

QUESTION 110

Lying

Next we have to consider the vices opposed to truthfulness (*veritas*): first, lying (*mendacium*) (question 110); second, dissimulation (*simulatio*) and hypocrisy (*hypocrisis*) (question 111); third, boasting (*iactantia*) and a vice opposed to it (questions 112-113).

On lying there are four questions: (1) Is lying always opposed to truthfulness? (2) What are the species of lying? (3) Is lying always a sin? (4) Is lying always a mortal sin.?

Article 1

Is lying always opposed to truthfulness?

It seems that lying is not always opposed to truthfulness (*mendacium non semper opponatur veritate*):

Objection 1: Opposites cannot exist at the same time. But lying can exist with truthfulness, since, as Augustine explains in *Contra Mendacium*, one who utters a truth which he believes to be false is lying. Therefore, lying is not opposed to truthfulness.

Objection 2: The virtue of truthfulness consists not only in words but also in deeds, since according to the Philosopher in *Ethics* 4, by this virtue one tells the truth “both with his speech and with his life.” But lying consists solely in words; for it is said that lying is “a false spoken signification.” Therefore, it seems that lying is not directly opposed to the virtue of truthfulness.

Objection 3: In *Contra Mendacium* Augustine says, “The sin of the liar is the strong desire to deceive (*fallendi cupiditas*).” But this is opposed not to truthfulness, but instead to benevolence or to justice. Therefore, lying is not opposed to truthfulness.

But contrary to this: In *Contra Mendacium* Augustine says, “Let no one doubt that someone lies when he tells a falsehood in order to deceive. Therefore, it is clear that to lie is to utter a false statement with the intent to deceive” (*enuntiationem falsi cum voluntate ad fallendum prolatam manifestum est esse mendacium*). But this is opposed to truthfulness. Therefore, lying is opposed to truthfulness.

I respond: A moral act receives its species in two ways, viz., (a) from its *object* and (b) from its *end*. For as is clear from what was said above (*ST* 1-2, q. 18, a. 6), the *end* is the object of the will, which is the first mover in moral acts, whereas the power moved by the will has its own object, which is the *proximate object* of a voluntary act and is related to the *end* in the act of the will as the *material* to the *formal*.

Now it has been explained (q. 109, aa. 2 and 3) that the virtue of truthfulness—and, as a consequence, its opposed vices—consists in an act of revealing that is effected by means of certain signs. This act of revealing, or of stating (*manifestatio sive enuntiatio*), is an act of reason that unites a sign to a thing signified. For every representation consists in a certain act of bringing things together (*omnis repraesentatio consistit in quadam collatione*), and this properly belongs to reason. Hence, even though non-rational animals reveal things, they nonetheless do not *intend* to reveal anything, but instead they do by natural instinct things that revelations follow upon. By contrast, insofar as an act of revealing or a statement of the sort in question is a moral act (*inquantum huiusmodi manifestatio sive enuntiatio est actus moralis*), it must be *voluntary* and *dependent on the will's intention*.

Now the proper object of an act of revealing or of a statement is something that is true or false. But the intention of a disordered will can be directed at two objects, one of which is *that something false be stated*, and the other of which is the proper *effect* of a false statement, viz., *that someone be deceived*. Therefore, if these three things occur together, viz., (a) that what is stated is false, and that there is (b) an intention (*voluntas*) to state what is false along with (c) an intention (*intentio*) to deceive, then there is (a) *falsity materially speaking* (*falsitas materialiter*), since what is said is false, and (b) *falsity formally*

speaking (falsitas formaliter), because of the intention to say what is false, and (c) *falsity in the effect (falsitas effective)*, because of the intention to give an impression of what is false. However, the definition of lying (*ratio mendacii*) is taken from *formal falsity*, i.e., from the fact that someone has the intention to state what is false. Hence, lying (*mendacium*) is named from the fact that something is said contrary to one's own understanding (*contra mentem dicitur*).

And so if someone states what is false while believing that it is true, then there is, to be sure, something false *materially speaking*, but not *formally speaking*, since the falsity lies outside the speaker's intention. Hence, it does not have the complete nature of lying, since what lies outside one's intention is incidental (*per accidens*) and so cannot be a specific difference.

By contrast, if someone *formally speaking* states what is false, i.e., if he has the intention of stating what is false, then even if what is stated is true, an act of this sort has falsity *per se* and truth *per accidens* to the extent that it is a voluntary and moral act. Hence, it attains to the species *lying*.

