

**Sancti Thomae de Aquino
Summa Theologiae
Secunda Pars Secundae Partis
Quaestio 110**

Prooemium

Deinde considerandum est de vitiis oppositis veritati. Et primo, de mendacio; secundo, de simulatione sive hypocrisi; tertio, de iactantia et opposito vitio. Circa mendacium quaeruntur quatuor. Primo, utrum mendacium semper opponatur veritati, quasi continens falsitatem. Secundo, de speciebus mendacii. Tertio, utrum mendacium semper sit peccatum. Quarto, utrum semper sit peccatum mortale.

Articulus 1: Utrum mendacium semper opponatur veritati, quasi continens falsitatem.

Ad primum sic proceditur. Videtur quod mendacium non semper opponatur veritati. Opposita enim non possunt esse simul. Sed mendacium simul potest esse cum veritate, qui enim verum loquitur quod falsum esse credit, mentitur, ut Augustinus dicit, in libro contra mendacium. Ergo mendacium non opponitur veritati.

Praeterea, virtus veritatis non solum consistit in verbis, sed etiam in factis, quia secundum philosophum, in IV Ethic., secundum hanc virtutem aliquis verum dicit et in sermone et in vita. Sed mendacium consistit solum in verbis, dicitur enim quod mendacium est falsa vocis significatio. Ergo videtur quod mendacium non directe opponatur virtuti veritatis.

Praeterea, Augustinus dicit, in libro contra mendacium, quod *culpa mentientis est fallendi cupiditas*. Sed hoc non opponitur veritati, sed magis benevolentiae vel iustitiae. Ergo mendacium non opponitur veritati.

Sed contra est quod Augustinus dicit, in libro contra mendacium, *nemo dubitet mentiri eum qui falsum enuntiat causa fallendi. Quapropter enuntiationem falsi cum voluntate ad fallendum prolata, manifestum est esse mendacium*. Sed hoc opponitur veritati. Ergo mendacium veritati opponitur.

**Saint Thomas Aquinas
Summa Theologiae
Second Part of the Second Part
Question 110**

Preface

We must now consider the vices opposed to truth. And first lying; second dissimulation or hypocrisy; third boasting and the opposite vice. Concerning lying there are four points of inquiry. First, whether lying, as containing falsehood, is always opposed to truth? Second, of the species of lying. Third, whether lying is always a sin? Fourth, whether it is always a mortal sin?

Article 1: Whether lying, as containing falsehood, is always opposed to truth?

Objection 1. It seems that lying is not always opposed to truth. For opposites are incompatible with one another. But lying is compatible with truth, since he who speaks the truth, thinking it to be false, lies, according to Augustine (Lib. De Mendac. iii). Therefore lying is not opposed to truth.

Objection 2. Further, the virtue of truth applies not only to words but also to deeds, since according to the Philosopher (Ethic. iv, 7) by this virtue one tells the truth both in one's speech and in one's life. But lying applies only to words, for Augustine says (Contra Mend. xii) that "a lie is a false signification by words." Accordingly, it seems that lying is not directly opposed to the virtue of truth.

Objection 3. Further, Augustine says (Lib. De Mendac. iii) that the "liar's sin is the desire to deceive." But this is not opposed to truth, but rather to benevolence or justice. Therefore lying is not opposed to truth.

On the contrary, Augustine says (Contra Mend. x): "Let no one doubt that it is a lie to tell a falsehood in order to deceive. Wherefore a false statement uttered with intent to deceive is a manifest lie." But this is opposed to truth. Therefore lying is opposed to truth.

