

Question 32

[On Works of Mercy]

One should next consider works of mercy.¹ Regarding this, ten queries are raised. (1) Whether generosity in works of mercy is an act of charity. (2) On a distinction within works of mercy. (3) Which are preferable, spiritual or bodily works of mercy? (4) Whether bodily works of mercy have a spiritual effect. (5) Whether to perform works of mercy is covered by a precept. (6) Whether bodily goods of mercy should be given out of what is necessary. (7) Whether they should be given out of things acquired unjustly. (8) Who should give goods of mercy? (9) To whom should they be given? (10) On the manner of giving goods of mercy.

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Article 1. [Whether giving goods of mercy is an act of charity.]

One proceeds in this way to the first query. IT SEEMS that giving goods of mercy is not an act of charity.

[1] The act of charity cannot be without charity. But generosity in goods of mercy can exist without charity, according to 1 Corinthians 13: "If I should distribute all my goods to feed the poor but do not have charity. . ." ² Therefore giving goods of mercy is not an act of charity.

[2] Furthermore, goods of mercy are reckoned among the works of satisfaction, according to Daniel 4: "Redeem your sins with works of mercy." ³ But satisfaction is an act of justice. Therefore giving goods of mercy is not an act of charity, but of justice.

[3] Furthermore, to offer sacrifice to God is an act of veneration (latría). But to give works of mercy is to offer sacrifice to God, according to the last chapter of Hebrews: "Do not be

forgetful of doing good and communion, for by such sacrifices God is merited.”⁴ Therefore giving works of mercy is not an act of charity, but of veneration.

[4] Furthermore, the Philosopher says in Ethics 4 that to give something on account of the good is an act of generosity.⁵ But this happens especially through generosity in goods of mercy. Therefore to give goods of mercy is not an act of charity.

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BUT TO THE CONTRARY there is what is said in 1 John 3: “He who has the substance of this world, and shall see his brother suffering need, and shall put up his bowels from him, how does the charity of God remain in him?”⁶

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I ANSWER THAT IT SHOULD BE SAID that outward acts are referred to some virtue, to which belongs the motive for doing acts of that sort. Now the motive for giving goods of mercy is to remedy the need of a person suffering. So that certain people, in defining goods of mercy, say that a “good of mercy is a work by which something is given to the needy out of compassion, on account of God.”⁷ This motive does in fact belong to mercy, as was said above.⁸ So it is clear that to give goods of mercy (dare eleemosynam) is properly an act of mercy (actus misericordiae). And this appears from the very name: for in Greek eleemosyna is derived from the word that means “mercy,” as is compassion (miseratio) in Latin. And since mercy is an effect of charity, as was shown above,⁹ to give goods of mercy is consequently an act of charity, by means of mercy.

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[1] TO THE FIRST ARGUMENT, THEREFORE, IT SHOULD BE SAID that something can be said to be an act of virtue in two ways. In one way, materially, as an act of justice is to do just things. And such an act of virtue can be without virtue, for many who do not have the habit of justice do just things, whether from natural reason, or from fear, or from hope of gaining something. In another way, something is said to be an act of virtue formally, as an act of justice is a just action according to the manner by which justice works, namely promptly and pleurably. And in this way an act of virtue is not without virtue. Accordingly, to give goods of mercy can materially be without charity, whereas formally to give goods of mercy—that is, on account of God, pleurably and promptly and in every way as one ought—is not without charity.

[2] To the second it should be said that nothing prevents the act that is properly elicited by one virtue from being attributed to another virtue, as directing and commanding it to its end. And in this way to give goods of mercy is set down among satisfactory works, so far as mercy on the defect of one who is suffering is directed to making satisfaction for his fault. But according as it is directed to placating God, it has the aspect of a sacrifice, and in this way is commanded by worship.

[3] So the response to the third argument is clear.

[4] To the fourth it should be said that to give goods of mercy belongs to generosity, so far as generosity removes a hindrance to that act. The hindrance can be from an overflowing love of riches, on account of which it happens that someone hoards them to excess.

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Article 2. [Whether the kinds of works of mercy are appropriately distinguished.]

One proceeds in this way to the second query. IT SEEMS that the kinds of works of mercy are inappropriately distinguished.

[1] Seven bodily works of mercy are set down: namely, to feed the hungry, to give drink to the thirsty, to clothe the naked, to offer hospitality, to visit the sick, to ransom the captive, to bury the dead. These are contained in this rhyme: Visito, poto, cibo, redimo, tego, colligo, condo (“Visit, quench, feed, ransom, clothe, gather, bury”). Seven other spiritual works of mercy are also set down: namely, to teach the ignorant, to counsel the doubtful, to console the grieving, to correct the sinner, to forgive injuries, to bear with those who trouble and annoy us, and to pray for all. These too are contained in a verse: Consule, castiga, solare, remitte, fer, ora (“Counsel, reprove, console, forgive, bear, and pray”)¹⁰—yet so that “counsel” and “teaching” are understood under the same heading. Now it seems that works of mercy of this sort are inappropriately distinguished. For a work of mercy is directed to helping our neighbor. But the fact that our neighbor is buried does not help him in anything; otherwise, what the Lord says, Matthew 10, would not be true: “Do not fear those who kill the body, and after this they have no more that they can do.”¹¹ So that the Lord, Matthew 25, recalling the works of mercy (misericordiae opera), makes no mention of burial of the dead.¹² Therefore it seems that works of mercy of this sort are inappropriately distinguished.

[2] Furthermore, goods of mercy are given for helping the needs of our neighbor, as was said.¹³ But there are many needs of human life other than those mentioned above—for instance, a blind man needs a leader, a lame man needs support, a poor man needs riches. Therefore the works of mercy mentioned above are inappropriately enumerated.

[3] Furthermore, to give goods of mercy is an act of mercy (actus misericordiae). But correcting an offender seems to belong to severity rather than to mercy. Therefore it ought not to be reckoned among spiritual works of mercy.

[4] Furthermore, a work of mercy is directed toward helping a defect. But there is no person who does not suffer the defect of ignorance in something. Therefore it seems that each person ought to teach another person, if that other person is ignorant of that which he himself knows.

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BUT TO THE CONTRARY Gregory says in a certain homily: “May he who has understanding beware, lest he is entirely silent; may he who has an affluence of things be vigilant, lest he slacken his merciful generosity; may he who has an art by which he is ruled be exceedingly zealous to share his skill and advantage with his neighbor; may he who has the place to speak with the wealthy fear damnation for keeping his talent, if he does not use it to intercede for the poor when he is able to do so.”¹⁴ Therefore the works of mercy mentioned before are appropriately distinguished according to the things in which human beings abound and lack.

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I ANSWER THAT IT SHOULD BE SAID that the distinction of works of mercy mentioned before is appropriately taken from the different defects of our neighbors. Some of these are on the part of the soul; to these, spiritual works of mercy are directed. Others are on the part of the body; to these, bodily works of mercy are directed. For a bodily defect occurs either in this life, or after this life. If it occurs in this life, it is either a common defect with respect to things

that everyone needs, or it is a particular defect on account of some supervening accident. In the first case, the defect is either inward or outward. The inward defect is twofold: the first, namely hunger, is relieved by dry food, and according to this we are supposed to "feed the hungry." The second inward defect, namely thirst, is relieved by liquid food, and according to this we are said to "give drink to the thirsty."

Now the common defect with respect to outward help is twofold. The first is in respect of clothing, and regarding this, we are supposed to "clothe the naked." The other is in respect of a place to live, and regarding this we must "offer hospitality." Likewise, if there should be some particular defect, it occurs either from an intrinsic cause, such as illness, and regarding this we are supposed to "visit the sick," or from an extrinsic cause, and regarding this we must "ransom the captive." Moreover, after this life, we give "burial to the dead."

Likewise, there are two ways in which help is given to spiritual defects by spiritual acts. In one way, by asking for help from God, and for this "prayer" is given, by which a person prays for others. In another way, by bestowing human assistance, and this in three ways. In the first way, against a defect of the intellect. If this be a defect of the speculative intellect, the remedy is applied to it by "teaching." But if this be a defect of the practical intellect, the remedy is applied to it by "counseling." In a second way, the defect is from the passion of the appetitive power, among which most of all is sorrow, which is remedied by "comforting." In a third way, on the part of a disordered act, which can be considered in three ways. In the first way, on the part of the sinner himself, so far as the disordered action proceeds from his disordered will—and thus the remedy that is applied is "correction." In a second way, on the part of the person who is sinned against. If the sin is committed against ourselves, we apply the remedy by

“forgiving the offense.” But if the sin is committed against God or our neighbor, it does not belong to our decision to forgive, as Jerome says, On Matthew.¹⁵ In a third way, on the part of the things that follow from the disordered act, things which burden those who live with him, even beyond his intention. And thus the remedy is applied by “bearing with him,” especially toward those who sin out of weakness, according to Romans 15: “We who are stronger ought to bear the infirmities of others.”¹⁶ And not only according as the weak are oppressed by disordered acts, but also by bearing with them any of their other burdens, according to Galatians 6: “Bear one another’s burdens.”¹⁷

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[1] TO THE FIRST ARGUMENT, THEREFORE, IT SHOULD BE SAID that burial does not help a dead man, with respect to any feeling that the body might have after death. Accordingly, the Lord said that those who kill the body have nothing more that they can do. On account of this, the Lord did not also recall burial among the other works of mercy, but counted only those which are of more evident need. Nonetheless, what is done regarding a dead person’s body does pertain to the deceased—both regarding what lives in the memory of men, whose honor is dishonored if he should remain unburied, and regarding the affection that he used to have for his body when he was still living, an affection to which those loyal to him should conform after his death. And according to this, some are commended in relation to burying the dead, as was Tobias, as well as those who buried the Lord, as is clear from Augustine in his book On Respect to be Shown to the Remains of the Dead.¹⁸

[2] To the second it should be said that all other needs are traced back to these. For blindness and lameness are kinds of sickness, so that to lead the blind, and to support the lame

are traced back to visitation of the sick. Likewise, to help a person against any oppression caused by something outside himself is traced back to the ransom of captives. The wealth, however, that is given to alleviate poverty is not sought except for the sake of remedying the defects mentioned above. And so no particular mention was made of this defect.

[3] To the third it should be said that correction of sinners, with regard to the very exercise of the act, seems to contain the severity of justice. But regarding the intention of the one who offers correction—that is, he who wants to free a man from the evil of fault (culpa)—it belongs to mercy and to the affection of love, according to Proverbs 27: “Better are the wounds of one who loves you, than the fraudulent kisses of an enemy.”¹⁹

[4] To the fourth it should be said that not every nescience belongs to a person’s defect, but only the nescience by virtue of which he does not know something that is appropriate for him to know. To remedy this defect by teaching belongs to works of mercy. In this, however, we should observe the due circumstances of persons, place and time, just as in other virtuous acts.

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Article 3. [Whether bodily works of mercy are preferable to spiritual works of mercy.]

One proceeds in this way to the third query. IT SEEMS that bodily works of mercy are preferable to spiritual works of mercy.

[1] It is more praiseworthy to perform a work of mercy for a person in need, for a work of mercy deserves praise from this—that it helps a person in need. But the body, which is helped by bodily works of mercy, is of a needier nature than the spirit, to which help is given by spiritual works of mercy. Therefore bodily works of mercy are preferable.

