

## QUESTION 188

### The Differences Among Religious Orders

Next we have to consider differences among religious orders (*de differentia religionum*). And on this topic there are eight questions: (1) Are there diverse religious orders, or just a single one? (2) Can a religious order be instituted for works of the active life? (3) Can a religious order be instituted for waging wars? (4) Can a religious order be instituted for preaching and for exercising works of that sort? (5) Can a religious order be instituted for the study of scientific knowledge (*ad studium scientiae*)? (6) Is a religious order that is directed toward the contemplative life better (*potior*) than one that is directed toward the active life? (7) Does possessing things in common detract from the perfection of a religious order? (8) Is a religious order composed of solitary individuals (*solitariorum*) preferable to a religious order composed of individuals living in community (*in societate viventium*)?

#### Article 1

##### Is there more than one religious order?

It seems that there is just a single religious order (*non sit nisi una tantum religio*):

**Objection 1:** In something that is had totally and completely, there cannot be any diversity; this is why, as was established in the First Part (*ST* 1, q. 11, a. 3), there can be only one highest good (*non potest esse nisi unum summum bonum*). But as Gregory explains in *Super Ezechiel*, “When an individual has vowed to almighty God everything that he has, his whole life, everything that he knows, this is a holocaust”—in the absence of which there is no religious state. Therefore, it seems that there are not many religious orders, but just a single one.

**Objection 2:** Things that agree in essentials are diversified only by their accidents (*non diversificantur nisi per accidens*). But, as was established above (q. 186, aa. 6-7), without the three vows that are essential to a religious order there is no such thing as a religious order. Therefore, it seems that religious orders are diversified not by their species, but only by their accidents (*solum per accidens*).

**Objection 3:** As was established above (q. 184, a. 5), the state of perfection belongs both to religious and to bishops. But the episcopate is not diversified into species, but is instead everywhere one; hence, in *Ad Evandrum Episcopum* Jerome says, “Wherever there is a bishop, whether at Rome or at Gubbio or at Constantinople or at Reggio, he has the same excellence, the same priesthood.” Therefore, by parity of reasoning, there is just a single religious order.

**Objection 4:** Everything that can cause confusion should be removed from the Church. But as is explained by a certain decretal, which is contained in *De Statu Monachorum et Canonicorum Regularium*, a sort of confusion is caused among the Christian people by the diversity of religious orders. Therefore, it seems that there should not be diverse religious orders.

**But contrary to this:** In Psalm 44:10 the queen’s adornment is described as her being “surrounded with variety.”

**I respond:** As is clear from what was said above (q. 186, a. 7 and q. 187, a. 2), the religious state is a certain practice that an individual carries out for the perfection of charity. However, there are diverse works of charity for which a man can make time, and there are also diverse modes of carrying them out. And so religious orders can be distinguished in two ways:

In one way, *according to the diversity of [the ends] toward which they are directed*—as, for instance, if one religious order were directed toward providing hospitality for pilgrims and another were directed toward visiting or ransoming captives.

In the second way, there can be a diversity of religious orders *according to differences among their practices*—in the sense, for instance, that in one religious order the body is castigated through abstinence from food and in another the body is castigated through the performance of manual labor or through

insufficient clothing (*per nuditatem*) or through some other thing of this sort.

However, since in each thing it is the end that is most important, the diversity among religious orders that has to do with the *diverse ends* toward which the religious orders are directed is greater than the diversity that has to do with *diverse practices*.

**Reply to objection 1:** It is common in every religious order that the individual should offer himself totally to serving God. Hence, on this score there is no diversity among religious orders, as if in one religious order an individual retained one thing for himself and in another an individual retained something else for himself.

However, there is diversity in the diverse matters in which a man can serve God, and in accord with this a man can dispose himself in different ways.

