

QUESTION 170

The Precepts that Pertain to Temperance

Next we have to consider the precepts pertaining to temperance: first, the precepts that pertain to temperance itself; and, second, the precepts that pertain to the parts of temperance.

Article 1

Are precepts pertaining to temperance correctly handed down in divine law?

It seems that precepts pertaining to temperance are not correctly (*inconvenienter*) handed down in divine law:

Objection 1: As was explained above (q. 123, a. 12 and q. 141, a. 8, and *ST* 1-2, q. 66, a. 4), fortitude is a more important virtue than temperance. But no precept pertaining to fortitude is posited among the precepts of the Decalogue, which are the most important precepts of the Law. Therefore, the prohibition of adultery—which, as is clear from what was said above (q. 154, aa. 1 and 8), is contrary to temperance—was incorrectly posited among the precepts of the Decalogue.

Objection 2: Temperance has to do not only with sex, but also with the pleasures of food and drink. But among the precepts of the Decalogue no sin pertaining to the pleasures of food and drink is prohibited; nor is any sin prohibited that pertains to a species of lust other than adultery. Therefore, neither should there have been a precept prohibiting adultery, which has to do with the pleasures of sex.

Objection 3: In the lawgiver's mind it is more important to lead individuals to virtue than to prohibit vices, since vices are prohibited in order that impediments to the virtues might be removed. But the precepts of the Decalogue are the most important precepts in divine law (*sunt principalia in lege divina*). Therefore, an affirmative precept directly leading one toward the virtue of temperance should have been posited among the precepts of the Decalogue instead of a negative precept prohibiting adultery, which is directly opposed to temperance.

But contrary to this is the authority of Scripture.

I respond: As the Apostle says in 1 Timothy 1:5, “The goal of the precept is charity,” to which we are led by the two precepts pertaining to the love of God and the love of neighbor. And so the precepts posited in the Decalogue are the ones that are more directly ordered toward loving God and loving neighbor.

Now among the vices opposed to temperance, the one that seems especially opposed to love of neighbor is adultery, through which an individual takes for himself what belongs to another by misusing the wife of his neighbor. And so among the precepts of the Decalogue adultery is specifically prohibited not only insofar as it is carried out as a deed, but also insofar as it is desired in the heart.

Reply to objection 1: Among the species of vices that are opposed to fortitude, none is so directly contrary to the love of neighbor as is adultery, which is contrary to temperance. And yet the vice of daring, which is opposed to fortitude, is in the normal course of things sometimes a cause of homicide, which is prohibited in the precepts of the Decalogue. For Ecclesiasticus 8:18 says, “Do not walk along the way of the rash man, lest he burden you with his evils.”

Reply to objection 2: Neither gluttony nor any of the species of lust [other than adultery] is directly opposed to the love of neighbor in the way that adultery is. For a father is not wronged to such a great degree by the seduction of his virgin, who is not married to him (*quae non est connubio deputata*), as is a husband by adultery, since “the wife does not rule over her own body, but the husband does ...” [1 Corinthians 7:4].

Reply to objection 3: As was explained above (q. 122, aa. 1 and 4), the precepts of the Decalogue are universal principles of divine law, and so they have to be general. But general affirmative precepts concerning temperance could not have been given, since, as Augustine explains in *De Bono Coniugali*, such precepts vary over diverse times and according to the diverse laws and customs of men.

Article 2

Are the precepts concerning the virtues annexed to temperance handed down correctly in divine law?

It seems that the precepts concerning the virtues annexed to temperance are not handed down correctly in divine law:

Objection 1: As has been explained (a. 1), the precepts of the Decalogue are general principles of the totality of divine law. But as Ecclesiasticus 10:15 says, “Pride is the beginning of every sin.” Therefore, a precept prohibiting pride should have been posited among the precepts of the Decalogue.

Objection 2: The precepts that should most of all be posited in the Decalogue are those through which men are especially inclined to fulfill the law, since such precepts seem to be the most important. But it is through *humility* (*humilitas*), through which a man is subject to God, that a man seems to be especially disposed to observe the divine law; this is why, as was established above (q. 161, a. 6), obedience is counted among the degrees of humility. And the same thing, it seems, should also be said of *gentleness* (*mansuetudo*), through which it happens that a man “does not contradict Sacred Scripture,” as Augustine puts it in *De Doctrina Christiana* 2. Therefore, it seems that some precepts should have been posited in the Decalogue concerning humility and gentleness.

Objection 3: It has been explained (a. 1) that adultery is prohibited in the Decalogue because it is contrary to love of neighbor. But disorder in exterior movements, which is contrary to modesty, is likewise contrary to love of neighbor; hence, in *Regula* Augustine says, “In all of your movements let nothing be done that offends the glance of anyone.” Therefore, it seems that a disorder of this sort should have likewise been prohibited by some precept of the Decalogue.

But contrary to this the authority of Scripture suffices.

I respond: There are two ways to think about the virtues annexed to temperance: (a) *in their own right* (*secundum se*) and (b) *with respect to their effects*.

In their own right they do not have a direct relation to the love of God or the love of neighbor, but instead they have to do with moderating things that belong to the man himself.

On the other hand, as regards their effects, they can be relevant to the love of God or the love of neighbor. And on this score, there are precepts posited in the Decalogue that involve prohibiting effects of vices opposed to the parts of temperance; for instance, out of anger, which is opposed to gentleness, an individual sometimes proceeds to homicide, which is prohibited in the Decalogue, or to withholding the honor that is owed to his parents. The latter can also proceed from pride, out of which many individuals also transgress the precepts of the first tablet.

Reply to objection 1: Pride is the beginning of sin, but it lies hidden in the heart, and a disorder in the heart is not generally taken into account by everyone. Hence, it is not the case that the prohibition of pride should have been posited among the Decalogue’s precepts, which are like first principles known in themselves (*sicut prima principia per se nota*).

Reply to objection 2: Precepts that lead one to obey the law already presuppose the law. Hence, they cannot be first precepts of the law like those that are posited in the Decalogue.

Reply to objection 3: Unlike homicide, adultery, and theft, which are prohibited in the Decalogue, disordered exterior movements do not, by the very species of the act, amount to an offense against one’s neighbor. Instead, as was explained above (q. 168, a. 1), they are relevant to an offense against one’s neighbor only insofar as they are signs of an interior disorder.