

QUESTION 183

The Roles and States of Men in General

Next we have to consider the diversity of human states and roles (*de diversitate statuum et officiorum humanorum*). And first we have to consider the roles and states of men *in general* (question 183); second, the state of those who are perfect *specifically* (*specialiter de statu perfectorum*) (questions 184-189).

On the first topic there are four questions: (1) What makes for a state among men? (2) Should there be diverse states (*diversi status*), or diverse roles or offices (*diversa officia*), among men? (3) What are the diverse roles or offices? (4) What are the diverse states?

Article 1

Does a state by its character imply a condition of freedom or servitude?

It seems that a state does not by its character imply a condition of freedom or servitude (*status in sui ratione non importet conditionem libertatis vel servitutis*):

Objection 1: *State* (*status*) comes from *standing* (*standus*). But an individual is said to be standing by reason of his uprightness (*ratione rectitudinis*); hence, Ezechiel 2:1 says, “Sons of man, stand up on your feet,” and in *Moralia* 7 Gregory says, “Those who fall through harmful words are lost to every state of uprightness.” But a man acquires spiritual uprightness by submitting his will to God; hence, a Gloss on Psalm 32:1 (“Praise is fitting for the upright”) says, “The upright are those who direct their heart in accord with God’s will.” Therefore, it seems that only obedience to God’s commands suffices for the character of a *state*.

Objection 2: The name ‘state’ or ‘standing’ (*status*) seems to imply immobility (*immobilitas*)—this according to 1 Corinthians 15:58 (“Be stable (*stabiles*) and unmoveable (*immobiles*).” Hence, in *Super Ezechiel* Gregory says, “A rock is foursquare and has on every side, as it were, a state that does not lapse amid any disturbance.” But as *Ethics* 2 says, a virtue is that which makes one operate in a way that is fixed (*immobiliter*). Therefore, it seems that an individual acquires a *state* from every virtuous operation.

Objection 3: The name ‘state’ or ‘standing’ (*status*) seems to involve a sort of height, since an individual stands by the fact that he rises up. But through diverse roles one individual comes to be higher than another. Similarly, through diverse *grades* or *orderings* men are, in different ways, set at different heights. Therefore, a mere diversity of *grades* or of *orderings* or of *roles* is sufficient to diversify *states*.

But contrary to this: In *Decretals, Causa* 2, q. 6 it says, “If an individual intervenes in a capital case or in a case of state, this is to be done not by a proxy, but in his own person”—where a case is called ‘a case of state’ when it pertains to freedom or servitude. Therefore, it seems that only what pertains to freedom or servitude changes a man’s *state*.

I respond: Properly speaking, ‘state’ or ‘standing’ (*status*) signifies a [specific] difference of [the category] *position* by which one is disposed in accord with the mode of his nature and with a sort of immobility. For instance, it is natural to a man that his head should tend toward higher things and that his feet should be planted firmly on the ground, and that the other members in between them should be arranged with the appropriate ordering—something that occurs not when the man is lying prostrate or sitting down or reclining, but only when he is standing up straight. Again, an individual is said to be standing not when he is moving, but only when he is at rest (*quies*). And hence it is that even among human actions themselves, a matter is said to have some *state* or *standing* in accord with the ordering of its own arrangement, accompanied by a sort of immobility or rest.

Hence, among men, those things that easily change and are extrinsic do not constitute a *state*—as, for instance, someone’s being either rich or poor, or someone’s being either set up in high office or a

commoner—or anything else of this sort. Thus in civil law, when someone is removed from the senate, it is the *dignity* of his office (*dignitas*), and not his *state* (*status*), that is lost.

By contrast, what seems to pertain to a man's *state* is only that which has to do with an obligation that attaches to the man's person, i.e., insofar as he is under his own jurisdiction or the jurisdiction of another—where this obligation arises not from some insignificant or easily changeable cause, but from something permanent, i.e., something that pertains to the nature of freedom or servitude. Therefore, an individual's *state*, properly speaking, pertains to freedom or servitude, whether in spiritual matters or in civil matters.

Reply to objection 1: Uprightness does not *as such* pertain to the character of a *state*, but only insofar as it is *connatural* to man, together with the addition of a certain sort of stability (*simul addita quadam quiete*). Hence, among the other animals uprightness is not required for their being said to be standing. Even in the case of men, they are not said to be standing even if they are upright (*recti*), unless they are also at rest.