Now the fact that someone intends to establish a false opinion in someone else by deceiving him does not belong to the species of lying but instead belongs to a *sort of fulfillment* of that species—just as, among natural things, something receives the species if it has the form even if it lacks the form's effect. This is clear, for instance, in the case of a heavy thing that is violently detained in a high place so that it does not fall in accord with the exigencies of its form.

So, then, it is clear that lying is directly and formally opposed to the virtue of truthfulness.

Reply to objection 1: Things are judged more in accord with what is in them formally and *per se* than in accord with what is in them materially and *per accidens*. And so it is more opposed to truthfulness (*veritas*), insofar as it is a moral virtue, that someone should say what is true while intending to say what is false than that he should say what is false while intending to say what is true.

Reply to objection 2: As Augustine points out in *De Doctrina Christiana 2*, words hold the principal place among signs. And so when it is said that lying is “a false signification of the word,” every sign is understood under the term ‘word’. Hence, one who intended to signify something false by nodding his head would not be free of lying.

Reply to objection 3: The desire to deceive belongs to the *fulfillment* of lying, but not to its *species*, just as some effects do not belong to the species of their cause.

Article 2

Is lying adequately divided into useful lying, the humorous lying, and pernicious lying?

It seems that lying is not adequately divided into useful lying (*mendacium officiosum*), humorous lying (*mendacium iocosum*), and pernicious lying (*mendacium perniciosum*):

Objection 1: As is clear from the Philosopher in *Metaphysics 7*, a division should be made in accord with what belongs to a thing in its own right (*per se*). But intending the effect lies beyond the species of a moral act and is related to it incidentally (*per accidens*)—or so it seems, given that an infinitely many effects can follow upon a single act. But the division under discussion is made according to the intending of the effect, since humorous lying is lying which is done for the sake of laughter, and useful lying is lying which is done for the sake of gaining some advantage, whereas pernicious lying is lying which is done for the sake of causing harm. Therefore, it is inappropriate for lying to be divided in the way in question.

Objection 2: In *Contra Mendacium* Augustine divides lying into eight parts. The first is lying “in religious doctrine”; the second is lying “that profits no one and hurts someone”; the third is lying “that profits one individual in order to hurt someone else”; the fourth is lying “that is done solely out of a lust

for lying and deceiving”; the fifth is lying “that is done out of an excessive desire to please”; the sixth is lying “that hurts no one and is useful for someone’s holding on to his money”; the seventh is lying “that harms no one and is useful for someone’s avoiding death”; and the eighth is lying “that harms no one and is useful for someone’s avoiding bodily impurity.” Therefore, it seems that the first division of lying, laid out above, is inadequate.

Objection 3: In *Ethics* 4 the Philosopher divides lying into boasting (*iactantia*), which goes beyond the truth in what it says, and self-deprecation (*ironia*), which falls short of the truth by saying less. These two things are not contained under any of the members of the division in question. Therefore, it seems that the aforementioned division is insufficient.

But contrary to this: A Gloss on Psalm 5:7 (“You will destroy everyone who tells a lie”) says, “There are three kinds of lying. Certain lies are for someone’s safety or advantage. There is another kind of lying that is done as a joke. The third kind of lying is done out of malice. The first of these is called *useful lying*, the second *humorous lying*, and the third *pernicious lying*.” Therefore, lying is divided into the aforementioned three kinds.

I respond: There are three ways in which lying can be divided:

First, lying can be divided *in accord with the very nature of lying*, and this is the proper and *per se* division of lying. On this score, lying is divided into two, viz., (a) lying that goes beyond the truth by saying more, and this belongs to *boasting (iactantia)*, and (b) lying that falls short of the truth by saying less, and this belongs to *self-deprecation (ironia)*. This is clear from the Philosopher in *Ethics* 4. Now this division is thus *per se* and a division of lying itself, since lying is as such opposed to truthfulness, and truthfulness is, as has been explained (a. 1), a sort of equality or adequacy to which *more* and *less* are directly (*per se*) opposed.

