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Question 101 (Partial): The Ceremonial Precepts in Themselves

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By Thomas Aquinas

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The Ceremonial Precepts in Themselves

1. [OMITTED] The nature of the ceremonial precepts
2. [Are they figurative?](#)
3. [OMITTED] Should there have been many of them?
4. [OMITTED] Their various kinds

Article 2. Whether the ceremonial precepts are figurative?

[Objections and On the contrary omitted]

I answer that, As stated above ([Article 1](#); [Question 99, Articles 3 and 4](#)), the ceremonial precepts are those which refer to the worship of God. Now the Divine worship is twofold: internal, and external. For since man is composed of soul and body, each of these should be applied to the worship of God; the soul by an interior worship; the body by an outward worship: hence it is written (Psalm 83:3): "My heart and my flesh have rejoiced in the living God." And as the body is ordained to God through the soul, so the outward worship is ordained to the internal worship. Now interior worship consists in the soul being united to God by the intellect and affections. Wherefore according to the various ways in which the intellect and affections of the man who worships God are rightly united to God, his external actions are applied in various ways to the Divine worship.

For in the state of future bliss, the human intellect will gaze on the Divine Truth in Itself. Wherefore the external worship will not consist in anything figurative, but solely in the praise of God, proceeding from the inward knowledge and affection, according to Isaiah 51:3: "Joy and gladness shall be found therein, thanksgiving and the voice of praise."

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But in the present state of life, we are unable to gaze on the Divine Truth in Itself, and we need the ray of Divine light to shine upon us under the form of certain sensible figures, as [Pseudo-]Dionysius [the Areopagite] states ([The Celestial Hierarchy](#), 1); in various ways, however, according to the various states of human knowledge. For under the Old Law, neither was the Divine Truth manifest in Itself, nor was the way leading to that manifestation as yet opened out, as the Apostle [Paul] declares (Hebrews 9:8). Hence the external worship of the Old Law needed to be figurative not only of the future truth to be manifested in our heavenly country, but also of Christ, Who is the way leading to that heavenly manifestation. But under the New Law this way is already revealed: and therefore it needs no longer to be foreshadowed as something future, but to be brought to our minds as something past or present: and the truth of the glory to come, which is not yet revealed, alone needs to be foreshadowed. This is what the Apostle [Paul] says (Hebrews 11:1): "The Law has [Vulgate: 'having'] a shadow of the good things to come, not the very image of the things": for a shadow is less than an image; so that the image belongs to the New Law, but the shadow to the Old.

[Replies omitted]

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