Reply to objection 2: Immobility is not sufficient for the character of a state. For an individual who is sitting or lying down is likewise at rest and yet is not said to be standing.

Reply to objection 3: Something is called a *role* or *office* (*officium*) in relation to an *act*, whereas something is called a *grade* or *degree* or *stage* (*gradus*) in relation to an ordering of *higher* and *lower*. By contrast, what is required for a *state* (*status*) is *unchangeableness* in what pertains to the *condition of the person*.

Article 2

Should there be a diversity of roles or of states within the Church?

It seems that there should not be a diversity of roles or of states (*diversitas officiorum vel statuum*) within the Church:

Objection 1: Diversity is incompatible with unity. But believers in Christ are called to unity—this according to John 17:21-22 (“... that they may be one in us, as we are one”). Therefore, there should not be a diversity of roles or states within the Church.

Objection 2: Nature does not do through many things what it is able to do through one thing. But the operation of grace is much more orderly than the operation of nature. Therefore, it would be more appropriate for those things that involve acts of grace to be administered through the same men in such a way that there would not be a diversity of roles and states within the Church.

Objection 3: The good of the Church consists most of all in peace—this according to Psalm 147:3 (“... Who has placed peace within your borders”). And 2 Corinthians 13:11 says, “Have peace and the God of peace will be with you”). But diversity impedes peace, which seems to be caused by similarity—this according to Ecclesiasticus 13:19 (“Every animal loves what is similar to it”). And in *Politics* 7 the Philosopher says that a small difference makes for discord in the city. Therefore, it seems that there should not be a diversity of states or roles within the Church.

But contrary to this: In Psalm 44:10 it is said in praise of the Church that she is “surrounded with variety,” and a Gloss on this passage says, “The Queen”—that is, the Church—“is adorned with the doctrine of the apostles, the confession of the martyrs, the purity of the virgins, and the lament of penitents.”

I respond: There are three things that the diversity of states (*status*) and roles (*officia*) within the Church pertains to:

First, it pertains to *the perfection of the Church*. For just as in the case of the ordering of natural entities, the perfection that is found in God in a simple and uniform way can be found in the universe of

creatures only in a varied and multiple way, so, too, the fullness of grace, which is united in Christ as in the head, redounds to His members in a diversified way in order that the body of the Church might be perfect. And this is why in Ephesians 4:11-12 the Apostle says, “He made some apostles, and some prophets, and others evangelists, and others pastors and teachers, in order to bring the saints to completion.”

Second, it pertains to *the demands of the actions that are necessary in the Church*. Now diverse men have to be deputized for diverse actions in order for all things to be accomplished expeditiously and without confusion. This is why in Romans 12:4-5 the Apostle says, “Just as in one body we have many members and the members do not all have the same act, so we many are one body in Christ.”

Third, it pertains to *the dignity and beauty of the Church*, which consists in a certain ordering. Hence, 3 Kings 10:4-5 says, “And when the queen of Sheba had seen all the wisdom of Solomon ... the seating of his officials, and the attendance of his servants ... there was no more spirit in her.” And in 2 Timothy 2:20 the Apostle says, “In a great house there are vessels not only of gold and silver, but also of wood and of clay.”

Reply to objection 1: Diversity of states and of roles does not impede the unity of Church, which is perfected by the unity of faith and charity and mutual service (*per unitatem fidei et caritatis et mutuae subministrationis*)—this according to the Apostle in Ephesians 4:16: “By this the whole body is joined together,” viz., by faith, “and connected,” viz., by charity, “by every relation of service,” viz., when one serves another.

Reply to objection 2: Just as nature does not do through many things what it is able to do through one thing, so, too, it likewise does not limit to one thing whatever requires many things—this according to the Apostle in 1 Corinthians 12:17 (“If the whole body were the eye, then where would the hearing come from?”). Hence, in the Church, which is the body of Christ, the members have to be diversified according to *role, state, and grade*.

Reply to objection 3: Just as in a natural body the diverse members are contained in a unity through the power of the life-giving spirit at whose departure the members of the body become separated, so, too, in the body of the Church peace among the diverse members is preserved by the Holy Spirit, who, as John 6:64 explains, gives life to the body of the Church.