Second, lying can be divided *insofar as it has the character of sinfulness (inquantum habet rationem culpae)*, with respect to what *aggravates* or *diminishes* the sinfulness of lying on the part of intending the end. Now it aggravates the sinfulness of lying if someone intends by his lying to harm someone else, and this is called *pernicious lying*. On the other hand, the sinfulness of lying is diminished if the lying is ordered toward some good, either a pleasurable good, which is called *humorous lying*, or a advantageous good, and this is called *useful lying*, by which one intends to help someone else or to remove some evil. And on this score, lying is divided into the three types mentioned above.

Third, lying is divided in a more general way *in accord with its being ordered toward an end*, regardless of whether the sinfulness of the lying is thereby increased or diminished. And on this score, there is the division into eight parts that was explained above (obj. 2). The first three members in this division fall under *pernicious lying*. This is done either (a) against God, and the *first* type of lying, which is in religious teaching, pertains to this, or (b) against man, either with the sole intention of harming someone, and this is the *second* kind of lying, which profits no one and harms someone, or else (c) what is intended in the harming of one individual is the advantage of another, and this is the *third* type of lying, which profits one individual and harms another. The second type is a more serious sin than the third, because the sinfulness of the latter is diminished by the intention of helping someone else. After these three types, which add to the seriousness of the sin of lying, a fourth is posited that has its own proper quantity [of sinfulness] without addition or subtraction. And this is the type of lying which is done solely out of a lust for lying and which proceeds from a habit. Hence, in *Ethics* 4 the Philosopher explains that since someone who is given to lying (*mendax*) “is like that because of a habit, he rejoices in the lying itself.” The four following types all diminish the sinfulness of lying. For the fifth type is *humorous lying*, which is done with an excessive desire to give pleasure. The other three types are included within *useful lying*, in which what is intended is an advantage for someone else, either (a) an advantage with respect to exterior things, and this is the sixth type of lying, which helps someone hold on to his money, or (b) an advantage to his body, and this is the seventh type of lying, by which a man’s death is impeded, or even (c) an advantage to the uprightness of virtue, and this is the eighth type of

lying, in which an illicit corporeal defilement is impeded.

Now it is clear that the sinfulness of the lying is diminished to the extent that the intended good is better. And so if one carefully considers the matter, there is an ordering of the seriousness of the sin in these types of lying that corresponds to the ordering of the foregoing enumeration. For the *useful good* is preferable to the *pleasurable good*, and *bodily life* is preferable to *money*, and *moral uprightness (honestas)* is likewise preferable to *bodily life*.

Reply to objection 1 and objection 2 and objection 3: This makes clear the replies to the objections.

Article 3

Is every instance of lying a sin?

It seems that not every instance of lying is a sin:

Objection 1: It is clear that the Evangelists did not sin by writing the Gospel. Yet they seem to have said something false, because the words of Christ—and the words of others as well—are related in one way by one and in another way by another. Hence, it seems that one or the other of them has said something false. Therefore, not every instance of lying is a sin.

Objection 2: No one is rewarded by God for a sin. But the midwives of the Egyptians were rewarded by God for lying; for Exodus 1:21 says, “God built them houses.” Therefore, lying is not a sin.

Objection 3: The deeds of holy men are narrated in Sacred Scripture as instruction for human life (*ad informationem vitae humanae*). But we read of certain very holy men that they told lies. For instance, in Genesis 12:13-19 and 20-25 we read that Abraham said of his wife that she was his sister. Again, as we read in Genesis 27, Jacob lied by claiming to be Esau, and yet he received the blessing. Again, Judith is commended and yet she lied to Holofernes. Therefore, not every instance of lying is a sin.

Objection 4: A lesser evil is to be chosen in order that a greater evil might be avoided; for instance, a physician amputates a limb lest the whole body be corrupted. But it is less harmful to generate a false opinion in someone’s mind than it is to kill or be killed. Therefore, a man can licitly tell a lie in order to keep an individual from committing homicide and to preserve someone else from death.

Objection 5: There is a lie if someone does not fulfill what he has promised. But not all promises should be fulfilled; for Isidore says, “Break faith in the case of bad promises.” Therefore, not every instance of lying is to be avoided.

Objection 6: The reason that lying seems to be a sin is that in lying a man deceives his neighbor; hence, in *Contra Mendacium* Augustine says, “If anyone thinks that there is some kind of lying that is not a sin, he deceives himself shamefully, since he deems himself an upright deceiver of others.” But not every lie is a cause of deception, since no one is deceived by humorous lying. For lies of this sort are told not in order that they might be believed, but only for the sake of pleasure; this is why hyperbolic speech is sometimes found even in Sacred Scripture. Therefore, not every instance of lying is a sin.