[2] Furthermore, recompense for a benefit diminishes its praise and merit, so that the Lord says, Luke 14: “When you make a dinner or supper, do not invite your rich neighbors, lest also they invite you in return.”²⁰ But in spiritual works of mercy, there is always recompense, since he who prays for another himself progresses, according to the Psalm: “My prayer shall be turned into my bosom.”²¹ Moreover, he who teaches another also progresses in knowledge. This does not happen in bodily works of mercy. Therefore, bodily works of mercy are preferable to spiritual works of mercy.

[3] Furthermore, it belongs to the praise of a work of mercy that a poor man should receive consolation from it, so that it is said in Job 31, “If his sides have not blessed me.”²² And the Apostle says in Philemon, “The bowels of the saints have been refreshed by you, brother.”²³ But sometimes bodily works of mercy are more pleasing to a poor man than spiritual works of mercy. Therefore bodily works of mercy are preferable to spiritual works of mercy.

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BUT TO THE CONTRARY there is what Augustine, in his book The Lord’s Sermon on the Mount, says about the passage “Give to him who begs something of you”:²⁴ “You should give so that you harm neither yourself nor another; and when you deny what another begs of you, you must not betray justice, so that you send him away empty. And sometimes you shall give something better, when you have set right a person who begs unjustly.”²⁵ Now setting someone right is a matter of spiritual works of mercy. Therefore spiritual works of mercy should be preferred over bodily works of mercy.

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I ANSWER THAT IT SHOULD BE SAID that a comparison of these works of mercy can be made in two ways. In one way, simply speaking, and according to this spiritual works of mercy outrank the others, for three reasons. First, that which is offered is more noble, namely a spiritual gift—which outranks a bodily gift, according to Proverbs 4: “I will give you a good gift, but do not abandon my law.”²⁶ Second, by reason of that to which assistance is given, since the spirit is nobler than the body. So just as a man in relation to himself ought to make more provision for his spirit than his body, he should do the same in relation to his neighbor, whom he ought to love as he loves himself. Third, regarding the very acts by which he gives help to his neighbor, since spiritual acts are more noble than bodily acts, which are in a certain way slavish.

In another way, works of mercy may be compared according to some particular case, in which certain bodily works of mercy are preferred to some spiritual works of mercy. For instance, a person dying of hunger should be fed rather than taught. Just as, according to the Philosopher, it is better for a person in need to be enriched than to philosophize,²⁷ notwithstanding that to philosophize is better simply.

[1] TO THE FIRST ARGUMENT, THEREFORE, IT SHOULD BE SAID that to give to someone in more need is better, other things being equal. But if he who is less needy is better, and needs better things, it is better to give to him. And so it is in the matter at hand.

[2] To the second it should be said that recompense does not diminish the merit and praise due to works of mercy if the recompense is not intended—just as human glory, if not intended, does not diminish the aspect of virtue. Thus Sallust says of Cato that “the more he ran away from fame, the more fame followed him.”²⁸ And so it goes in spiritual works of

mercy. Nonetheless, the intention [of gaining] spiritual goods does not diminish merit, unlike the intention of gaining bodily goods.

[3] To the third it should be said that merit of giving a good of mercy is observed according to that in which the receiver's will should reasonably rest, and not in that in which it rests if his will be misdirected.

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Article 4. [Whether bodily works of mercy have a spiritual effect.]

One proceeds in this way to the fourth query. IT SEEMS that bodily works of mercy do not have a spiritual effect.

[1] An effect is not superior to its cause. But spiritual goods are superior to bodily goods. Therefore, bodily works of mercy do not have spiritual effects.

[2] Furthermore, to give something bodily for something spiritual is the vice of simony. But this sin should be avoided entirely. Therefore bodily works of mercy should not be given in the pursuit of spiritual effects.

[3] Furthermore, when the cause is multiplied, the effect is multiplied. If therefore bodily works of mercy were to cause a spiritual effect, it would follow that the greater the work of mercy, the more one would progress spiritually. But this goes against what is read in Luke 21 about the widow who threw two brass baubles into the treasury and, according to the Lord's pronouncement, "put in more than all of them."²⁹ Therefore bodily works of mercy do not have any spiritual effect.

BUT TO THE CONTRARY there is what is said in Sirach 17: "A person's works of mercy shall preserve his grace as the apple of the eye."³⁰

I ANSWER THAT IT SHOULD BE SAID that bodily works of mercy can be considered in three ways. In the first way, according to their substance. And according to this, they do not have anything except a bodily effect, namely so far as they supply the bodily defects of our neighbors. In a second way, they can be considered on the part of their cause, so far as someone performs bodily works of mercy on account of the love of God and neighbor. And with respect to this, they bring forth spiritual fruit, according to Sirach 29: "Lose your money on account of your brother. Place your treasures in the teachings of the most high, and it shall profit you more than gold."³¹ In a third way, on the part of the effect. And in this way it also bears spiritual fruit, so far as our neighbor, who is helped by a bodily work of mercy, is moved to pray for his benefactor. So that in the same place these words are added: "Enclose works of mercy within the breast of the poor man, and it shall prevail on your behalf over every evil."³²

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[1] TO THE FIRST ARGUMENT, THEREFORE, IT SHOULD BE SAID that this reasoning proceeds from bodily works of mercy according to their substance.

[2] To the second it should be said that he who gives goods of mercy does not intend to buy something spiritual with something bodily, since he knows that spiritual things infinitely outrank bodily things. Rather, he intends to be deserving of a spiritual fruit by the affection of charity.³³

[3] To the third it should be said that the widow, who gave less according to quantity, gave more according to proportion. Weighing this, we see in her a greater affection of charity, from which bodily works of mercy have spiritual efficacy.

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Article 5. [Whether giving goods of mercy is covered by a precept.]

One proceeds in this way to the fifth query. IT SEEMS that giving goods of mercy is not covered by a precept.

[1] Counsels are distinguished from precepts. But to give a good of mercy belongs to counsel, according to Daniel 4: "Let my counsel be pleasing to the king, and atone for your sins with works of mercy."³⁴ Therefore giving a good of mercy is not covered by a precept.

[2] Furthermore, it is lawful for any person to use something of his own, and to keep it. But in keeping something of his own, a person does not give a good of mercy. Therefore it is lawful not to give a good of mercy. Giving goods of mercy, therefore, is not covered by a precept.

[3] Furthermore, anything that falls under some precept obligates those who transgress the precept as a matter of mortal sin, since affirmative precepts obligate a person for a determinate time. If, therefore, giving goods of mercy were to fall under a precept, it would be possible to determine some time in which a man would mortally sin unless he were to give a good of mercy. But this does not seem to be the case, since it can always be estimated with some probability that a poor man can be helped in some other way, and that what is to be given to him in a good of mercy might be necessary for him at some other time, either in the present or in the future time. Therefore it seems that giving a good of mercy is not covered by a precept.

[4] Furthermore, every commandment is traced back to the precepts of the Decalogue. But among these precepts, nothing is contained about giving works of mercy. Therefore giving works of mercy is not covered by a precept.

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BUT TO THE CONTRARY no one is punished with an eternal penalty for the omission of something that does not fall under a precept. But some are punished with an eternal penalty for the omission of goods of mercy, as is clear from Matthew 25.³⁵ Therefore giving goods of mercy is covered by a precept.

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I ANSWER THAT IT SHOULD BE SAID that since the love of neighbor is covered by a precept, it is necessary for everything to fall under a precept without which the love of neighbor is not preserved. Now it belongs to the love of neighbor not only that we should wish him good, but also that we should do him good, according to 1 John 3: “Let us not love in word, nor in tongue, but in deed and in truth.”³⁶ But wishing and doing good for a person requires that we assist him with his needs. This happens through generosity in works of mercy. And so generosity in works of mercy is covered by a precept.

But since precepts are given in relation to acts of virtues, it is necessary that in this manner the gift of a good of mercy should fall under a precept, according as the act necessarily belongs to the virtue—namely, as right reason requires. One thing should be considered according to right reason on the part of the giver, and another thing on the part of the person to whom the good of mercy should be given. On the part of the giver, it should be considered that what he gives in works of mercy should come from what is superfluous to him, according to Luke 11: “From that which remains, give works of mercy.”³⁷ And I call “superfluous” not only regarding what belongs to a person, above and beyond what is necessary to the individual, but also regarding the others whose care is incumbent on him, after they have been helped with

their remaining needs, in relation to which something is said to be necessary to the person according as the person denotes some worthiness. It is just as nature first takes food³⁸ for the support of its own body, which is necessary to serve the nutritive power, but then uses the surplus for the generation of another by the generative power. —On the part of the recipient, it is required that he have a need; otherwise there would not be any reason whereby works of mercy should be given to him. But since it is not possible for the need of everyone to be alleviated by a single person, not every necessity obliges by a precept, but only that without which he who is suffering a need cannot be sustained. For in this case what Ambrose says has place: “Feed the person who is dying of hunger. If you have not fed him, you have killed him.”³⁹

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In this way, then, giving goods of mercy out of one’s surplus is covered by a precept, as well as giving goods of mercy to a person who is in extreme need. To give other goods of mercy, however, is a matter of counsel, just as counsels are given in relation to any greater good.

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[1] TO THE FIRST ARGUMENT, THEREFORE, IT SHOULD BE SAID that Daniel was speaking to a king who had not been subjected to the law of God. And so even the things that belong to the precept of the Law, which he did not profess, had to be proposed to him by way of counsel. Or it can be said that he was speaking about a case in which to give a good of mercy was not covered by a precept.

[2] To the second it should be said that the temporal goods which are divinely conferred upon a man are indeed his with respect to ownership (proprietas). But with respect to use,

they should belong not only to him, but also to others who can be sustained by them, because they are superfluous to him. So Basil says, “if you acknowledge them” (namely, temporal goods) “to have proceeded divinely to you, is God unjust in distributing them to us unequally? Why do you abound in goods, while another person has to go begging, except that you may attain the merits of a good dispensation, and he be decorated with the rewards of suffering? It is the bread of the hungry that you withhold, the cloak of the naked that you lock in a chamber, the shoe of the barefoot that in your keeping withers away, the money of the needy that you take to bury. Wherefore you bring harm to as many as you give help.”⁴⁰ And Ambrose says the same thing, as attested in the Book of Decrees.⁴¹

[3] To the third it should be said that there is a given time in which a person sins mortally if he omits to give a good of mercy. [This time may be understood] on the part of the receiver, when there appears an evident and urgent need, or nobody is on hand to help him. [This time may be understood] on the part of the giver, when he has superfluous things that in his present condition are not necessary to him, to the extent that this can be assessed with probability. It is not necessary that he consider every case that can occur in the future, for this would be “to think on the morrow,” which the Lord prohibits, Matthew 6.⁴² But he ought to discern what is superfluous and what is necessary, according to the things that happen probably and for the most part.

[4] To the fourth it should be said that all assistance to our neighbor is traced back to the precept regarding the honor of parents. For the Apostle interprets it thus, 1 Timothy 4, saying “piety is useful to all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come”⁴³—which he says because the precept regarding the honor of parents adds the promise

“that you may be of great age on the land.” Now all generosity in works of mercy is comprehended under “piety” (pietas).

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Article 6. [Whether someone ought to perform works of mercy out of what is necessary.]

One proceeds in this way to the sixth query. IT SEEMS that someone ought not to give goods of mercy out of what is necessary.

[1] The order of charity is not less observed with respect to an effect of doing good, than it is with respect to an interior affection. Now he who turns the order of charity upside down does wrong, since the order of charity is covered by a precept. Because, therefore, a person should from the order of charity love himself more than his neighbor, it seems that he would sin if he were to deprive himself of necessary things in order to give generously to his neighbor.

