ST. THOMAS AQUINAS

SUMMA THEOLOGICA

SUMMA THEOLOGICA (Benziger Bros. edition, 1947)

Translated by Fathers of the English Dominican Province

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Summa Theologica

Author(s): Thomas Aquinas, Saint (1225?-1274)

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Description: Written from 1265-1274, the *Summa Theologica* is St. Thomas Aquinas' greatest work. Originally written for the "instruction of beginners," time has shown that all believers can come to learn from this enriching book. Organized systematically for the clearest way of "setting forth" the "sacred doctrine," Aquinas addresses many of Christianity's most pertinent questions in this multi-volume work. The First Part of the *Summa* begins with the existence and nature of God, before moving to creation and the nature of man. The Second Part contains his examination of morality and law; it also provides his account of the theological virtues, the cardinal virtues, and the seven deadly sins. The Third Part, uncompleted due to Aquinas' death, treats the incarnation and the sacraments. Taken together, the three parts compose one of the most impressive works of Christianity. Indeed, countless people from many centuries have studied and learned from the *Summa*; it has been widely influential from Aquinas' own day to the present. Hence, those with a passing inquiry or a serious question, an existential concern or a philosophical problem, can learn much from reading and studying St. Thomas Aquinas' *Summa Theologica*.

Tim Perrine
CCEL Staff Writer

Subjects: Christian Denominations
Roman Catholic Church
Theology. Doctrine. Dogmatics
FIRST PART OF THE SECOND PART (FS)
(QQ[1]-114)
OF THE NATURAL LAW (SIX ARTICLES)
We must now consider the natural law; concerning which there are six points of inquiry:
(1) What is the natural law?
(2) What are the precepts of the natural law?
(3) Whether all acts of virtue are prescribed by the natural law?
(4) Whether the natural law is the same in all?
(5) Whether it is changeable?
(6) Whether it can be abolished from the heart of man?
Whether the natural law can be changed?

Objection 1: It would seem that the natural law can be changed. Because on Ecclus. 17:9, "He gave them instructions, and the law of life," the gloss says: "He wished the law of the letter to be written, in order to correct the law of nature." But that which is corrected is changed. Therefore the natural law can be changed.

Objection 2: Further, the slaying of the innocent, adultery, and theft are against the natural law. But we find these things changed by God: as when God commanded Abraham to slay his innocent son (Gn. 22:2); and when he ordered the Jews to borrow and purloin the vessels of the Egyptians (Ex. 12:35); and when He commanded Osee to take to himself "a wife of fornications" (Osee 1:2). Therefore the natural law can be changed.

Objection 3: Further, Isidore says (Etym. 5:4) that "the possession of all things in common, and universal freedom, are matters of natural law." But these things are seen to be changed by human laws. Therefore it seems that the natural law is subject to change.

On the contrary, It is said in the Decretals (Dist. v): "The natural law dates from the creation of the rational creature. It does not vary according to time, but remains unchangeable."

I answer that, A change in the natural law may be understood in two ways. First, by way of addition. In this sense nothing hinders the natural law from being changed: since many things for the benefit of human life have been added over and above the natural law, both by the Divine law and by human laws.

Secondly, a change in the natural law may be understood by way of subtraction, so that what previously was according to the natural law, ceases to be so. In this sense, the natural law is altogether unchangeable in its first principles: but in its secondary principles, which, as we have said (A[4]), are certain detailed proximate conclusions drawn from the first principles, the natural law is not changed so that what it prescribes be not right in most cases. But it may be changed in some particular cases of rare occurrence, through some special causes hindering the observance of such precepts, as stated above (A[4]).

Reply to Objection 1: The written law is said to be given for the correction of the natural law, either because it supplies what was wanting to the natural law; or because the natural law was perverted in the hearts of some men, as to certain matters, so that they esteemed those things good which are naturally evil; which perversion stood in need of correction.

Reply to Objection 2: All men alike, both guilty and innocent, die the death of nature: which death of nature is inflicted by the power of God on account of original sin, according to 1 Kings 2:6: "The Lord killeth and maketh alive." Consequently, by the command of God, death can be inflicted on any man, guilty or innocent, without any injustice whatever. In like manner adultery is intercourse with another's wife; who is allotted to him by the law emanating from God. Consequently intercourse with any woman, by the command of God, is neither adultery nor fornication. The same applies to theft, which is the taking of another's
property. For whatever is taken by the command of God, to Whom all things belong, is not taken against the will of its owner, whereas it is in this that theft consists. Nor is it only in human things, that whatever is commanded by God is right; but also in natural things, whatever is done by God, is, in some way, natural, as stated in the FP, Q[105], A[6], ad 1.