But contrary to this: Ecclesiasticus 7:14 says, “Do not will to tell any sort of lie.”

I respond: What is bad in its own right by its genus (*secundum se malum ex genere*) can in no way be good and licit, since in order for something to be good, it is required that *everything* come together in the right way; for as Dionysius says in *De Divinis Nominibus*, chap. 4, “*Good* exists by virtue of a complete cause, whereas *bad* exists by virtue of any single defect.” But lying is bad by its genus, because it is an act that involves an inappropriate matter. For since words are by their nature signs of acts of understanding, it is unnatural and inappropriate for someone to signify by his words what he does not have in his mind. Hence, in *Ethics* 4 the Philosopher says, “Lying is wicked in its own right and to be avoided, whereas telling the truth is good and praiseworthy.” Hence, every instance of lying is a sin, as

Augustine likewise claims in *Contra Mendacium*.

Reply to objection 1: It is impermissible to hold the opinion that something false is asserted either in the Gospels or in any canonical Scripture, or that their writers told lies, since the certitude of the Faith, which rests on the authority of Sacred Scripture, would perish.

However, it is not a lie when, in the Gospels or in other sacred writings, the words of certain individuals are related in different ways. Hence, in *De Consensu Evangelistarum* Augustine says, “Someone who prudently understands that the meanings themselves are necessary for grasping the truth will judge that he should not in any way be concerned about which words are used to express that meaning.” Hence, in this matter it is apparent, as Augustine adds in the same place, that “we must not think that someone is lying if, when several individuals are recalling something that they have heard or seen, the same thing is not made known [by each of them] in the same way and with the same words.”

Reply to objection 2: The midwives were rewarded not for lying, but for the fear of God and the benevolence from which their lie proceeded. Hence, Exodus 1:21 explicitly says, “Because the midwives feared God, He built them houses.” But the lie that followed afterwards was not meritorious.

Reply to objection 3: As Augustine explains, in Sacred Scripture the deeds of some individuals are brought forward as examples of perfect virtue, and in those cases one should not believe that they lied. And if things shows up in what they say that seem like lies, one should understand that these things were said prophetically and as prefigurements. Hence, in *Contra Mendacium* Augustine says, “We should believe that whatever is related of those who, in prophetic times, are mentioned as being worthy of influence, was done and said by them prophetically.”

Now as Augustine explains in *Quaestiones in Heptateuchum, super Genesim*, in saying that Sarah was his sister, Abraham wished to hide the truth without telling a lie; for she is called his sister because she was the daughter of his [father]. Hence, Abraham himself says in Genesis 20:12, “She really is my sister, the daughter of my father, though not the daughter of my mother”—for he was related to her on his father’s side.

Again, it was in a mystical sense that Jacob said that he was Esau, since Esau’s inheritance was owed to him by right. He used this manner of speaking through the spirit of prophecy in order to signal a mystery, viz., that a younger people, the Gentiles, were going to take the place of the firstborn; more specifically, they were going to take the place of the Jews.

On the other hand, some individuals are commended in Scripture not because of their perfect virtue, but because of a sort of natural quality of virtue, since what we see in them is a praiseworthy affection by which they are moved to do certain inappropriate things. And it is in this sense that Judith is praised—not because she lied to Holofernes, but because of the intense desire which she had for the safety of the people and for the sake of which she exposed herself to danger. However, one could also reply that her words had truth according to some mystical interpretation.

Reply to objection 4: Lying has the nature of a sin not only because of the damage it inflicts on one’s neighbor, but also, as has been explained, because it is disordered in its own right (*ex sua inordinatione*). But one is not permitted to use an illicit disorderedness in order to prevent a harm or a loss to others. For instance, it is not permissible to steal in order that a man might give alms—except, perhaps, in a case of necessity, in which all things are held in common. And so it is not permissible to tell a lie in order to free another individual from any sort of danger. However, as Augustine explains in *Contra Mendacium*, it is permissible to hide the truth in a prudent way by some sort of dissimulation.

