Worcester F 80 Distinctiones

200 Precepts (*Precepta*)

The divine precepts are to be fulfilled by reason

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of a triple cause. First by reason of cause, that is, of God’s commanding.

¶ About which three things are to be considered. First by the power of the one commanding because he is omnipotent, Lev. 20[:8]: “Keep my precepts,” and my judgments, “and do them. I am the Lord.”

¶ Guard these things in the heart, as they might be in the memory through retention, as they may be in the intelligence through consideration, in the will through devotion, and do them in work through execution, Prov. 2[:5-10], Of what use is knowledge without use, Psal. [98:7]: “They kept his testimonies, and the commandment which he gave them.”

¶ Second, the presence of the powerful one, namely, by the roaring lion,[[1]](#endnote-1) the land beasts are fixed nor dare to proceed, how much more rational men ought to be restrained at the thunder of God commanding and always present, Isai. 30[:20-21]: “Your eyes shall see your teacher. And your ears shall hear the words of one admonishing you behind your back: This is the way, walk in it.” The example of Thais the courtesan in the *Vitae Patrum*,[[2]](#endnote-2) who said to Abbot Paphnutius, no one will see us except God.

¶ Third, we see the justice of the present because the precept of the remiss superior are to be neglected, but our preceptor God is most just in punishing evils, Jer. 7[:12]: “Go to my place in Silo and see what I did to it for the wickedness of my people.”

¶ And furthermore may the proud see the fall of Lucifer, the submersion of the world of the Pharaoh, the damnation of the greedy rich, the reprobation of the angry wicked servant not wishing to have mercy, the condemnation of the slothful lazy servant, the cleansing of the lustful, the drowning of the gluttonous, the burning of the Jewish people, Tob. 3[:4]: “For we have not obeyed your commandments, therefore are we delivered to spoil and to captivity, and death, and are made a fable, and a reproach,” etc.

¶ Secondly, the precepts of God are to be fulfilled by reason of form in commanding. Which certainly is first obligatory to all. For the laws of the matter belong to the buyer. Since therefore God made and redeemed us, we are his and not ours. Especially when they observe this obligation irrationally, Job 39[:27]: “Will the eagle mount up at your command,” etc. Because it is also senseless, Job 9[:7]: “Who commands the sun, and it rises not.” How much more are the rational obliged to conduct his precepts, Deut. 8[:1]: “All the commandments, that I command you this day, take great care to observe.”

¶ Second, the form of the precept is threatening as far as the rebel ban of the prince who was commanded under penalty of losing the earthly substance and the body

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well served. But the divine precept was commanded to be guarded under penalty of temporal matters, the body, and soul, Psal. [118:4]: “You have commanded your commandments to be kept most diligently.” Gen. 2[:16-17]: “God commanded man: Of every tree,” etc., up to, “you shall die the death.” The example of Semei, [3] Reg. 2[:43]. The third form of the divine precept is promissory to the obedient, Deut. 4[:40]: “Keep his precepts that it may be well with you,” etc. Just as one keeps well a castle committed to him. Thus, it is concerning the divine precept, Eccle. 8[:5]: “He that keeps the commandments shall find no evil.”

¶ Third, the divine precepts are to be fulfilled with the material reason because they are easy. For with delight nothing is easier, John 15[:12]: “This is my commandment, that you love one another.” Wherefore also it is said about Naaman, [4] Kings 5[:13]: “If the prophet had bid you do some great thing.” Deut. 30[:11]: “This commandment, that I command you this day is not above you, nor far off,” etc. [1] John 5[:3]: “His commandments are not heavy.” Second, because they are good and useful whatever is desired, under this aspect of the good they are desired. Nehe. 9[:13]: “You gave them, good precepts,” Psal. [110:8]: “All his commandments are faithful, confirmed.” There was not such a precept said about killing Urias, 2 Kings. 11[:15]. Nor that of the Jews, Act. 5[:5]. Third because they are delightful. For through this occurs the conjunction of the convenient with the convenient, namely of the soul obeying God, Eccli. 23[:37]: “There is nothing sweeter than to have regard to the commandments of the Lord.” For such was the commandment of Herod, Mark 6[:28], who commanded John to be beheaded.

1. Cf. Bartholomaeus Anglicus, *De proprietatibus rerum* 18.63 (1505, p. 460b): In altissimis montibus occultat se, et inde contemplat predam suam qua cum viderit alte rugit, ad cuius vocem terrentur animalia et subito figunt gradum circa quue cume cauda in orbe linea ducit, et illius lineature circulum transire quodlibet animal pertimescit et stant animalia stupida quasi edictum expectantia regis sui.

   He hideth himself in high mountains, and espieth from thence his prey. And when he seeth his prey he roareth full loud, and at the voice of him other beasts dread and stint suddenly: and he maketh a circle all about them with his tail, and all the beasts dread to pass out over the line of the circle, and the beasts stand astonied and afraid, as it were abiding the hest and commandment of their king. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. *Vitae Patrum*, *Octobris VIII. Vita Sanctae Thaisis, Meretricis* (PL 73:661): Quae cum abbas Paphnutius audisset, sumpto habitu saeculari et uno solido, profectus est ad eam in quadam Aegypti civitate; deditque ei solidum pro mercede peccati. At illa accepto pretio, ait: Ingrediamur domum. Tunc ille ingressus, ut lectum pretiosis vestibus stratum conscenderet, invitabat eam, et dixit: Si est interius cubiculum, in ipso eamus, illa dixit: Est quidem, sed si homines vereris, nec in isto exteriori cubiculo ullus ingreditur; si vero Deum, nullus est locus qui divinitatis ejus [Col.0661B] oculis abscondatur.

   Cf. Jacobus de Voragine, *The Golden Legend* 152. Saint Thais, Courtesan (Ryan, 2:234-235): Thais the courtesan, as we read in *Lives of the Fathers*, was a woman of such beauty that for her many men sold all they possessed and were reduced to penury. Her lovers, driven by jealousy, frequently fought each other at thje woman’s door and covered the threshold with the blood of young men. ...

   ... Finally she said to him: “There is a little room that nobody goes to; but if you are afraid of God, there is no place that is hidden to his divinity.” .... [↑](#endnote-ref-2)