*perfectum*) are the same thing. But what belongs to perfection falls under a counsel and not under a precept. Therefore, it should not be commanded that God be loved with one’s whole heart.

But contrary to this: Deuteronomy 6:5 says, “You shall love the Lord your God with your whole heart.”

I respond: Since the precepts are given concerning acts of the virtues, a given act falls under a precept with the mode by which it is an act of that virtue. But it is required for an act of virtue not only that the act have to do with the appropriate matter, but also that it be adorned with circumstances appropriate for it to be proportioned to that matter.

Now God is to be loved as the ultimate end, whom all things are to be referred back to. And so a certain sort of totality had to be designated with respect to the precept concerning the love of God.

Reply to objection 1: A mode that the act of a given virtue has from another, higher virtue does not fall under the precept that is given concerning the act of the virtue in question. However, the mode

which belongs to the nature of its own virtue does fall under the precept. And this is the sort of mode that is signified when one says, “with one’s whole heart.”

Reply to objection 2: There are two ways in which it is possible to love God with one’s whole heart.

In one way, *in actuality (in actu)*, i.e., so that a man’s whole heart is always moved toward God in actuality. This is the perfection of heaven.

In the second way, a man’s whole heart is moved *habitually* toward God, so that a man’s heart receives nothing that is contrary to God. And this is the perfection of this life (*perfectio viae*). Venial sin is not contrary to this sort of perfection, since it does not destroy the habit of charity; for venial sin does not tend toward an object opposed to charity, even though it does impede the use of charity.

Reply to objection 3: The perfection of charity toward which the counsels are ordered lies between the two sorts of perfection just mentioned, so that insofar as this is possible, a man removes himself from temporal things, even those that are permitted, which, by occupying the mind, impede the heart’s actual movement toward God.

Article 5

Is it inappropriate for Deuteronomy 6:5 to have added “and with all your soul and with all your strength” to “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart”?

It seems that it is inappropriate for Deuteronomy 6:5 to have added “and with all your soul (*ex tota anima*) and all your strength (*ex tota fortitudine*)” to “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart” (*ex toto corde*):

Objection 1: ‘Heart’ is not to be taken here for a corporeal part of the body, since loving God is not a bodily act. Therefore, one must take ‘heart’ in a spiritual sense. But heart, taken in a spiritual sense, is either the soul itself or some aspect of the soul. Therefore, it was redundant to posit both of them.

Objection 2: A man’s strength depends mainly on his heart, whether this is taken in a spiritual sense or a corporeal sense. Therefore, after it had said, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart,” it was superfluous to add “and with all your strength.”

Objection 3: Matthew 22:37 says, “with all your mind,” which is not posited in Deuteronomy 6:5. Therefore, the precept is given in an inappropriate way in Deuteronomy 6.

But contrary to this is the authority of Sacred Scripture.

I respond: The precept in question is handed down in diverse ways in various places. For as has been pointed out, Deuteronomy 6:5 posits three things, viz., “with your whole heart and with your whole soul and with your whole strength.” Matthew 22:37 posits two of these, viz., “with your whole heart and with your whole soul,” omits “and with your whole strength,” and adds “and with your whole mind (*ex toto mente*).” On the other hand, Mark 12:30 posits four things, viz., “with your whole heart, and with your whole soul, and with your whole mind, and with all your power (*ex tota virtute*),” which is the same as “and with your whole strength.” And these four are also mentioned in Luke 10:27, since in place of “strength” or “power” it says, “with all your might” (*ex omnibus viribus*). And so we need to assign reasons for four of these, since the reason that one of them is omitted in some places is that it is understood from the others.

Therefore, we must consider that elective love is an act of the will, and the will is signified by ‘heart’. For just as the corporeal heart is the principle of all corporeal movements, so, too, the will—especially with respect to the intending of the ultimate end, which is the object of charity—is the

principle of all spiritual movements.

Now there are three principles of action that are moved by the will, viz., (a) the intellect, which is signified by ‘mind’, (b) the lower appetite, which is signified by ‘soul’, and (c) the external executive power, which is signified by ‘strength’ or ‘power’ or ‘might’.

Therefore, we are commanded (a) that our whole intention be moved toward God, which is to love God *with our whole heart*; and (b) that our intellect be submitted to God, which is to love God *with our whole mind*; and (c) that our appetite be regulated by God, which is to love God *with our whole soul*; and (d) that our exterior acts be obedient to God, which is to love God *with our whole strength* or *with all our power* or *with all our might*.

