

QUESTION 186

The Things that the Religious State Mainly Consists In

Next we have to consider the things that pertain to the religious state (*de his quae pertinent ad statum religionis*). On this matter there are four things to consider: first, the things that the religious state mainly consists in (question 186); second, the things that licitly belong to religious (question 187); third, the differences among religious (question 188); and, fourth, the entry into the religious state (question 189).

And on the first topic there are ten questions: (1) Is the religious state perfect? (2) Are religious bound to all the counsels? (3) Is voluntary poverty required for the religious state? (4) Is celibacy or continence (*continentia*) required for the religious state? (5) Is obedience required for the religious state? (6) Is it required that [all three of these counsels] fall under a vow? (7) Are these vows sufficient? (8) How do these vows compare with one another? (9) Does a religious always commit a mortal sin when he transgresses a statute of his rule? (10) Other things being equal, does a religious sin more grievously by the same kind of sin than a secular individual does?

Article 1

Does the religious state imply a state of perfection?

It seems that the religious state does not imply a state of perfection (*videtur quod religio non importet statum perfectionis*):

Objection 1: That which is necessary for salvation (*illud quod est necessitate salutis*) does not seem to pertain to the state of perfection. But religion (*religio*) is necessary for salvation, since, as Augustine says in *De Vera Religione*, through religion “we are bound again (*religamur*) to the one true God”—or else [the name] ‘religion’ derives from the fact that “we choose God again (*Deum reeligimus*), whom we had lost by neglecting Him,” as Augustine puts it in *De Civitate Dei* 10. Therefore, it seems that ‘religion’ does not name a state of perfection.

Objection 2: According to Tully, religion is “that which offers worship and ceremony to the divine nature.” But as is clear from what said above (q. 40, a. 2 and q. 183, a. 3), to offer God worship and ceremony seems to pertain more to the ministries of holy orders than to the diversity of states. Therefore, it seems that ‘religion’ does not name a state of perfection.

Objection 3: The state of perfection is distinguished from the state of beginners and from the state of those who are making progress. But some who are beginning and some who are progressing likewise are in religion or in the religious state (*in religione*). Therefore, ‘religion’ does not name a state of perfection.

Objection 4: Religion seems to be the locus of repentance; for *Decretals* 7, q. 1 says, “The holy synod commands that if anyone descends from episcopal dignity (*de pontificali dignitate*) to the life of monks and the place of repentance, he may never rise again to the episcopate (*ad pontificatum*).” But the locus of repentance is opposed to the state of perfection. Hence, in *De Ecclesiastica Hierarchia*, chap. 6 Dionysius puts penitents in the lowest place, viz., among “those to be cleansed.” Therefore, it seems that religion is not a state of perfection.

But contrary to this: In *Collationes Patrum* Abbot Moses says in speaking of religious, “We must know how to submit ourselves to the hunger of fasts, vigils, bodily toil, sparse clothing (*corporis nuditatem*), reading, and other acts of virtue, in order to mount by these steps to the perfection of charity.” But things that pertain to human action receive their species and their name from the act of intending the end. Therefore, religious belong to the state of perfection.

Likewise, in *De Ecclesiastica Hierarchia*, chap. 6 Dionysius says, “Those who are called servants of God are united to lovable perfection by pure service and subjection to God.”

I respond: As is clear from what has been said above (q. 141, a. 2), that which belongs to many in common is attributed antonomastically to that which it belongs to in an excellent way (*per excellentiam*). For instance, the name ‘fortitude’ claims for itself the virtue that preserves firmness of mind in the face of grave difficulties, and the name ‘temperance’ claims for itself the virtue that moderates the greatest pleasures.

Now as was established above (q. 81, aa. 1-2), religion is a virtue through which an individual offers something to the service and worship of God. And so, antonomastically, the religious are those who give themselves totally to the service of God—offering, as it were, a holocaust to God. Hence, in *Super Ezechiel* Gregory says, “There are those who reserve nothing for themselves, but sacrifice to almighty God their understanding, their tongue, their life, and the property they had taken possession of (*sensum, linguam, vitam atque substantiam quam perceperunt omnipotenti Deo immolant*).” But as is clear from what was said above (q. 184, a. 2), a man’s perfection consists in his totally adhering to God. Accordingly, ‘religion’ names a state of perfection.

Reply to objection 1: To offer certain things to the worship of God is indeed necessary for salvation, but an individual’s dedicating himself and what belongs to him totally to the worship of God is something that belongs to perfection.

Reply to objection 2: As was explained above when we were talking about the virtue of religion (q. 81, aa. 1 and 4; q. 85, a. 3), not only is it the case that what belongs to [the virtue of] religion is the offering of sacrifices and other things of this sort that are proper to religion, but it is also the case that insofar as they are referred to the service and honor of God, all the acts of the virtues become acts of religion. And on this score, if an individual dedicates his whole life to the service of God, his whole life belongs to [the virtue of] religion. Accordingly, because of the religious life that they lead, those who are in the state of perfection are called religious.

Reply to objection 3: As has been explained, ‘religion’ names the state of perfection from the intending of the end. Hence, it is not necessary that if someone is in the state of religion (*in religione*), then he is already perfect; instead, what is necessary is that he be tending toward perfection. Hence, in commenting on Matthew 19:21 (“If you wish to be perfect ...”), Origen says, “When an individual exchanges his riches for poverty in order to become perfect, he will not become altogether perfect in the moment at which he hands over his goods to the poor. But from that moment the contemplation of God (*speculatio Dei*) will lead him toward all the virtues.” And this is the sense in which not everyone in the religious state is perfect; instead, some are beginners and some are among those making progress.

Reply to objection 4: The state of religion was instituted mainly to acquire perfection through certain practices by which impediments to perfect charity are removed. Now when the impediments to perfect charity have been removed, the occasions of sin through which charity is totally removed are much decreased. So since repentance involves cutting out the causes of sin, it follows that the state of religion is the most fitting locus for repentance. Hence, in *Decretals* 33, q. 2, chap. *Admonere*, a man who had killed his wife is advised that it would be preferable for him to enter a monastery, which it describes as better and easier than doing public penance while remaining in the world.

Article 2

Is every religious bound to all the counsels?

It seems that every religious is bound to all the counsels (*quilibet religiosus teneatur ad omnia consilia*):

Objection 1: If an individual professes a certain state, then he is obligated to do all the things appropriate to that state. But every religious professes the state of perfection. Therefore, every religious

is bound to all the counsels that belong to the state of perfection.

Objection 2: In *Super Ezechiel* Gregory says, “He who renounces this present world and does all the good he can is like one who has already left Egypt and offers sacrifice in the wilderness.” But renouncing the world belongs specifically to religious. Therefore, it likewise belongs to them to do all the good they can. And so it seems that each of them is bound to fulfill all the counsels.

