94 Ten (*Decem*)

Aristotle in his *Problems* asks[[1]](#endnote-1) why beyond ten numbering does not proceed but replicates what was before. And he responds because the first men were accustomed to count on their fingers which are no more than ten. Therefore, as men can carry on their fingers all things necessary to their safety. Therefore,[[2]](#endnote-2) then God collected his precepts to this number, as is evident in Exod. 34[:28] and Deut. 4[:13].

Wherefore, the transgressor of this Decalogue can say that of Job 19[:3]: “Behold, these ten times you confound me.” Because there is confusion for man if he does not hold to the necessary things collected to such a modest number. Therefore, Jacob says to Laban, Gen. 31[:7]: “You have changed my wages ten times,” thus the devil does because he made man transgress the Decalogue because he permitted to himself delight, now in idolatry against the first precept, now in one, now in another running through the transgressions of each. But behold what the Lord says in Num. 14[:22-23]: “The men that … have tempted me now ten times, and have not obeyed my voice, shall not see the land for which I swore to their fathers.” For those who do not observe the Ten Commandments and through them do not obey God shall not be saved.

¶ The figure of this is treated in Gen. 18[:23-32], where Abraham asks of the Lord whether he would destroy the good with the evil. The response was finally that he would not, if he could find ten just men. They who when found are the fulfillment of the Decalogue, there will not be perdition for the parents of Rebecca who said, Gen. 24[:55]: Let the maid stay at least ten days with us, and afterwards she shall depart,” namely, to her spouse, namely, thus the soul which ought to set forth to Christ, it is necessary that it remain in the ten commandments. According to Rabanus[[3]](#endnote-3) and Isidore[[4]](#endnote-4) in the gloss on Gen. 18,[[5]](#endnote-5) the number ten signifies the cross of Christ, because the ten letters by which the number ten (*decem*) is expressed set forth in the figure of the cross. Wherefore also the servant who sought to acquire a wife for Isaac took with him ten camels, Gen. 24[:10].

¶ Again, the ten brothers of Joseph came down into Egypt and bought for themselves necessities, Gen. 42[:1]. Because they who wish to procure from God any goods it is necessary that they remain in the precepts. The confirmation of the preachers make it clear through Chrysostom who says, in the first *Homilia*,[[6]](#endnote-6) that the number ten is perfect. Wherefore it results that they are found just as perfect in evil as they are perfect in the good in this number.

¶ Again, Exod. 26[:1], the Lord commanded ten kettles to be made for this tabernacle, and ten curtains for coverings. Thus morally the ten precepts accomplish the tabernacle of God in the soul, but it is by necessity for guarding against temptations something more durable is to be supplied, namely, counsels which render the pelt red by their asperity and sometimes the face pallid as if hyacinth through the maceration of the flesh.

¶ The example of Chrysostom, *Super Matthaeum*,[[7]](#endnote-7) is to this that fruit conserved on the tree is required that the garden be well enclosed about with thorns and rough things.

[Chapter 99] Tithes (*Decime*) see below.

[Chapter 100] Delights (*Delicie*) seek below.

1. Aristotle, *Problems* 15.3, 910b23-911a3 (Barnes 2:1416): Why do all men, barbarians and Greeks alike, count up to 10 and not up to any other number.... Is it because all men have ten fingers and so..... [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. Cf. Bonaventure, *Diaetae Salutis* 3.1 (8:276a): De scriptura præceptorum in corde nota quod in triplici parte corporis nostri quodam modo scripta sunt præcepta Dei quasi pro sempiterno et continuo memoriali. Scripta enim sunt in manibus ubi sunt decem digiti in pedibus ubi sunt decem articuli .... [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. Rabanus Maurus, *Commentariorum in Genesim* 2.22 (PL 107:554): Usque ad decem autem justos non perire Sodomam dixit, quia si in quolibet per decem praeceptorum custodiam Christi nomen inveniat, iste non perit, denarii namque numeri figura Christi crucem demonstrat. [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. Isidore, *In Genesin* 15.3 (PL 83:245): Usque ad decem autem justos non perire Sodomam dixit, quasi in quolibet per decem praeceptorum custodiam Christi nomen inveniatur, iste non perit. Denarii enim numeri figura crucem Christi demonstrat. [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
5. *Glossa ordinaria* on Gen. 18:24-26, 28-33 (PL 123:128-29): Usque ad decem justos non perire Sodomam dixit, quia si in quolibet per decem praeceptorum custodiam Christi nomen inveniatur, non per ibit. Denarii enim numeri figura et crucem Christi significat. ... «Decem.» Denarius crucem Christi designat quia X littera, qua denarius exprimitur, in figura crucis formatur.

   That is to say “decem” spelled horizontally and vertically, intersecting at the letter “c.” [↑](#endnote-ref-5)
6. (Pseudo-)Chrysostomus, *Opus imperfectum in Matthaeum,* Homilia 1 ex cap. 1 (PG 56:618\*): Jesu iota habet, decem denotans. [↑](#endnote-ref-6)
7. Cf. (Pseudo-)Chrysostomus, *Opus imperfectum in Matthaeum* Homilia 19 ex cap. 7 (PG 56:741): Sicut enim in horto sunt multae arbores fructum inutilem facientes, in silvis autem non invenitur bonum faciens: si autem faciunt, aut insipidum faciunt, aut acerbum: sic in Ecclesia, quae hortus est Christi, Salomone dicente, *Hortus conclusus, fons signatus, soror mea, paradisus cum fructu pomorum* (Cant. 4. 12. 13), multi sunt mali [↑](#endnote-ref-7)