

QUESTION 22

The Precepts that Pertain to Hope and Fear

We next have to consider the precepts that pertain to hope and fear. And on this topic there are two questions, the first about the precepts pertaining to hope, and the second about the precepts pertaining to fear.

Article 1

Should any precept be given pertaining to the virtue of hope?

It seems that no precepts should be given that pertain to the virtue of hope:

Objection 1: What can be effected sufficiently by one thing is such that it is unnecessary for anything else to be brought in for it. But a man is sufficiently induced to hope for the good by natural inclination itself. Therefore, it is unnecessary for a man to be induced to this by a precept of the Law.

Objection 2: When precepts are given about the acts of the virtues, the main precepts should be given about acts of the principal virtues. But among all the virtues the most important are the three theological virtues, viz., hope, faith, and charity. Therefore, since the main precepts of the Law are the precepts of the Decalogue, which, as was established above (*ST* 1-2, q. 100, a. 3), all other precepts are traced back to, it seems that if a precept were to be given about hope, it should be contained among the precepts of the Decalogue. But no such precept is contained there. Therefore, it seems that no precept in the Law should be given about the act of hope.

Objection 3: Commanding an act of a virtue is of a piece with prohibiting the act of an opposed vice. But no precept is given by which despair, which is the opposite of hope, is prohibited. Therefore, it likewise seems inappropriate that any precept about hope should be given.

But contrary to this: In commenting on John 15:12 (“This is my commandment, that you love one another”), Augustine says, “So many things have been demanded of us concerning faith, and so many concerning hope!” Therefore, it seems appropriate that some precepts be given about hope.

I respond: Among the precepts found in Sacred Scripture, some belong to the *substance* of the Law, whereas others are *preambles* to the Law.

The preambles to the Law are those precepts which are such that if they do not exist, then there can be no place for the Law. Precepts about the act of faith and the act of hope are of this sort, since it is through the act of faith that a man’s mind is inclined toward recognizing the author of the Law as being such that one should submit oneself to Him, whereas it is through a man’s hope for a reward that he is induced to observe the precepts of the Law.

On the other hand, the precepts that belong to the substance of the Law are those which are imposed on a man who is already a subject and prepared to obey, and they have to do with the rectitude of one’s life. And so precepts of this sort are proposed immediately in the manner of precepts in the very giving of the law (*in ipsa legis latione*).

Now it is not the case that the precepts about hope and faith should have been proposed in the manner of precepts; for if a man did not already believe and hope, then it would be useless for the Law to be proposed to him. Instead, just as it was the case that the precept about faith had to be proposed, as was explained above (q. 16, a. 1), in the manner of a proclamation or of a remembrance (*per modum denuntiationis vel commemorationis*), so, too, the precept about hope had to be proposed in the initial giving of the Law in the manner of a promise which promised rewards to those who are obedient and which thereby served as an incitement to hope. Hence, all the promises that are contained in the Law are incitements to hope. However, once the Law has already been posited, it is up to the wise not only to induce men to observe the precepts but also, much more, to conserve the foundation of the Law; thus, in many instances in Sacred Scripture after the initial giving of the Law men are induced to have hope in the manner of an admonition or precept as well and not only, as in the Law itself, in the manner of a promise.

This is clear from Psalm 61:9 (“Hope in Him, all you assemblies of the people”) and from many other places in Scripture.

Reply to objection 1: Nature sufficiently inclines one toward hoping for a good that is proportioned to human nature. But in order for a man to hope for a supernatural good, it was necessary that he be induced by the authority of divine law, in part by its promises and in part by its admonitions or precepts.

And yet as regards even those things that natural reason inclines one toward, e.g., the acts of the moral virtues, it was necessary for the precepts of divine law to be given for the sake of greater steadfastness and especially because man’s natural reason had been clouded by sinful desires (*per concupiscentias peccati*).

Reply to objection 2: The precepts of the Decalogue belong to the initial giving of the Law. And so it is not the case that a precept about hope should have been given among the precepts of the Decalogue. Instead, as is clear from the first and fourth commandments, it was sufficient to induce men to hope through certain promises posited in the Decalogue.

Reply to objection 3: In those cases in which a man is obliged to obey by reason of what he owes (*ex ratione debiti*), it suffices for an affirmative precept to be given about what is to be done, and in these cases the prohibition of the things to be avoided is understood. For instance, a precept is given about honoring one’s parents, whereas dishonoring one’s parents is not prohibited except by the fact that a punishment is applied in the Law to those who dishonor their parents. And since for human salvation it is owed by man that he should have hope in God, man had to be induced to this affirmatively, as it were, in some of the ways mentioned above, and the prohibition of the opposite was thereby understood.

Article 2

Should a precept about fear have been given in the Law?

It seems that a precept about fear should not have been given in the Law:

Objection 1: The fear of God belongs to the things that are preambles to the Law, since it is the beginning of wisdom. But what belongs to the preambles to the Law does not fall under the precepts of the Law. Therefore, no precept about fear should have been given in the Law.

Objection 2: When a cause is posited, its effect is posited. But love is a cause of fear, since, as Augustine says, “Every sort of fear proceeds from some sort of love.” Therefore, given that a precept about love had been posited, it would have been superfluous to command fear.

Objection 3: Presumption is in some sense opposed to fear. But no prohibition of presumption is given in the Law. Therefore, it seems that no precept about fear should have been given, either.

But contrary to this: Deuteronomy 10:12 says, “And now, O Israel, what does the Lord your God require of you, but that you fear the Lord your God?” Therefore, it falls under a precept that one should fear God.

I respond: There are two sorts of fear, viz., *servile* fear and *filial* fear.

Now just as someone is induced to obey the precepts of the Law by his hope for rewards, so, too, he is induced to obey the Law by his fear of punishments, i.e., by his *servile* fear. And so just as, according to what was said above (a. 1), it was not the case that a precept about the act of hope had to be given in the very giving of the Law, but instead men were to be induced by promises, so, too, it was not the case that a precept should have been given about the sort of fear which is related to punishment, but instead men were to be induced by the threat of punishment. This was done both in the very precepts of the Decalogue and, afterwards, as a consequence, in the secondary precepts of the Law. However, just as, afterwards, the wise men and prophets, intending that men should become steadfast in their obedience to

the Law, handed down teachings about hope in the manner of an admonition or precept, so too with fear.

By contrast, *filial* fear, which shows reverence to God, is, as it were, a kind of fear which is directed toward the love of God and which is a beginning of everything that is observed in reverence of God. And so precepts about filial fear are given in the Law in the same way that precepts about love are given, since both of them are preambles to the exterior acts which are commanded in the Law and which the precepts of the Decalogue pertain to. And so in the passage from the Law quoted above fear is required of man, both in order that he walk in the ways of God by worshiping Him and in order that he love Him.

Reply to objection 1: Filial fear is a certain preamble to the Law not in sense of being something extrinsic but in the sense of being a beginning of the Law, just as love likewise is. And so precepts that are, as it were, common principles of the whole Law are given about both.

Reply to objection 2: Filial fear follows from love, just as other good works that are done out of charity likewise follow from love. And so just as precepts are given about the other acts of the virtues after the precept about charity, so, too, the precepts about fear and about the love of charity are given at the same time—just as, in the case of the demonstrative sciences, it is not sufficient to posit the first principles unless the conclusions that follow from those principles, either proximately or remotely, are likewise posited.

Reply to objection 3: An inducement to fear is sufficient for excluding presumption, in the same way that, as has been explained (a. 1), an inducement to hope is likewise sufficient for excluding despair.