

ANALYTICAL TABLE OF CONTENTS

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*All selections are from the Prima Secundae
(First Part of the Second Part) of the Summa Theologiae;
St. Thomas's titles for the sections are paraphrased*

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PRELIMINARY CONSIDERATIONS

The Types of Law (Question 91)

Was a Divine Law Needed? (Article 4)

Is the Divine law a distinct kind of law, alongside what St. Thomas calls the eternal, natural, and human laws -- or is it merely a rehashing or recapitulation of one of the other kinds of law? Does it provide anything that the other kinds don't?

Text, Paraphrase, and Commentary 000

Discussion: The Relation between Natural and Divine law 000

Does Divine Law Come in One Edition, or in Two, Old and New? (Article 5)

According to the tradition, there is more than one Divine law, for there is the law of the Old Testament, called the Old Law, given to the chosen nation, the Jews, and the law of the New Testament, called the New Law or the Law of the Gospel, given to the Church. One might hold that there could not have been two laws, because God

would have done just as He intended to do the first time, or that the Old and New Law are not two different laws, but two different promulgations of the same law. Is this the case? Or are they somehow different?

Text, Paraphrase, and Commentary 000

Discussion: Revelation – Says Who? 000

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THE OLD DIVINE LAW

What Kinds of Precepts the Old Law Contains (Question 99)

Were Any of the Old Law’s Precepts Moral? (Article 2)

According to an influential argument, the Old Testament law included three different kinds of precept: Moral, ceremonial, and judicial. Is this classification correct? At first, the question would seem to be easy to answer: Just look and see whether there are any moral, any ceremonial, or any judicial rules. However, the “look and see” approach begs the question of which rules are of which kind.

Text, Paraphrase, and Commentary 000

Discussion: How Many Kinds of Precepts Are There? 000

Discussion: Correcting Aristotle 000

Were Any of the Old Law’s Precepts Judicial? (Article 4)

Judicial rules should be of broad interest, even among those who do not share St. Thomas’s faith tradition, because they concern rulers and governance, relations among citizens, relations with foreigners, and relations among members of the household.

Text, Paraphrase, and Commentary 000

Discussion: What Difference Does It Make? 000

Were the Promises of Benefits and Threats of Penalties Appropriate? (Article 6)

Although the Old Law is rich with promises of blessings in the present life for obedience to God’s law and warnings of calamities for faithlessness, in this respect the New Law is quite different. Yet the claim is that both laws come from God. What

is going on? St. Thomas believes that although God devised the best law possible given the initial condition of the Hebrew people, His intention in giving them the law was not that they remain in this condition, but that they advance – that their minds be more faithfully shaped by His.

Text, Paraphrase, and Commentary 000

Discussion: So What Are These Promises and Threats? 000

Discussion: Does the New Law Also Contain Promises and Threats? 000

The Old Law’s Moral Precepts (Question 100)

Are All of the Old Law’s Moral Precepts Also Included in the Natural Law? (Article 1)

If all of the moral precepts of the Old Law belong to natural law, then we could have known them all by reason alone. In that case, why was it necessary for God to add words? But if any of the moral precepts of the Old Law do not belong to natural law, then they would seem arbitrary to us -- unintelligible decrees without any basis other than that they were decreed. In that case, how could they count as true law? For in order to be true law, doesn’t an edict have to be recognizable as an ordinance of reason?

Text, Paraphrase, and Commentary 000

Discussion: Does What Holds for the Old Law Hold for the New Law Too? 000

Why Does the Old Law Contain Just These Moral Precepts? (Article 5)

In the present Article, we are concerned with the Decalogue, which is a summary of the Law. At first glance, what these Ten Commandments include and leave out might seem a bit quirky. For example, since we are forbidden even to consider possessing our neighbor’s wives and husbands, why aren’t we forbidden even to consider lying and murdering, acts that are also wrong? After compiling a thorough list of such puzzles, St. Thomas shows that far from being arbitrary or idiosyncratic, the Commandments are organized and systematic.

Text, Paraphrase, and Commentary 000

Discussion: The Moral Architecture of the Decalogue 000

Discussion: The Rest of the Moral Precepts 000

Were the Old Law’s Moral Precepts Appropriately Formulated? (Article 7)

Certain principles of composition apply with equal force to each of the Commandments. At stake is whether the Decalogue is just a collection of good ideas, haphazardly expressed, or a clear and systematic body of principles truly sufficient to serve as the foundation of the Old Law.