[2] Furthermore, whoever gives generously in the things that are necessary to himself squanders his own substance, which belongs to the prodigal, according to the Philosopher in Ethics 4.⁴⁴ But no sinful deed should be done. Therefore goods of mercy should not be given out of what is necessary.

[3] Furthermore, the Apostle says: “If any man does not take care of his own, and especially of those of his house, then he has denied the faith and is worse than an infidel.”⁴⁵ But if someone were to give from the things that are necessary to himself or his own, then he seems to detract from the care that he should have for himself or his own. Therefore, it seems that whoever gives goods of mercy out of what is necessary sins gravely.

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BUT TO THE CONTRARY there is what the Lord says, Matthew 19: “If you want to be perfect, go and sell all that you have, and give it to the poor.”⁴⁶ But he who gives all that he has to the poor gives not only superfluous things, but also necessary things. Therefore a man can give goods of mercy out of what is necessary.

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I ANSWER THAT IT SHOULD BE SAID that a thing is called “necessary” in two ways. In one way, if something cannot exist without it. And from such necessary things, it is altogether the case that a good of mercy should not be given—for instance, if someone were placed in a case of necessity so that he could only support himself and his children and others who belong to him. To give a good of mercy out of what is necessary in this sense is to take away from the lives of himself and those in his care. —But I say this unless, by chance, such a case were to happen where, by taking away from himself, he could give to some great personage, by which the church or the commonwealth would be supported. By delivering such a person from debt, he would expose himself and his own to the danger of death in a manner deserving praise, since the common good should be preferred over one’s own good.

In another way, something is called necessary if a life cannot suitably be lived without it, according to the condition or station (secundum conditionem vel statum) of his own person, or that of other persons for whom he is obliged to care. Any limit to such necessary things is not fixed in something indivisible. On the contrary, even after many things have been added, one cannot judge whether one has gone beyond such a necessity. And if many things are taken away, it may still remain that someone can suitably live a life according to his own station. Therefore in cases like this, to give a good of mercy is good and does not fall under a precept,

but under counsel. For it would be misdirected if someone were to take so much away from his own good in order to give generously to others, so that from what remains he could not suitably live his life, according to his proper station and day-to-day expenses. For no one ought to live unsuitably.

But three exceptions should be made. Of these, the first is when someone changes his state of life, as by entering into religion. For then, giving away all of his things on account of Christ, he accomplishes a work of perfection, putting himself in another state. Second, when he withdraws himself things that, although they are necessary for the suitability of life, can nonetheless be restored with ease, so that what is most unsuitable would not follow. Third, when extreme necessity occurs to some private person, or else there occurs some great necessity to the commonwealth. For in such cases someone would in a praiseworthy manner overlook what seems to belong to the propriety of his station, so that he would alleviate a greater need.

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[1]-[3] And from this the answer TO WHAT WAS OBJECTED is easily made clear.

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Article 7. [Whether works of mercy can be performed out of things unjustly acquired.]

One proceeds in this way to the seventh query. IT SEEMS that works of mercy cannot be performed out of things unjustly acquired.

[1] It says in Luke 16: "Make yourselves friends out of the Mammon of iniquity."⁴⁷ Now "Mammon" signifies "riches." Therefore, out of riches acquired unjustly, someone can make spiritual friends for himself, by giving goods of mercy generously.

[2] Furthermore, all filthy lucre (turpe lucrum) seems to be acquired unlawfully. But what is acquired from prostitution is filthy lucre, so that from such things no sacrifice or oblation should be offered to God, according to Deuteronomy 23: “Do not offer the reward of a whore in the house of your God.”⁴⁸ Likewise, that which is acquired through gambling is acquired wickedly, since as the Philosopher says in Ethics 4, “we take such winnings from the friends to whom it is necessary to give.”⁴⁹ Finally, something is acquired most wickedly by simony, through which a person does injustice to the Holy Spirit. Nonetheless, a work of mercy can be performed out of such things. Therefore, a person can perform a work of mercy out of things acquired by evil means.

[3] Furthermore, greater evils should be avoided more than lesser evils. But keeping what belongs to another is a lesser sin than homicide, which one commits unless he brings assistance to someone in ultimate need, as is clear from Ambrose when he says: “Feed the person who is dying of hunger. If you have not fed him, you have killed him.”⁵⁰ Therefore in a particular case of things acquired by evil means, a person can perform a work of mercy.

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BUT TO THE CONTRARY Augustine says in his book On the Word of the Lord: “Perform works of mercy from your just labors. For you will not corrupt Christ the judge, not so that he may hear you with the poor whom you destroy. Do not wish to perform works of mercy out of interest and usury. I speak to the faithful, to whom we give the body of Christ.”⁵¹

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I ANSWER THAT IT SHOULD BE SAID that a thing can be acquired unlawfully in three ways. In the first way, that which is acquired unlawfully out of what is owed to the person from

whom it was acquired, and cannot be kept by the person who acquired it—as happens in robbery and theft and usury. A work of mercy cannot be performed out of such things, since a person is bound to return them. —In a second way, something is acquired unlawfully when the person who acquired the thing cannot keep it, and yet does not owe the person from whom he acquired it, since he received it against justice, or else the other person gave it against justice—as happens in simony, in which the giver and the receiver act against the justice of divine law. So that restitution should not be given to the person who gave the thing, but the thing should rather be given in goods of mercy. And the same reasoning applies to similar things, namely those in which both giving and receiving is against the law. —In a third way, something is acquired unlawfully, not indeed because the thing acquired is illicit, but because the act by which it was acquired is illicit—as is clear when a woman acquires something by prostitution. And this is properly called “filthy lucre.” For a woman, by engaging in prostitution, acts wickedly and against the law of God, but she does not act unjustly or against the Law toward the money that she receives. So that something acquired unlawfully in this way can be kept, and from it a work of mercy can be performed.

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[1] TO THE FIRST ARGUMENT, THEREFORE, IT SHOULD BE SAID that as Augustine says in his book On the Words of the Lord: “Certain people, badly understanding the saying of the Lord to mean ‘take another’s property and thence distribute it to the poor,’ suppose themselves to fulfill the precept. This understanding should be corrected.”⁵² But “all riches are called riches of iniquity,” as he says in Questions on the Gospels, “since these things are not riches,” according to Augustine, “except for the sinful who place their hope in them.”⁵³ Or, according to

Ambrose: “He calls Mammon unjust, because it tempts our affections by the various allurements of wealth.”⁵⁴ Or, “because among the many ancestors whose property you inherit, there is one who took the property of others unjustly, although you know nothing about it,” as Basil says.⁵⁵ Or finally, all riches are called riches “of iniquity,” i.e., of “inequality,” because they are not distributed equally among all, one being in need, and another in superabundance.

[2] To the second it should be said that we have already explained⁵⁶ how a work of mercy can be performed out of what is acquired by prostitution. No sacrifice or altar offering, however, should come from these proceeds—both because of scandal and because of reverence for sacred things. A work of mercy can be lawfully performed out of what is acquired by simony, because what is acquired is not due to the person who gave—rather, he deserves to lose it.

About the winnings acquired from gambling, there seems to be something illicit by divine law—namely, that a person wins money from others who cannot alienate their property, such as minors and crazy people and those of this sort; or that he draws another person to the table to play, out of a base desire for gain; or that he gains from him by cheating. In these cases he is bound to reinstate his gains [to the losers], and thus cannot perform works of mercy out of his gains. Moreover, something else seems to be unlawful, according to positive civil law, which universally prohibits such lucre. But since civil law does not obligate everyone, but only those who are subject to these laws—and they can be repealed through disuse—it follows that those who are bound by these laws are universally bound to reinstate those from whom he has won. Unless, by chance, some contrary custom should prevail, or unless he won the money from the person who drew him into the game. In this case, the winner is not bound to reinstate

the loser, since the loser does not deserve to recuperate his losses. But while such a positive law endures, the winner cannot lawfully keep his gains. So in this case, he should use the money to perform a work of mercy.

[3] To the third it should be said that in a case of extreme need, all things are common property. So for a person who is suffering such need, it is lawful for him to take something belonging to another, for the sake of his own sustenance, if he does not find someone who is willing to donate to him. For the same reason, it is lawful for a man to hold something that belongs to another, and to give a good of mercy from that, or indeed to take something from another, if he cannot otherwise help the suffering person in need. But if it can be done without danger, he should wait until the owner's voluntary consent has been sought before providing for the poor person who is suffering extreme need.

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Article 8. [Whether a person who is placed under the power of another can perform a work of mercy.]

One proceeds in this way to the eighth query. IT SEEMS that a person who is placed under the power of another can perform a work of mercy.

[1] The religious bound by monastic vows are under the power of their prelates to whom they have vowed obedience. Now if it were unlawful for them to perform a work of mercy, they would experience a loss from entering the religious state, since as Ambrose says: "The highest point of the Christian religion consists in piety,"⁵⁷ which is especially commended by a generosity of works of mercy. Therefore those who are placed in the power of another can perform a work of mercy.

[2] Furthermore, a wife is under her husband's power, as is said in Genesis 3.⁵⁸ But a wife can perform works of mercy, since she is taken up into the society of her husband, so that it is said of the Blessed Lucy that she performed works of mercy without the knowledge of her betrothed. Therefore by the fact that someone is placed in the power of another, a person is not hindered from being able to perform works of mercy.

[3] Furthermore, there is a certain natural subjection of children to their parents, so that the Apostle says: "Children, obey your parents in the Lord."⁵⁹ But children, as it seems, can perform works of mercy out of what belongs to their father, since it belongs to them in a certain way, because they are the heirs. Since they can use it for some bodily purpose, much more does it seem that they can use it in giving goods of mercy, for the remedy of their soul. Therefore those who are placed under the power of another can give goods of mercy.

[4] Furthermore, slaves are under the power of their masters, according to Titus 2: "Exhort slaves to be obedient to their masters."⁶⁰ Now it is lawful for them to do anything for the advantage of their masters—and this would apply especially if they were generously to perform works of mercy for their sake. Therefore those who are under another's power can perform works of mercy.

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BUT TO THE CONTRARY works of mercy should not be performed out of what belongs to another. Rather, "each person should perform works of mercy from his own just labors," as Augustine says in his book On the Words of the Lord.⁶¹ But if those subject to others were to perform works of mercy, this would be out of what belongs to another. Therefore those who are placed under the power of others cannot perform a work of mercy.

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I ANSWER THAT IT SHOULD BE SAID that a person who is placed under the power of another must, as such, be ruled according to the power of his superior. For this is the natural order—that lower things are ruled by higher things. And so it is necessary that in things in which the lower is subject to a higher, the lower cannot be dispensed in any way except by the commission of the higher. In this way, therefore, he who is placed under the power of another must not perform a work of mercy in regard to any matter according to which he is subject to his superior, except to the extent that it has been permitted⁶² him by his superior. But if he should possess something in relation to which he is not under the power of his superior, then he is not subject to his power in that respect. And from this he can perform a work of mercy.