Objection 3: If it is not required for the state of perfection that an individual fulfill all the counsels, then it seems to be sufficient if he fulfills some of the counsels. But this is false, since, as is clear in the case of those observe continence, there are many in secular life who fulfill some of the counsels. Therefore, it seems that every religious, who is in the state of perfection, is bound to everything that belongs to perfection. But all the counsels are of this kind.

But contrary to this: An individual is not bound to what is supererogatory except by his own act of obligating himself. But every religious obligates himself to some specific things—some to these things and some to those. Therefore, not all of them are bound to all the things.

I respond: There are three ways in which something belongs to perfection:

In one way, *essentially*. And on this score, as was explained above (q. 184, a. 3), what belongs to perfection is the perfect observance of the precepts of charity.

The second way in which something belongs to perfection is *as a consequence (consequenter)*, in the sense that these things are consequent upon the perfection of charity—for instance, that an individual should bless someone who curses him and do other things of this sort which, even if they are contained in the precepts as regards the mind’s being prepared for them in order that they might be performed when necessity requires it, are nonetheless sometimes performed even without necessity because of a superabundance of charity.

The third way in which things belong to perfection is *as instruments and dispositions (instrumentaliter et dispositive)*, as with poverty, continence (*continentia*), abstinence [from food and drink], and other things of this sort.

Now it has been explained (a. 1) that it is the *perfection itself of charity* that is the end of the religious state, whereas the religious state is a certain sort of discipline or practice aimed at reaching perfection. Now individuals try to reach perfection by means of diverse sorts of practices, in the way that a physician can likewise make use of diverse medicines in order to bring about healing. But it is clear that it does not necessarily belong to someone who is acting for an end to have already attained the end. Instead, it is required that he be tending toward the end along some path. And so an individual who takes on the religious state is not obligated to have perfect charity, but he is obligated to tend toward perfect charity and to work toward possessing perfect charity (*operam dare ut habeat caritatem perfectam*).

For the same reason, he is not obligated to do the things that are *consequences* of the perfection of charity, though he is obligated to *intend* to do them, which is opposed to his *disdaining* them. Hence, he sins not by omitting them, but by disdaining them.

Similarly, he is not obligated carry out *all* the practices by which one arrives at perfection, but he is obligated to carry out specifically those practices that he is tasked with by the [religious] rule that he has professed.

Reply to objection 1: An individual who enters religious life (*transit ad religionem*) does not profess that he is perfect, but instead professes that he is applying his zeal to pursue perfection, in the same way that an individual who enters the schools does not profess to have scientific knowledge, but instead professes to be studying in order to acquire scientific knowledge. Hence, as Augustine puts it in *De Civitate Dei* 8, Pythagoras wanted to profess not that he was wise, but that he was “a lover of wisdom.” And so a religious transgresses his profession not if he is not perfect, but only if he disdains tending toward perfection.

Reply to objection 2: Just as everyone is obligated to love God with his whole heart, even though there is a total sum of perfection that cannot be omitted without sin and a total sum of perfection that can

be omitted without sin (assuming, as was explained above (q. 184, a. 2), that contempt is not present), so, too, all individuals, both religious and secular, are obligated in some way to do whatever good they are able to do. For it is to everyone in general that Ecclesiastes 9:10 says, “Whatever your hand is able to do, do it earnestly.” And yet there is a way of fulfilling this precept by which sin is avoided, viz., if the man does what he is able to do insofar as his state of life (*conditio sui status*) requires it—as long as there is no contempt for doing better things through which his mind is firmed up against spiritual progress.

Reply to objection 3: Some counsels are such that if they were omitted, then a man’s whole life would be tangled up in secular affairs, e.g., if he owned property, or was married, or did something of this sort that touched upon the essential vows of religion. And so religious are obligated to observe all such counsels.

However, there are certain counsels concerning certain better particular acts which can be omitted without a man’s life being entangled in secular acts. Hence, it is not necessary for religious to be bound to all such counsels.

Article 3

Is poverty required for the perfection of the religious state?

It seems that poverty is not required for the perfection of the religious state (*non requiratur ad perfectionem religionis*):

Objection 1: It does not seem to belong to the state of perfection that anything be done illicitly. But it seems illicit for a man to relinquish all of his own belongings; for in 2 Corinthians 8:12 the Apostle describes to the faithful the way to give alms when he says, “If the will is prompt, then it is received in accord with what the man has, i.e., so that you retain what is needed.” And afterwards (8:13) he adds, “... in order that what is relief to others not be for you a tribulation”—where a Gloss says, “that is, poverty.” And a Gloss on 1 Timothy 6:8 (“... having food and the wherewithal to be clothed ...”) says, “Even though we brought nothing with us and will take nothing away, these temporal things are not to be given up altogether.” Therefore, it seems that voluntary poverty is not required for the perfection of the religious state (*ad perfectionem religionis*).

Objection 2: If anyone exposes himself to danger, then he commits a sin. But if an individual, having left everything behind, pursues voluntary poverty, he exposes himself to danger, both (a) spiritual danger—this according to Proverbs 30:9 (“Lest, perhaps, ... compelled by poverty, I should steal and forswear the name of my God”) and according to Ecclesiasticus 27:1 (“Many perish because they are destitute”)—and (b) bodily danger, since Ecclesiastes 7:13 says, (“Just as wisdom protects one, so, too, does money protect one”). And in *Ethics* 4 the Philosopher says, “The loss of riches seems to be the ruin of the man himself, since a man lives off of his riches.” Therefore, it seems that voluntary poverty is not required for the perfection of the religious life (*ad perfectionem religiosae vitae*).

Objection 3: As *Ethics* 2 says, “Virtue consists in a mean.” But an individual who leaves everything through voluntary poverty seems to stand not in the middle, but at the endpoint. Therefore, he does not act virtuously. And so this does not belong to the perfection of religious life.

Objection 4: The ultimate perfection of a man consists in beatitude. But riches contribute to beatitude; for Ecclesiasticus 31:8 says, “Blessed is the rich man who is found without stain.” And in *Ethics* 1 the Philosopher says that riches contribute “instrumentally” to happiness (*organice deseveriunt ad felicitatem*). Therefore, voluntary poverty is not required for the perfection of the religious state.

Objection 5: The state of bishops is more perfect than the religious state. But as was established above (q. 185, a. 5), bishops can possess their own property. Therefore, so can religious.

Objection 6: Giving alms is a work that is especially acceptable to God and, as Chrysostom says,

“a medicine that especially works in the case of repentance.” But poverty excludes the generous giving of alms (*excludit eleemosynarum largitionem*). Therefore, it seems that poverty does not belong to the perfection of the religious state.

But contrary to this: In *Moralia* 7 Gregory says, “There are some among the just who, having girded themselves in order to lay hold of the very height of perfection, aim at higher objects interiorly while leaving behind all things exteriorly.” But as has been explained (aa. 1-2), to gird oneself to lay hold of the very height of perfection properly pertains to religious. Therefore, it is fitting for them to leave everything behind exteriorly through voluntary poverty.