Hence, in Ephesians 4:3 the Apostle says, “... being careful to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.” Now an individual departs from this unity of the Spirit when he seeks after things for himself (*quaerit quae sibi sunt propria*), just as peace in an earthly city is likewise destroyed by the fact that individual citizens are seek after things for themselves (*quod cives singuli quae sua sunt quaerunt*). Instead, peace is better preserved through the distinction of *roles* and *states* both in the mind and in the earthly city, insofar as through these *roles* and *states* there are more individuals who share in the public acts. Hence, in 1 Corinthians 12:24-25 the Apostle says, “God has moderated [the body] in such a way that there might be no schism in the body, but that the members might be solicitous about one another.”

Article 3

Are roles distinguished by their acts?

It seems that *roles* or *offices* (*officia*) are not distinguished by their acts:

Objection 1: There is an infinite diversity in human acts, both in spiritual matters and in temporal matters. But there cannot be a fixed distinction among infinitely many things. Therefore, a distinction among human *roles* cannot be made by reference to the diversity of their acts.

Objection 2: As has been explained (q. 179), the active life and the contemplative life are distinguished by their acts. But the distinction among *roles* seems to be different from the distinction

among *lives*. Therefore, it is not the case that *roles* or *offices* are distinguished by their acts.

Objection 3: Ecclesiastical *orders* and *states* and *grades* also seem to be distinguished by their acts. Therefore, if *roles* or *offices* are distinguished by their acts, then it seems to follow that the distinction among *roles*, *grades*, and *states* is the same. But this is false, since they are divided into their parts in different ways. Therefore, it seems that *roles* are not distinguished by their acts.

But contrary to this: In *Etymologia* Isidore says, “*Officium* [*role* or *office*] comes from *efficere* [to do or effect]—*efficium*, as it were, with one letter changed for the sake of a better sound.” But *efficere* involves action. Therefore, *roles* are distinguished by their acts.

I respond: As has been explained (a. 2), there are three things that diversity among the members of the Church is ordered toward, viz., *perfection* (*perfectio*), *action* (*actio*), and *beauty* (*decor*). And from these three one can draw three distinctions of diversity among the faithful:

The first is a distinction *with respect to perfection*. And on this score there is a distinction among *states*, insofar as some *states* are more perfect than others.

The second is a distinction *with respect to action*. And this is a distinction among *roles* or *offices*, since those who are in diverse *roles* or *offices* have been allotted diverse actions.

The third distinction is *with respect to the ordering of ecclesiastical beauty*. And on this score there is a difference of *grades* or *degrees* or *stages* (*gradus*), so that even within the same *state*, or even within the same *role*, one individual is *higher* than another. Hence, Psalm 47:4 says in an alternative translation, “In her grades shall God be known.”

Reply to objection 1: What is infinite is the *material* diversity of human acts. And *roles* or *offices* are distinguished not by this sort of diversity, but by a *formal* diversity, which is taken from the diverse *species* of acts and in accord with which human acts are *not* infinite.

Reply to objection 2: ‘Life’ is predicated in an absolute way (*vita dicitur absolute*), and so the diversity of *lives* is taken from the diverse acts that are appropriate for a man *in his own right* (*secundum seipsum*).

By contrast, *efficiency* or *efficient causality* (*efficientia*), from which, as has been said, the name *officium* [*role* or *office*] is taken, implies action *that tends toward another*; this is explained in *Metaphysics* 9. And so *roles* or *offices* are distinguished, properly speaking, by acts that are *referred to others*, in the way that a teacher (*doctor*) or judge (*iudex*), etc., is said to have a *role* or *office*. This is why Isidore says that a *role* or *office* is such that “the individual does things that do not obstruct anyone (*quae nulli officiant*) anyone”—i.e., do no harm to anyone—“but benefit everyone.”

Reply to objection 3: As has been explained, *states* and *roles* and *grades* are taken from diverse considerations. But it is possible for these three to come together in the same individual subject. For instance, when someone is assigned some higher act, he attains thereby both a *role* and a *grade*, and sometimes, in addition, a *state* of perfection because of the sublimity of the act. This is clear in the case of a bishop.

On the other hand, ecclesiastical *orders* are specifically distinguished in accord with divine *roles* or *offices*. For in *Etymologia* Isidore says, “There are various kinds of *roles* or *offices*, but the most important is that which relates to sacred and divine things.”