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[1] TO THE FIRST ARGUMENT, THEREFORE, IT SHOULD BE SAID that a monk, if he has a dispensation that was commissioned by his prelate, can perform works of mercy from the things of the monastery, according as he has been commissioned. But if he does not in fact have a dispensation, since he has nothing of his own, then he cannot perform a work of mercy without the permission of the abbot, whether this be expressly given or presumed with probability. Unless, perhaps, in a case of extreme need, in which it would be lawful for him to commit a theft in order to perform a work of mercy. Nor because of this is he brought into a worse condition, since as it says in the book On Church Dogmatics: “It is good to give one’s assets to the poor, dispensing them little by little, but it is better to give them all at once, with the intention of following the Lord, and being freed from care, to be needy with Christ.”⁶³

[2] To the second it should be said that if a wife should have other things beyond her dowry—which is directed to sustaining the burdens of marriage—she can give goods of mercy, whether from her own resources or any other acquired in a lawful manner, even if she does not ask the consent of her husband. But these should be moderated, lest her husband becomes impoverished by a surplus of such works. She should not, however, give other goods of mercy without the consent of her husband, whether given expressly or presumed, except in the case of extreme need, as has been said about the monk.⁶⁴ For though the wife is the equal of her husband in the act of marriage, yet in the things that belong to the disposing of the home, “the husband is the head of the wife,” as the Apostle says, 1 Corinthians 11.⁶⁵ Now blessed Lucy had a betrothed, not a husband. So she was able to perform a work of mercy with the consent of her mother.

[3] To the third it should be said that what belongs to children also⁶⁶ belongs to the father. And so a child cannot perform a work of mercy—except perhaps just a little, out of what can be presumed to please the father. Or unless perhaps the dispensation of some particular matter has been commissioned to the child by his father. And the same should be said regarding servants.

[4] So the solution to the fourth argument is clear.

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Article 9. [Whether a work of mercy should be performed more for those who are more closely connected to us.]

One proceeds in this way to the ninth query. IT SEEMS that a work of mercy should not be performed more for those who are more closely connected to us.

[1] Sirach 12 says: "Give to the merciful and do not support the sinner; do good to the humble and do not give to the impious."⁶⁷ But sometimes it happens that those who are closely connected to us are sinners and impious men. Therefore works of mercy should not be performed more for them.

[2] Furthermore, works of mercy should be performed for the sake of receiving an eternal reward, according to Matthew 6: "And your Father, who sees in secret, will repay you."⁶⁸ But the eternal reward is especially acquired by works of mercy that are given to the saints, according to Luke 16: "Make yourselves friends out of the Mammon of iniquity, that when you shall fail, they may receive you into everlasting dwellings," which passage Augustine expounds: "Who shall have eternal dwellings, except for the saints of God? And who are they who shall be received by them into their dwellings, except for those who serve the needs of these saints?"⁶⁹ Therefore works of mercy should be given to saints rather than to those more closely connected to us.

[3] Furthermore, a person is especially close to himself. But a man cannot perform a work of mercy for himself. Therefore it seems that a work of mercy should not be performed more for a person more connected to us.

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BUT TO THE CONTRARY the Apostle says, 1 Timothy 5: "If someone does not have the care of his own, and especially those of his own house, he has denied the faith and is worse than an infidel."⁷⁰

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I ANSWER THAT IT SHOULD BE SAID that as Augustine says in On Christian Doctrine, Book 1: “It falls to us by lot, as it were, to have to look to the welfare of those who are more connected to us.”⁷¹ Nevertheless in this matter we must employ discretion, according to the various degrees of connection, holiness and advantage. For a good of mercy should be given more to one who is holier, to one suffering greater need, and to one more useful to the common good, than to one who is more closely connected to us, especially if the latter is not very closely connected in a way that demands our special care, and if he is not suffering any great need.

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[1] TO THE FIRST ARGUMENT, THEREFORE, IT SHOULD BE SAID that a sinner should not be helped insofar as he is a sinner, i.e. so that by this help he is enabled in sin, but insofar as he is a man, i.e. so that his nature is sustained.

[2] To the second it should be said that a work of mercy (opus eleemosynae) deserves an eternal reward in two ways. In one way, from its root in charity. According to this, a work of mercy is meritorious to the extent that it preserves the order of charity, according to which we should provide for those more closely connected with us, other things being equal. So that Ambrose says in On Duties 1: “It is with commendable generosity that you do not overlook your blood relatives, if you know them to be in need. For it is better that you should yourself help your own family, who would be ashamed to beg help from others.”⁷² —In another way, a good of mercy deserves the reward of eternal life, from the merit of the person to whom the work is given, and who prays for the person who gave the good of mercy. And Augustine is speaking there according to this sense.

[3] To the third it should be said that since a good of mercy is a work of mercy (opus misericordiae), then just as mercy is not properly directed toward oneself, but only by a certain likeness, as was said above,⁷³ so too, properly speaking, nobody performs a work of mercy for himself, unless perhaps in the person of another. For example, when someone is appointed to distribute goods of mercy, he can take something for himself, if he be in need, on the same ground as when he attends to others.

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Article 10. [Whether a work of mercy should be performed abundantly.]

One proceeds in this way to the tenth query. IT SEEMS that a work of mercy should not be performed abundantly.

[1] A work of mercy should especially be given to those who are more connected to us. But it should not be given to them “so that they are likely to become richer thereby,” as Ambrose says in On Duties, Book 1.⁷⁴ Nor therefore should it be given abundantly to others.

[2] Furthermore, Ambrose says in the same place: “Wealth should not be poured out (effundi) all at once, but little by little.”⁷⁵ But an abundance of works of mercy belongs to being poured out (effusio). Therefore a work of mercy should not be performed abundantly.

[3] Furthermore, the Apostle says, 2 Corinthians 8: “Not so that others should be eased,” i.e. so that they should live on our resources in idleness, “and we should be in tribulation,” i.e. in poverty.⁷⁶ But this would happen if a good of mercy were given abundantly. Therefore a good of mercy should not be generously given in abundance.

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BUT TO THE CONTRARY there is what is said in Tobit 4: “If you have much, give abundantly.”⁷⁷

I ANSWER THAT IT SHOULD BE SAID that an abundance of goods of mercy can be considered either on the part of the giver, or on the part of the receiver. On the part of the giver, when that which someone gives is great in proportion to his own assets. To give in this way is praiseworthy, so that the Lord, Luke 21, praised the widow who “out of her want, put in all the livelihood that she had.”⁷⁸ Nevertheless, the things that were said above⁷⁹ about performing works of mercy out of necessary resources should be observed. —On the part of the receiver, a work of mercy is abundant in two ways. In one way, by sufficiently supplying his need. In this way, it is praiseworthy to give a good of mercy. In another way, by supplying his need beyond what is sufficient. This is not praiseworthy—rather, it would be better to give generously to many who stand in need. So that the Apostle says, 1 Corinthians 13: “If I should distribute [all my goods] to feed the poor,”⁸⁰ on which words a Gloss says: “Through this, caution in giving is taught, so that we give not to one but to many, in order for many to benefit.”⁸¹

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[1] TO THE FIRST ARGUMENT, THEREFORE, IT SHOULD BE SAID that this reasoning proceeds from an abundance that surpasses the need for goods of mercy on the part of the receiver.

[2] To the second it should be said this authority is speaking of an abundance of goods of mercy on the part of the giver. But it should be understood that God does not wish a man to pour out all his wealth at once, unless his station is in flux. So that he adds: “Unless perhaps

that we imitate Eliseus, who slew his oxen and fed the poor with what he had, so that no domestic care would hold him back.”⁸²

[3] To the third it should be said the authority cited, regarding the words “Not that others should be eased” (or refreshed), is speaking of an abundance of goods of mercy which surpasses the need of the recipient, to whom one should give goods of mercy not so that he may wallow in luxury, but so that he might be sustained. About this, however, discretion should be applied, on account of the different conditions of human beings, some of whom are more luxuriously reared and need more luxurious food and clothing. So that Ambrose says in On Duties: “Age and weakness should be considered in giving—and even the shame that proclaims his good birth. Or whether he has fallen from riches to need through no fault of his own.”⁸³ —With regard to the words that follow, “and you should be in tribulation,” these words are speaking of abundance on the giver’s part. But, as a Gloss says on the same passage, “he does not say that it would not be better”—namely, to give abundantly—“but because he fears for the weak, and he admonishes them to give in this way, so that they might not suffer want.”⁸⁴

Notes for Question 32

¹ Older translations sometimes render eleemosyna as “almsgiving.” For a justification of this translation’s decision to use “works of mercy” and “goods of mercy,” see the Note to the Translation.

² 1 Corinthians 13.3, truncated.

³ Daniel 4.24.

⁴ Hebrews 13.16.

⁵ Aristotle, Nicomachean Ethics bk.4 chap.1 (1120a24).

⁶ 1 John 3.17.

⁷ A similar passage appears in Bonaventure, Commentaria in Quatuor Libros Sententiarum bk.4 dist.15 pt.2 a.1 q.4 (Quaracchi 4:368). The reference may be to Alexander of Hales; see Summa Halensis pt.2 sect.585 (Quaracchi 4:911) and pt.2 sect.597 (Quaracchi 4:924). See also Albert the Great, Super IV Sententiarum bk.4, dist.15 art.15 (Borgnet 29:493).

⁸ In Question 30, Article 4, above.

⁹ In Question 30, Article 2 and Article 3, Argument [3], above.

¹⁰ This verse, as well as the one above, also appears in Bonaventure, Commentaria in Quatuor Libros Sententiarum bk.4 dist.15 pt.2 dub.2 (Quaracchi 4:376-77). See also Albert the Great, Super IV Sententiarum bk.4 dist.15 a.23 ad 3 (Borgnet 29:505).

¹¹ The passage quoted is from Luke 12.4, not Matthew 10.28.

¹² See Matthew 25.35.

¹³ In Article 1 of this Question, above.

- ¹⁴ Gregory the Great, Homiliae in Evangelia bk.1 hom.9 sect.7, on Matthew 25.14-30 (PL 76:1109; CCSL 141:63-64.139-145).
- ¹⁵ Jerome, In Matheum bk.3, on Matthew 18.15 (PL 26:136; CCSL 77:161.609-10).
- ¹⁶ Romans 15.1.
- ¹⁷ Galatians 6.2.
- ¹⁸ Augustine, De cura pro mortuis gerenda ad Paulinum chap.3 sect.5 (PL 40:595).
- ¹⁹ Proverbs 27.6.
- ²⁰ Luke 14.12.
- ²¹ Psalm 34.13.
- ²² Job 31.20.
- ²³ Philemon, verse 7.
- ²⁴ Matthew 5.42.
- ²⁵ Augustine, De sermone Domini in monte bk.1 chap.20 (PL 34:1264; CCSL 35:76-77.1675-80).
- ²⁶ Proverbs 4.2.
- ²⁷ Aristotle, Topics bk.3 chap.2 (118a10).
- ²⁸ Sallust, De coniuratione Catilinae chap.54.
- ²⁹ Luke 21.3.
- ³⁰ Sirach 17.18. The rendering of pupilla as “apple of the eye” follows Douay-Rheims.
- ³¹ Sirach 29.13-14, quoted in part.
- ³² Sirach 29.15.
- ³³ Here and in the Reply to the third argument, some versions read “effect of charity.”
- ³⁴ Daniel 4.24.

³⁵ See Matthew 25.35-46.

³⁶ 1 John 3.18.

³⁷ Luke 11.41.

³⁸ Some versions read “takes itself.”

³⁹ Although these words are attributed to Ambrose by both Alexander of Hales and Albert the Great, it is not clear that they appear in any of Ambrose’s texts. See Summa Halensis part 2 sect.485 (Quaracchi 3:473) and Albert the Great, Super IV Sententiarium bk.4 dist.15 a.16 arg.4 (Borgnet 29:494).

⁴⁰ Basil the Great, Homilia in illud dictum evangelii secundum Lucam, sect.7, on Luke 12.18 (PG 31:275). (The Latin translation quoted by Thomas is not the same as that which appears in PG 31.)