Respondeo dicendum quod actus moralis ex duobus speciem sortitur, scilicet ex obiecto, et ex fine. Nam finis est obiectum voluntatis, quae est primum movens in moralibus actibus. Potentia autem a voluntate mota habet suum obiectum, quod est proximum obiectum voluntarii actus, et se habet in actu voluntatis ad finem sicut materiale ad formale, ut ex supra dictis patet. Dictum est autem quod virtus veritatis, et per consequens opposita vitia, in manifestatione consistit, quae fit per aliqua signa. Quae quidem manifestatio, sive enuntiatio, est rationis actus conferentis signum ad signatum, omnis enim repraesentatio consistit in quadam collatione, quae proprie pertinet ad rationem; unde etsi bruta animalia aliquid manifestent, non tamen manifestationem intendunt, sed naturali instinctu aliquid agunt ad quod manifestatio sequitur. In quantum tamen huiusmodi manifestatio sive enuntiatio est actus moralis, oportet quod sit voluntarius et ex intentione voluntatis dependens. Obiectum autem proprium manifestationis sive enuntiationis est verum vel falsum. Intentio vero voluntatis inordinatae potest ad duo ferri, quorum unum est ut falsum enuntietur; aliud quidem est effectus proprius falsae enuntiationis, ut scilicet aliquis fallatur. Si ergo ista tria concurrant, scilicet quod falsum sit id quod enuntiat, et quod adsit voluntas falsum enuntiandi, et iterum intentio fallendi, tunc est falsitas materialiter, quia falsum dicitur; et formaliter, propter voluntatem falsum dicendi; et effective, propter voluntatem falsitatem imprimendi. Sed tamen ratio mendacii sumitur a formali falsitate, ex hoc scilicet quod aliquis habet voluntatem falsum enuntiandi. Unde et mendacium nominatur ex eo quod contra mentem dicitur. Et ideo si quis falsum enuntiet credens illud verum esse, est quidem falsum materialiter, sed non formaliter, quia falsitas est praeter intentionem dicentis. Unde non habet perfectam rationem mendacii, id enim quod praeter intentionem est, per accidens est; unde non potest esse specifica differentia. Si vero formaliter aliquis falsum dicat, habens voluntatem falsum dicendi, licet sit verum id quod dicitur, in quantum tamen huiusmodi actus est voluntarius et moralis, habet per se falsitatem, et per accidens veritatem. Unde ad speciem mendacii pertingit.

I answer that, A moral act takes its species from two things, its object, and its end: for the end is the object of the will, which is the first mover in moral acts. And the power moved by the will has its own object, which is the proximate object of the voluntary act, and stands in relation to the will's act towards the end, as material to formal, as stated above (I-II, 18, 6,7). Now it has been said above (109, 1, ad 3) that the virtue of truth--and consequently the opposite vices--regards a manifestation made by certain signs: and this manifestation or statement is an act of reason comparing sign with the thing signified; because every representation consists in comparison, which is the proper act of the reason. Wherefore though dumb animals manifest something, yet they do not intend to manifest anything: but they do something by natural instinct, and a manifestation is the result. But when this manifestation or statement is a moral act, it must needs be voluntary, and dependent on the intention of the will. Now the proper object of a manifestation or statement is the true or the false. And the intention of a bad will may bear on two things: one of which is that a falsehood may be told; while the other is the proper effect of a false statement, namely, that someone may be deceived. Accordingly if these three things concur, namely, falsehood of what is said, the will to tell a falsehood, and finally the intention to deceive, then there is falsehood--materially, since what is said is false, formally, on account of the will to tell an untruth, and effectively, on account of the will to impart a falsehood. However, the essential notion of a lie is taken from formal falsehood, from the fact namely, that a person intends to say what is false; wherefore also the word "mendacium" [lie] is derived from its being in opposition to the "mind." Consequently if one says what is false, thinking it to be true, it is false materially, but not formally, because the falseness is beside the intention of the speaker so that it is not a perfect lie, since what is beside the speaker's intention is accidental for which reason it cannot be a specific difference. If, on the other hand, one utters' falsehood formally, through having the will to deceive, even if what one says be true, yet inasmuch as this is a voluntary and moral act, it contains falseness essentially and truth accidentally, and attains the specific nature of a lie.

Quod autem aliquis intendat falsitatem in opinione alterius constituere fallendo ipsum, non pertinet ad speciem mendacii, sed ad quandam perfectionem ipsius, sicut et in rebus naturalibus aliquid speciem sortitur si formam habeat, etiam si desit formae effectus; sicut patet in gravi quod violenter sursum detinetur, ne descendat secundum exigentiam suae formae. Sic ergo patet quod mendacium directe et formaliter opponitur virtuti veritatis.

Ad primum ergo dicendum quod unumquodque magis iudicatur secundum id quod est in eo formaliter et per se, quam secundum id quod est in eo materialiter et per accidens. Et ideo magis opponitur veritati, in quantum est virtus moralis, quod aliquis dicat verum intendens dicere falsum, quam quod dicat falsum intendens dicere verum.

Ad secundum dicendum quod, sicut Augustinus dicit, in II de Doctr. Christ., voces praecipuum locum tenent inter alia signa. Et ideo cum dicitur quod mendacium est falsa vocis significatio, nomine vocis intelligitur omne signum. Unde ille qui aliquod falsum nutibus significare intenderet, non esset a mendacio immunis.