I respond: As was explained above (a. 2), the state of religion is a certain sort of practice or discipline by means of which an individual arrives at the perfection of charity. For this it is necessary that an individual keep his affections totally removed from worldly things; for in *Confessiones* 10 Augustine says in speaking to God, “He loves You less who loves something along with you which he does not love because of You.” Hence, in *83 Quaestiones* Augustine says, “The nourishment of charity is the lessening of excessive sentient desire (*imminutio cupiditatis*); the perfection of charity is no excessive sentient desire.” But by the very fact that an individual possesses worldly things, his mind is drawn toward love of them. Hence, in his letter *Ad Paulinum et Therasiam* Augustine says, “Earthly things are loved more strongly when they are possessed than when they are [merely] desired. For why else did that young man go away sad, except because he [already] possessed great riches? For it is one thing not to want to lay hold of things that one does not possess, and another thing to tear away things that one already possesses; the former are repudiated as extraneous, the latter are amputated like a limb.” And in *Super Matthaenum* Chrysostom says, “The possession of wealth kindles a greater flame, and the desire for it becomes stronger.”

And so it is that in order to acquire the perfection of charity, the first foundation is voluntary poverty, in the sense that an individual lives without property of his own, in keeping with our Lord’s saying (Matthew 19:21), “If you wish to be perfect, go and sell all that you possess and give it to the poor, and come, follow me.”

Reply to objection 1: As a Gloss on the same passage adds, “The Apostle said this (viz., ‘that it not be for you a tribulation’, i.e., poverty) not in the sense that it was better, but because he fears for the weak, whom he admonishes to give in such a way as not to suffer privation.” Hence, similarly, the other Gloss should not be taken to mean that it is impermissible to abandon all temporal things, but that this is not required with necessity.

Thus in *De Officio* 1 Ambrose says, “Our Lord does not will”—viz., with the necessity of a precept—“that one’s wealth be poured out all at once, but rather that it be disbursed—unless perhaps in the way that Elisha slew his oxen and fed the poor with what he possessed, so that he would not be held back by any household care.”

Reply to objection 2: An individual who gives up all his belongings because of Christ does not expose himself to danger, either spiritual or bodily.

For spiritual danger arises from poverty when the poverty is not voluntary, since it is from an affection for adding to one’s money, which is suffered by those who are poor involuntarily, that a man falls into many sins—this according to 1 Timothy 6:9 (“Those who want to become rich fall into temptation and into the snares of the devil”). The affection in question is set aside by those who pursue voluntary poverty and, as is clear from what has been said, is more dominant in those who [already] possess riches.

Likewise, bodily danger does not threaten those who, with the intention of following Christ, leave all their belongings behind and commit themselves to God’s providence. Hence, in *De Sermone Domini in Monte* Augustine says, “Anxiety about lacking what is necessary should not be close at hand for those who are seeking the kingdom of God and His justice.”

Reply to objection 3: According to the Philosopher in *Ethics* 2, the mean of virtue is taken from

right reason and not from the quantity of a thing. And so whatever can be in accordance with right reason is made more virtuous, and not vicious, by the magnitude of the quantity.

Now it would lie outside of right reason for an individual to consume all his wealth through intemperance or for no useful purpose. On the other hand, it is in accord with right reason for an individual to throw away his riches in order to free himself for the contemplation of wisdom; even certain philosophers are said to have done this. For instance, in his letter *Ad Paulinum* Jerome says: “When Crates of Thebes, at one time a very wealthy man, journeyed to Athens to study philosophy, he got rid of a large amount of gold; he thought that he could not possess both gold and virtue at the same time.” Hence, *a fortiori*, it is in accord with right reason for a man to leave behind all that he possesses in order to follow Christ perfectly. Hence, in his letter *Ad rusticum monachum* Jerome says: “Poor yourself, follow Christ the poor (*nudum Christum nudus sequere*).”

Reply to objection 4: There are two sorts of beatitude or happiness (*beatitudo sive felicitas*). One is *complete* (*perfecta*) and we look forward to it in the future life, whereas the other is *incomplete* (*imperfecta*)—and it is in accord with incomplete happiness that some are called blessed in the present life.

Again, as is clear from the Philosopher in *Ethics* 10, there are two sorts of happiness *in the present life*, one involving the *active life* and the other involving the *contemplative life*. Now as regards the happiness of the active life, which consists in exterior operations, riches contribute to it instrumentally, since, as the Philosopher explains in *Ethics* 1, “We accomplish many things through our friends, through our wealth, and through our political power as instruments (*sicut per quaedam organa*).” By contrast, riches do not contribute much to the happiness of the contemplative life, but instead impede it, insofar as by our anxiety about them they impede the peace of mind that is especially necessary for one who contemplates. And this is why in *Ethics* 10 the Philosopher says, “Many things are needed for [exterior] actions, but the one who contemplates needs no such things”—viz., external goods—“for his operation. In fact, they are impediments to his contemplation.”

On the other hand, an individual is ordered toward future beatitude through charity. And since voluntary poverty is an effective practice for arriving at perfect charity, it contributes much to the pursuit of heavenly beatitude, and this is why in Matthew 19:21 our Lord says, “... go and sell all that you possess and give it to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven.” By contrast, riches that are possessed are in their own right apt to prevent the perfection of charity, mainly by enticing the mind and distracting it. Hence, Matthew 13:22 says, “The cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches suffocate the word” of God. For as Gregory puts it, “By not allowing good desire to enter the heart, they prevent the entry of the breath of life.” And so it is difficult to preserve charity when surrounded by riches (*inter divitias*). Hence, in Matthew 19:23 our Lord says, “It is difficult for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven.” This should be understood as applying to someone who *actually has* riches, since of one who *puts his affections into* riches, He says that it is *impossible*—this according Chrysostom’s exposition of our Lord’s adding (19:24), “It is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven.”

And this is why [this passage from Ecclesiasticus 31:8] does not say simply that the rich man is blessed; instead, it says that the rich man is blessed “who is without stain and does not run off after gold.” And since he has done something difficult, it adds (Ecclesiasticus 31:9): “Who is he? And we will praise him, for he has done wonderful things in his life”—viz., though *surrounded by* riches, he does not *love* riches.

Reply to objection 5: The episcopal state is not ordered toward *acquiring* perfection, but instead, on the basis of the perfection that the individual [*already*] *has*, he governs others by ministering not only spiritual goods but also temporal goods. This involves an active life, in which, as has been explained (ad 4), there are many things that have to be done by means of wealth as an instrument. And so it is not required of bishops, who profess to be governing the flock of Christ, that they lack personal property, in

the way that it is required of religious, who profess a discipline for *acquiring* perfection.