⁴¹ Gratian, Decretum, part 1 dist.47 can.8 Sicut ii (Richter-Friedberg 1:171).

⁴² See Matthew 6.34.

⁴³ 1 Timothy 4.8.

⁴⁴ Aristotle, Nicomachean Ethics bk.4 chap.1 (1121a17).

⁴⁵ 1 Timothy 5:8.

⁴⁶ Matthew 19.21.

⁴⁷ Luke 16.9.

⁴⁸ Deuteronomy 23.18.

⁴⁹ Aristotle, Nicomachean Ethics bk.4 chap.1 (1122a10).

⁵⁰ Although these words are attributed to Ambrose by both Alexander of Hales and Albert the Great, it is not clear that they appear in any of Ambrose’s texts. See Summa Halensis part 2

sect.485 (Quaracchi 3:473) and Albert the Great, Super IV Sententiarium bk.4 dist.15 a.16 arg.4 (Borgnet 29:494).

⁵¹ Augustine, Sermones ad populum, serm.113 chap.2 sect.2 (PL 38:649), truncated.

⁵² Augustine, Sermones ad populum, serm.113 chap.2 sect.2 (PL 38:648-49), truncated.

⁵³ Augustine, Quaestiones evangeliorum bk.2 q.34 (PL 35:1349).

⁵⁴ Ambrose, Expositio evangelii secundum Lucam bk.7 sect.245, on Luke 16.9 (PL 15:1764B; CCSL 14:297.2648-50).

⁵⁵ Basil the Great, Twenty-Four Sermons on Morals, serm.6 “On Avarice” (PG 32:1190A).

⁵⁶ In the body of the Article.

⁵⁷ Rather, the author known since Erasmus as “Ambrosiaster.” See Ambrosiaster, In Epistolam 1 ad Timotheum, on 1 Timothy 4.8 (PL 17:500C) and Glossa Lombardi (PL 192:348D).

⁵⁸ Genesis 3.16.

⁵⁹ Ephesians 6.1.

⁶⁰ Titus 2.9.

⁶¹ Augustine, Sermones ad populum, serm.113 chap.2 sect.2 (PL 38:649).

⁶² Some versions read “commissioned to him.”

⁶³ Gennadius of Massilia, De Ecclesiasticis Dogmatibus, chap.71 (PL 58:997). (This work was once thought to have been written by Augustine.)

⁶⁴ In this Article, Reply [1].

⁶⁵ 1 Corinthians 11.3.

⁶⁶ Some versions omit “also.”

⁶⁷ Sirach 12.4, combined with 12.6.

⁶⁸ Matthew 6.18.

⁶⁹ Luke 16.9. Augustine, Sermones ad populum, serm.113 chap.1 sect.1 (PL 38:648).

⁷⁰ 1 Timothy 5.8.

⁷¹ Augustine, De doctrina christiana bk.1 chap.28 sect.29 (PL 34:30; CCSL 32:22.3-4,9-1),
paraphrased.

⁷² Ambrose, De officiis bk.1 chap.30 (PL 16:72; CCSL 15:55.66-69).

⁷³ In Question 30, Article 1, Reply [2], above.

⁷⁴ Ambrose, De officiis bk.1 chap.30 (PL 16:72; CCSL 15:55:69-70).

⁷⁵ Ambrose, De officiis bk.1 chap.30 (PL 16:72; CCSL 15:54.61-62).

⁷⁶ 2 Corinthians 8.13.

⁷⁷ Tobit 4.9.

⁷⁸ Luke 21.4.

⁷⁹ In Article 6 of this Question, above.

⁸⁰ 1 Corinthians 13.3.

⁸¹ Glossa Lombardi on 1 Corinthians 13.3 (PL 191:1660A).

⁸² Ambrose, De officiis bk.1 chap.30 (PL 16:72; CCSL 15:54:62-65).

⁸³ Ambrose, De officiis bk.1 chap.30 (PL 16:74; CCSL 15:57:135-140).

⁸⁴ Glossa Lombardi on 2 Corinthians 7.13 (PL 192:58D).

Question 33

[On Fraternal Correction]

One should next consider fraternal correction. Regarding this, eight queries are raised.

(1) Whether fraternal correction is an act of charity. (2) Whether it falls under a precept. (3) Whether this precept extends to all, or only to prelates. (4) Whether subordinates are bound by this precept to correct prelates. (5) Whether a sinner can give correction. (6) Whether someone ought to be corrected who is made worse by correction. (7) Whether secret correction should precede denunciation. (8) Whether the calling of witnesses should precede denunciation.

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Article 1. [Whether fraternal correction is an act of charity.]

One proceeds in this way to the first query. IT SEEMS that fraternal correction is not an act of charity.

[1] A Gloss on Matthew 18's words "If your brother has sinned against you"¹ says that your brother should be accused out of the zeal of justice. But justice is a virtue distinct from charity. Therefore fraternal correction is not an act of charity, but of justice.

[2] Furthermore, fraternal correction occurs by a secret admonition. But admonition is a kind of counsel, which belongs to prudence, "for a prudent person is of good counsel," as is said in Ethics 6.² Therefore fraternal correction is not an act of charity, but of prudence.

[3] Furthermore, an act's opposites do not belong to the same virtue. But to support the sinner is an act of charity, according to Galatians 6, "Bear one another's burdens, and in this way you shall fulfill the law of Christ,"³ which is the law of charity. Therefore it seems that to correct a sinning brother, which is the contrary of supporting him, is not an act of charity.

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BUT TO THE CONTRARY to censure an offender is a certain spiritual work of mercy. But a work of mercy is an act of charity, as was said above.⁴ Therefore fraternal correction is also an act of charity.

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I ANSWER THAT IT SHOULD BE SAID that the correction of an offender is a certain remedy that should be administered against the sin of another. Now the sin of another can be considered in two ways. In one way, so far as it is harmful to the person who sins. In another way, so far as the sin inclines to the harm of others, who are wounded or scandalized by the person's sin—or so far as the sin is a nuisance to the common good, the justice of which is disturbed by the person's sin.

Therefore, the correction of the offender is twofold. The first administers a remedy to the sin so far as it is a certain evil on the part of the sinner himself—and this is properly fraternal correction, which is directed to the improvement of the offender. Now removing an evil from another belongs to the same aspect (ratio) as attending to his good. Now attending to your brother's good belongs to charity, by which we will and do good to a friend. So that fraternal correction too is an act of charity, since by it we drive out our brother's evil, namely sin. The removal of our brother's sin belongs more to charity than even the removal of an

outward injury, or of a bodily harm, so far as the opposed good of virtue is more closely related to charity than the good of the body or external things. So fraternal correction is more an act of charity than a healing of bodily weakness, or any help by which outward need is removed. The second correction is one that administers a remedy to the offender's sin, according as the sin is present in the evil of others, and especially as it is a nuisance to the common good. And such correction is an act of justice, which is to preserve the rightness of justice of one person toward another.

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[1] TO THE FIRST ARGUMENT, THEREFORE, IT SHOULD BE SAID that this Gloss is speaking of a second kind of correction, which is an act of justice. Or, if it were also speaking of the first, justice would there be taken as a universal virtue, as will be said below, to the extent that "every sin is iniquity," as is said in 1 John 3,⁵ being as it were against justice.

[2] To the second it should be said that, just as the Philosopher says in Ethics 6, "prudence brings about rightness in the things that are directed to the end,"⁶ about which things there is counsel and choice. Nonetheless, since by prudence someone acts rightly for the end of some moral virtue, e.g. the end of temperance or fortitude, that act belongs principally to the virtue to whose end it is directed. Therefore since the admonition that occurs in fraternal correction is directed to the removal of a brother's sin, which belongs to charity, it is clear that such an admonition is principally an act of charity, commanding, as it were; and secondarily an act of prudence, executing and directing the act, as it were.

[3] To the third it should be said that fraternal correction is not opposed to the support of weak people, but rather follows from it. For so far as a person supports a sinner, he is not

stirred up against him, but preserves good will toward him. And from this it happens that he tries to improve him.

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Article 2. [Whether fraternal correction falls under a precept.]

One proceeds in this way to the second query. IT SEEMS that fraternal correction does not fall under a precept.

[1] Nothing that is impossible falls under a precept, according to Jerome: “Cursed is he who says that God has commanded anything impossible.”⁷ But Ecclesiastes 7 says: “Consider the works of God, which no man can correct whom He has despised.”⁸ Therefore fraternal correction does not fall under a precept.

[2] Furthermore, all precepts of divine law are traced back to the precepts of the Decalogue. But fraternal correction does not fall under any of the precepts of the Decalogue. Therefore it does not fall under a precept.

[3] Furthermore, the omission of a divine precept is a mortal sin, which is not found in a holy man. But the omission of fraternal correction is found in holy and spiritual men, for Augustine says, City of God Book 1: “Not only lower men, but also those who hold a superior grade of life, abstain from blaming others, on account of a certain chain of covetous desire (cupiditas), and not on account of the kindness of charity.”⁹ Therefore fraternal correction is not a matter of precept.

[4] Furthermore, that which falls under a precept has the aspect of something owed. If therefore fraternal correction were to fall under a precept, it would be owed to these brethren that we should correct them when they sin. Now when a person owes someone a bodily debt,

e.g. money, he must not be content that his creditor chance upon him. Rather, he should seek him out, so that he might pay him what he owes. Therefore it is necessary that a person should seek out those in need of correction, so that he might correct them. But this seems inappropriate—both on account of the multitude of sinners, for whose correction one man could not suffice, and because it would be necessary for religious to leave the cloister for the correction of men, which is inappropriate. Therefore fraternal correction does not fall under a precept.

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BUT TO THE CONTRARY Augustine says in his book On the Words of the Lord: “If you neglect to give correction, you become worse than he who has sinned.”¹⁰ But this would not be the case, unless by such neglect a person had omitted a precept. Therefore fraternal correction falls under a precept.

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I ANSWER THAT IT SHOULD BE SAID that fraternal correction falls under a precept. But one should consider that just as the negative precepts of the law prohibit acts of sinners, so the affirmative precepts induce acts of virtue. Now the acts of sins are evil in themselves, and in no way can become good, since they are in themselves connected to an evil end, as said in Ethics 2.¹¹ And so negative precepts are binding always and for all times. On the other hand, acts of virtue should not arise in just any matter, but by observing the due circumstances, which are required in order for the act to be virtuous—namely, that it arise where it should be, when it should be, and according as it should be. And since the disposition of the things that are directed to the end is observed according to the aspect of the end, in these circumstances the

one that should be chiefly observed is the aspect of the end, which is the good of virtue. If, therefore, there is some such omission of another circumstance regarding a virtuous act, which destroys entirely the good of virtue, this act is contrary to a precept.

If, however, there is a defect of another circumstance that does not entirely destroy the good of virtue, though it does not completely attain the good of virtue, it is not against a precept. So the Philosopher says in Ethics 2 that if one deviates a little from the mean, it is not against the virtue, whereas if one deviates much, the virtue is corrupted in its act. Now fraternal correction is directed to the improvement of our brother. And so in this way it falls under a precept, according as it is necessary for that end, but not so that our offending brother be corrected at any place or time whatever.

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[1] TO THE FIRST ARGUMENT, THEREFORE, IT SHOULD BE SAID that in all good things to be done, the action of a man is not efficacious unless divine help is present—and yet a man must do what is in him. So Augustine says in his book On Admonition and Grace: “Since we, not knowing who belongs to the number of the predestined and who does not, we should be affected by the affection of charity, so that we wish for everyone to be saved.”¹² And so we should bestow the kindness (officium) of fraternal correction on everyone, under the hope of divine help.