**Reply to objection 2:** As has been explained (q. 186, a. 7, ad 2), the three essential vows of the religious state belong to the practice of the religious state as certain principal elements to which everything else is traced back. But an individual can dispose himself in different ways in keeping each of these vows; for instance, an individual disposes himself to keep the vow of continence by spatial solitude, by fasting (*per abstinentiam*), by mutual fellowship, and by many other means of this sort. And on this score it is clear that a commonality in the essential vows is compatible with a diversity of religious orders, both because of the diverse dispositions and also because of the diverse ends.

**Reply to objection 3:** As has been explained (q. 184, a. 7), in those things that belong to the state of perfection, a bishop behaves in the manner of an agent, whereas religious behave in the manner of something that is acted upon. Now an agent, even among natural things, is higher to the extent that it is more unified, whereas the things acted upon are diverse. Hence, it stands to reason that there is a single episcopal state, whereas religious orders are diverse.

**Reply to objection 4:** Confusion is opposed to distinction and order. So, then, confusion would be induced by the multitude of religious orders if there were diverse religious orders which, in the absence of any usefulness or necessity, were directed toward the same [end] and in the same way. Hence, in order for this not to happen, it has been advantageously established that no new religious order is instituted except by the authority of the Supreme Pontiff.

## Article 2

### Should any religious orders be instituted for works of the active life?

It seems that no religious order should be instituted for works of the active life:

**Objection 1:** As is clear from what was said above (q. 184, a. 5 and q. 186, a. 1), every religious order belongs to the state of perfection. But the perfection of the religious state consists in contemplating divine things; for in *De Ecclestica Hierarchia*, chap. 6 Dionysius says, “[Religious] are named after their pure service of, and attention to, God and by reason of the indivisible and the single-minded life that unites them by holy reflections”—that is, contemplations—“upon invisible things into the godlike unity and perfection that is lovable to God.” Therefore, it seems that no religious order can be instituted for works of the active life.

**Objection 2:** According to *Decretals, Extra, De Postulando, Ex parte*, “The same judgment seems to apply to both monks and canons regular,” and *De Statu Monachorum, Quod Dei timorem*, says, “[Canons regular] are not thought of as separate from the company of the holy monks.” And the same line of reasoning seems to apply to all other religious orders as well. But the religious orders of monks were instituted for the contemplative life; hence, in *Ad Paulinum* Jerome says, “If you want to be what you are called, a monk (*monachus*)”—that is, a loner (*soles*)—“then what are you doing in the cities?” And the same thing is found in *Extra, De Renunciatione*, chap. *Nisi cum pridem*; and in *De Regularibus*,

chap. *Lice quibusdam*. Therefore, it seems that every religious order is directed toward the contemplative life and none toward the active life.

**Objection 3:** The active life belongs to the present world. But all religious are said to leave the world behind; hence, in *Super Ezechiel* Gregory says, “An individual who leaves the present world behind and does the good that he is capable of is like one who has left Egypt and offers sacrifice in the wilderness.” Therefore, it seems that no religious order can be directed toward the active life.

**But contrary to this:** James 1:27 says, “Religion clean and undefiled before our God and Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their tribulation, and to keep oneself unblemished by this world.” But this pertains to the active life. Therefore, a religious order can be fittingly directed toward the active life.

**I respond:** As was explained above (q. 187, a. 2), the religious life is ordered toward the perfection of charity, which extends itself to love of God and love of neighbor. Now the contemplative life, which desires to make time for God alone, pertains directly to the love of God, whereas the active life, which serves the needs of one’s neighbors, pertains to the love of neighbor. And just as one’s neighbor is loved out of charity for the sake of God, so, too, the service rendered to one’s neighbors redounds to God—this according to Matthew 25:40 (“Whatever you did to one of the least of my brethren, you did to me”). Hence, services rendered to one’s neighbors, insofar as they are referred to God, are said to be sacrifices of a certain sort (*quaedam sacrificia*)—this according to Hebrews 13:16 (“Do not forget to do good and to share what you have, for God is pleased by such sacrifices”). Hence, in *Collationes Patrum* the abbot Nesteros, in distinguishing the diverse aims of the religious orders, says, “Some direct the height of their intention to the hidden works of the desert and to purity of heart; some are occupied with the instruction of their brothers and the care of the monasteries; and it is the service of the guesthouse”—that is, of hospitality—“that delights others.”