Reply to objection 6: The renunciation of one's own wealth is related to the generous giving of alms in the way that a universal is related to a particular and in the way that a holocaust is related to a sacrifice. Hence, in *Super Ezechiel* Gregory says, "Those who supply assistance to the needy out of the things they possess offer a *sacrifice* in the good that they do, since they immolate something for God and reserve something for themselves, whereas those who reserve nothing for themselves offer a *holocaust*, which is greater than a sacrifice."

Likewise, in *Contra Vigilantium* Jerome says, "When you assert that those do better who retain the use of their possessions and dole out the fruits of their possessions to the poor, it is not I but the Lord Who answers you: 'If you wish to be perfect, etc.'" And afterwards he adds, "This man whom you praise belongs to the second and third level, and we commend him as well—as long as we acknowledge that the first level is to be preferred to the second and third levels." And so in order to rule out the error of Vigilantium, in *De Ecclesiasticis Dogmatibus* it says, "It is a good thing to dole out one's goods by disbursing them to the poor; it is better, with the intention of following our Lord, to give them away all at once and, freed from anxiety, to be poor with Christ."

Article 4

Is perpetual continence required for the perfection of the religious state?

It seems that perpetual continence (*perpetua continentia*) is not required for the perfection of the religious state:

Objection 1: All perfection of the Christian life began with Christ's apostles. But the apostles do not seem to have observed continence; this is clear in the case of Peter, who, in Matthew 8:14, is said to have had a mother-in-law. Therefore, it seems that perpetual continence is not required for perfection.

Objection 2: The first example of perfection is shown to us in Abraham, to whom the Lord said in Genesis 17:1, "Walk before me and be perfect." But it is not necessary for the copy (*exemplar*) to exceed what is being copied (*exemplatum*). Therefore, perpetual continence is not required for the perfection of the religious state.

Objection 3: What is required for the perfection of the religious state (*ad perfectionem religionis*) is required in every instance of the religious state (*in omni religione*). But some religious have wives. Therefore, the perfection of the religious state does not demand perpetual continence.

But contrary to this: In 2 Corinthians 7:1 the Apostle says, "Let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of the flesh and of the spirit, bringing our sanctification to perfection in the fear of God." But cleanness of the flesh and of the spirit is preserved through continence; for 1 Corinthians 7:34 says, "The woman who is unmarried and a virgin thinks about the things of the Lord, in order that she might be holy in body and in spirit." Therefore, the perfection of the religious state requires continence.

I respond: What is required for the religious state is the removal of those things by which a man is impeded from totally devoting himself to the service of God. Sexual union keeps the mind from being totally devoted to the service of God, and this in two ways.

In one way, because of *strength of the pleasure*, by the frequent experience of which sentient desire grows, as the Philosopher points out in *Ethics* 3. And so it is that sexual activity draws the soul back from the perfect intention of tending toward God. This is why, in *Soliloquiorum* 1, Augustine says, "I think there is nothing that throws the male mind down from its height any more than the blandishments of a woman and the bodily contact without which a wife cannot be had."

In a second way, because of the *solicitude that is heaped upon a man by the management of a wife and children and the temporal things which are needed for their sustenance*. This is why the Apostle

says (1 Corinthians 7:32), “He who is without a wife is solicitous for the things of the Lord and for how to please the Lord, whereas he who has a wife is solicitous for the things of the world and for how to please his wife.”

And so perpetual continence is required for the perfection of the religious state in the same way that voluntary poverty is. Hence, just as Vigilantius was condemned for equating riches with poverty, so Iovinianus was condemned for equating marriage with virginity.

Reply to objection 1: The perfection not only of poverty but also of continence was introduced by Christ, who in Matthew 19:12 says, “There are eunuchs who have castrated themselves for the sake of the kingdom of heaven.” And afterwards he adds, “He who can take it, let him take it.” And lest anyone’s hope of arriving at perfection should be destroyed, he lifted up to the state of perfection even those whom He found joined in matrimony.

Now husbands could not have left their wives without injury being done, in the way that it could happen without injury that a man leave behind his riches. And this is why Peter, whom He found joined in matrimony, did not separate from his wife. However, John, who wished to marry, He summoned back from getting married.

Reply to objection 2: As Augustine says in *De Bono Coniugali*, “The chastity of celibates is better than nuptial chastity, one instance of which Abraham had in actuality and two in habit. Indeed, he lived his conjugal life chastely, and he could have remained chaste without marriage, but it was not necessary at that time.”

Nevertheless, it is not the case that because the ancient patriarchs had perfection of mind together with wealth and marriage, which pertained to the magnitude of their virtue, weaker individuals should presume to have such great virtue that they could attain to perfection together with riches and matrimony—just as it is not the case that a man presumes to attack his enemies unarmed just because Samson slew many of his enemies with the jawbone of an ass. For if the time had been right for preserving continence and poverty, those patriarchs would have observed them very zealously.

Reply to objection 3: Those modes of living in accord with which people make use of marriage are not, simply and absolutely speaking, instances of religion, but are instead instances of religion *in a certain respect*, viz., insofar they participate in some way in certain things that belong to the religious state.

Article 5

Does obedience belong to the perfection of the religious state?

It seems that obedience does not belong to the perfection of the religious state:

Objection 1: The things that seem to belong to perfection are those which are supererogatory and which not everyone is bound to. But all are bound to obey their prelates—this according to Hebrews 13:17 (“Obey your prelates and be subject to them”). Therefore, it seems that obedience does not belong to the perfection of the religious state.

Objection 2: Obedience seems to belong properly to those who ought to be governed by someone else’s understanding, i.e., to those who lack discretion. But in Hebrews 5:14 the Apostle says, “Solid food is for the perfect, who have by habituation an understanding that is exercised in distinguishing what is good and what is bad.” Therefore, it seems that obedience does not belong to the state of those who are perfect.

Objection 3: If obedience were required for the perfection of the religious state, then it would have to be fitting for *all* religious. But it is not fitting for all of them, since there are certain religious who live solitary lives and do not have superiors whom they obey. Again, the prelates of religious orders do

not themselves seem to be obligated to obey anyone. Therefore, obedience does not seem to belong to the perfection of the religious state.

Objection 4: If a vow of obedience were required for the religious state, then it would follow that religious are obligated to obey their prelates in all things, just as through a vow of continence they are obligated to abstain from all sexual activity. But as was established above when we were talking about the virtue of obedience (q. 104, a. 5), they are not obligated to obey in all things. Therefore, a vow of obedience is not required for the religious state.

Objection 5: The service that is most of all acceptable to God is service that is performed freely and not out of necessity—this according to 2 Corinthians 9:7 (“... not out of sadness or necessity”). But things that are done out of obedience are done out of a necessity of precept. Therefore, good works are done in a more praiseworthy manner when an individual does them by his own free will (*proprie sponte facit*). Therefore, a vow of obedience is not appropriate for the religious state, through which men seek to move forward to better things.