Ad tertium dicendum quod cupiditas fallendi pertinet ad perfectionem mendacii, non autem ad speciem ipsius, sicut nec aliquis effectus pertinet ad speciem suae causae.

Articulus 2: De speciebus mendacii.

Ad secundum sic proceditur. Videtur quod insufficienter mendacium dividatur per mendacium officiosum, iocosum et perniciosum. Divisio enim est danda secundum ea quae per se conveniunt rei, ut patet per philosophum, in VII Metaphys. Sed intentio effectus est praeter speciem actus moralis, et per accidens se habet ad illum, ut videtur, unde et infiniti effectus possunt consequi ex uno actu. Haec autem divisio datur secundum intentionem effectus, nam mendacium iocosum est quod fit causa ludi; mendacium autem officiosum, quod fit causa utilitatis; mendacium autem perniciosum, quod fit causa nocimenti. Ergo inconvenienter hoc modo dividitur mendacium.

That a person intends to cause another to have a false opinion, by deceiving him, does not belong to the species of lying, but to perfection thereof, even as in the physical order, a thing acquires its species if it has its form, even though the form's effect be lacking; for instance a heavy body which is held up aloft by force, lest it come down in accordance with the exigency of its form. Therefore it is evident that lying is directly and formally opposed to the virtue of truth.

Reply to Objection 1. We judge of a thing according to what is in it formally and essentially rather than according to what is in it materially and accidentally. Hence it is more in opposition to truth, considered as a moral virtue, to tell the truth with the intention of telling a falsehood than to tell a falsehood with the intention of telling the truth.

Reply to Objection 2. As Augustine says (De Doctr. Christ. ii), words hold the chief place among other signs. And so when it is said that "a lie is a false signification by words," the term "words" denotes every kind of sign. Wherefore if a person intended to signify something false by means of signs, he would not be excused from lying.

Reply to Objection 3. The desire to deceive belongs to the perfection of lying, but not to its species, as neither does any effect belong to the species of its cause.

Article 2: Of the species of lying.

Objection 1. It seems that lies are not sufficiently divided into "officious," "jocose" and "mischievous" lies. For a division should be made according to that which pertains to a thing by reason of its nature, as the Philosopher states (Metaph. vii, text. 43; De Part. Animal i, 3). But seemingly the intention of the effect resulting from a moral act is something beside and accidental to the species of that act, so that an indefinite number of effects can result from one act. Now this division is made according to the intention of the effect: for a "jocose" lie is told in order to make fun, an "officious" lie for some useful purpose, and a "mischievous" lie in order to injure someone. Therefore lies are unfittingly divided in this way.

Praeterea, Augustinus, in libro contra mendacium, dividit mendacium in octo partes. Quorum primum est in doctrina religionis; secundum est ut nulli prosit et obsit alicui; tertium est quod prodest uni ita ut alteri obsit; quartum est quod fit sola mentiendi fallendique libidine; quintum est quod fit placendi cupiditate; sextum est quod nulli obest, et prodest alicui ad conservandam pecuniam; septimum est quod nulli obest, et prodest alicui ad vitandum mortem; octavum quod nulli obest, et prodest alicui ad vitandum immunditiam corporalem. Ergo videtur quod prima divisio mendacii sit insufficientis.

Praeterea, philosophus, in IV Ethic., dividit mendacium in iactantiam, quae verum excedit in dicendo, et ironiam, quae deficit a vero in minus. Quae duo sub nullo praedictorum membrorum continentur. Ergo videtur quod praedicta divisio mendacii sit incompetens.

Sed contra est quod super illud Psalm., *perdes omnes qui loquuntur mendacium*, dicit Glossa quod *sunt tria genera mendaciorum. Quaedam enim sunt pro salute et commodo alicuius; est etiam aliud genus mendacii, quod fit ioco; tertium vero mendacii genus est quod fit ex malignitate*. Primum autem horum dicitur officiosum; secundum, iocosum; tertium, perniciosum. Ergo mendacium in tria praedicta dividitur.

Respondeo dicendum quod mendacium tripliciter dividi potest. Uno modo, secundum ipsam mendacii rationem, quae est propria et per se mendacii divisio. Et secundum hoc, mendacium in duo dividitur, scilicet in mendacium quod transcendit veritatem in maius, quod pertinet ad iactantiam; et in mendacium quod deficit a veritate in minus, quod pertinet ad ironiam; ut patet per philosophum, in IV Ethic. Haec autem divisio ideo per se est ipsius mendacii, quia mendacium, in quantum huiusmodi, opponitur veritati, ut dictum est, veritas autem aequalitas quaedam est, cui per se opponitur maius et minus. Alio modo potest dividi mendacium in quantum habet rationem culpae, secundum ea quae aggravant vel diminuunt culpam mendacii ex parte finis intenti. Aggravat autem culpam mendacii si aliquis per mendacium intendat alterius nocumentum, quod vocatur mendacium perniciosum.