Article 4

Is there a difference in state among those who are beginning, those who are progressing, and those who are perfect?

It seems that there is no difference in *state* among those who are *beginning*, for those who are *making progress*, and those who are *perfect* (*differentia statuum non attendatur secundum incipientes*,

proficientes, et perfectos):

Objection 1: The *species* and *differences* of diverse things are themselves diverse. But as was explained above when we were talking about charity (q. 24, a. 9), the *stages* [or *grades* or *degrees*] of charity (*gradus caritatis*) are divided by the differences *beginning*, *progressing*, and *perfect*. Therefore, it seems that a difference among *states* should not thereby be drawn.

Objection 2: As has been explained (a. 1), *state* has to do with the condition of servitude or the condition of freedom. But the aforementioned differences, viz., *beginning*, *making progress*, and *perfect*, do not pertain to those conditions. Therefore, it is inappropriate to divide *state* by those differences.

Objection 3: Those who are *making progress* and those who are *perfect* seem to be distinguished by reference to *more* and *less*, which seems to pertain to the character of a *grade* or *degree* or *stage* (*gradus*). But as was explained above (a. 3), the division of *grades* is different from the division of *states*. Therefore, it is inappropriate to divide *states* by *beginning*, *making progress*, and *perfect*.

But contrary to this: In *Moralia* Gregory says, “There are three modes (*modi*) of the converted: *beginning*, *middle*, and *perfect*.” And in *Super Ezechiel* he says, “The beginning of virtue is one thing, progress in virtue is another thing, and perfection in virtue is yet another.”

I respond: As was explained above (a. 1), *state* has to do with freedom and servitude.

Now in spiritual matters there are two kinds of servitude and two kinds of freedom. One kind of servitude is the *servitude of sin* (*servitudo peccati*), the other is the *servitude of uprightness or justice* (*servitudo iustitiae*). Similarly, there are two kinds of freedom. One is *freedom from sin* (*libertas a peccato*), and the other is *freedom from uprightness or justice* (*libertas a iustitiae*). This is clear from the Apostle, who in Romans 6:20-22 says, “When you were servants of sin, you were free from uprightness ... but now, freed from sin, you have become servants of God.”

Now the servitude of sin or the servitude of uprightness exists when an individual is inclined by a habit of sin toward what is bad, or when he is inclined by the habit of uprightness toward what is good. Similarly, freedom from sin exists when an individual is not conquered by an inclination toward sin, whereas freedom from uprightness exists when he is not held back by his love of uprightness from what is bad. However, since a man is inclined by natural reason toward uprightness, whereas sin is contrary to natural reason, it follows that freedom from sin is *genuine* freedom and that it is joined to the servitude of uprightness, since through both of them a man tends toward what is fitting for him. Similarly, *genuine* servitude is the servitude of sin, which is joined to freedom from uprightness, since through the servitude of sin a man is kept from what is proper to him.

Now the fact that a man becomes either a servant of uprightness or a servant of sin happens through human effort (*per humanum studium*), just as the Apostle says in the same place (Romans 6:16): “The one to whom you yield yourselves as servants to obey, his servants you are whom you obey, whether it be servants of sin unto death or servants of obedience unto justice”. But in every human endeavor there is a beginning, a middle, and an end. And so it follows that the *spiritual state* of servitude and the *spiritual state* of liberty are divided into three, viz., (a) the *beginning*, which pertains to the *state of the beginners*; (b) the *middle*, which pertains to the *state of those making progress*; and (c) the *end*, which pertains to the *state of the perfect*.

Reply to objection 1: Freedom from sin is effected through charity, which, as Romans 5:5 says, “is poured into our heart by the Holy Spirit.” Thus it is that 2 Corinthians 3:17 says, “Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom.” And so the division of charity is the same as the division of the states pertaining to [genuine] spiritual freedom.

Reply to objection 2: Insofar as their states are being distinguished, men are called beginners, proficient, and perfect not because of just any sort of effort at all on their part, but, as has been explained, because of those efforts of theirs that pertain to spiritual freedom or servitude.

Reply to objection 3: As was previously explained (a. 3, ad 3), nothing prevents a *grade* and a *state* from coming together in the same subject. For even in worldly matters those who are free not only differ in *state* from servants, but also have higher [and lower] *grades* [of freedom among themselves].