But contrary to this: The perfection of the religious state consists especially in the imitation of Christ—this according to Matthew 19:21 (“If you wish to be perfect, go and sell all that you possess and give it to the poor, and come, follow me”). But it is the obedience in Christ that is commended most of all—this according to Philippians 2:8 (“He became obedient unto death”). Therefore, it seems that obedience belongs to the perfection of the religious state.

I respond: As was explained above (aa. 2-3), the religious state is a certain sort of discipline or practice tending toward perfection. Now when an individual is instructed or put through exercises in order to reach some end, then he has follow the direction of someone in accord with whose judgment he is instructed or put through the exercises, in the way that a student is subject to a teacher. And this is why, in those things that belong to the religious life, religious have be subject to someone’s instruction or command. Hence, *Decretals* 7, q. 1 says, “The monastic life has the character of subjection and discipleship.” But it is through obedience that a man is subject to someone else’s command and instruction. And this is why obedience is required for the perfection of the religious state.

Reply to objection 1: To obey one’s prelates in matters that involve *the necessity of virtue* is something that is not supererogatory but common to everyone. By contrast, to obey one’s prelates in matters that involve *the practice of perfection* is something that pertains properly to religious. And this latter sort of obedience is compared to the former as a universal to a particular. For those who live in the world retain something for themselves and give something to God, and it is in accord with the latter that they submit themselves to obeying their prelates. By contrast, as is clear from what was said above (aa. 1 and 3), those who live in the religious state (*qui vivunt in religione*) give themselves and all that they have *totally* to God. Hence, their obedience is *universal*.

Reply to objection 2: As the Philosopher explains in *Ethics* 2, men who exercise themselves in works arrive at certain habits which are such that when they acquire them, they are especially adept at performing the same acts. In this way, then, those who have not yet attained perfection arrive at perfection by obeying.

On the other hand, those who have already acquired perfection become especially prompt at obeying, not in the sense that they need to be directed in order to acquire perfection, but in the sense that they thereby preserve themselves in what pertains to perfection.

Reply to objection 3: The subjection of religious has mainly to do with bishops, who are compared to them as perfecter to those being perfected. This is clear from Dionysius in *De Ecclesiastica Hierarchia*, chap. 6, where he says, “The monastic order is subjected to the perfective powers of the bishops, and is educated by their divine illuminations.” Hence, neither hermits nor even the prelates of religious orders are excused from obedience to their bishops. And even if they are totally or partially exempt from their diocesan bishops, they are still obligated to obey the Supreme Pontiff not only in those matters that they share in common with others, but even in those matters that specifically pertain to the

discipline of the religious state.

Reply to objection 4: The vow of obedience that belongs to the religious state extends to the arrangement of the whole of human life. And on this score, the vow of obedience has a sort of universality, even though it does not extend to all particular acts, (a) some of which do not pertain to the religious state, since they do not have to do with matters that involve the love of God and neighbor, e.g., stroking one's beard or lifting up a stick from the ground, and similar acts which do not fall under a vow or under obedience, whereas (b) some are contrary to the religious state. Nor is the case similar to that of the vow of continence, by which acts contrary to the religious state are altogether excluded.

Reply to objection 5: A necessity of coercion (*necessitas coactionis*) makes for involuntariness and so excludes the notions of praise and merit. But the necessity that follows upon obedience is not a necessity of coercion, but is instead *a necessity of free will*, insofar as the man wills to obey, even if what is commanded is such that he would have not willed it in its own right. And so since through a vow of obedience a man subjects himself, for the sake of God, to doing with necessity certain things that do not please him in their own right, the things he does are by that very fact more pleasing to God, even if they are little things. For a man can give nothing greater to God than to subject his own will to the will of another for the sake of God. Hence, in *Collationes Patrum* it says, "The worst class of monks are the Sarabaites, who, providing for their own needs and free of the yoke of superiors, have the freedom to do whatever they please—even if they are more consumed with their work day and night than those who live in religious communities."

Article 6

Is it required for the perfection of the religious state that poverty, continence, and obedience fall under a vow?

It seems that it is not required for the perfection of the religious state that the three things just mentioned, viz., poverty, continence, and obedience, fall under a vow:

Objection 1: The discipline for receiving perfection is taken from what our Lord has handed down. But in laying down the form of perfection in Matthew 19:21, our Lord said, "If you wish to be perfect, go and sell all that you possess and give it to the poor," with no mention being made of a vow. Therefore, it seems that no vow is required for the discipline of the religious state.

Objection 2: A vow consists in a certain promise made to God; hence, in Ecclesiastes 5:3, after the wise man had said, "If you vow something to God, do not delay in fulfilling it," he immediately adds, "For a faithless and foolish promise displeases Him." But when the thing is on display, a promise is not required. Therefore, it suffices for the perfection of the religious state that the individual preserve poverty, continence, and obedience, without a vow.

Objection 3: In *Ad Pollentium De Coniugiis Adulterinis* Augustine says, "The services we render are more pleasing when we are permitted not to render them and yet render them out of love." But things that are done without a vow are such that it is permissible not to render them, whereas this is not permissible in the case of things which are done with a vow. Therefore, it seems to be more pleasing to God if an individual preserves poverty, continence, and obedience without a vow. Therefore, it is not the case that a vow is required for the perfection of the religious state.

But contrary to this: In the Old Law the Nazarites were sanctified with a vow—this according to Numbers 6:2 ("When a man or woman makes a vow to be sanctified and wills to consecrate himself or herself to the Lord, etc."). But as Gregory's Gloss on the same passage says, these individuals signify "those who reach the summit of perfection." Therefore, a vow is required for the state of perfection.

I respond: As is clear from what was said above (q. 184, a. 5), being a religious involves being in

the state of perfection. But for the state of perfection an obligation is required with respect to those things that belong to perfection. Now it is clear from what has gone before (aa. 3 and 5) that the perfection of the Christian life involves poverty, continence, and obedience. And so the state of religion requires that the individual be bound to these three things by a vow. Hence, in *Super Ezechiel* Gregory says, “When an individual vows to God everything that he has, everything in his life, everything that he knows, it is a holocaust”—which pertains, he later notes, to those “who abandon the present world.”

Reply to objection 1: Our Lord said that the perfection of a life involves an individual’s following Him in not just any way at all, but in such away that in the end he would not turn back; hence, in Luke 9:62 He said, “No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God.”

And even though certain of His disciples did turn back, nonetheless, Peter, speaking for the others after our Lord had asked, “Do you also wish to go away?”, replied, “Lord, to whom shall we go?” Hence, in *De Consensus Evangelistarum* Augustine likewise says, “As Matthew and Mark report, Peter and Andrew followed Him after hauling their boats on to the shore—not, as it were, for the sake of turning back, but in order to follow Him as He was commanding them to.” This unchangeability in the following of Christ is strengthened by a vow. And so a vow is required for the perfection of the religious state.