Reply to objection 5: One who promises something is not lying if he has the intention to do what he promises, since he is not saying anything that goes against what he has in his mind. If he does not do what he promises, then, it seems, it is because he has changed his mind that he is acting in an untrustworthy manner. Still, there are two possible ways in which he might be excused. First, if he promised what is clearly illicit, then since he sinned in making the promise, he does well to change his intention. Second, he might be excused if the situation has changed with respect to the persons and deeds

involved. For as Seneca explains in *De Beneficio*, in order for a man to be obligated to do what he has promised to do, it is required that everything remain unchanged; otherwise, it is neither the case that (a) he was mendacious in making the promise, since he promised what he had in his mind, with all the appropriate conditions having been taken for granted, nor that (b) he was unfaithful in not fulfilling his promise, since the same conditions did not exist. Hence, the Apostle likewise did not lie when he failed to travel to Corinth, to which he had promised to return (see 2 Corinthians 1:15 and 1 Corinthians 16:5)—and this because of obstacles that had supervened.

Reply to objection 6: There are two ways in which an action (*operatio*) can be considered: (a) *in its own right (secundum se)* and (b) *on the part of the agent (ex parte operantis)*. Thus, humorous lying (*mendacium iocosum*) has the character of being deceptive *by the very genus of the deed (ex ipso genere operis habet rationem fallendi)*, even though, *by the intention of the speaker*, the lie was not told in order to deceive and it did not deceive, given the manner in which it was told (*quamvis ex intentione dicentis non dicatur ad fallendum nec fallat ex modo dicendi*).

Moreover, this is not similar to the hyperbolic expressions, or to any sort of figurative expressions, that are found in Sacred Scripture. For as Augustine puts it in *Contra Mendacium*, “It is not lying when something is said or done figuratively. For every statement has to be thought of in terms of *what* it states, and anything said or done figuratively states what it should be understood to signify by those to whom it is offered.”

Article 4

Is every instance of lying a mortal sin?

It seems that every instance of lying is a mortal sin:

Objection 1: Psalm 5:7 says, “You will destroy everyone who tells a lie,” and Wisdom 1:11 says, “The mouth that lies kills the soul.” But the destruction and death of the soul come only from mortal sin. Therefore, every instance of lying is a mortal sin.

Objection 2: Everything that is contrary to a precept of the Decalogue is a mortal sin. But lying is contrary to the precept *You shall not bear false witness*. Therefore, every instance of lying is a mortal sin.

Objection 3: In *De Doctrina Christiana* 1 Augustine says, “No one who lies keeps faith in lying; for he wants the individual to whom he is lying to have faith in him, and yet he does not keep faith with him when he lies. But anyone who breaks faith is wicked.” Now no one is called either a breaker of faith or wicked because of a venial sin. Therefore, no instance of lying is a venial sin.

Objection 4: An eternal reward is destroyed only because of mortal sin. But an eternal reward is destroyed because of lying and changed into a temporal reward; for Gregory says, “From the reward of the midwives we learn what the sin of lying deserves, since the reward for their kindness, which could have been given to them in eternal life, is reduced to an earthly reward because it was accompanied by the sin of lying.” Therefore, even useful lying of the sort engaged in by the midwives—which seems to be a sin of very little seriousness—is a mortal sin.

Objection 5: In *Contra Mendacium* Augustine says, “The precept of those who are perfect is not only not to lie at all, but not even *to want to lie*.” But it is a mortal sin to act against a precept. Therefore, every instance of lying on the part of those who are perfect is a mortal sin. Therefore, by parity of reasoning, any instance of lying on the part of anyone else is likewise a mortal sin; otherwise, those who are perfect would be worse off than others.

But contrary to this: In *In Psalmum 5* (verse 7) Augustine says, “There are two kinds of lying in which the sin is not great even though they are not without sin, viz., (a) when we are being humorous and (b) when we lie in order to take care of our neighbor.” But every mortal sin is a serious sin. Therefore,

humorous lying and useful lying are not mortal sins.

I respond: As has been explained (q. 24, a. 12 and q.35, a. 3 and *ST* 1-2, q. 72, a.5) a mortal sin, properly speaking, is a sin that is incompatible with [the virtue of] charity, through which the soul lives by being conjoined with God. Now there are three ways in which lying can be opposed to charity: *in its own right* (*secundum se*); *in its intended end* (*secundum finem intentum*); and *incidentally* (*per accidens*).

(a) Lying *in its own right* is contrary to charity by virtue of the false signification itself.

