

## QUESTION 90

### Adjurations

Next we have to consider the taking of God's name in the manner of an adjuration. And on this topic there are three questions: (1) Is it permissible to adjure men? (2) Is it permissible to adjure demons? (3) Is it permissible to adjure non-rational creatures?

#### Article 1

##### Is it permissible to adjure men?

It seems that it is not permissible to adjure men (*non liceat hominem adiurare*):

**Objection 1:** In *Super Matthaem* Origin says, "I do not think it is necessary for a man who wants to live according to the Gospel to adjure another man. For if, according to the Gospel mandate of Christ, he is not permitted to swear oaths, then it is clear that neither is he permitted to adjure another. Because of this, it is clear that the high priest illicitly adjured Jesus by the living God" (Matthew 26:63).

**Objection 2:** If an individual adjures someone, then in a sense he compels him. But he is not permitted to coerce another unwillingly. Therefore, it seems that neither is he permitted to adjure anyone.

**Objection 3:** To adjure someone is to induce him to swear an oath. But inducing someone to swear an oath belongs to his superior, who imposes the swearing of oaths on those subject to him (*inferioribus*). Therefore, subjects cannot adjure their superiors.

**But contrary to this:** We implore even God through appealing to Him by certain sacred things (*etiam Deum obsecramus per aliqua sacra eum obtestantes*). Again, as is clear from Romans 12:1, the Apostle implores the faithful "by the mercy of God," and this seems to involve a sort of adjuration. Therefore, it is permissible to adjure others.

**I respond:** An individual who swears via a promissory oath through reverence for God's name—something that contributes to the confirmation of his promise—obligates himself to do what he promises; that is, he orders himself unshakably toward doing something. Now as is clear from what was said above (q. 83, a. 1), just as a man can order himself toward doing something, so, too, he can order others as well by pleading with his superiors (*superiores deprecando*) and commanding those subject to him (*imperando inferiores*). Therefore, since each of these two sorts of ordering is confirmed by something divine, it is an adjuration (*adiuratio*).

However, they differ in that a man is the master of his own acts, whereas he is not the master of the acts that are to be done by someone else. And so he can impose an obligation on his very own self (*sibi ipsi potest necessitatem imponere*) by invoking God's name, but he cannot impose this obligation on others—except for those subject to him, whom he can compel by dint of their standing oath [to him]. Therefore, if someone, by invoking God's name or the name of some sacred thing, intends by adjuring to impose on someone who is not subject to him the obligation of doing something, in the same way that he imposes this on himself by swearing an oath, then such an adjuration is illicit, since he is appropriating to himself a power that he does not have over that other individual. However, if there is a great need (*propter aliquam necessitatem*), superiors are able to bind those who are subject to them by this kind of adjuration.

On the other hand, if someone just wants to obtain something from another through reverence for God's name or through reverence for some sacred thing, without the imposition of any obligation (*absque necessitatis impositione*), then this sort of adjuration is permissible with respect to anyone (*licita est respectu quorumlibet*).

**Reply to objection 1:** Origin is here speaking of an adjuration by which someone intends to impose an obligation in the same way that he imposes an obligation on himself by swearing an oath. For it was in this way that the high priest presumed to adjure our Lord Jesus Christ.

**Reply to objection 2:** This argument goes through for an adjuration that imposes an obligation.

**Reply to objection 3:** To adjure is not to induce someone to swear an oath; instead, to adjure is to spur another to do something with a certain likeness of swearing an oath induced by himself.

Yet we use adjurations in one way with respect to a man and in another way with respect to God. For by adjuring we intend to change a man's will because of his reverence for something sacred—which we do not intend in the case of God, whose will is immutable. By contrast, what we intend in the case of God is to obtain something through His eternal will, not because of our merits, but because of His goodness.

## Article 2

### Is it permissible to adjure demons?

It seems that it is not permissible to adjure demons:

**Objection 1:** In *Super Matthaem* Origen says, “To adjure demons does not accord with the power given by our Savior, since it is something Jewish. However, we ought not to imitate the rites of the Jews, but should instead use the power given by Christ. Therefore, it is not permissible to adjure demons.

**Objection 2:** It is by means of necromantic incantations (*nigromanticis incantationibus*) that many individuals invoke the demons through something divine. Therefore, if it is permissible to adjure demons, then it is permissible to use necromantic incantations. But the consequent is clearly false. Therefore, the antecedent is false as well.

**Objection 3:** If an individual adjures someone, then by that very fact he forms a fellowship with him. But it is impermissible to form a fellowship with demons—this according to 1 Corinthians 10:20 (“I do not want you to become fellows of the demons”). Therefore, it is not permissible to adjure demons.

**But contrary to this:** Mark 16:17 says, “In my name they will cast out demons.” But to induce another to do something by the divine name is just what adjuring is. Therefore, it is permissible to adjure demons.