Objection 2. Further, Augustine (Contra Mendac. xiv) gives eight kinds of lies. The first is "in religious doctrine"; the second is "a lie that profits no one and injures someone"; the third "profits one party so as to injure another"; the fourth is "told out of mere lust of lying and deceiving"; the fifth is "told out of the desire to please"; the sixth "injures no one, and profits someone in saving his money"; the seventh "injures no one and profits someone in saving him from death"; the eighth "injures no one, and profits someone in saving him from defilement of the body." Therefore it seems that the first division of lies is insufficient.

Objection 3. Further, the Philosopher (Ethic. iv, 7) divides lying into "boasting," which exceeds the truth in speech, and "irony," which falls short of the truth by saying something less: and these two are not contained under any one of the kinds mentioned above. Therefore it seems that the aforesaid division of lies is inadequate.

On the contrary, A gloss on Psalm 5:7, "Thou wilt destroy all that speak a lie," says "that there are three kinds of lies; for some are told for the wellbeing and convenience of someone; and there is another kind of lie that is told in fun; but the third kind of lie is told out of malice." The first of these is called an officious lie, the second a jocose lie, the third a mischievous lie. Therefore lies are divided into these three kinds.

I answer that, lies may be divided in three ways. First, with respect to their nature as lies: and this is the proper and essential division of lying. In this way, according to the Philosopher (Ethic. iv, 7), lies are of two kinds, namely, the lie which goes beyond the truth, and this belongs to "boasting," and the lie which stops short of the truth, and this belongs to "irony." This division is an essential division of lying itself, because lying as such is opposed to truth, as stated in the preceding Article: and truth is a kind of equality, to which more and less are in essential opposition. Secondly, lies may be divided with respect to their nature as sins, and with regard to those things that aggravate or diminish the sin of lying, on the part of the end intended. Now the sin of lying is aggravated, if by lying a person intends to injure another, and this is called a "mischievous" lie.

Diminuitur autem culpa mendacii si ordinetur ad aliquod bonum, vel delectabile et sic est mendacium iocosum; vel, utile, et sic est mendacium officiosum, sive quo intenditur iuvamentum alterius vel remotio nocuenti. Et secundum hoc, dividitur mendacium in tria praedicta. Tertio modo dividitur mendacium universaliter secundum ordinem ad finem, sive ex hoc addatur vel diminuatur ad culpam mendacii, sive non. Et secundum hoc, est divisio octo membrorum quae dicta est. In qua quidem tria prima membra continentur sub mendacio pernicioso. Quod quidem fit vel contra Deum, et ad hoc pertinet primum mendacium, quod est in doctrina religionis. Vel est contra hominem, sive sola intentione nocendi alicui, et sic est secundum mendacium, quod scilicet nulli prodest et obest alicui; sive etiam intendatur in nocumento unius utilitas alterius, et hoc est tertium mendacium, quod uni prodest et alteri obest. Inter quae tria primum est gravissimum, quia semper peccata contra Deum sunt graviora, ut supra dictum est. Secundum autem est gravius tertio, quod diminuitur ex intentione utilitatis alterius. Post haec autem tria quae superaddunt ad gravitatem culpae mendacii, ponitur quartum, quod habet propriam quantitatem sine additione vel diminutione. Et hoc est mendacium quod fit ex sola mentiendi libidine, quod procedit ex habitu, unde et philosophus dicit, in IV Ethic., quod *mendax, eo quod talis est secundum habitum, ipso mendacio gaudet*. Quatuor vero subsequentes modi diminuunt de culpa mendacii. Nam quintum est mendacium iocosum, quod fit placendi cupiditate. Alia vero tria continentur sub mendacio officioso. In quo intenditur quod est alteri utile vel quantum ad res exteriores, et sic est sextum mendacium, quod prodest alicui ad pecuniam conservandam; vel est utile corpori, et hoc est septimum mendacium, quo impeditur mors hominis; vel est utile etiam ad honestatem virtutis, et hoc est octavum mendacium, in quo impeditur illicita pollutio corporalis. Patet autem quod quanto bonum intentum est melius, tanto magis minuitur culpa mendacii. Et ideo, si quis diligenter consideret, secundum ordinem praedictae enumerationis est ordo gravitatis culpae in istis mendaciis, nam bonum utile praefertur delectabili; et vita corporalis praefertur pecuniae; honestas autem etiam ipsi corporali vitae.