Text, Paraphrase, and Commentary 000

Discussion: Sins of the Fathers 000

Discussion: Does the Old Law Recognize the Natural Law? 000

Can Any Exceptions Be Made to The Old Law’s Moral Precepts? (Article 8)

A precept is “dispensable” if the authority that issues it can allow an exception to the duty of obedience. Are the Ten Commandments dispensable? For example, could any person ever be allowed to dishonor his parents, steal or murder, or be unfaithful to his wife?

Text, Paraphrase, and Commentary 000

Discussion: False Difficulties 000

Discussion: Real Difficulties 000

Was It Enough to Obey the Old Law’s Moral Precepts, or Did They Have to Be Obeyed in a Certain Way? (Article 9)

I may perform a just deed because it is ingrained in me to do the right thing the right way – but I may also perform it merely because people are watching. Does the law require only that certain things be done? Or does it also require that they be done “according to the mode of virtue” – in the way that a just person would perform them?

Text, Paraphrase, and Commentary 000

Discussion: Do Legislators Really Aim at Making Men Virtuous? Should They? 000

Did The Old Law’s Moral Precepts Have to Be Obeyed According to Love, or Charity? (Article 10)

We have already considered whether the precepts of Divine law require doing the deeds that they perform as a virtuous person would perform them. However, the complete development of the virtues lies in that loving friendship between man and God which is called charity. In fact, without charity, even the ordinary moral excellences are virtues only “in a restricted sense,” because although they direct us to good purposes, they do not have the power to place these purposes in right relationship to our ultimate purpose, which is God. These facts force us to broaden our inquiry. If even acts of virtue are not all that they should be unless motivated by charity, then do the precepts of Divine law require acting from this motive?

Text, Paraphrase, and Commentary 000

Discussion: Love Is Complicated 000

How Are the Moral Precepts of the Decalogue Related to the Old Law’s Other Moral Precepts? (Article 11)

Besides the Ten Commandments, the Old Testament contains a host of other moral precepts. Were they really needed? Why isn’t the Decalogue enough? Unlike the previous two Articles, which focus on the manner in which the Law must be followed, this one focuses on its architecture: On the relation among love of God and neighbor, the Decalogue itself, and all the other Old Law moral rules.

Text, Paraphrase, and Commentary 000

Discussion: Is “Determination” Arbitrary? 000

Discussion: False Teachers 000

Did the Moral Precepts of the Old Law Make Man Just and Acceptable in the Sight Of God? (Article 12)

The question of this Article is whether a person can earn his way into God’s approval by doing the sorts of good “works” or deeds which were commanded by the Old Law. One of the difficulties theologians confront is that some New Testament passages seem to suggest that obedience to the Law’s moral precepts does have the power to do this, but others seem to suggest that it does not. How we can be justified – how we can be made just in God’s sight and acceptable to Him – is one of the great doctrines of Christianity, and was also one of the great fault lines during the Protestant Reformation.

Text, Paraphrase, and Commentary 000

Discussion: St. Thomas and the Reformers 000

The Old Law’s Ceremonial Precepts – Reasons for Them (Question 102)

Were the Old Law’s Ceremonial Precepts Arbitrary, or Given for Intelligible Reasons? (Article 1)

The vast majority of the ceremonial precepts are what St. Thomas calls “determinations” of the three Commandments of the Decalogue concerning the worship of God. In his view they do not depend on “the very dictate of reason,” because although it could not be other than right to worship God, He might have enacted different modes of worshipping Him. But this fact does not imply that there were no reasons for enacting these modes rather than others. Were there such reasons? Or did the Divine legislator flip a coin?

Text, Paraphrase, and Commentary 000

Discussion: So What Was the Problem with Mixing Linen with Wool? 000

Discussion: Another Example: Avoiding Blood 000

Discussion: Can Anything Still Be Learned from the Ceremonial Precepts? 000

Discussion: Does God Have a Sense of Humor?..... 000

Discussion: Does St. Thomas Have a Sense of Humor? 000

The Old Law’s Judicial Precepts -- Reasons for Them (Question 105)

Reasons for Old Law Judicial Precepts about Relations between Citizens and Rulers (Article 1)

St. Thomas holds that although the ceremonial precepts of the Old Law passed away with the coming of Christ, their underlying rationale continues to have much to teach us. This is even more true of the judicial precepts, which were the civil law of the ancient Jewish people, a commonwealth of human beings united under God. The first category of judicial precepts is “precepts concerning rulers,” which is almost equivalent to what we call “constitutional laws.” The Israelite community had the special characteristic of being united in subjection to God – as all communities ought to be -- but most of what we find here has implications for any community whatsoever.

