

QUESTION 140

The Precepts that Pertain to Fortitude

Next we have to consider the precepts that pertain to fortitude: first, the precepts that belong to fortitude itself and, second, the precepts that belong to the parts of fortitude.

Article 1

Are precepts belonging to fortitude appropriately handed down in divine law?

It does not seem that precepts belonging to fortitude are not appropriately handed down in divine law:

Objection 1: The New Law is more perfect than the Old Law. But as is clear from Deuteronomy 20, in the Old Law some precepts belonging to fortitude are handed down. Therefore, some precepts belonging to fortitude should have been handed down in the New Law as well.

Objection 2: Affirmative precepts seem to be more important than negative precepts, because the affirmative precepts include the negative precepts, but not vice versa. Therefore, it is inappropriate for divine law to contain just negative precepts, prohibiting fear, which belong to fortitude.

Objection 3: As was established above (q. 123, a. 11 and *ST* 1-2, q. 61, a. 2), fortitude is one of the most important virtues. But precepts are ordered toward the virtues as their ends, and so they are proportioned to the virtues. Therefore, precepts that belong to fortitude should likewise have been posited *among the precepts of the Decalogue*, which are the most important precepts of the Law.

But contrary to this is what is apparent from the things handed down in Sacred Scripture.

I respond: The precepts of law are ordered toward the legislator's intention. Hence, the precepts of law have to be instituted in diverse ways according to the diverse ends that the legislator intends. This is why in human affairs some precepts are democratic, others are regal, and others are tyrannical.

Now the end of *divine* law is that a man should adhere to God. And so the precepts of divine law—both those having to do with fortitude and those having to do with the other virtues—are handed down in a way that befits the ordering of the mind toward God. It is for this reason that Deuteronomy 20:3-4 says, “Do not fear them, because the Lord your God is in your midst, and He will fight for you against your enemies.”

Now *human* laws are ordered toward certain earthly goods. Precepts belonging to fortitude are found among human laws in accord with the conditions surrounding those goods.

Reply to objection 1: As Augustine explains in *Contra Faustum*, the Old Testament contained temporal promises, whereas the New Testament contained spiritual and eternal promises. And so in the Old Law the people had to be instructed in how they ought to fight in a bodily way for the sake of acquiring their earthly property. By contrast, in the New Testament men had to be instructed in how, by *doing battle spiritually*, they might come into possession of eternal life—this according to Matthew 11:12 (“The kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent bear it away”). Hence, in 1 Peter 5:8-9 Peter issues the command, “Your adversary the devil roams about like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour; resist him, strong in the Faith.” And James 4:7 says, “Resist the devil and he will flee from you.” Yet since men tending toward spiritual goods are able to be drawn away from them by bodily dangers, precepts belonging to fortitude had likewise to be given in divine law for *enduring temporal evils courageously*—this according to Matthew 10:28 (“Do not fear those who kill the body ...”).

Reply to objection 2: The law contains *general instruction* through its precepts. However, those things that have to be done in the midst of dangers, like those things that have to be avoided, cannot be reduced to anything general. And this is why the precepts belonging to fortitude were given in the negative rather than in the affirmative.

Reply to objection 3: As has been explained (q. 122, a. 1), the precepts of the Decalogue are

posited in the Law as first principles that ought to be immediately known to everyone. And so the precepts of the Decalogue had to be mainly about acts of justice, in which the notion of *what is owed* or *duty* (*ratio debiti*) is found in an obvious way—and not about acts of fortitude, since it does not seem as obvious that it is a duty for someone not to shrink from the danger of death.

Article 2

Are precepts belonging to the parts of fortitude appropriately handed down in divine law?

It seems that precepts belonging to the parts of fortitude are not appropriately handed down in divine law:

Objection 1: As is clear from what was said above (q. 128), just as patience (*patientia*) and perseverance (*perseverantia*) are parts of fortitude, so too are magnificence (*magnificentia*) and magnanimity (*magnanimitas*), i.e. confidence (*fiducia*). But certain precepts about patience are found to be handed down in divine law, as are certain precepts about perseverance as well. Therefore, by parity of reasoning, certain precepts should have been handed down about magnificence and magnanimity.

Objection 2: Patience is an especially necessary virtue, since it is, as Gregory says, “the guardian of the other virtues.” But precepts are given about the other virtues in an absolute way. Therefore, it should not have been the case that the precepts given about patience are understood “in a way proportioned to the mind’s preparedness,” as Augustine puts it in *De Sermone Domini in Monte*.

Objection 3: As has been explained (q. 128 and q. 136, a. 4 and q. 137, a. 2), patience and perseverance are parts of fortitude. But as was established above (a. 1), only negative precepts—and no affirmative precepts—are given about fortitude. Therefore, only negative precepts—and no affirmative precepts—should have been given about patience and perseverance.

But contrary to this is what is handed down in Sacred Scripture.

I respond: Divine law informs a man completely about those things that are necessary for living in an upright manner (*necessaria ad recte vivendum*). Now in order to live in an upright manner a man needs not only the more important virtues, but also the secondary and adjoined virtues. And so just as appropriate precepts about the acts of the more important virtues are given in divine law, so, too, appropriate precepts about the acts of the secondary and adjoined virtues are likewise given.

Reply to objection 1: The genus of fortitude involves magnificence and magnanimity only with respect to a certain *excellence of magnitude* which they take account of with respect to their proper subject matter. But those things that pertain to *excellence* fall under *counsels of perfection* rather than under *precepts of necessity*. And this is why *counsels*, and *not precepts*, had to be handed down about magnificence and magnanimity. By contrast, the afflictions and toils of the present life pertain to patience and perseverance not by reason of any *magnitude* that might be thought of in them, but by reason of *their genus itself*. And this is why *precepts* had to be given about patience and perseverance.

Reply to objection 2: As was explained above (q. 3, a. 2), even if affirmative precepts are binding *at all times*, they do not bind an individual *for every time*, but instead bind him *for given places and times*. And so just as the affirmative precepts that are given about [the other virtues] are to be understood in a way proportioned to the mind’s preparedness—viz., in such a way that the man is prepared to fulfill them when it becomes necessary—so too with the affirmative precepts about patience.

Reply to objection 3: Fortitude, insofar as it is distinct from patience and perseverance, has to do with the *greatest* dangers, in the case of which one must act with more caution, and it is not proper to predetermine what in particular must be done. By contrast, patience and perseverance have to do with lesser afflictions and toils, and this is why in their case it can be predetermined without danger what must be done, especially in general.