But the sin of lying is diminished if it be directed to some good--either of pleasure and then it is a "jocose" lie, or of usefulness, and then we have the "officious" lie, whereby it is intended to help another person, or to save him from being injured. In this way lies are divided into the three kinds aforesaid. Thirdly, lies are divided in a more general way, with respect to their relation to some end, whether or not this increase or diminish their gravity: and in this way the division comprises eight kinds, as stated in the Second Objection. Here the first three kinds are contained under "mischievous" lies, which are either against God, and then we have the lie "in religious doctrine," or against man, and this either with the sole intention of injuring him, and then it is the second kind of lie, which "profits no one, and injures someone"; or with the intention of injuring one and at the same time profiting another, and this is the third kind of lie, "which profits one, and injures another." Of these the first is the most grievous, because sins against God are always more grievous, as stated above (I-II, 73, 3): and the second is more grievous than the third, since the latter's gravity is diminished by the intention of profiting another. After these three, which aggravate the sin of lying, we have a fourth, which has its own measure of gravity without addition or diminution; and this is the lie which is told "out of mere lust of lying and deceiving." This proceeds from a habit, wherefore the Philosopher says (Ethic. iv, 7) that "the liar, when he lies from habit, delights in lying." The four kinds that follow lessen the gravity of the sin of lying. For the fifth kind is the jocose lie, which is told "with a desire to please": and the remaining three are comprised under the officious lie, wherein something useful to another person is intended. This usefulness regards either external things, and then we have the sixth kind of lie, which "profits someone in saving his money"; or his body, and this is the seventh kind, which "saves a man from death"; or the morality of his virtue, and this is the eighth kind, which "saves him from unlawful defilement of his body." Now it is evident that the greater the good intended, the more is the sin of lying diminished in gravity. Wherefore a careful consideration of the matter will show that these various kinds of lies are enumerated in their order of gravity: since the useful good is better than the pleasurable good, and life of the body than money, and virtue than the life of the body.

Et per hoc patet responsio ad obiecta.

Articulus 3: Utrum mendacium semper sit peccatum.

Ad tertium sic proceditur. Videtur quod non omne mendacium sit peccatum. Manifestum est enim quod Evangelistae scribendo Evangelium non peccaverunt. Videntur tamen aliquid falsum dixisse, quia verba Christi, et etiam aliorum, frequenter aliter unus et aliter retulit alius; unde videtur quod alter eorum dixerit falsum. Non ergo omne mendacium est peccatum.

Praeterea, nullus remuneratur a Deo pro peccato. Sed obstetrices Aegypti remuneratae sunt a Deo propter mendacium, dicitur enim Exod. I, quod *aedificavit illis Deus domos*. Ergo mendacium non est peccatum.

Praeterea, gesta sanctorum narrantur in sacra Scriptura ad informationem vitae humanae. Sed de quibusdam sanctissimis viris legitur quod sunt mentiti, sicut legitur Gen. XII et XX quod Abraham dixit de uxore sua quod soror sua esset. Iacob etiam mentitus est dicens se Esau, tamen benedictionem adeptus est, ut habetur Gen. XXVII. Iudith etiam commendatur, quae tamen Holoferni mentita est. Non ergo omne mendacium est peccatum.

Praeterea, minus malum est eligendum ut vitetur maius malum, sicut medicus praecidit membra ne corrumpatur totum corpus. Sed minus nocuum est quod aliquis generet falsam opinionem in animo alicuius quam quod aliquis occidat vel occidatur. Ergo licite potest homo mentiri ut unum praeservet ab homicidio, et alium praeservet a morte.

Praeterea, mendacium est si quis non impleat quod promisit. Sed non omnia promissa sunt implenda, dicit enim Isidorus, in malis promissis rescinde fidem. Ergo non omne mendacium est vitandum.

Praeterea, mendacium ob hoc videtur esse peccatum quia per ipsum homo decipit proximum, unde Augustinus dicit, in libro contra mendacium, *quisquis esse aliquod genus mendacii quod peccatum non sit, putaverit, decipiet seipsum turpiter, cum honestum se deceptorem arbitretur aliorum*.

This suffices for the Replies to the Objections.

Article 3: Whether lying is always a sin?

