Worcester F 80 Distinctiones

126 The Commandments of God (*Mandata Dei*)

The commandments of God are to be observed for four reasons or causes.

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First, for the efficient reason like things said or seen, what is from a great one should be served better, Eccli. 2[:21]: “They that fear the Lord, keep his Commandments.” For the commandments of God terrify by reason of the presence of one looking on, Psal. [118:168]: “I have kept your commandments because all my ways are in your sight.” For in the absence of the prelate the precept is more easily omitted.

¶ Again, they have force by reason of the power of the one punishing. For he not only punishes under the crime of the whip, but under the pain of the heart and soul, Psal. [118:4]: “You have commanded your commandments to be kept most diligently.”

¶ Secondly, divine precepts are to be observed by reason of the material. For how much better the matter so much more it ought to be observed, but Eccli. 23[:37] it is said, “There is nothing sweeter than to have regard to the commandments of the Lord.” And this is deservedly so, because his commandment of God is faithful, Psal. [110:8]: “All his commandments are faithful.” Not so was the commandment of David concerning the killing of Uriah. Second because the commandment of God is easy. It often happens that a difficult commandment is despised but, [1] John 5[:3]: “His commandments are not heavy.” And 4 Kings 5[:13]: “If the prophet had bid you do some great thing,” etc. What therefore is easier than to love, John 13[:34]: “A new commandment I give unto you.” Deut. 30[:11]: “This commandment, that I command you this day is not above you, nor far off from you.” Third, the commandments of God are to be observed by reason of form. For they are beautiful because they are common or few for receiving. Often, they are complained of when one is without cause or one is received and another is punished, Eccle. last chapter [12:13]: “Fear God and keep his commandments.” Second, because they are open and few, without the overshadowing of figures. Often the multitude and obscurity of the commandments beget neglect, but it is the contrary, Psal. [118:104, 67]: “By your commandments I have had understanding: therefore, have I kept your word.”

¶ Fourth, the commandments are to be observed by reason of their end. For an object that is more useful is guarded more carefully, but Prov. 19[:16] it is said. “He that keeps the commandment, keeps his own soul.” For they are peaceful in the present and what is better than peace, Isai. 48[:18]: “O that you had hearkened to my commandments,” etc.

¶ Second, they are salubrious in the future. If man obeys the earthly commandment, on account of the health of the temporal life, much more on account of the adoption of eternal life, Matt. 19[:17]: “If you will enter into life, keep the commandments.” So, the puppy serves on account of a morsel, the cleric on account of the prebend, Luc. 18[:18, 20-21]: “Master, what shall I do to possess everlasting life,” etc. “You know the commandments.” And that one: “All these things have I kept.” And well he said, “all.” Because a transgression of one commandment impedes eternal life, just as an uneven addition to an even makes the whole number uneven. And one negative premise attached makes the conclusion negative. Therefore, it is said in John 2[:5]: “Whatsoever he shall say to you, do.” And Acts 9[:6]: “Lord, what will you have me to do?” For he who sins does not do something but nothing, according to Augustine, *Super Joannem*.[[1]](#endnote-1) Mich. 6[:8]: “I will show you, O man, what is good, and what the Lord requires of you: Verily, to do judgment, and to live mercy.” Eccle. 9[:10]: “Whatsoever your hand is able to do, do it earnestly,” etc.

1. Augustine, *In Epistolam Joannis ad Parthos* 7.7 (PL 35:2033): Videtis quia non quid faciat homo, considerandum est; sed quo animo et voluntate faciat. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)