However, in *Super Matthaem* Chrysostom interprets ‘heart’ and ‘soul’ in a way opposite to that which has just been put forth. By contrast, in *De Doctrina Christiana* 1 Augustine takes ‘heart’ for thoughts (*cogitationes*), ‘soul’ for life, and ‘mind’ for intellect, whereas some say that “with all your heart” means the intellect, “with all your soul” means the will, and “with all your mind” means memory.

Alternatively, according to Gregory of Nyssa, ‘heart’ signifies the vegetative soul, ‘soul’ signifies the sentient soul, and ‘mind’ signifies the intellective soul; for we ought to refer back to God the fact that we are nourished, the fact that we have sensation, and the fact that we have understanding.

Reply to objection 1 and objection 2 and objection 3: From this the replies to the objections are clear.

Article 6

Can the commandment concerning love of God be kept in this life?

It seems that the commandment concerning love of God can be kept in this life:

Objection 1: In *Expositio Catholicae Fidei* Jerome says, “Cursed be anyone who claims that God has commanded the impossible.” But God has given the commandment in question, as is clear from Deuteronomy 6. Therefore, this commandment can be fulfilled in this life.

Objection 2: Whoever fails to fulfill a precept sins mortally, since, according to Ambrose, sin is nothing other than “a transgression of God’s law and disobedience to heavenly commandments.” Therefore, if the commandment in question cannot be kept in this life, it follows that no one is able to exist in this life without mortal sin. But this is contrary to what the Apostle says in 1 Corinthians 1:8 (“He will confirm you unto the end without crime”) and in 1 Timothy 3:10 (“Let them minister, having no crimes”).

Objection 3: Precepts are given in order to direct men into the way of salvation—this according to Psalm 18:9 (“The law of the Lord is clear, enlightening our eyes”). But it is in vain for someone to be directed toward the impossible. Therefore, it is not impossible for the precept in question to be kept in this life.

But contrary to this: In *De Perfectione Iustitiae Hominis* Augustine says, “It is in the fullness of the charity of heaven that the commandment, “You shall love the Lord your God, etc.” will be fulfilled. For since there is still something of carnal concupiscence that is restrained by continence, God is not altogether loved with one’s whole soul.”

I respond: There are two ways in which a given precept can be fulfilled, (a) *perfectly* and (b) *imperfectly*. A precept is fulfilled *perfectly* when one arrives at the end intended by the one who gives the precept, whereas it is fulfilled *imperfectly* when, even if one does not arrive at the end intended by the one who gives the precept, he nonetheless does not withdraw from being ordered toward that end. In the same way, if the general of an army commands his soldiers to fight, the one who fulfills the command perfectly is the one who conquers the enemy by fighting, which is what the general intended, whereas the

one who fulfills the command imperfectly is the one whose fighting does not attain victory, even though he does nothing contrary to military discipline.

Now through the precept in question God intends that a man be totally united with God, which will occur in heaven, when “God will be all things in all things,” as 1 Corinthians 15:28 puts it. And so the precept will be fulfilled fully and perfectly in heaven. By contrast, in this life (*in via*) it is fulfilled, but imperfectly. And in this life one individual fulfills the precept more perfectly than another to the extent that he comes closer, through a certain similarity, to the perfection of heaven.

Reply to objection 1: This argument proves that the precept can be fulfilled in some sense in this life, though not perfectly.

Reply to objection 2: Just as a soldier who fights in the right way, even if he does not conquer, is not blamed and does not merit punishment, so, too, one who fulfills the precept in this life by not doing anything contrary to divine love does not sin mortally.

Reply to objection 3: As Augustine says in *De Perfectione Iustitiae Homnis*, “Why shouldn’t this perfection be prescribed for a man, even though no man attains it in this life? For one does not run straight if he does not know where he is supposed to run to. But how will he know if there are no precepts to show him?”

Article 7

Is it appropriate for a precept to be given concerning love of one’s neighbor?

It seems that it is inappropriate for a precept to be given concerning love of one’s neighbor:

Objection 1: As is clear from Matthew 5:44, the love of charity extends to all men, even to one’s enemies. But the name ‘neighbor’ (*proximus*) implies a certain closeness (*propinquitas*), which one does not seem to have with respect to all men. Therefore, it seems inappropriate for this precept to be given.

Objection 2: According to the Philosopher in *Ethics* 9, “The friendly regard (*amicabilia*) directed toward the other comes from the friendly regard that is directed toward oneself.” And from this it seems that love of oneself is a principle of love of one’s neighbor. But the principle is more important than what follows from the principle. Therefore, it is not the case that a man should love his neighbor as himself.