Objection 1. It seems that not every lie is a sin. For it is evident that the evangelists did not sin in the writing of the Gospel. Yet they seem to have told something false: since their accounts of the words of Christ and of others often differ from one another: wherefore seemingly one of them must have given an untrue account. Therefore not every lie is a sin.

Objection 2. Further, no one is rewarded by God for sin. But the midwives of Egypt were rewarded by God for a lie, for it is stated that "God built them houses" (Exodus 1:21). Therefore a lie is not a sin.

Objection 3. Further, the deeds of holy men are related in Sacred Writ that they may be a model of human life. But we read of certain very holy men that they lied. Thus (Genesis 12 and 20) we are told that Abraham said of his wife that she was his sister. Jacob also lied when he said that he was Esau, and yet he received a blessing (Genesis 27:27-29). Again, Judith is commended (Judith 15:10-11) although she lied to Holofernes. Therefore not every lie is a sin.

Objection 4. Further, one ought to choose the lesser evil in order to avoid the greater: even so a physician cuts off a limb, lest the whole body perish. Yet less harm is done by raising a false opinion in a person's mind, than by someone slaying or being slain. Therefore a man may lawfully lie, to save another from committing murder, or another from being killed.

Objection 5. Further, it is a lie not to fulfill what one has promised. Yet one is not bound to keep all one's promises: for Isidore says (Synonym. ii): "Break your faith when you have promised ill." Therefore not every lie is a sin.

Objection 6. Further, apparently a lie is a sin because thereby we deceive our neighbor: wherefore Augustine says (Lib. De Mend. xxi): "Whoever thinks that there is any kind of lie that is not a sin deceives himself shamefully, since he deems himself an honest man when he deceives others."

Sed non omne mendacium est deceptionis causa, quia per mendacium iocosum nullus decipitur. Non enim ad hoc dicuntur huiusmodi mendacia ut credantur, sed propter delectationem solam, unde et hyperbolicae locutiones quandoque etiam in sacra Scriptura inveniuntur. Non ergo omne mendacium est peccatum.

Sed contra est quod dicitur Eccli. VII, *noli velle mentiri omne mendacium.*

Respondeo dicendum quod illud quod est secundum se malum ex genere, nullo modo potest esse bonum et licitum, quia ad hoc quod aliquid sit bonum, requiritur quod omnia recte concurrant; bonum enim est ex integra causa, malum autem est ex singularibus defectibus, ut Dionysius dicit, IV cap. de Div. Nom. Mendacium autem est malum ex genere. Est enim actus cadens super indebitam materiam, cum enim voces sint signa naturaliter intellectuum, innaturale est et indebitum quod aliquis voce significet id quod non habet in mente. Unde philosophus dicit, in IV Ethic., quod *mendacium est per se pravum et fugiendum, verum autem et bonum et laudabile.* Unde omne mendacium est peccatum, sicut etiam Augustinus asserit, in libro contra mendacium.

Ad primum ergo dicendum quod nec in Evangelio, nec in aliqua Scriptura canonica fas est opinari aliquod falsum asseri, nec quod scriptores earum mendacium dixerunt, quia periret fidei certitudo, quae auctoritati sacrae Scripturae innititur. In hoc vero quod in Evangelio, et in aliis Scripturis sacris, verba aliquorum diversimode recitantur, non est mendacium. Unde Augustinus dicit, in libro de consensu Evangelist., *nullo modo laborandum esse iudicat qui prudenter intelligit ipsas sententias esse necessarias cognoscendae veritati, quibuslibet verbis fuerint explicatae.* Et in hoc apparet, ut ibidem subdit, *non debere nos arbitrari mentiri quemquam si, pluribus reminiscantibus rem quam audierunt vel viderunt, non eodem modo atque eisdem verbis eadem res fuerit indicata.*

Ad secundum dicendum quod obstetrices non sunt remuneratae pro mendacio, sed pro timore Dei et benevolentia, ex qua processit mendacium. Unde signanter dicitur Exod. I, *et quia timuerunt obstetrices Deum, aedificavit illis domos.* Mendacium vero postea sequens non fuit meritorium.

Yet not every lie is a cause of deception, since no one is deceived by a jocular lie; seeing that lies of this kind are told, not with the intention of being believed, but merely for the sake of giving pleasure. Hence again we find hyperbolic expressions in Holy Writ. Therefore not every lie is a sin.

On the contrary, It is written (Sirach 7:14): "Be not willing to make any manner of lie."