**Reply to objection 1:** As has been explained, the service of, and attention to, God is preserved even in the works of the active life by which an individual serves his neighbor *for the sake of God*. What is likewise preserved in these works is the single-mindedness of his life, not in the sense that the man does not converse with other men, but in the sense that the man single-mindedly attends to those things that have to do with service to God. And as long as religious pursue the works of the active life with a gaze upon God (*intuitu Dei*), it follows that their action in these matters flows from their contemplation of divine things. Hence, they are not altogether deprived of the fruits of the contemplative life.

**Reply to objection 2:** The line of reasoning is the same for monks and for all other religious as regards those things that are common to every religious order, viz., that they dedicate themselves totally to serving God, and that they observe the essential vows of the religious state, and that they abstain from secular business affairs.

However, there does not have to be similarity with respect to other things which are proper to a monastic profession and which are specifically ordered toward the contemplative life. Hence, in the cited *Decretal De Postulando*, it does not say simply, “The same judgment seems to apply to both monks and canons regular,” but also “with respect to the things discussed above”—and, more specifically, “they do not play the role of advocate in court cases.” And in the cited *Decretal De Statu Monachorum*, after it had been stated that “[canons regular] are not thought of as separate from the company of the holy monks,” it was added, “though they follow a more lax rule.” From this it is clear that canons regular are not bound to all the things that monks are bound to.

**Reply to objection 3:** There are two ways in which an individual can be *in the world* (*in saeculo*): (a) *through his bodily presence* and (b) *through mental affections* (*per mentis affectum*). Hence, our Lord says to His disciples, “I have chosen you from out of the world,” (John 15:19) and yet He says of them to the Father, “They are in the world, and I am coming to You” (John 17:11). Therefore, even if religious who are occupied with the works of the active life are in the world with respect to their *bodily presence*, they are nonetheless not in the world with respect to their *mental affections*. For they are occupied with exterior matters only in the service of God and not in the sense that they are seeking something in the

world. As 1 Corinthians 7:31 puts it, “They are dealing with the world as if they were not dealing with it.” Hence, James 1:27, after explaining that “religion clean and undefiled is ... to visit orphans and widows,” adds, “and to keep oneself unblemished by this world”—in the sense, namely, of not being detained in the affairs of the world by their affections.

### Article 3

#### Can a religious order be directed toward military combat?

It seems that no religious order can be directed toward military combat (*ad militandum*):

**Objection 1:** Every religious order belongs to the state of perfection. But one thing that belongs to the perfection of the Christian life is what our Lord says in Matthew 5:39, “I say to you: Do not resist evil, but if someone strikes you on one cheek, turn the other cheek to him”—which is incompatible with a military role. Therefore, no religious order can be instituted for military combat.

**Objection 2:** The combat of physical battles is more serious than the verbal disputes carried on in legal proceedings. But as is clear from the decretal *De Postulando*, religious are forbidden to exercise the role of an advocate. Therefore, it seems all the less possible for a religious order to be instituted for military combat.

**Objection 3:** As was explained above (q. 186, a.1, ad 4 and q. 187, a. 6), the religious state is a state of penance. But according to the laws, military fighting (*militia*) is forbidden to penitents; for in *Decretals, De Poenitentia*, dist. 5 it says, “It is altogether contrary to all ecclesiastical rules to return to secular military fighting after doing penance.” Therefore, no religious order can fittingly be instituted for military combat.

**Objection 4:** No religious order can be instituted for something unjust. But as Isidore explains in *Etymologia*, “A just war is one that is waged by an imperial edict.” Therefore, since religious are private persons of a certain sort, it seems that they are not permitted to wage war. And so a religious order cannot be instituted for this.