Objection 3: A man loves himself, but not his neighbor, by nature (*naturaliter*). Therefore, it is inappropriate for a man to be commanded to love his neighbor as himself.

But contrary to this: Matthew 22:39 says, “The second commandment is similar to the first: You shall love your neighbor as yourself.”

I respond: It is appropriate for this precept to be handed down, since it touches upon both the *reason for loving* and the *mode of loving*.

The *reason for loving* is touched upon by the use of ‘neighbor’ or ‘someone close’ (*proximus*). For we ought to love others because they are close to us both (a) in being the natural image of God and (b) in their capacity for glory. And it does not matter whether such an individual is called a ‘neighbor’ (*proximus*) or a ‘brother’ (*frater*), as 1 John 4:20-21 has it, or a ‘friend’ (*amicus*), as Leviticus 19:18 has it; for the same closeness or affinity (*affinitas*) is designated by all of these names.

The *mode of loving* is touched upon when it says “as yourself.” This is to be understood not in the sense that someone should love his neighbor *as much as he loves himself*, but that he should love his neighbor *in a way similar to the way in which he loves himself*—and this in three ways:

First, on the part of *the end*, so that, namely, one loves his neighbor because of God, just as he ought to love himself because of God. In this sense, one’s love of his neighbor is *holy*.

Second, on the part of *the rule of love*, so that, namely, one gives way to his neighbor not in

anything bad, but only in the good, just as a man ought to fulfill his own will only in good things. In this sense, one's love of his neighbor is *just*.

Third, on the part of *the reason for loving*, so that, namely, one loves his neighbor not for the sake of his own advantage or pleasure, but in the sense that he wills his neighbor's good just as he wills his own good. In this sense, one's love of his neighbor is *true*. For when one loves his neighbor for the sake of his own advantage or pleasure, he is loving himself and not truly loving his neighbor.

Reply to objection 1 and objection 2 and objection 3: The replies to the objections are clear.

Article 8

Does the ordering of charity fall under the precept?

It seems that the ordering of charity (*ordo caritatis*) does not fall under the precept:

Objection 1: Whoever transgresses a precept does harm (*inuriam facit*). But if someone loves a given individual as much as he should, and there is someone else whom he loves more, then he does not do harm to anyone. Therefore, the precept is not transgressed. Therefore, the ordering of charity does not fall under the precept.

Objection 2: What falls under the precept is handed down to us clearly enough in Sacred Scripture. But the ordering of charity that was posited above (q. 26) is nowhere handed down to us in Sacred Scripture. Therefore, the ordering of charity does not fall under the precept.

Objection 3: An ordering involves a certain sort of distinction. But love of neighbor is commanded without distinctions, since it says, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." Therefore, no ordering of charity falls under the precept.

But contrary to this: God has taught us through the precepts of the law what He effects in us through grace—this according to Jeremiah 31:33 ("I will give my law in their hearts"). But God causes the ordering of charity within us—this according to Canticle of Canticles 2:4 ("He has ordered the charity within me"). Therefore, the ordering of charity falls under the precept of the law.

I respond: As has been explained (a. 4), the mode that belongs to the nature of a virtuous act falls under the precept that is given concerning the act of that virtue. But the ordering of charity belongs to the very nature of the virtue, since, as is clear from what was said above (q. 26, aa. 4 and 7-9), the ordering is taken from one's proportioning his love to what is lovable. Hence, it is clear that the ordering of charity should fall under the precept.

Reply to objection 1: A man gives a greater degree of satisfaction to someone he loves to a greater degree. And so if he were to love less someone whom he ought to love more, he would be willing to give more satisfaction to someone whom he ought to give less satisfaction to. And so he would be doing harm to the one whom he ought to love more.

Reply to objection 2: The ordering of the four things to be loved out of charity is expressly given in Sacred Scripture. For when it is commanded that we love God with our whole heart, we are given to understand that we should love God above all things, whereas when it is commanded that one should love his neighbor as himself, the love of oneself is preferred to the love of neighbor. Similarly, when it is commanded in 1 John 3:16 that we "ought to lay down our soul," i.e., our corporeal life, for our brother, we are given to understand that we should love our neighbor more than our own body. Similarly, when it is commanded in Galatians 6:10 that we should "do good to those who belong to the family of the Faith," and when, in 1 Timothy 5:8 holds as blameworthy one who does not take care of what is his own, and especially his own family, we are given to understand that, among our neighbors, we ought to love more those who are better and those who are closer to us.

Reply to objection 3: From the phrase "You shall love your neighbor" (*diliges proximum tuum*), we are given to understand as a consequence that those who are closer to us are to be loved more.