[2] To the second it should be said that, as said above,¹³ all precepts which belong to the conferring of some benefit on our neighbor are traced back to the precept regarding the honoring of one’s parents.

[3] To the third it should be said that fraternal correction can be omitted in three ways. In the first way, meritoriously, when out of charity a person omits correction. For Augustine says in City of God Book 1: “If a person refrains from scolding and censuring wrongdoers, because he is looking for an opportune time, or because he fears that if he does so, they may become worse, or hinder, oppress, or turn away from the faith others who are weak and need to be instructed in a life of goodness and virtue, this does not seem to be the occasion of covetous desire (cupiditas), but rather the counsel of charity.”¹⁴

In a second way, fraternal correction is omitted with mortal sin, namely when (as he says there) “one dreads the judgment of the mob, lest one suffer excruciating pain or death,” provided, however, that the mind is so dominated by such things that they are given greater weight than fraternal charity. And this seems to happen when a person anticipates that he could probably draw some particular offender back from a sin, and yet refrains from doing so on account of fear or covetous desire (cupiditas).

In a third way, such omission is a venial sin, when fear or covetous desire makes a man slower to correct the misdeeds of his brother, and yet not so much that if he saw clearly that he could draw him back from sin, he would still abandon the effort to do so on account of fear or self-seeking desire, over which he gives greater weight to fraternal charity. And in this way holy men sometimes neglect to correct offenders.

[4] To the fourth it should be said that regarding what is due to some fixed and particular person, whether it be a bodily or a spiritual good, it is necessary that we should give it to him—not waiting for him to chance upon us, but having due solicitude, inquiring after him. Just as he who owes money to a creditor should seek him out when the time comes to pay him

what is owed, so he who has the spiritual care of someone should seek him out for this—that he may correct him in relation to a sin.

But regarding benefits that are not owed to a particular person, but are in common to all neighbors, whether they be bodily or spiritual things, it is not necessary for us to seek out the persons to whom we should give them. Rather, it is enough that we give them to those who chance upon us. For this is to be had “as it were, by chance,” as Augustine says in On Christian Doctrine, Book 1.¹⁵ And for this reason he says in his book On the Word of the Lord that “our Lord reminds us not to be negligent vis-à-vis one another's sins—not by seeking out something to blame, but rather by seeing something to correct.”¹⁶ Otherwise we should become spies on the lives of others, against which is said in Proverbs 24: “Lie not in wait, nor seek after wickedness in the house of the just, nor spoil his rest.”¹⁷

So it is clear that it is not necessary for the religious to leave their cloister for the correction of offenders.

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Article 3. [Whether fraternal correction belongs to anyone except prelates.]

One proceeds in this way to the third query. IT SEEMS that fraternal correction does not belong to anyone except prelates.

[1] Jerome says: “Let priests strive to fulfill this passage of the Gospel: ‘If your brother has sinned against you,’” etc.¹⁸ But it was by the name of “priest” that prelates—who have the care of others—used to be signified. Therefore it seems that fraternal correction belongs to prelates alone.

[2] Furthermore, fraternal correction is a certain spiritual work of mercy. But to give bodily works of mercy belongs to those who are superior in temporal matters, namely to the rich. Therefore fraternal correction belongs to those who are superior in spiritual matters, namely to prelates.

[3] Furthermore, he who censures another moves him by an admonition to something better. But in natural things, lower things are moved by higher things. Therefore also according to the order of virtue, which follows the order of nature, it belongs to prelates alone to correct inferiors.

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BUT TO THE CONTRARY there is what is said in the Book of Decrees Cause 24, Question 3, “Both priests and the other faithful ought to have the greatest care for those who perish, so that by their reproof either they are corrected from sins, or—if they appear incorrigible—are separated from the Church.”¹⁹

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I ANSWER THAT IT SHOULD BE SAID that, as said above,²⁰ correction is twofold. One is an act of charity, which particularly tends to the improvement of an offending brother by means of a simple admonition. And such correction belongs to anyone who has charity, whether he is a subject or a prelate. But there is another correction that is an act of justice, by which is intended the common good, which is procured not only by admonishing a brother, but also sometimes by a punishment, so that others, afraid, may desist from sin. And such correction belongs only to prelates, who not only have to admonish, but also have to correct by punishing.

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[1] TO THE FIRST ARGUMENT, THEREFORE, IT SHOULD BE SAID that even in the fraternal correction that belongs to all, the care for which prelates are responsible is more grave, as Augustine says in City of God, Book 1.²¹ For just as someone should confer temporal benefits on those particularly of whom he has temporal care, so also should he confer spiritual benefits—e.g. correction, doctrine and other such things—on those who are entrusted to his spiritual care. Therefore Jerome does not intend to say that that the precept regarding fraternal correction belongs to priests alone, but that it belongs to them particularly.

[2] To the second it should be said that just as he who has that by which he can help in a bodily manner is rich in this respect, so he has the sane judgment of reason, out of which he can correct the misdeed of another, should be regarded as a superior in this respect.

[3] To the third it should be said that even in natural things, certain things act mutually on one another, since regarding some particular thing, each is higher than the other—namely, to the extent that in relation to the other, each is in some way in potency and each is some way

in act. Likewise, a person can correct another, so far as he has a sane judgment of reason in that in which the other falls short, though he is not his superior simply.

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Article 4. [Whether someone is bound to correct his prelate.]

One proceeds in this way to the fourth query. IT SEEMS that someone is not bound to correct his prelate.

[1] It says in Exodus 19: "The beast that has touched the mountain shall be stoned"; and 2 Samuel 6 says that Uzzah was struck by the Lord because he touched the ark.²² But "prelate" is signified by the mountain and the ark. Therefore prelates should not be corrected by their subjects.

[2] Furthermore, on Galatians 2, "I opposed him to his face," a Gloss says: "as an equal."²³ Therefore, since a subject is not equal to his prelate, he should not correct him.

[3] Furthermore, Gregory says: "one does not presume to correct the life of holy men, unless one thinks better things of oneself."²⁴ But one ought not to think better things of oneself than of one's prelate. Therefore prelates should not be corrected.

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BUT TO THE CONTRARY Augustine says in his Rule: "Be merciful not only to yourselves, but also to him who, being in the higher position among you, is therefore in greater danger."²⁵ But fraternal correction is a work of mercy. Therefore even prelates ought to be corrected.

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I ANSWER THAT IT SHOULD BE SAID that the correction which is an act of justice, by means of the coercion²⁶ of punishment, does not belong to subjects in respect of their prelates. But the fraternal correction that is an act of charity belongs to any person whatever in respect of any person toward whom he should have charity, if something is found in that person that is worthy of correction. For an act, proceeding from a habit or a power, extends to all things that

are contained under the object of that power or habit, just as vision extends to all things that are contained under the object of vision.

But since a virtuous act should be moderated by due circumstances, it follows that in the correction by which subjects correct prelates, a suitable manner should be used—namely, not wantonness (protervia) and hardness (duritia), but mildness and reverence. So the Apostle says, 1 Timothy, “Do not chide an old man, but entreat him as a father.”²⁷ And so Dionysius reproved the monk Demophilus, since he had corrected a priest irreverently, striking him and casting him out of the church.²⁸

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[1] TO THE FIRST ARGUMENT, THEREFORE, IT SHOULD BE SAID that it would seem that a prelate is touched inordinately when he is scolded irreverently, or also when he is disparaged. And this is signified by contact with the mountain and ark, contact that is condemned by God.

[2] To the second it should be said that “to oppose [a person] to his face, before everyone”²⁹ exceeds the measure of fraternal correction, and so Paul would not have thus blamed Peter, unless he were in some way his equal in respect to the defense of faith. But one who is not an equal can still issue an admonition in secret. So the Apostle, in the last chapter of Colossians, when he says: “Say to Archippus: fulfill your ministry,”³⁰ writes in relation to subjects, so that they might admonish their prelate.

It should be known, however, that whenever a danger should threaten the faith, prelates should be reprovved by their subjects, even publicly. So that Paul, who was subject to Peter, publicly reprovved Peter, on account of a threatening danger of scandal about faith. And so Augustine’s gloss on Galatians 2: “Peter himself gave an example to superiors, that if at any

time by chance they should abandon the straight path, they should not disdain to be corrected by their followers.”³¹

[3] To the third it should be said that presuming oneself better simply than a prelate seems to belong to presumptuous pride. But to deem oneself better in some particular respect does not belong to presumption, since there is nobody in this life who does not have some defect. It should also be remembered that when someone warns his prelate charitably, he does not judge himself better on that account. Rather, help is given to him who “occupies a higher place, and so is in greater danger,” as Augustine says in his Rule.³²

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Article 5. [Whether a sinner should correct an offender.]

One proceeds in this way to the fifth query. IT SEEMS that a sinner should correct an offender.

[1] No one that is excused from observing a precept on account of a sin that he has committed. But fraternal correction falls under a precept, as was said.³³ Therefore it seems that a person should not overlook correction of this sort on account of a sin that he has committed.

[2] Furthermore, spiritual works of mercy are better than bodily works of mercy. But he who is in sin should not abstain so that he does not perform a bodily work of mercy. Much less, therefore, should he refrain from the correction of an offender on account of a preceding sin.

[3] Furthermore, it is said in 1 John 1, “If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves.”³⁴ If, therefore, on account of a sin someone is hindered from fraternal correction, there will be no one who can correct the offender. This, however, is inappropriate—and so, therefore, is the first claim.

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BUT TO THE CONTRARY there is what Isidore says in his book On the Highest Good: “He should not correct the vices of others, if he is subject to these vices.”³⁵ And Romans 2 says, “In that in which you judge another, you condemn yourself, for you do the same things that you judge.”³⁶

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I ANSWER THAT IT SHOULD BE SAID that, as was said above,³⁷ the correction of an offender belongs to someone, so far as the right judgment of reason is strong in him. Now sin,

as was said above, does not destroy the whole good of nature; rather, something remains in the sinner regarding the right judgment of reason. And according to this, he can be competent to censure a misdeed by another.³⁸ Nonetheless, a certain impediment to this correction is conveyed by a preceding sin, on account of three things.

First, because from a preceding sin, a person is rendered unworthy to correct another. And especially if he has committed a greater sin, he is not worthy to correct another for a lesser sin. So that on the passage of Matthew 7, “why do you see the mote” etc.,³⁹ Jerome says: “He is speaking of those who, while they are themselves guilty of mortal sin, do not pardon the lesser sins committed by their brethren.”⁴⁰

Second, correction is rendered undue on account of scandal, which follows upon correction if the sin of the one who is censuring is manifest, since it seems that he who corrects does not correct out of charity, but more for the sake of showing off. So on the passage of Matthew 7, “How do you say to your brother” etc.,⁴¹ Chrysostom expounds: “What is the point? Do you suppose it is out of charity, so that you may save your neighbor? No, since you would save yourself first. Therefore, you do not want to save others, but to conceal your evil acts with good teaching, and to seek the praise of knowledge (scientia) from men.”⁴²

In the third way, on account of the pride of the one who reproves, namely so far as someone who, weighing his own sins lightly, prefers himself in his heart to his neighbor, judging his neighbor’s sins with austere severity, as if he himself were a just man. So Augustine says in his book The Lord’s Sermon on the Mount, “To reprimand vices is the duty of good men, just as when the wicked do this, they act the other part.”⁴³ And so Augustine says in the same passage: “When necessity compels us to find fault with someone, let us consider whether we

never had his vice; and then let us remember that we are human beings, and might have had it. Or that we once had the vice, but have it no longer. Then it touches the memory of our common fragility, so that our correction might proceed not from hatred, but from mercy. If, however, we discover the same vice to be in us, let us not scold him, but rather sigh deeply with him and invite him equally to repentance.”⁴⁴

From these things, therefore, it is clear that a sinner, if he corrects an offender with humility, does not sin, nor adds a new condemnation to himself. This being granted, he does show himself to be condemnable for his past sin, either in the conscience of his brother or at least his own conscience.