I answer that, An action that is naturally evil in respect of its genus can by no means be good and lawful, since in order for an action to be good it must be right in every respect: because good results from a complete cause, while evil results from any single defect, as Dionysius asserts (Div. Nom. iv). Now a lie is evil in respect of its genus, since it is an action bearing on undue matter. For as words are naturally signs of intellectual acts, it is unnatural and undue for anyone to signify by words something that is not in his mind. Hence the Philosopher says (Ethic. iv, 7) that "lying is in itself evil and to be shunned, while truthfulness is good and worthy of praise." Therefore every lie is a sin, as also Augustine declares (Contra Mend. i).

Reply to Objection 1. It is unlawful to hold that any false assertion is contained either in the Gospel or in any canonical Scripture, or that the writers thereof have told untruths, because faith would be deprived of its certitude which is based on the authority of Holy Writ. That the words of certain people are variously reported in the Gospel and other sacred writings does not constitute a lie. Hence Augustine says (De Consens. Evang. ii): "He that has the wit to understand that in order to know the truth it is necessary to get at the sense, will conclude that he must not be the least troubled, no matter by what words that sense is expressed." Hence it is evident, as he adds (De Consens. Evang. ii), that "we must not judge that someone is lying, if several persons fail to describe in the same way and in the same words a thing which they remember to have seen or heard."

Reply to Objection 2. The midwives were rewarded, not for their lie, but for their fear of God, and for their good-will, which latter led them to tell a lie. Hence it is expressly stated (Exodus 2:21): "And because the midwives feared God, He built them houses." But the subsequent lie was not meritorious.

Ad tertium dicendum quod in sacra Scriptura, sicut Augustinus dicit, inducuntur aliquorum gesta quasi exempla perfectae virtutis, de quibus non est aestimandum eos fuisse mentitos. Si qua tamen in eorum dictis appareant quae mendacia videantur, intelligendum est ea figuraliter et propheticè dicta esse. Unde Augustinus dicit, in libro contra mendacium, *credendum est illos homines qui propheticis temporibus digni auctoritate fuisse commemorantur, omnia quae scripta sunt de illis propheticè gessisse atque dixisse*. Abraham tamen, ut Augustinus dicit, in quaest. Genes. Dicens Saram esse suam sororem, veritatem voluit celari, non mendacium dici, soror enim dicitur quia filia fratris erat. Unde et ipse Abraham dicit, Gen. XX, *vere soror mea est, filia patris mei, et non matris meae filia*, quia scilicet ex parte patris ei attinebat. Iacob vero mystice dixit se esse Esau, primogenitum Isaac, quia videlicet primogenita illius de iure ei debebantur. Usus autem est hoc modo loquendi per spiritum prophetiae, ad designandum mysterium, quia videlicet minor populus, scilicet gentilium, substituendus erat in locum primogeniti, scilicet in locum Iudaeorum. Quidam vero commendantur in Scriptura non propter perfectam virtutem, sed propter quandam virtutis indolem, quia scilicet apparebat in eis aliquis laudabilis affectus, ex quo movebantur ad quaedam indebita facienda. Et hoc modo Iudith laudatur, non quia mentita est Holoferni, sed propter affectum quem habuit ad salutem populi, pro qua periculis se exposuit. Quamvis etiam dici possit quod verba eius veritatem habent secundum aliquem mysticum intellectum.

Ad quartum dicendum quod mendacium non solum habet rationem peccati ex damno quod infert proximo, sed ex sua inordinatione, ut dictum est. Non licet autem aliqua illicita inordinatione uti ad impediendum nocumenta et defectus aliorum, sicut non licet furari ad hoc quod homo eleemosynam faciat (nisi forte in casu necessitatis, in quo omnia sunt communia). Et ideo non est licitum mendacium dicere ad hoc quod aliquis alium a quocumque periculo liberet. Licet tamen veritatem occultare prudenter sub aliqua dissimulatione, ut Augustinus dicit, contra mendacium.