Reply to objection 2: As Gregory explains, the perfection of the religious state requires that an individual “display that he is living his whole life for God.” But a man cannot actually display his whole life to God, since his life is not a simultaneous whole but is instead lived successively. Hence, there is no way for a man to display his whole life to God other than through the obligation that accompanies a vow.

Reply to objection 3: Among the other things that we are permitted not to render is likewise our own freedom, which a man holds more dear than other things. Hence, when an individual by his own will deprives himself of the freedom to hold himself back from the things that pertain to serving God, this is something more acceptable to God than anything else. Hence, in his letter *Ad Armentarium et Paulinam* Augustine says, “Do not regret that you have made the vow; just the opposite, rejoice that what would have been permissible for you to your detriment is no longer permissible for you. Happy is the necessity that compels one to better things.”

Article 7

Is it appropriate to claim that the perfection of the religious state consists in these three vows?

It seems inappropriate to claim that the perfection of the religious state consists in these three vows:

Objection 1: The perfection of a life consists more in interior acts than in exterior acts—this according to Romans 14:17 (“The kingdom of God is not food and drink, but justice and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit”). But through a vow that belongs to the religious state an individual is bound to those things that belong to perfection. Therefore, the religious state should involve vows with respect to interior acts, e.g., a vow of contemplation, a vow of love of God and neighbor, and others of this sort rather than a vow of poverty, a vow of continence, and a vow of obedience, which pertain to exterior acts.

Objection 2: The three things in question fall under a vow insofar as they pertain to certain practices tending toward perfection. But there are many other acts that religious exercise, e.g., abstinence [from food], vigils, and other things of this sort. Therefore, it seems inappropriate to say that the three vows in question pertain to the essence of the state of perfection (*inconvenienter ista tria vota dicantur essentialiter statum perfectionis pertinere*).

Objection 3: Through the vow of obedience an individual is bound to fulfill, in accord with the command of a superior, *everything* that pertains to the practice of perfection. Therefore, the vow of

obedience is sufficient without the other two vows.

Objection 4: It is not only wealth that belongs to the external goods, but honor as well. Therefore, if through the vow of poverty religious give up riches, there should likewise be another vow through which they disdain worldly honors.

But contrary to this: In *Decretals, Extra, De Statu Monachorum* it says: “The preservation of chastity and the abdication of property (*custodia castitatis et abdication properitatis*) are affixed to the monastic rule.”

I respond: There are three ways in which the religious state can be considered: (a) insofar as it is a *certain practice that tends toward the perfection of charity*; (b) insofar as it *keeps the human mind unperturbed by exterior anxieties*—this according to 1 Corinthians 7:32 (“I want you to be free of worry”); and (c) insofar as it is a *sort of holocaust through which an individual offers himself and what belongs to him totally to God*. Accordingly, the religious state is made into a whole out of the three vows in question.

For, first of all, as regards the practice of perfection, it is required that an individual remove from himself those things by which his affections could be prevented from tending totally toward God—which is what perfect charity consists in. Now there are three things of that sort. First, *excessive sentient desire for external goods (cupiditas exteriorum bonorum)*, which is removed by the vow of poverty. The second is *excessive sentient desire for pleasurable goods (concupiscentia sensibilibum delectationum)*, among which sexual pleasures are the most prominent; and these are excluded by the vow of continence. The third is *disorder in the human will*, which is excluded by the vow of obedience.

Similarly, the unrest that stems from worldly anxiety presses upon a man mainly with respect to three things. First, with respect to *managing exterior things*, and this anxiety is removed from a man by the vow of poverty. Second, with respect to *a wife and children*, and this is eliminated by the vow of continence. Third, with respect to *arranging his own acts*, and this is eliminated by the vow of obedience, by which an individual commits himself to another’s arrangement.

Similarly, as Gregory says in *Super Ezechiel*, “A holocaust occurs when an individual offers everything that he has to God.” Now according to the Philosopher in *Ethics* 1, what a man has is a threefold good. First, *the good of exterior things*; this the individual offers totally to God by the vow of voluntary poverty. Second, *the good of his own body*; this the individual offers to God mainly by the vow of continence, through which he renounces the greatest bodily pleasures. Third, *the good of his soul*; this the individual offers totally to God through obedience, by which he offers to God his own will, where it is through his will that a man makes use of all the powers and habits that belong to his soul.

And so the religious state is appropriately made into a whole out of the three vows.

Reply to objection 1: As was explained above (a. 1), the religious state is ordered toward the perfection of charity as its end, and this involves all the interior acts of the virtues, the mother of which is charity—this according to 1 Corinthians 13:4ff. (“Charity is patient, is kind, etc.”). And so the interior acts of the virtues, e.g., acts of humility and of patience and others of this sort, do not fall under the vow of religion, which is ordered toward them as toward an end.

Reply to objection 2: All the other observances of the religious orders (*religionum observantiae*) are ordered toward the three principal vows in question.

For if any of these observances is instituted in the religious orders to procure the necessities of life, e.g., working, begging, or other observances of this sort, it is referred to *poverty*, for the preservation of which religious procure their own necessities of life in these ways.

On the other hand, observances by which the body is weakened, e.g., vigils, fasts, and any others of this sort that there might be, are directly ordered toward observing the vow of *continence*.

And if in the religious orders observances are instituted that involve human acts by which an individual is ordered toward the end of the religious state, viz., love of God and neighbor, e.g., reading, praying, visiting the sick, or anything else of this sort, they are included under the vow of *obedience*,

which belongs to a will that orders its acts toward that end in accord with someone else's commands.

Now a distinctive [religious] habit accompanies all three vows as a sign of being bound by them. The habit that belongs to the religious rule in question is given or blessed at the same time that [the vows] are professed (*cum professione*).

Reply to objection 3: Through obedience an individual offers to God his own will, which is such that even if everything human is subject to it, there are nonetheless certain things that are specifically subject *only* to it, viz., human actions, since the passions belong to the *sentient appetite* as well. And so the vows of continence and poverty were necessary in order to curb those *passions*, having to do with bodily pleasures and desirable exterior things, that impede the perfection of life, whereas the vow of obedience is required to arrange one's *proper actions* in the way required for the perfection of life.

Reply to objection 4: As the Philosopher explains in *Ethics* 4, honor is, properly speaking and in truth, due only for virtue, but since external goods serve as instruments for certain acts of the virtues, some honor is shown for the excellence of those goods as well—and mainly by the common people, who recognize only exterior excellence. Therefore, it is not fitting for religious, who tend toward the perfection of virtue, to renounce the sort of honor that is shown to God and to saintly men because of virtue; as Psalm 138:17 says, “Your friends, O God, are made exceedingly honorable to me.” But the honor that is shown for exterior excellence they do reject by the very fact that they leave behind their worldly life. Hence, no special vow is required for this.

Article 8

Is the vow of obedience the most important of the three vows of the religious state?