Now if the lying has to do with *divine matters*, then it is contrary to charity with respect to God, whose truth one conceals or corrupts by such a lie. Hence, this sort of lying is opposed not only to the virtue of truthfulness but also to the virtue of faith and to the virtue of religion. And so this sort of lying is a very serious sin and a mortal sin.

Again, if the false signification has to do with something the cognition of which is relevant to a man's good, e.g., something that has to do with the perfection of scientific knowledge or with moral formation, then insofar as lying of this sort inflicts the harm of holding a false opinion on one's neighbor, it is contrary to charity with respect to the love of neighbor. Hence, it is a mortal sin.

On the other hand, if the false opinion generated by the lying has to do with something such that it does not matter whether it is thought about one way or the other, then one's neighbor is not harmed by lying of this sort—as, for example, if someone is deceived about particular contingent matters that do not have anything to do with him. Hence, such an instance of lying is not in its own right a mortal sin.

(b) Some instances of lying may be contrary to charity *by reason of their intended end*, e.g., when (a) something is said in order to injure God, and this is always a mortal sin because it is contrary to [the virtue of] religion, or when (b) something is said to harm one's neighbor with respect to his person, his wealth, or his reputation, and this is likewise a mortal sin, since it is a mortal sin to harm one's neighbor and one commits a mortal sin by merely intending to commit a mortal sin.

On the other hand, if the intended end is not contrary to charity, then neither will lying in accord with this intention (*secundum hanc rationem*) be a mortal sin; this is apparent in the case of humorous lying, in which what is intended is some frivolous delight, and in the case of useful lying, in which what is intended is an advantage for one's neighbor.

(c) Lying can be *incidentally* contrary to charity by reason of scandal or by reason of some sort of consequent damage. And on this score lying will likewise be a mortal sin if an individual is not deterred from lying in public by the possibility of giving scandal.

Reply to objection 1: As a Gloss on this Psalm verse (“You will destroy everyone who tells a lie”) explains, the passages in question are understood to be talking about *pernicious* lying.

Reply to objection 2: Since, as was explained above (q. 44, a. 1 and *ST* 1-2, q. 100, a. 5), all the precepts of the Decalogue are ordered toward loving God and neighbor, to the extent that lying is contrary to a precept of the Decalogue it is contrary to loving God and neighbor. Hence, it is false testimony *against one's neighbor* that is explicitly forbidden.

Reply to objection 3: Even a venial sin can in a broad sense be called *wickedness* insofar as it lies outside the balance or equality that belongs to justice. Hence, 1 John 3:4 says, “All sin is wickedness.” And it is this sense in which Augustine is speaking.

Reply to objection 4: There are two ways in which one can think about the midwives' lie.

First, with respect to the effect of their benevolence on the Jews and with respect to the reverence of their godly fear, because of which their natural virtue is commended. And on this score an eternal reward was owed to them. Hence, Jerome explains that God built them *spiritual* homes.

The second way in which the midwives' lie can be thought of is with respect to the exterior act of lying itself, by which they were able to merit not an eternal reward, but perhaps some sort of temporal reward that the deformity of their lying was not incompatible with—in the way that it *was* incompatible with an eternal reward. And *this* is the way one should understand the words of Gregory; and one should *not* understand his words to mean, as the argument suggests, that through their lying they deserved to lose

the eternal reward that they had already merited by their previous affection.

Reply to objection 5: Some claim that for perfect men every instance of lying is a mortal sin. But this is an unreasonable claim. For no circumstance becomes weightier and weightier *ad infinitum* without altering the species [of the act]. But a circumstance belonging to the person himself does not draw an act into another species—except perhaps by something that is annexed to him, e.g., if the act is contrary to a vow he has taken—which cannot apply in the case of *useful* or *humorous* lying. And so useful or humorous lying is not a mortal sin in the case of perfect men, except perhaps incidentally by reason of its giving scandal.

And we can bring back to this point what Augustine says, viz, “The precept of those who are perfect is not only not to lie at all, but not even *to want to lie*”—even though Augustine says this with hesitation and not assertively, since he prefaces it with “... unless perhaps in such a way that the precept of the perfect, etc.” Nor is it an objection that those who are obligated to tell the truth because of their role as judges or teachers are placed in a state of having to conserve the truth, and that if they lie against this truth, then it will be an instance of lying which is a mortal sin. For in *other* matters it does not have to be the case that they commit a mortal sin by lying.