**But contrary to this:** In *Ad Bonifacium* Augustine says, “Do not think that no one who wields the weapons of war can please God. Among them was the holy David, to whom the Lord gave great testimony.” But religious orders are instituted in order for men to please God. Therefore, nothing prevents a religious order from being instituted for military combat.

**I respond:** As has been explained (a. 2), a religious order can be instituted not only for the works of the contemplative life, but also for the works of the active life, insofar as this involves assisting one’s neighbors and serving God—though not insofar as it involves holding on to anything worldly.

Now a military role can be ordered toward assisting one’s neighbors, not only as regards private persons, but also with respect to the defense of the whole republic. Hence, 1 Maccabees 3:2-3 says of Judas Maccabeus, “He gladly fought the battle of Israel, and he spread glory over his people.” Again, a military role can be ordered toward the preservation of divine worship; hence, in the same place it is added that Judas said, “We will fight for our lives and for our laws.” And further on in 1 Maccabees 13:3 Simon says, “You know what great battles my brothers and I, and the house of my father, have fought for the laws and for the sanctuary.”

Hence, a religious order can be appropriately instituted for military combat—not, to be sure, for any worldly reason, but for the sake of defending divine worship and the public safety, or even for defending the poor and the oppressed—this according to Psalm 81:4 (“Rescue the poor and deliver the needy from the hands of the sinner”).

**Reply to objection 1:** There are two ways in which an individual is able not to resist: In one way, *by pardoning an injury to himself (condonando propriam iniuriam)*. And this can

involve perfection when the individual's being acted upon in this way contributes to the salvation of others.

In the second way, *by tolerating with patience injury done to others*. And this involves *imperfection*, or even *vice*, if the individual is able to resist in an appropriate way the one who is inflicting the injuries. Hence, in *De Officio* Ambrose says, "That fortitude is full of justice which guards one's fatherland in war against barbarians, or defends the weak at home, or protects one's friends against robbers." Similarly, our Lord says in the same place (Luke 6:30), "Do not ask for your things back"—and yet an individual would sin if he were not to demand the return of *someone else's* property, given that it was his business to do so. For it is praiseworthy for a man to give away his own things, but not someone else's things. And the things that belong to God are all the less to be neglected, since, as Chrysostom says in *Super Matthaem*, "It is very wicked to overlook injuries done to God."

**Reply to objection 2:** To exercise the role of advocate for something worldly is incompatible with every religious state, but not if someone is doing this in accord with the disposition of his own prelate and on behalf of his own monastery, as is added in the same *Decretal*—or, again, if someone is doing this in defense of the poor or of the widows. Hence, in *Decretals*, dist. 88 it says, "The holy synod has decreed that, from now on, no cleric is to buy property or occupy himself with secular business affairs, except for the sake of caring for orphans [... or widows], etc."

And, similarly, to act as a soldier for the sake of something worldly is contrary to every religious state, but not to act as a soldier for the sake of serving God.

**Reply to objection 3:** Secular military combat is forbidden to penitents, but military combat which is for the sake of serving God is imposed on some penitents, as is clear in the case of those who are enjoined to take up arms in defense of the Holy Land (*de his quibus iniungitur ut militent in subsidium Terrae Sanctae*).

**Reply to objection 4:** A religious order is instituted for military combat not in such a way that the religious are permitted to wage war by their own authority, but only in such a way that they are permitted to wage war by the authority of their rulers or of the Church.

#### Article 4

##### Can a religious order be instituted for preaching or hearing confessions?

It seems that no religious can be instituted for preaching or hearing confessions:

**Objection 1:** *Decretals* 7, q. 1 says, "The life of monks involves a promise of subjection and discipleship, not one of teaching or presiding or pastoral care"—and the same line of reasoning seems to apply to other religious orders. But to preach and to hear confessions is to provide pastoral care for others or to teach them. Therefore, it is not the case that a religious order can be instituted for this.