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[1]-[3] So the response TO WHAT WAS OBJECTED is clear.

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Article 6. [Whether someone should quit giving correction to a person on account of a fear that the person might become worse.]

One proceeds in this way to the sixth query. IT SEEMS that someone should not quit giving correction to a person on account of a fear that the person might become worse.

[1] Sin is a certain weakness of the soul, according to the Psalm: “Have mercy on me, O Lord, since I am weak.”⁴⁵ But he to whom the care of a sick person falls should not quit taking care of someone, even on account of his nay-saying or contempt—since then a greater danger threatens, as is clear regarding crazy people. Much more, then, ought one to correct a sinner, however violently he should bear it.

[2] Furthermore, according to Jerome, the truth of life should not be deserted on account of scandal.⁴⁶ Now the precepts of God belong to the truth of life. Since, therefore, fraternal correction falls under a precept, as said above, it seems that it should not be deserted on account of scandalizing the person who is corrected.

[3] Furthermore, according to the Apostle, Romans 3, “Evil should not be done so that good comes of it.”⁴⁷ Therefore, for a similar reason, good should not be omitted, lest evil come of it. But fraternal correction is a certain good. Therefore it should not be omitted on account of a fear that he who is corrected might become worse.

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BUT TO THE CONTRARY there is what is said in Proverbs 9: “Do not rebuke a scorner, lest he hate you,”⁴⁸ where a Gloss says: “It should not be feared that a scorner will inflict contumely on you, when he is rebuked; rather this should be foreseen—that when he is turned

toward hatred, he should become worse.”⁴⁹ Therefore one should cease from fraternal correction when it is feared that a person should thereby become worse.

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I ANSWER THAT IT SHOULD BE SAID that, as was said above,⁵⁰ the correction of the offender is twofold. One type of correction, belonging to prelates, and which is directed to the common good, has coercive power. Such correction should not be deserted on account of a disturbance on the part of him who is corrected. This is both since, if he does not wish to be improved by his own accord, he should by punishments be compelled to stop sinning, and since if he is incorrigible, provision is made for the common good, while the order of justice is served, and others are deterred by the example of one. So that a judge does not omit passing a sentence of condemnation against a sinner on account of a fear of any disturbance on his part, or that of his friends.

The other type of fraternal correction, whose end is improvement of the offender, is not that having any coercion; it only bears a simple admonition. And so where is it deemed with probability that a sinner will not heed an admonition, but rather slide into worse things, one should cease from correction of this sort, since the things that are directed toward the end should be regulated according to what is required by the nature (ratio) of the end.

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[1] TO THE FIRST ARGUMENT, THEREFORE, IT SHOULD BE SAID that a physician applies a certain kind of force against somebody who is frenetic, when he does not want to receive his care. And to this may be likened the correction of prelates, which has coercive power, but not simple fraternal correction.

[2] To the second it should be said that regarding fraternal correction, a precept is given according as it is an act of virtue. Now this is according as it is proportioned to the end. And so when it hinders the end, as when a person is made worse, it no longer belongs to the truth of life, and nor does it fall under a precept.

[3] To the third it should be said that the things which are directed to the end have the aspect of good from their ordering to the end. And so fraternal correction, when it is a hindrance to the end—namely, the improvement of our brother—no longer has the aspect of good. And so when such correction is omitted, good is not omitted so that evil would come of it.

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Article 7. [Whether in fraternal correction a secret admonition should, by the necessity of the precept, precede denunciation.]

One proceeds in this way to the seventh query. IT SEEMS that in fraternal correction a secret admonition should not, by the necessity of the precept, precede denunciation.

[1] In works of charity, we should especially imitate God, according to Ephesians 5: “Be imitators of God, as children who are most dear, and walk in love.”⁵¹ Now God from time to time publicly punishes a man for a sin, with no preceding secret warning. Therefore it seems that it is not necessary for a secret admonition to precede denunciation.

[2] Furthermore, as Augustine says in his book Against Lying, “from the deeds of the saints it can be understood in what way the precepts of Sacred Scripture should be understood.”⁵² Now among the deeds of the saints are found a denunciation of a hidden sin, a denunciation made public with no prior secret warning—as is read in Genesis 37, when Joseph

“accused his brothers to his father of a most wicked crime.”⁵³ And in Acts 5, it is said that Peter publicly denounced Ananias and Saphira— who, secretly defrauding, kept back the price of the land—with no previous secret warning.⁵⁴ Even the Lord himself is not taken to have warned Judas in secret before he denounced him. It does not, therefore, belong to the necessity of the precept that a secret warning should precede a public denunciation.

[3] Furthermore, an accusation is graver than a denunciation. But someone can proceed to a public accusation, with no prior secret warning, for it is determined in the Book of Decrees that only an inscription (inscriptio) must precede an accusation.⁵⁵ It does not, therefore, belong to the necessity of the precept that a secret warning should precede a public denunciation.

[4] Furthermore, it does not seem probable that the things which are in common usage among the religious should be against the precepts of Christ. But it is customary amongst the religious that in chapter houses some are proclaimed guilty with no previous secret warning. Therefore it seems that this does not belong to the necessity of the precept.

[5] Furthermore, religious are bound to obey their prelates. But sometimes a prelate gives orders—either commonly to all, or specially to someone—that if something that should be corrected is known, it should be said to him. Therefore it would seem that they are bound to tell him this, even before any secret admonition. It does not, therefore, belong to the necessity of the precept that a secret warning should precede a public denunciation.

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BUT TO THE CONTRARY there is what Augustine says in his book On the Words of the Lord, expounding the passage “Correct him between you and him alone”:⁵⁶ “Strive for his correction, sparing him shame. For perhaps because out of shame he begins to defend his sin,

and him whom you wish to make better, you make worse.”⁵⁷ But we are bound by the precept of charity to this—that we take precautions, lest our brother become worse. Therefore the order of fraternal correction falls under the precept.

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I ANSWER THAT IT SHOULD BE SAID that regarding the public denunciation of sinners, one must distinguish. For sins are either public, or they are hidden. If they are public, a remedy should be administered not only to the person who has sinned, so that he may become better, but also to others whom knowledge of the sin has reached, so they are not scandalized. And so such sins should be reprimanded in public, according to the passage in the Apostle: “Reprimand sinners before all, so that the rest may have fear”;⁵⁸ this is understood to speak of public sins, as Augustine says in his book On the Word of the Lord.⁵⁹

If, however, the sins are hidden, then what the Lord says seems to have place: “If your brother has sinned against you” etc.⁶⁰ For when he offends you publicly in the presence of others, he no longer sins against you alone, but also against others whom he disturbs. But since even in hidden sins, offense can be taken by one’s neighbors, it seems that something further should be distinguished. For certain hidden sins are harmful to our neighbors, either bodily or spiritually—as when someone plots, in hiding, the way the city should be handed over to its enemies, or when a heretic in private turns human beings away from the faith. And since he who sins thus in hiding sins not only against you, but also against others, it is necessary to proceed at once to a denunciation, so that he is hindered from doing harm of this sort—unless by chance someone were to judge firmly that by means of a secret warning, he could hinder evils of this sort.

Certain sins, however, involve only the evil of the sinner and the person who is sinned against—because the latter is the only person wounded by the sin, or alone has knowledge [of the sin]. At this point the matter extends only to this: that help might be given to our sinning brother. Just as a physician who confers bodily health on a sick person does so, if he can, without cutting off any of his members—but if he cannot do this, then he cuts the member as little as is necessary, so that the life of the whole may be preserved—so too he who strives to improve his brother should, if he can, thus improve his brother regarding his conscience, so that his good name (fama) might be kept. For a good name is useful.⁶¹ First, to the sinner himself—not only in temporal things, where in multiple domains a person suffers damage when his good name is lost, but also in spiritual things, since in view of the fear of disgrace (infamia), many are diverted from sin, so when a person regards himself as disgraceful, he sins without any curb. So that Jerome says: “Your brother should be corrected separately, lest he continue in sin once he has lost his sense of decency (pudor) or shame (verecundia).”⁶² Second, a good name of a sinning brother should be preserved, both since after one person is disgraced, others are disgraced, according to the passage of Augustine in a letter to the clergy, the elders, and the people of Hippo: “When a few of those who profess a holy name are held to have committed some offense—whether this is reported falsely or exposed truly—some will press hard, busy themselves, and canvass, so that it is believed of all [who profess a holy name]”⁶³—and also because after the sin of one person is publicized, others are provoked to sinning.

But since conscience should be preferred to a good name, the Lord willed that the conscience should be set free from sin by means of a public denunciation, even at the cost of

our brother's good name. —So that it is clear that it belongs to the necessity of the precept that a secret warning precede a public denunciation.

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[1] TO THE FIRST ARGUMENT, THEREFORE, IT SHOULD BE SAID that all hidden things are known to God. In this way, hidden sins are to divine judgment, as public sins are to human judgment of man. And yet, God does frequently rebuke sinners by a secret admonition, as it were—inspiring them inwardly, asleep or awake, according to Job 33: “By a dream in a night vision, when deep sleep comes upon men, then he opens the ears of men, and by discipline he instructs them, so that he may turn a man away from the things that he has done.”⁶⁴

[2] To the second it should be said that the Lord, as God, knew the sin of Judas as though it were public. So that he could have proceeded at once to publicize it. Nevertheless, he did not, but warned him of his sin by dark words. Peter, however, did publicize the hidden sin of Ananias and Saphira, acting as the executor of God, by whose revelation he knew of their sin. Regarding Joseph, it should be believed that he had warned his brothers, though this is not written. Alternatively, it can be said that the sin was public among his brothers, so that it says in the plural: “he accused his brothers.”

[3] To the third it should be said that when a danger threatens many, these words of the Lord do not have any place there, since then a sinning brother does not sin only against you.

[4] To the fourth it should be said that proclamations of this sort, which are made in chapter houses, concern light matters, which do not detract from a man's good name. So that they are, as it were, certain admonitions of faults forgotten, and not so much accusations or denunciations. Were they, however, such that our brother would be disgraced by them, then

the person who publicizes his brother's sin in this manner would act against the precept of the Lord.

[5] To the fifth it should be said that a prelate should not be obeyed against a precept of the Lord,⁶⁵ according to Acts 5: "We must obey God rather than men."⁶⁶ And so when a prelate prescribes that a person should tell him anything that he knows to require correction, the precept should be understood sanely, as preserving the order of fraternal correction—whether the precept applies commonly to all, or to someone in particular. But if a prelate were to expressly prescribe something against this order, instituted by the Lord, then the person who prescribes it would sin, as would the person who obeys him, acting as against the precept of the Lord. So that he should not be obeyed, because a prelate is not a judge of things hidden, but only God is. So that he has no power of prescribing anything regarding hidden things, except so far they are manifested through certain signs, as by disgrace or some suspicions. In these cases, a prelate can command in the same way as a judge, whether secular or ecclesiastical, can compel the truth to be told under oath.

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Article 8. [Whether the calling of witnesses should precede public denunciation.]