Reply to Objection 3: A thing is said to belong to the natural law in two ways. First, because nature inclines thereto: e.g. that one should not do harm to another. Secondly, because nature did not bring in the contrary: thus we might say that for man to be naked is of the natural law, because nature did not give him clothes, but art invented them. In this sense, "the possession of all things in common and universal freedom" are said to be of the natural law, because, to wit, the distinction of possessions and slavery were not brought in by nature, but devised by human reason for the benefit of human life. Accordingly the law of nature was not changed in this respect, except by addition.
OF THE MORAL PRECEPTS OF THE OLD LAW (TWELVE ARTICLES)

We must now consider each kind of precept of the Old Law: and (1) the moral precepts, (2) the ceremonial precepts, (3) the judicial precepts. Under the first head there are twelve points of inquiry:

(1) Whether all the moral precepts of the Old Law belong to the law of nature?
(2) Whether the moral precepts of the Old Law are about the acts of all the virtues?
(3) Whether all the moral precepts of the Old Law are reducible to the ten precepts of the decalogue?
(4) How the precepts of the decalogue are distinguished from one another?
(5) Their number;
(6) Their order;
(7) The manner in which they were given;
(8) Whether they are dispensable?
(9) Whether the mode of observing a virtue comes under the precept of the Law?
(10) Whether the mode of charity comes under the precept?
(11) The distinction of other moral precepts;
(12) Whether the moral precepts of the Old Law justified man?
Whether the precepts of the decalogue are dispensable?

Objection 1: It would seem that the precepts of the decalogue are dispensable. For the precepts of the decalogue belong to the natural law. But the natural law fails in some cases and is changeable, like human nature, as the Philosopher says (Ethic. v, 7). Now the failure of law to apply in certain particular cases is a reason for dispensation, as stated above (Q[96], A[6]; Q[97], A[4]). Therefore a dispensation can be granted in the precepts of the decalogue.

Objection 2: Further, man stands in the same relation to human law as God does to Divine law. But man can dispense with the precepts of a law made by man. Therefore, since the precepts of the decalogue are ordained by God, it seems that God can dispense with them. Now our superiors are God's viceregents on earth; for the Apostle says (2 Cor. 2:10): "For what I have pardoned, if I have pardoned anything, for your sakes have I done it in the person of Christ." Therefore superiors can dispense with the precepts of the decalogue.

Objection 3: Further, among the precepts of the decalogue is one forbidding murder. But it seems that a dispensation is given by men in this precept: for instance, when according to the prescription of human law, such as evil-doers or enemies are lawfully slain. Therefore the precepts of the decalogue are dispensable.

Objection 4: Further, the observance of the Sabbath is ordained by a precept of the decalogue. But a dispensation was granted in this precept; for it is written (1 Macc. 2:4): "And they determined in that day, saying: Whosoever shall come up to fight against us on the Sabbath-day, we will fight against him." Therefore the precepts of the decalogue are dispensable.

On the contrary, are the words of Is. 24:5, where some are reproved for that "they have changed the ordinance, they have broken the everlasting covenant"; which, seemingly, apply principally to the precepts of the decalogue. Therefore the precepts of the decalogue cannot be changed by dispensation.

I answer that, As stated above (Q[96], A[6]; Q[97], A[4]), precepts admit of dispensation, when there occurs a particular case in which, if the letter of the law be observed, the intention of the lawgiver is frustrated. Now the intention of every lawgiver is directed first and chiefly to the common good; secondly, to the order of justice and virtue, whereby the common good is preserved and attained. If therefore there by any precepts which contain the very preservation of the common good, or the very order of justice and virtue, such precepts contain the intention of the lawgiver, and therefore are indispensable. For instance, if in some community a law were enacted, such as this---that no man should work for the destruction of the commonwealth, or betray the state to its enemies, or that no man should do anything unjust or evil, such precepts would not admit of dispensation. But if other precepts were enacted, subordinate to the above, and determining certain special modes of procedure, these latter precepts would admit of dispensation, in so far as the omission of these precepts in certain cases would not be prejudicial to the former precepts which contain
the intention of the lawgiver. For instance if, for the safeguarding of the commonwealth, it were enacted in some city that from each ward some men should keep watch as sentries in case of siege, some might be dispensed from this on account of some greater utility.

Now the precepts of the decalogue contain the very intention of the lawgiver, who is God. For the precepts of the first table, which direct us to God, contain the very order to the common and final good, which is God; while the precepts of the second table contain the order of justice to be observed among men, that nothing undue be done to anyone, and that each one be given his due; for it is in this sense that we are to take the precepts of the decalogue. Consequently the precepts of the decalogue admit of no dispensation whatever.