**Objection 2:** As was explained above (a. 1), that for which a religious order is instituted seems to be especially proper to a religious order. But the acts in question are proper to *prelates* rather than to *religious*. Therefore, it is not the case that a religious order can be instituted for those sorts of acts.

**Objection 3:** It seems inappropriate that the authority to preach and to hear confessions should be committed to an unlimited number of men (*infinitis hominibus committatur*). But there is no fixed number of those who are received into a religious order. Therefore, it is inappropriate for a religious order to be instituted for the acts in question.

**Objection 4:** As is clear from 1 Corinthians 9, preachers are owed the necessities of life by the faithful of Christ. Therefore, if the role of preaching is committed to a religious order instituted for this, then it will follow that the faithful of Christ are obligated to make expenditures for an unlimited number of persons—which imposes a heavy burden on them. Therefore, no religious order should be instituted to

exercise the acts in question.

**Objection 5:** Ecclesiastical instituting should follow Christ's instituting. But Christ first sent the twelve apostles to preach (Luke 9:1-2) and later sent the seventy-two disciples (Luke 10:1). And a Gloss on the these texts says, "Bishops are modeled on the apostles, and lesser priests, viz., curates (*minores presbyteri, scilicet curati*), are modeled on the seventy-two disciples." Therefore, beyond the bishops and parochial priests (*praeter episcopos et presbyteros parochiales*), there should not be any religious order instituted to preach and to hear confessions.

**But contrary to this:** In *Collationes Patrum* the abbot Nesteros, in talking about the diversity of religious orders, says, "... some choosing the care of the sick, others carrying out interventions for the afflicted and oppressed or devoting themselves to teaching or giving alms to the poor, they have been held in high esteem by great and good men because of their devotion and piety." Therefore, just as a religious order can be instituted for care of the sick, so, too, a religious order can be instituted for teaching the people through preaching and other works of this sort.

**I respond:** As has been explained (a. 2), a religious order can be appropriately instituted for works of the active life insofar as those works are directed toward the good of one's neighbors, toward serving God, and toward preserving divine worship.

Now to the extent that spiritual goods are better than bodily goods, the good of one's neighbors is procured more through what pertains to the spiritual welfare of the soul than through what pertains to alleviating bodily needs. This is why it was claimed above (q.32, a. 3) that the spiritual works of mercy are better than the corporal works of mercy (*quod eleemosynae spirituales sunt corporalibus potiores*).

This point also applies to serving God, "to whom no sacrifice is more acceptable than zeal for souls," as Gregory puts it in *Super Ezechiel*.

Again, it is a greater thing to defend the faithful with spiritual weapons against the errors of heretics and the temptations of demons than to guard the faithful populace with bodily weapons.

And this is why it is very fitting for a religious order to be instituted for preaching and the other works that pertain to the salvation of souls.

**Reply to objection 1:** An individual who operates in the power of another acts in the manner of an instrument. But as the Philosopher says in *Politics* 1, a minister is "an animate instrument." Hence, an individual's preaching, or doing other things of this sort, by the authority of prelates does not exceed the degree of discipleship or subjection that belongs to religious.

**Reply to objection 2:** Just as some religious orders are instituted for military combat—in order to fight not by their own authority, but, as has been explained (a. 3, ad 4), by the authority of rulers or of the Church, to which this authority belongs *ex officio*—so, too, religious orders are instituted to preach and hear confessions, not by their own authority, but by the authority of higher and lower prelates, to whom this authority belongs *ex officio*. And so to assist prelates in such a ministry is proper to a religious order of this sort.

**Reply to objection 3:** Prelates do not grant to such religious that just any one of them at all can preach or hear confessions. Instead, this is allowed to them in accord with the guidance of those who are in charge of the relevant religious orders or in accord with an appraisal by the prelates themselves.