Text, Paraphrase, and Commentary 000

Discussion: What St. Thomas Really Means by Kingship 000

Discussion: The Peril of Tyranny 000

Reasons for Old Law Judicial Precepts about Relations among Citizens (Article 2)

Having considered the reasons for the rules about the structure of governance, St. Thomas now turns to the reasons for the rules about the relations among members of the community. Because this Article is extremely long, I have summarized the Objections and Replies, devoting the usual line-by-line commentary only to the sed contra and the respondeo.

Text, Paraphrase, and Commentary 000

Discussion: Commonwealths Considered Ideally and Considered as They Are in Real Life 000

Discussion: On Whether the Lower is Really the More Solid

Reasons for Old Law Judicial Precepts about Relations with Non-Citizens (Article 3)

Besides addressing relations among persons of the Chosen Nation, the Old Law also addressed their relations with foreigners, or “strangers,” both inside and outside their borders. Some of these aliens were friendly, others hostile. Some lived in the cities and towns of other lands, some were sojourners passing through the land, and some, though not Israelites, were residents of the land.

Text, Paraphrase, and Commentary..... 000

Discussion: Building Families and Transmitting Faith 000

Discussion: Harm to Innocents 000

THE NEW DIVINE LAW, OR LAW OF THE GOSPEL

The New Law in Itself (Question 106)

Is the New Law a Written Law, or Is It Poured Into Us? (Article 1)

St. Thomas argues that although in one sense the New Law is a written law, something outside of us, in another sense it is the very grace of the Holy Spirit, instilled into us. The latter sense is primary, but surprisingly, this does not make the former sense superfluous. We still need written instructions too.

Text, Paraphrase, and Commentary..... 000

Discussion: The Relevance of the Gospel to Philosophy 000

Discussion: The Relation Between Nature and Grace 000

Does the New Law Make Men Just and Acceptable in the Sight of God? (Article 2)

In some places the New Testament plainly speaks of justification as the beginning of the process of becoming just; in other places as its continuation, lest it be lost; and in still other places as its fulfillment. Not only does the God of Truth declare His followers just, but also, through the perfect integrity of the Savior with whom He joins them, He makes them just. St. Thomas considers Objections from various points of view, exploring how this could be. This Article should be read together with Question 100, Article 12.

Text, Paraphrase, and Commentary 000

Discussion: The Letter That Kills 000

Discussion: The Scandal of This Teaching 000

The Contents of the New Law (Question 108)

Is It Appropriate that the New Law Includes Not Only Precepts but Also “Counsels”? (Article 4)

The Tradition has always distinguished between precepts and evangelical counsels. The precepts are the moral commands of the Decalogue, interpreted in the light of the New Testament teaching about love. These are utterly necessary for entering into redeemed life. The counsels, such as perpetual poverty and perpetual virginity, are directions for those who wish to progress even more swiftly and with a minimum of distractions to the fullness of that life. Is this distinction reasonable? Considering certain remarks of Christ Himself, the answer would seem to be “Yes.” On the other hand, over the course of history many have answered “No.” St. Thomas considers the objections and proposes solutions.

Text, Paraphrase, and Commentary 000

*Discussion: Does the Recommendation of Perpetual Virginity
Imply that Marriage Is Bad? 000*

Discussion: The Evangelical Counsels as the Foundation of the

Consecrated Religious Life 000

**AFTERWORD: Implications of St. Thomas’s Teaching for
the World of the Present** 000

By the light of natural law, even nations that have never heard of Divine Law may be able to achieve more or less decent rules of conduct and systems of civil law. Yet apart from grace, in our fallen state we fall far short of admitting what in principle we are capable of knowing, and doing what in principle we are capable of doing. We need Divine guidance to mend and correct us. Why then does the very mention of such guidance arouse such strong resentment? Can this resentment be overcome?

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