One proceeds in this way to the eighth query. IT SEEMS that the calling of witnesses should not precede public denunciation.

[1] Secret sins should not be manifested to others, since in this way a man would be the “betrayor” of an offense, rather than the “corrector” of a brother, as Augustine says.⁶⁷ But he who calls witnesses manifests a brother's sin to others. Therefore in hidden sins, the calling of witnesses should not precede public denunciation.

[2] Furthermore, a man should love his neighbor as himself. But no one calls witnesses with respect to his own hidden sin. Therefore nor should he call them with respect to the hidden sin of his brother.

[3] Furthermore, witnesses are called for the sake of proving something. But in hidden things, a proof by witnesses cannot be given. Therefore witnesses of this sort are called in vain.

[4] Furthermore, Augustine says in his Rule that “the matter should first be revealed to a superior, before it is shown to witnesses.”⁶⁸ But to reveal a matter to a superior or a prelate is to tell the Church. Therefore the calling of witnesses should not precede public denunciation.

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BUT TO THE CONTRARY the Lord says, Matthew 18: “Take one or two with you, so that in the mouth of two” etc.⁶⁹

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I ANSWER THAT IT SHOULD BE SAID that one appropriately passes from one extreme to another through a mean. Now in fraternal correction the Lord wished that the beginning would

be hidden—as when one brother corrects another brother—between himself and the other alone. The end, however, he wished to be public, namely as when he would be denounced to the church. And so the calling of witnesses is appropriately put in the middle, as first indicating a brother’s sin to a few, who can profit him and not hurt him. At least in this way he may be improved without disgrace before the many.

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[1] TO THE FIRST ARGUMENT, THEREFORE, IT SHOULD BE SAID that certain people⁷⁰ have thus understood the order of fraternal correction to be preserved, so that our brother should first be rebuked in secret, and if he should listen, all is well. If, however, he should fail to listen—and if his sin is entirely hidden—then they would say that the issue should not be further pursued. If, however, the issue has already begun to reach the awareness of many by various indications, then it should be pursued further, according to what the Lord commands. But this is contrary to what Augustine says in his Rule, that a brother’s sin should not be hidden, "lest the sin should putrefy in his heart."⁷¹ And so it should be said otherwise—that after a secret admonition has been given once or several times, and as long as hope for his correction is held with probability, the issue should be pursued by means of a secret admonition. But from the point that we can know with probability that a secret admonition is of no avail, the issue must proceed further, however hidden the sin may be, to the calling of witnesses. Unless, by chance, if it were to be judged with probability that such a course would not accomplish the improvement of our brother, and that he would be rendered worse by it. On that account, one should refrain entirely from correction, as said above.⁷²

[2] To the second it should be said that a man needs no witnesses for the improvement of his own sin, but that it may nevertheless be necessary for the improvement of his brother's sin. So there is no similar reasoning [about the two].

[3] To the third it should be said that witnesses can be called for three reasons. First, for the sake of showing that the matter is a sin, for which someone is charged, as Jerome says.⁷³ Second, for establishing that the act has been repeated, as Augustine says in his Rule.⁷⁴ Third, "for testifying that the brother who has admonished [the offender] has done what he could do," as Chrysostom says.⁷⁵

[4] To the fourth it should be said that Augustine understands that the matter should be mentioned to the superior before it is mentioned to witnesses, in that a prelate is a certain singular person who can be of more help than others. The issue is not, however, told to him as it is to the Church, that is, in place of a presiding judge.

Notes for Question 33

¹ Glossa ordinaria on Matthew 18.15 (Strasbourg 5, “Hoc ordine scandala vitare,” col.b).

² Aristotle, Nicomachean Ethics bk.6 chap.5 (1140a25); bk.6 chap.7 (1141b8); bk.6 chap.9 (1142b31).

³ Galatians 6.2.

⁴ In Question 32, Article 1, above.

⁵ 1 John 3.4.

⁶ Aristotle, Nicomachean Ethics bk.6 chap.12 (1144a8).

⁷ In fact, Pelagius, ep.1 to Demetrius chap.16 (PL 30:32). Compare Pelagius, Libellus fidei ad Innocentium papam (PL 45:1718).

⁸ Ecclesiastes 7.14.

⁹ Augustine, De civitate Dei bk.1 chap.9 (PL 41:22; CCSL 47:9.43-66), much condensed.

¹⁰ Augustine, Sermones ad populum, serm.82 chap.4 sect.7 (PL 38:508).

¹¹ Aristotle, Nicomachean Ethics, bk.2 chap.6 (1107a12).

¹² Augustine, De correptione et gratia chap.15 sect.46 (PL 44:944).

¹³ In Question 32, Article 5, Reply [4], above.

¹⁴ Augustine, De civitate Dei bk.1 chap.9 (PL 41:22; CCSL 47:9.31-36).

¹⁵ Augustine, De doctrina christiana bk.1 chap.28 sect.29 (PL 34:30; CCSL 32:22.4).

¹⁶ Augustine, Sermones ad populum, serm.82 chap.1 sect.1 (PL 38:506).

¹⁷ Proverbs 24.15.

¹⁸ Matthew 18.15. See Origen, On Joshua hom.7 (PG 12:861B).

¹⁹ Gratian, Decretum, part 2, causa.24, q.3, can.14 Tam sacerdotes. (Richter-Friedberg I:994).

²⁰ In Article 1 of this Question, above.

²¹ Augustine, De civitate Dei bk.1 chap.9 (PL 41:23; CCSL 47:10.79-86).

²² Exodus 19.13 and 2 Samuel 6.6-7. (Following the Vulgate, the Latin text refers to 2 Kings 6.)

²³ Glossa Lombardi on Galatians 2.11 (PL 192:108D).

²⁴ Gregory the Great, Moralia bk.5 chap.11 sect.24 (PL 75:692; CCSL 143:235.191-92).

²⁵ Augustine, Epistulae ep.211 chap.15 (PL 33:965; CSEL 57:370.12-14; Lawless 117, chap.7 sect.4). On the importance of the Rule of St. Augustine for the Dominican order, see M. Michèle Mulchahey, “First the Bow is Bent in Study” Dominican Education before 1350 (Toronto: PIMS, 1998), 11-16.

²⁶ Some versions read “correction.”

²⁷ 1 Timothy 5.1.

²⁸ Ps-Dionysius, ep.8 to Demophilus sect.1 (PG 3:1088A; Chevallier 2:1513).

²⁹ Galatians 2.11.

³⁰ Colossians 4.17.

³¹ Glossa Lombardi on Galatians 2.14 (PL 192:109D). See also Augustine, Epistulae ep.82 to Jerome chap.2 sect.7 (PL 33:278; CCSL 31A:101.109-127).

³² Augustine, Epistulae ep.211 chap.15 (PL 33:965; CSEL 57:370.12-14; Lawless 117, chap.7 sect.4).

³³ In Article 2 of this Question, above.

³⁴ 1 John 1.8.

³⁵ Isidore of Seville, Sententiae libri tres, bk.3 chap.32 (PL 83:704; CCSL 111.269.1-4).

³⁶ Romans 2.1.

³⁷ In Article 3, Reply [2] of this Question, above.

³⁸ Some versions read “by subordinates.”

³⁹ Matthew 7.3.

⁴⁰ Jerome, In Matheum bk.1, on Matthew 7.3 (PL 26:48; CCSL 77:41-42.896-98).

⁴¹ Matthew 7.4.

⁴² Ps-Chrysostom, Opus imperfectum in Matthaem hom.17, on Matthew 7.4 (PG 56:727).

⁴³ Augustine, De sermone Domini in monte bk.2 chap.19 (PL 34:1298; CCSL 35:160.1459-61).

Thomas omits the final words of Augustine’s sentence, “as hypocrites.”

⁴⁴ Augustine, De sermone Domini in monte bk.2 chap.19 (PL 34:1298-99; CCSL 35:161.1470-1481), somewhat altered.

⁴⁵ Psalm 6.3.

⁴⁶ This is a summary of what Alexander of Hales erroneously takes to be part of the “rule of Jerome.” See the Summa Halensis part 2 sect.862 (Quaracchi 3:821).

⁴⁷ Romans 3.8.

⁴⁸ Proverbs 9.8.

⁴⁹ Glossa ordinaria (Strasbourg 3, “Noli arguere,” col.b). See also Gregory the Great, Moralia bk.8 chap.42 sect.67 (PL 75:842; CCSL 143:434.55-57).

⁵⁰ In Article 3 of this Question, above.

⁵¹ Ephesians 5.1-2.

⁵² Compare Augustine, De mendacio chap.15 sect.25 (PL 40:506). The text refers to Contra mendacium, but the appropriate reference is to the earlier De mendacio.

⁵³ Genesis 37.2.

⁵⁴ Acts 5.3.

⁵⁵ Gregory IX, Decretalium bk.5 tit.1 chap.24 Qualiter (Richter-Friedberg 2:746)

⁵⁶ Matthew 18.15.

⁵⁷ Augustine, Sermones ad populum, serm.82 chap.4 sect.7 (PL 38:509).

⁵⁸ 1 Timothy 5.20.

⁵⁹ Augustine, Sermones ad populum, serm.82 chap.7 sect.10 (PL 38:510).

⁶⁰ Matthew 18.15.

⁶¹ Tugwell notes that Thomas was not afraid to take unpopular stands on these matters. “Even at the General Chapter of 1269 Thomas had found himself in disagreement with his fellow Dominican Masters: on two points in the report submitted by the commission of Masters Thomas expressed a lone dissenting opinion, advocating a subtly nuanced position on how far a superior could go in obliging his subjects to reveal secrets concerning matter of conscience. Thomas maintained that, if the matter was already in some sense public, then a superior could use his authority to probe farther, whereas something that was genuinely secret should not be divulged and therefore no superior should demand to have it divulged” (Albert & Thomas: Selected Writings [New York: Paulist Press, 1988], 231).

⁶² Jerome, In Matheum bk.3, on Matthew 18.15 (PL 26:136; CCSL 77:161.614-15).

⁶³ Augustine, Epistulae ep.78 chap.6 (PL 33:271; CCSL 31A:89.161-164).

⁶⁴ Job 33.15.

⁶⁵ Some versions read “against a divine precept.”

⁶⁶ Acts 5.29.

⁶⁷ Augustine, Sermones ad populum, serm.82 chap.7 sect.10 (PL 38:510).

⁶⁸ Augustine, Epistulae ep.211 chap.11 (PL 33:962; CSEL 57:364.21-22-365.1-2; Lawless 113, chap.4 sect.8).

⁶⁹ Matthew 18.15. Some versions only cite Matthew 18, without quoting the verse.

⁷⁰ The reference seems to be to William of Auxerre, Summa Aurea p.3 tr.24 q.5 chap.2. See also Albert the Great, Super IV Sententiarium bk.4 dist.15 a.21 (Borgnet 29:827).

⁷¹ Augustine, Epistulae ep.211 chap.11 (PL 33:962; CSEL 57:364.21; Lawless 114, chap.4 sect.8).

⁷² In Article 6 of this Question, above.

⁷³ Glossa interlinearis on Matthew 18.16 (Strasbourg 5). Compare Jerome, In Matheum bk.3, on Matthew 18.16 (PL 26:136; CCSL 77:161).

⁷⁴ Augustine, Epistulae ep.211 chap.11 (PL 33:962; CSEL 57:364.12-14; Lawless 113 chap.4, sect.7-8).

⁷⁵ John Chrysostom, On Matthew hom.60 (PG 58:586).