**I respond:** As has been explained (a. 1), there are two ways of adjuring: (a) in the manner of *pleading* or *inducing* because of a reverence for something sacred, and (b) in the manner of *compelling*.

It is not licit to adjure demons in the first way, since that way of adjuring seems to involve benevolence or friendship, which is not licit to make use of with respect to demons.

However, the second way of adjuring, which is through compulsion, we are permitted to use for some purposes and not permitted to use it for other purposes (*licet nobis ad aliquid et ad aliquid non licet*). For in the course of the present life the demons are set up as adversaries to us, whereas their actions are subject not to our direction, but to the direction of God and the holy angels, since, as Augustine says in *De Trinitate* 3, “A deserter spirit is ruled by a just spirit.”

Therefore, by adjuring we are able to repel the demons by the power of God's name as our enemies, lest they harm us either spiritually or corporeally, in accord with the power given us by Christ—this according to Luke 10:19 (“Behold, I have give you the power of treading upon serpents and scorpions and upon all the power of the enemy, and nothing will harm you”).

However, it is not licit to adjure demons in order to learn something from them or, again, in order to obtain something through them, since this would involve having some sort of fellowship with them—except, perhaps, when, by a special inspiration or divine revelation, certain holy individuals use the operations of demons to bring about certain effects, in the way that we read of St. James' bringing it about through demons that Hermogenes was led to him.

**Reply to objection 1:** Origen is talking about an adjuration that is not made by an open declaration in the manner of compelling, but is rather made in the manner of a friendly entreaty.

**Reply to objection 2:** Necromancers use the adjuring and invoking of demons in order to obtain something from them or learn something from them, and this is illicit, as has been explained. Hence, Chrysostom, in commenting on the words of our Lord in Mark 1:25, where He said to the unclean spirit, “Be quiet, and go out of the man,” says, “A salutary teaching is given us here, that we not put our trust in the demons (*ne credamus daemonibus*), no matter how much they might speak the truth.”

**Reply to objection 3:** This argument goes through for an adjuration by which the help of the demons is implored in order to do something or to find something out, since this seems to involve a sort of fellowship. By contrast, someone’s repelling demons by adjuring them is to withdraw from fellowship with them.

### Article 3

#### Is it permissible to adjure non-rational creatures?

It seems that it is not permissible to adjure non-rational creatures:

**Objection 1:** An adjuration is done by speaking. But speech is directed in vain toward that which does not understand, and this is the way a non-rational creature is. Therefore, it is empty and illicit to adjure a non-rational creature.

**Objection 2:** Adjuring seems to suit someone for whom swearing an oath is appropriate. But swearing an oath does not appropriate for a non-rational creature. Therefore, it seems that it is not permissible to use an adjuration with respect to a non-rational creature.

**Objection 3:** As is clear from what was said above (a. 1), there are two ways of adjuring. One is in the manner of *pleading*, which we cannot use with respect to a non-rational creature, since it is not the master of its own acts. The other is an adjuration in the manner of *compelling*, which likewise, it seems, we cannot use with respect to a non-rational creature, since it is not our role to command non-rational creatures, but the role only of Him of whom Matthew 8:27 says, “The winds and the sea obey Him.” Therefore, there is no way, it seems, in which it is permissible to use an adjuration with respect to non-rational creatures.

**But contrary to this:** Simon and Jude are said to have adjured dragons and to have commanded them to withdraw into the desert.

**I respond:** Non-rational creatures are acted upon by another with respect to their proper operations. Now the action of that which is acted upon and moved is the same as the action of what acts and moves; for instance, the movement of the arrow is also a certain operation of the archer. And so the action of a non-rational creature is attributed not only to itself, but principally to God, by whose direction all things are moved (*cuius dispositione omnia moventur*). Now this applies likewise to the devil, who by God’s permission makes use of certain non-rational creatures in order to harm men.

So, then, there are two possible ways to understand an adjuration that someone uses with respect to a non-rational creature:

In the first way, the adjuration is aimed at the non-rational creature itself in its own right (*secundum se*). And on this understanding it would be empty to adjure a non-rational creature.

In the second way, the adjuration is aimed at the one by whom the non-rational creature is being acted upon and moved. And on this understanding there are two ways in which a non-rational creature is adjured:

(a) in the manner of a direct *pleading with God*, and this pertains to those who work miracles by invoking God;

(b) in the manner of *compelling*, which is aimed at the devil, who uses non-rational creatures to our detriment, and this is the sort of adjuring found in the Church’s exorcisms, through which the power of

the demons is removed from non-rational creatures. However, it is not permissible to adjure demons by imploring their assistance.

**Reply to objection 1 and objection 2 and objection 3:** The replies to the objections are clear from what has been said.