

(Gen. 1, 27.) Therefore God alone has supreme right over the life and death of His own creature: and he who usurps this power and destroys the life of a human being usurps the prerogative of God and is guilty of the greatest crime.

Like all the other Commandments, the fifth contains a two-fold obligation: 1st, it forbids to kill, 2nd, it commands us to live in peace with all men, to cherish sentiments of charity, good-will and friendship towards our neighbors even those who are hostile to us, and to bear with patience the ill-treatment, insults and injuries of others.

1st. The prohibitory precept. — This precept requires some explanation to be correctly understood. St. Augustin tells us that in his time there were false doctors who taught that the precept «Thou shalt not kill,» should be extended to the fruits of the earth which are insensible, and to the irrational animals which form no part of the great society of mankind. This false teaching is condemned by Holy Scripture, since God said to Noah and his sons on going forth from the ark after the deluge: «All the beasts of the earth, all the fowls of the air, all that move upon the earth, all the fishes of the sea are delivered into your hand. And every thing that moveth and liveth shall be meat for you: even as the green herbs have I delivered them all to you.» (Gen. IX, 2, 3.) The fifth Commandment refers only to the killing of human beings. The lower animals are destined by God for the service of man: they supply us with what is essential to life, namely, food and clothing; they help us in our work; they instruct us in our duties by their faithful compliance with the instinct of the nature which God gave them. The bee, for example, shows us by its constant industry that we should not spend our time in idleness; the dove teaches us to be pure, devoted and peaceful; the lamb to be inoffensive and patient; the birds delight and amuse us by the sweetness and variety of their singing. Thus all created things help to show