**Reply to Objection 1:** The Philosopher is not speaking of the natural law which contains the very order of justice: for it is a never-failing principle that "justice should be preserved." But he is speaking in reference to certain fixed modes of observing justice, which fail to apply in certain cases.

**Reply to Objection 2:** As the Apostle says (2 Tim. 2:13), "God continueth faithful, He cannot deny Himself." But He would deny Himself if He were to do away with the very order of His own justice, since He is justice itself. Wherefore God cannot dispense a man so that it be lawful for him not to direct himself to God, or not to be subject to His justice, even in those matters in which men are directed to one another.

**Reply to Objection 3:** The slaying of a man is forbidden in the decalogue, in so far as it bears the character of something undue: for in this sense the precept contains the very essence of justice. Human law cannot make it lawful for a man to be slain unduly. But it is not undue for evil-doers or foes of the common weal to be slain: hence this is not contrary to the precept of the decalogue; and such a killing is no murder as forbidden by that precept, as Augustine observes (De Lib. Arb. i, 4). In like manner when a man's property is taken from him, if it be due that he should lose it, this is not theft or robbery as forbidden by the decalogue.

Consequently when the children of Israel, by God's command, took away the spoils of the Egyptians, this was not theft; since it was due to them by the sentence of God. Likewise when Abraham consented to slay his son, he did not consent to murder, because his son was due to be slain by the command of God, Who is Lord of life and death: for He it is Who inflicts the punishment of death on all men, both godly and ungodly, on account of the sin of our first parent, and if a man be the executor of that sentence by Divine authority, he will be no murderer any more than God would be. Again Osee, by taking unto himself a wife of fornications, or an adulterous woman, was not guilty either of adultery or of fornication: because he took unto himself one who was his by command of God, Who is the Author of the institution of marriage.

Accordingly, therefore, the precepts of the decalogue, as to the essence of justice which they contain, are unchangeable: but as to any determination by application to individual
actions—for instance, that this or that be murder, theft or adultery, or not—in this point they admit of change; sometimes by Divine authority alone, namely, in such matters as are exclusively of Divine institution, as marriage and the like; sometimes also by human authority, namely in such matters as are subject to human jurisdiction: for in this respect men stand in the place of God: and yet not in all respects.

**Reply to Objection 4:** This determination was an interpretation rather than a dispensation. For a man is not taken to break the Sabbath, if he does something necessary for human welfare; as Our Lord proves (Mat. 12:3, seqq.).
SECOND PART OF THE SECOND PART (SS) (QQ[1]-189)
OF RIGHT (FOUR ARTICLES)

After considering prudence we must in due sequence consider justice, the consideration of which will be fourfold:

(1) Of justice;
(2) Of its parts;
(3) Of the corresponding gift;
(4) Of the precepts relating to justice.

Four points will have to be considered about justice: (1) Right; (2) Justice itself; (3) Injustice; (4) Judgment.

Under the first head there are four points of inquiry:

(1) Whether right is the object of justice?
(2) Whether right is fittingly divided into natural and positive right?
(3) Whether the right of nations is the same as natural right?
(4) Whether right of dominion and paternal right are distinct species?
Whether right is fittingly divided into natural right and positive right?

Objection 1: It would seem that right is not fittingly divided into natural right and positive right. For that which is natural is unchangeable, and is the same for all. Now nothing of the kind is to be found in human affairs, since all the rules of human right fail in certain cases, nor do they obtain force everywhere. Therefore there is no such thing as natural right.

Objection 2: Further, a thing is called "positive" when it proceeds from the human will. But a thing is not just, simply because it proceeds from the human will, else a man's will could not be unjust. Since then the "just" and the "right" are the same, it seems that there is no positive right.

Objection 3: Further, Divine right is not natural right, since it transcends human nature. In like manner, neither is it positive right, since it is based not on human, but on Divine authority. Therefore right is unfittingly divided into natural and positive.

On the contrary, The Philosopher says (Ethic. v, 7) that "political justice is partly natural and partly legal," i.e. established by law.

I answer that, As stated above (A[1]) the "right" or the "just" is a work that is adjusted to another person according to some kind of equality. Now a thing can be adjusted to a man in two ways: first by its very nature, as when a man gives so much that he may receive equal value in return, and this is called "natural right." In another way a thing is adjusted or commensurated to another person, by agreement, or by common consent, when, to wit, a man deems himself satisfied, if he receive so much. This can be done in two ways: first by private agreement, as that which is confirmed by an agreement between private individuals; secondly, by public agreement, as when the whole community agrees that something should be deemed as though it were adjusted and commensurated to another person, or when this is decreed by the prince who is placed over the people, and acts in its stead, and this is called "positive right."