**Reply to objection 4:** The common faithful are not obligated by a legal debt to contribute support to anyone other than their ordinary prelates, who for this reason receive the tithes and oblations of the faithful, along with other ecclesiastical revenues. However, if some individuals want to minister to the faithful in acts of the sort in question for free, without demanding payment from them as a right, the faithful are not thereby burdened. For they themselves can generously give compensation for the temporary assistance, where even if they are not obligated to do this by a legal debt, they are nonetheless obligated by a debt of charity—though not in such a way that "they should be burdened while others are unburdened," as 2 Corinthians 8:13 puts it.

However, if none were found to devote themselves to services of this kind for free, then the

ordinary prelates would be bound, if they were not sufficient by themselves, to find other suitable individuals whom they themselves would support.

**Reply to objection 5:** It is not just the priest curates who represent the seventy-two disciples, but anyone of the other lesser orders who serves under the bishops in their office. For we do not read that our Lord gave any determinate parochial assignments to the seventy-two disciples; instead, we read that “He sent them ... before His face into every city and town that He Himself was going to visit.”

Now it was opportune that, besides the ordinary prelates, others were to be assumed into roles of the same sort because of the great numbers of the faithful and because of the difficulty of finding enough individuals to be allotted to each of the population centers—just as it had been necessary for religious orders to be instituted for military combat because of the failure of secular rulers to fight off non-believers in certain territories.

## Article 5

### Should any religious orders be instituted for studying?

It seems that no religious order should be instituted for studying:

**Objection 1:** Psalm 70:15-16 says, “Because I have not known literature, I will enter into the powers (*potentias*) of the Lord,” where a Gloss adds, “that is, into Christian virtue (*virtue*).” But the perfection of Christian virtue seems to apply especially to religious. Therefore, it is not their role to apply themselves to the study of letters.

**Objection 2:** That which is a principle of disagreement is inappropriate for religious, who are brought together in the unity of peace. But study induces disagreement, and this is why a diversity of sects has ensued among philosophers. Hence, in *Super Epistolam ad Titum* Jerome says, “Before, by a diabolical instinct, studies were applied to religion and the people were saying, ‘I belong to Paul’ and ‘I belong to Apollo’ and ‘I belong to Cephas’ ...” Therefore, it seems that no religious order should be instituted for studying.

**Objection 3:** What the Christian religion professes should differ from what the gentiles profess. But among the gentiles some professed philosophy, and even now some seculars are called professors of the various sciences. Therefore, the study of letters is inappropriate for religious.

**But contrary to this:** In *Epistola ad Paulinum* Jerome invites Paulinus to acquire learning in the monastic state, saying, “Let us learn on earth those things, the knowledge of which will remain for us in heaven,” and later on, “Whatever you seek to know, I will try to know along with you.”

**I respond:** As has been explained (aa. 2-3), religious orders can be directed toward the active life and toward the contemplative life. Now among the works of the active life, the most important are those that are ordered directly toward the salvation of souls, e.g., preaching and other works of this sort. Therefore, there are three ways in which the study of letters is fitting for a religious order.

First, *with respect to what is proper to the contemplative life*, and the study of letters aids this in two ways. In one way, by *directly* assisting the act of contemplating—more specifically, by illuminating the intellect. For the contemplative life of which we are now speaking is ordered mainly toward the consideration of divine things, as was established above (q. 180, a. 4)—a life in which a man is directed toward considering divine things. Hence, in praise of the just man Psalm 1:2 says, “He meditates on the law of the Lord day and night. And Ecclesiasticus 39:1 says, “The wise man will seek out the wisdom of all the ancients, and will make time for the prophets.” In the second way, the study of letters helps the contemplative life *indirectly* by removing the dangers that accompany contemplation, viz., errors, which in the contemplation of divine things frequently occur in the case of those who do not know the Scriptures—as, for instance, we read in *Collationes Patrum* that the abbot Serapion, because of his

simplemindedness, fell into the error of the Anthropomorphites, i.e., the error of those who think that God has a human form. Hence, in *Moralia* 6 Gregory says, “There are those who, when they seek in contemplation more than they understand, erupt all the way into perverse doctrines, and when they neglect to be disciples of the truth in humility, they become teachers of error.” And it is because of this that Ecclesiastes 2:3 says, “I decided in my heart to withdraw my flesh from wine, in order that I might turn my mind to wisdom and avoid stupidity.”