Reply to Objection 3. In Holy Writ, as Augustine observes (Lib. De Mend. v), the deeds of certain persons are related as examples of perfect virtue: and we must not believe that such persons were liars. If, however, any of their statements appear to be untruthful, we must understand such statements to have been figurative and prophetic. Hence Augustine says (Lib. De Mend. v): "We must believe that whatever is related of those who, in prophetic times, are mentioned as being worthy of credit, was done and said by them prophetically." As to Abraham "when he said that Sara was his sister, he wished to hide the truth, not to tell a lie, for she is called his sister since she was the daughter of his father," Augustine says (QQ. Super. Gen. xxvi; Contra Mend. x; Contra Faust. xxii). Wherefore Abraham himself said (Genesis 20:12): "She is truly my sister, the daughter of my father, and not the daughter of my mother," being related to him on his father's side. Jacob's assertion that he was Esau, Isaac's first-born, was spoken in a mystical sense, because, to wit, the latter's birthright was due to him by right: and he made use of this mode of speech being moved by the spirit of prophecy, in order to signify a mystery, namely, that the younger people, i.e. the Gentiles, should supplant the first-born, i.e. the Jews. Some, however, are commended in the Scriptures, not on account of perfect virtue, but for a certain virtuous disposition, seeing that it was owing to some praiseworthy sentiment that they were moved to do certain undue things. It is thus that Judith is praised, not for lying to Holofernes, but for her desire to save the people, to which end she exposed herself to danger. And yet one might also say that her words contain truth in some mystical sense.

Reply to Objection 4. A lie is sinful not only because it injures one's neighbor, but also on account of its inordinateness, as stated above in this Article. Now it is not allowed to make use of anything inordinate in order to ward off injury or defects from another: as neither is it lawful to steal in order to give an alms, except perhaps in a case of necessity when all things are common. Therefore it is not lawful to tell a lie in order to deliver another from any danger whatever. Nevertheless it is lawful to hide the truth prudently, by keeping it back, as Augustine says (Contra Mend. x).

Ad quintum dicendum quod ille qui aliquid promittit, si habeat animum faciendi quod promittit, non mentitur, quia non loquitur contra id quod gerit in mente. Si vero non faciat quod promisit, tunc videtur infideliter agere per hoc quod animum mutat. Potest tamen excusari ex duobus. Uno modo, si promisit id quod est manifeste illicitum, quia promittendo peccavit, mutando autem propositum bene facit. Alio modo, si sint mutatae conditiones personarum et negotiorum. Ut enim Seneca dicit, in libro de Benefic., ad hoc quod homo teneatur facere quod promisit, requiritur quod omnia immutata permaneant, alioquin nec fuit mendax in promittendo, quia promisit quod habebat in mente, subintellectis debitis conditionibus; nec etiam est infidelis non implendo quod promisit, quia eadem conditiones non extant. Unde et apostolus non est mentitus, qui non ivit Corinthum, quo se iturum esse promiserat, ut dicitur II Cor. I, et hoc propter impedimenta quae supervenerant.

Ad sextum dicendum quod operatio aliqua potest considerari dupliciter, uno modo, secundum seipsam; alio modo, ex parte operantis. Mendacium igitur iocosum ex ipso genere operis habet rationem fallendi, quamvis ex intentione dicentis non dicatur ad fallendum, nec fallat ex modo dicendi. Nec est simile de hyperbolicis aut quibuscumque figurativis locutionibus, quae in sacra Scriptura inveniuntur, quia, sicut Augustinus dicit, in libro contra mendacium, *quidquid figurate fit aut dicitur, non est mendacium. Omnis enim enuntiatio ad id quod enuntiat referenda est, omne autem figurate aut factum aut dictum hoc enuntiat quod significat eis quibus intelligendum prolatum est.*

Reply to Objection 5. A man does not lie, so long as he has a mind to do what he promises, because he does not speak contrary to what he has in mind: but if he does not keep his promise, he seems to act without faith in changing his mind. He may, however, be excused for two reasons. First, if he has promised something evidently unlawful, because he sinned in the promise, and did well to change his mind. Secondly, if circumstances have changed with regard to persons and the business in hand. For, as Seneca states (De Benef. iv), for a man to be bound to keep a promise, it is necessary for everything to remain unchanged: otherwise neither did he lie in promising--since he promised what he had in his mind, due circumstances being taken for granted--nor was he faithless in not keeping his promise, because circumstances are no longer the same. Hence the Apostle, though he did not go to Corinth, whither he had promised to go (2 Corinthians 1), did not lie, because obstacles had arisen which prevented him.

Reply to Objection 6. An action may be considered in two ways. First, in itself, secondly, with regard to the agent. Accordingly a jocose lie, from the very genus of the action, is of a nature to deceive; although in the intention of the speaker it is not told to deceive, nor does it deceive by the way it is told. Nor is there any similarity in the hyperbolical or any kind of figurative expressions, with which we meet in Holy Writ: because, as Augustine says (Lib. De Mend. v), "it is not a lie to do or say a thing figuratively: because every statement must be referred to the thing stated: and when a thing is done or said figuratively, it states what those to whom it is tendered understand it to signify."