It seems that the vow of obedience is not the most important of the three vows of the religious state:

Objection 1: The perfection of the Christian life took its source from Christ. But Christ specifically gave the counsel concerning poverty (Matthew 19:21), whereas He is not said to have given the counsel concerning obedience. Therefore, the vow of poverty is more important than the vow of obedience.

Objection 2: Ecclesiasticus 26:20 says, “No weight (*ponderatio*) [of any good] is worth a continent soul.” But a vow that has to do with a thing that is worth more is more eminent. Therefore, the vow of continence is more eminent than the vow of obedience.

Objection 3: To the extent that a vow is more important, it seems to be more indispensable. But one of the *Decretals* in *De Statu Monachorum* says that the vows of poverty and continence are conjoined to the monastic rule “to such an extent that not even the supreme Pontiff can grant permission [to break the vows]”—and yet he *can* grant permission for a religious not to obey his prelate. Therefore, it seems that the vow of obedience is less important than the vow of poverty and the vow of continence.

But contrary to this: In *Moralia* 35 Gregory says, “In the Law obedience is rightly placed before sacrificial victims, since through victims something else's flesh is sacrificed, whereas through obedience an individual's own will is sacrificed.” But as was explained above (aa. 1 and 3), the vows of the religious state are a sort of holocaust. Therefore, the vow of obedience is the principal one among all the vows of the religious state.

I respond: The vow of obedience is the principal one among the three vows of the religious state, and this for three reasons:

First, because through the vow of obedience a man offers God something greater, viz., his will itself, which is more important than his own body offered to God through continence, and more important than the exterior things offered to God through the vow of poverty. Hence, what is done out of obedience is more acceptable to God than what is done through one's own proper will—this in accord

with what Jerome says in *Ad Rusticum Monachum*: “My words are intended to teach you not to rely on your own judgment,” and a little later, “You should not do what you want to; you should eat what you are told to; you may possess as much as you receive; you should wear what is given to you.” Hence, even a fast is not rendered acceptable to God by one’s own will—this according to Isaiah 58:3 (“Behold, in the day of your fast your own will is found”).

Second, because the vow of obedience contains the other vows under itself, but not vice versa. For even if a religious is bound by vow to observe continence and poverty, these things nonetheless also fall under obedience, which involves many other things beyond continence and poverty.

Third, because the vow of obedience properly extends to acts that are close to the end of the religious state, and a thing is better to the extent that it is closer to the end. And because of this it is also the case that the vow of obedience is more essential to the religious state. For if, without a vow of obedience, an individual observes voluntary poverty and continence, even with a vow, this does not belong to the religious state, which is preferable even to virginity itself observed with a vow. For in *De Virginitate* Augustine says, “No one, as far as I know, has dared to prefer virginity to the monastery.”

Reply to objection 1: The counsel of obedience is included in the very following of Christ, since an individual who obeys follows the will of another. And so a vow of obedience pertains to perfection more than a vow of poverty does, since, as Jerome puts it in *Super Matthaicum* 19:27 (“We have left everything ...”), “Peter added what pertained to perfection when he said, ‘... and have followed You.’”

Reply to objection 2: This passage establishes that continence is preferred not to all other virtuous acts, but to conjugal chastity or, again, to the exterior riches of gold and silver, which are measured by weight.

An alternative reply is that ‘continence’ is being understood here in a general way to mean, as was established above (q. 155, a. 4, ad 1), abstaining from *every* evil.

Reply to objection 3: As regards the vow of obedience, the Pope cannot give a dispensation to a religious in such a way that he is not bound to obey any prelate at all in those matters that pertain to the perfection of life, since he cannot exempt him from obedience to the Pope himself. Yet he can exempt him from being subject to some lower prelate—which is not to dispense him from the vow of obedience.

Article 9

Does a religious always commit a mortal sin when he transgresses what is contained in his religious rule?

It seems that a religious always commits a mortal sin when he transgresses what is contained in his religious rule (*religiosus semper peccet mortaliter transgrediendo ea quae sunt in regula*):

Objection 1: As is clear from the fact that in 1 Timothy 5: 11-12 the Apostle says that the [young] widows who wish to marry “incur condemnation for having violated their first pledge (*primam fidem*),” to act contrary to a vow is a damnable sin. But religious are bound to their rule by the vow of their profession. Therefore, they commit a mortal sin when they transgress what is contained in the rule.

Objection 2: The rule is imposed on a religious like a sort of law. But an individual who transgresses a precept of the law commits a mortal sin. Therefore, it seems that a monk who transgresses what is contained in his rule commits a mortal sin.

Objection 3: Contempt brings with it mortal sin. But an individual who repeatedly does something (*frequenter aliquid iterat*) that he ought not to do seems to be sinning out of contempt. Therefore, it seems that if a religious repeatedly transgresses what is contained in his rule, then he commits a mortal sin.

But contrary to this: The religious state is more secure than the state of secular life; hence, at the

beginning of *Moralia* Gregory compares the secular life to a stormy sea and the religious life to a tranquil harbor. But if every transgression of what is contained in the rule tied a religious to a mortal sin, then the religious state would be extremely precarious because of the great number of the observances. Therefore, it is not the case that every transgression of what is contained in the rule is a mortal sin.

I respond: As is clear from what has been said (a. 2 and a. 7), there are two ways in which something is contained in a rule:

In one way, as *the end of the rule*, as, for instance, things that involve acts of the virtues. And a transgression of those things, to the extent that they fall under a precept in general, involves mortal sin (*obligat ad mortale*). But as regards those things that exceed the general necessity of a precept (*excedunt communiter necessitatem praecepti*), they do not bind under the pain of mortal sin (*non obligat ad mortale*)—unless they are transgressed out of contempt (*nisi propter contemptum*)—since, as was explained above (a. 2), religious are not obligated to *be* perfect, but are instead obligated to be *tending toward* perfection, the contrary of which is having contempt for perfection.

In the second way, something is contained in the rule by pertaining to *exterior exercise*, as do all the exterior observances. Among these there are some to which a religious is bound by the vow of his profession. Now the vow of profession has to do mainly with the three things talked about above, viz., poverty, continence, and obedience, whereas everything else is ordered toward these three things. And so a transgression of these three things involves mortal sin (*obligat ad mortale*). However, the transgression of the other things does not involve mortal sin, except because of either (a) contempt for the rule, since this is directly contrary to the profession, or (b) because of a precept, whether it is expressed verbally by the prelate or expressed in the rule, since this would be to do something contrary to the vow of obedience.

Reply to objection 1: An individual who professes a rule does not vow to observe everything contained in the rule, but instead vows *to live a regulated life* (*regularem vitam*) which consists essentially in the three things mentioned above.

Hence, in certain religious orders (*in quibusdam religionibus*) they profess, more cautiously, *not the rule*, but *to live according to the rule*, i.e., to tend toward the individual's informing his actions in accord with the rule as a sort of exemplar. And this is violated by contempt [for the rule] (*tollitur per contemptum*).