Second, the study of letters is necessary to a religious order instituted *for preaching and exercising other works of this sort*. Hence, in Titus 1:9 the Apostle says of the bishop, whose role involves acts of the sort in question, “... embracing that faithful word which is in accord with doctrine, in order that he might be able to exhort in sound doctrine, and to convince those who disagree.” Nor does it count against this that the apostles were sent to preach without studying letters; for as Jerome says in *Epistola ad Paulinum*, “The Holy Spirit furnished them with whatever is normally supplied to others by training and daily meditation on the law.”

Third, the study of letters is fitting for a religious order with respect to what is common to every religious order *because it helps one forestall the lust of the flesh (valet enim ad vitandum carnis lasciviam)*. Hence, in *Ad Rusticum Monachus* Jerome says, “Love the study of the Scriptures and you will not love the vices of the flesh.” For it turns the mind away from lustful thoughts and weakens the flesh because of the laboriousness of study—this according to Ecclesiasticus 31:1 (“The vigilance of moral uprightness melts the flesh”). It likewise helps in removing the excessive desire for riches. Hence, Wisdom 7:8 says, “I have called riches nothingness in comparison to her.” And 1 Maccabees 12:9 says, “We have not needed any of them”—viz., exterior means of support—“having for our comfort the holy books that are in our hands.” It likewise helps the teaching of obedience. Hence, in *De Operibus Monachorum* Augustine says, “What perversity is this: not wanting to comply with what you read when you wish to make time for reading it?”

And so it is clear that a religious order can be fittingly instituted for the study of letters.

**Reply to objection 1:** The Gloss here is talking about the letter of the Old Law, of which the Apostle says in 2 Corinthians 3:6, “The letter kills.” Hence, ‘not knowing literature’ means not approving of literal circumcision and other carnal observances.

**Reply to objection 2:** Study is ordered toward knowledge, which becomes inflated in the absence of charity and, as a result, causes disagreements—this according to Proverbs 13:10 (“Among the proud there are always quarrels”)—whereas study accompanied by charity builds up and gives rise to concord. Hence, in 1 Corinthians 1:5, after the Apostle had said, “You have become rich ... in all utterance and in all knowledge,” he later added, “... that you might all say the same thing, and that there be no schisms among you.”

Jerome, on the other hand, is speaking here not about the study of letters, but about the study of dissensions, which entered the Christian religion through heretics and schismatics.

**Reply to objection 3:** The philosophers professed the study of letters with respect to secular doctrines. But it is fitting for religious to tend mainly toward the study of letters that pertain to the teaching that is “in accord with piety,” as Titus 1:1 puts it. On the other hand, religious, whose whole life is given over to the service of God, involve themselves with other teachings only insofar as those other teachings are ordered toward sacred doctrine. Hence, at the end of *Musica* Augustine says, “While we think that we should not neglect those whom heretics deceive by the fallacious promise of reason and knowledge, we come more slowly to the consideration of the ways of those heretics. Yet we would not dare to do this at all if we did not see that many pious children of the Church have done it under the same necessity of confounding heretics.”

## Article 6

### Is a religious order that is dedicated to the contemplative life better than one that makes time for the operations of the active life?

It seems that a religious order that is dedicated to the contemplative life is not better than one that makes time for the operations of the active life (*religio quae vacat vitae contemplativae non sit potior ea quae vacat operationibus vitae activae*):

**Objection 1:** *Decretals, Extra, de regularibus et transeuntibus ad religionem*, chap. *licet* says, “Just as a greater good is preferred to a lesser good, so the common good is preferred to a specific good, and in this case teaching is rightly preferred to silence, solicitude to contemplation, and work to rest.” But a religious order is better insofar as it is directed toward a greater good. Therefore, it seems that religious orders that are directed toward the active life are better than those that are directed toward the contemplative life.