Reply to Objection 1: That which is natural to one whose nature is unchangeable, must needs be such always and everywhere. But man's nature is changeable, wherefore that which is natural to man may sometimes fail. Thus the restitution of a deposit to the depositor is in accordance with natural equality, and if human nature were always right, this would always have to be observed; but since it happens sometimes that man's will is unrighteous there are cases in which a deposit should not be restored, lest a man of unrighteous will make evil use of the thing deposited: as when a madman or an enemy of the common weal demands the return of his weapons.

Reply to Objection 2: The human will can, by common agreement, make a thing to be just provided it be not, of itself, contrary to natural justice, and it is in such matters that positive right has its place. Hence the Philosopher says (Ethic. v, 7) that "in the case of the legal just, it does not matter in the first instance whether it takes one form or another, it only matters when once it is laid down." If, however, a thing is, of itself, contrary to natural
right, the human will cannot make it just, for instance by decreeing that it is lawful to steal or to commit adultery. Hence it is written (Is. 10:1): "Woe to them that make wicked laws."

**Reply to Objection 3:** The Divine right is that which is promulgated by God. Such things are partly those that are naturally just, yet their justice is hidden to man, and partly are made just by God's decree. Hence also Divine right may be divided in respect of these two things, even as human right is. For the Divine law commands certain things because they are good, and forbids others, because they are evil, while others are good because they are prescribed, and others evil because they are forbidden.
OF OBEDIENCE (SIX ARTICLES)

We must now consider obedience, under which head there are six points of inquiry:
(1) Whether one man is bound to obey another?
(2) Whether obedience is a special virtue?
(3) Of its comparison with other virtues;
(4) Whether God must be obeyed in all things?
(5) Whether subjects are bound to obey their superiors in all things?
(6) Whether the faithful are bound to obey the secular power?
Whether God ought to be obeyed in all things?

Objection 1: It seems that God need not be obeyed in all things. For it is written (Mat. 9:30,31) that our Lord after healing the two blind men commanded them, saying: "See that no man know this. But they going out spread His fame abroad in all that country." Yet they are not blamed for so doing. Therefore it seems that we are not bound to obey God in all things.

Objection 2: Further, no one is bound to do anything contrary to virtue. Now we find that God commanded certain things contrary to virtue: thus He commanded Abraham to slay his innocent son (Gn. 22); and the Jews to steal the property of the Egyptians (Ex. 11), which things are contrary to justice; and Osee to take to himself a woman who was an adulteress (Osee 3), and this is contrary to chastity. Therefore God is not to be obeyed in all things.

Objection 3: Further, whoever obeys God conforms his will to the divine will even as to the thing willed. But we are not bound in all things to conform our will to the divine will as to the thing willed, as stated above (FS, Q[19], A[10]). Therefore man is not bound to obey God in all things.

On the contrary, It is written (Ex. 24:7): "All things that the Lord hath spoken we will do, and we will be obedient."

I answer that, As stated above (A[1]), he who obeys is moved by the command of the person he obeys, just as natural things are moved by their motive causes. Now just a God is the first mover of all things that are moved naturally, so too is He the first mover of all wills, as shown above (FS, Q[9], A[6]). Therefore just as all natural things are subject to the divine motion by a natural necessity so too all wills, by a kind of necessity of justice, are bound to obey the divine command.

Reply to Objection 1: Our Lord in telling the blind men to conceal the miracle had no intention of binding them with the force of a divine precept, but, as Gregory says (Moral. xix), "gave an example to His servants who follow Him that they might wish to hide their virtue and yet that it should be proclaimed against their will, in order that others might profit by their example."

Reply to Objection 2: Even as God does nothing contrary to nature (since "the nature of a thing is what God does therein," according to a gloss on Rom. 11), and yet does certain things contrary to the wonted course of nature; so to God can command nothing contrary to virtue since virtue and rectitude of human will consist chiefly in conformity with God's will and obedience to His command, although it be contrary to the wonted mode of virtue. Accordingly, then, the command given to Abraham to slay his innocent son was not contrary to justice, since God is the author of life an death. Nor again was it contrary to justice that He commanded the Jews to take things belonging to the Egyptians, because all things are His, and He gives them to whom He will. Nor was it contrary to chastity that Osee was
commanded to take an adulteress, because God Himself is the ordainer of human generation, and the right manner of intercourse with woman is that which He appoints. Hence it is evident that the persons aforesaid did not sin, either by obeying God or by willing to obey Him.

**Reply to Objection 3:** Though man is not always bound to will what God wills, yet he is always bound to will what God wills him to will. This comes to man’s knowledge chiefly through God’s command, wherefore man is bound to obey God’s commands in all things.