Moreover, in other religious orders, they profess, still more cautiously, *obedience in accord with the rule* (*obedientiam secundum regulam*), with the result that nothing is contrary to the profession except what is contrary to a *precept* of the rule, whereas a transgression or omission with respect to other things involves only a venial sin (*obligat solum ad peccatum veniale*). For, as has been explained (a. 7), these sorts of things are dispositions with respect to the principal vows and, as was explained above (*ST* 1-2, q. 88, a. 3), a venial sin is a disposition toward a mortal sin insofar as it impedes things by which an individual is disposed toward observing the main precepts of the law of Christ, viz., the precepts of charity.

However, in one religious order, viz., the Order of Preachers (*ordinis fratrum praedicatorum*), a transgression or omission of the sort in question does not by its genus involve a sin, either mortal or venial, but instead involves only being subject to the attached penalty, since it is in this way that [the friars] are obliged to observe such things. Still, they could commit either a venial or a mortal sin out of negligence or excessive sensual desire, on the one hand, or out of contempt on the other.

Reply to objection 2: Not all the things contained in the law are handed down in the manner of a *precept*; some are proposed in the manner of an *ordering* or of a *statute* that involves a certain penalty, just as in civil law the transgression of a legal statute does not always make one deserving of the punishment of bodily death. So, too, in Church law not all orderings or statutes oblige one under pain of mortal sin, and, similarly, neither do all the statutes of a religious rule.

Reply to objection 3: An individual acts or transgresses out of contempt when (a) his will refuses

to be subject to the ordinance of a law or of a rule, and (b) because of this he proceeds to do something contrary to the law or to the rule. But when, conversely, he is induced to do something contrary to the statutes of the law or of the rule because of some particular cause, e.g., excessive sentient desire or anger, then he sins not out of contempt but because of some other cause, even if he sins repeatedly because of that cause or a similar one—just as in *De Natura et Gratia* Augustine likewise explains that not all sins are committed out of the contempt that belongs to pride. Nonetheless, the frequency of a sin leads one dispositively toward contempt—this according to Proverbs 18:3 (“When the wicked one arrives at the depths [of sin], he is disdainful”).

Article 10

Does a religious sin more gravely than a secular individual by a sin of the same genus?

It seems that a religious does not sin more gravely than a secular individual by a sin of the same genus:

Objection 1: 2 Paralipomenon 30:18-19 says, “The Lord, who is good, will be pleased with all who seek with their whole heart the Lord God of their fathers, and it will not be imputed to them that they are less holy.” But religious seem to follow the Lord God of their fathers with their whole heart more than do secular individuals, who, as Gregory explains in *Super Ezechiel*, give a part of themselves to God and reserve a part for themselves. Therefore, it seems that it is imputed to them less if they fall short of holiness in some respect.

Objection 2: By the fact that an individual does good works, God is less angered by his sins; for 2 Paralipomenon 19:2-3 says, “You give aid to the wicked man and you are joined in friendship with those who have hated the Lord, and therefore you deserved the wrath of the Lord—and yet good works were found in you.” But religious do more good works than secular individuals do. Therefore, if they commit some sins, God is less angry with them.

Objection 3: The present life is not traversed without sin—this according to James 3:2 (“We all commit offenses in many matters”). Therefore, if the sins of religious were more grave than the sins of secular individuals, it would follow that religious are in a worse situation than secular individuals. And so it would not be a sound plan to enter religious life.

But contrary to this: One should be more saddened by a greater evil. But it seems that one should be saddened most of all by the sins of those who are in the state of holiness and perfection; for in Jeremiah 23:9 [the Lord] says, “My heart is broken within me,” and afterwards (Jeremiah 23:11) He adds, “For the prophet and the priest are defiled; and in my house I have seen their wickedness.” Therefore, all other things being equal, it is religious and others in the state of perfection who sin more grievously.

I respond: There are three ways in which a sin that is committed by religious can be more grave than a sin of the same species committed by secular individuals.

In one way, if it is *contrary to a vow that belongs to the religious state*, e.g., if a religious fornicates or steals, since by fornicating he is doing something contrary to the vow of continence and by stealing he is doing something contrary to the vow of poverty—and not just something contrary to a precept of divine law.

In the second way, if he *sins out of contempt*, since he thereby seems to be more ungrateful for God’s gifts, by which he was lifted up to the state of perfection. As the Apostle says in Hebrews 10:29, the believer “deserves worse punishments” because by sinning he tramples the Son of God underfoot through his contempt. Hence, in Jeremiah 11:15 the Lord complains, “Why is it that my beloved has done many evils in my house?”

In the third way, the sin of a religious can be greater *because of the scandal*, since many are looking to his life. Hence, Jeremiah 23:14 says, “Among the prophets of Jerusalem I have seen the likeness of adultery and the path of lying, and they have strengthened the hands of the wicked, so that none of them turns away from his evildoing.”

However, if a religious commits a sin not out of contempt, but out of weakness or ignorance, and without scandal, e.g., a hidden sin, he sins less gravely by a sin of the same genus than a secular individual. For if his sin is not grave, it is, as it were, swallowed up by the many good works that he does. And if it is a mortal sin, he rises up from it more easily. First, because of the tendency toward God which he has set up and which, even if it is interrupted for the moment, is easily restored to its original condition. Hence, in commenting on Psalm 36:24 (“When he falls, he shall not be bruised”), Origen says, “If the unjust individual sins, he does not repent, and he does not know how to make up for his sin. But the just individual knows how to make up for his sin, he knows how to correct it—just as (a) the one who had said, ‘I do not know the man,’ shortly afterwards, once the Lord had looked at him, began to weep most bitterly, and just as (b) the one who had seen the woman from the roof and desired her knew how to say, ‘I have sinned and done evil in Your sight.’” Second, he is assisted by his fellow religious to rise again—this according to Ecclesiastes 4:10 (“If one of them falls, he will be propped up by the other. Woe to him who is all alone, since if he falls, he has no one to lift him up”).

Reply to objection 1: This passage is speaking about those [sins] that are committed out of weakness or ignorance and not about those that are committed out of contempt.

Reply to objection 2: Once again, Josaphat, to whom the words in this passage are spoken, sinned not out of malice but out of a certain weakness in human affection.

Reply to objection 3: The just do not easily sin out of contempt, but sometimes they fall into a sin out of ignorance or weakness from which they are easily lifted up.

However, if they arrive at the point of sinning out of contempt, they become very bad and especially incorrigible—this according to Jeremiah 2:20 (“You have shattered my yoke, you have burst my chains, and you have said, ‘I will not serve!’ For on every high hill and under every green tree you were prostituting yourself”). Hence, in his letter *Ad Plebem Hipponensen* Augustine says, “From the time I began to serve God, as difficult as it was to know men better than those who made progress in monasteries, so I have not known men worse than those who have fallen in the monasteries.”