**Objection 2:** As was established above (q. 186, a. 7 and q. 187, a. 2), every religious order is directed toward the perfection of charity. But a Gloss on Hebrews 12:4 (“You have not yet resisted to the point of blood”) says, “In this life no love (*dilectio*) is more perfect than that at which the martyrs arrived and which contended with sin up to the point of blood.” But to contend up to the point of blood belongs to religious orders which are directed toward military combat, but which involve the active life. Therefore, it seems that religious orders of this sort are the best of all.

**Objection 3:** A religious order seems more perfect to the extent that it is more strict. But nothing prevents religious orders that are directed toward the active life from being more strict in observance than those that are directed toward the contemplative life. Therefore, they are better.

**But contrary to this:** In Luke 10:42 our Lord says that the “best part” belongs to Mary, and it is the contemplative life that is signified by this.

**I respond:** As was explained above (a. 1), the difference between one religious order and another is found mainly on the part of their *ends* and secondarily on the part of their *practices* (*ex parte exercitii*). And since one thing cannot be said to be better than another except with respect to what it differs from the other in, the excellence of one religious order over another has to do mainly with the religious order’s *end* and secondarily with its *practices*.

Yet with respect to the two of these, the comparison proceeds in diverse ways. For the comparison that has to do with the end is *absolute*, because the end is what is sought *for its own sake*, whereas the comparison that has to do with the practices is *relative*, since the practices are sought not for their own sake but *for the sake of the end*. And so the religious order that is preferred to another is the one that is directed to a better end absolutely speaking, either because the end is a greater good or because that religious order is directed toward more than one end. On the other hand, if the ends are the same, then what is attended to secondarily is the *preeminence* of the religious orders, not with respect to the *number* of practices, but with respect to *how they are proportioned to the intended end*. Hence, *Collationes Patrum* introduces the opinion of Saint Anthony, who preferred *discretion*, by which an individual is *moderate* in all things, over *fasts and vigils and all observances of that sort*.

So, then, one should reply that there are two sorts of work in the active life:

One sort of work is *derived from the plenitude of contemplation*, e.g., teaching and preaching. Hence, in *Super Ezechiel*, homily 5 Gregory says, “[The verse] ‘They shall publish the memory of Your sweetness’ (Psalm 144:7) is said of perfect men returning from their contemplation.” And this is preferred over simple contemplation. For just as it is a greater thing to illuminate than merely to shine, so it is a greater thing to pass on to others what has been contemplated than merely to contemplate.

The second sort of work of the active life is *that which consists wholly in exterior occupations* such as giving alms, receiving guests, and other things of this sort. As is clear from what was said above

(q. 182, a. 1), these are less great than the works of contemplation, except perhaps in cases of necessity.

So, then, the highest level among religious orders is held by those religious orders which are directed toward teaching and preaching, and which are also very close to the perfection of bishops—in the same way that, in other matters, “the ends of what is primary are conjoined with the principles of what is secondary,” as Dionysius puts it in *De Divinis Nominibus*, chap. 7. Again, the second level is held by those religious orders that are directed toward contemplation. The third level is held by those religious orders that are occupied with exterior actions.

Now on each of these levels one can take account of preeminence insofar as one religious order is directed toward a higher act within the same genus—in the way that, among the works of the active life, buying back captives is more important than receiving guests, and that, among the works of the contemplative life, speaking is more important than reading. Preeminence can also be taken account of if one of the religious orders is ordered toward more of these acts than another, or if one has statutes that are more appropriate to attaining the proposed end.

**Reply to objection 1:** This decretal is talking about the active life insofar as it is directed toward the salvation of souls.

**Reply to objection 2:** Religious orders that are instituted for the sake of military combat are more directly ordered toward shedding the *blood of enemies* than toward shedding *their own blood*—which is what belongs properly to martyrs.

However, nothing prevents religious of this sort from attaining the merit of the martyr in some cases, and in this they are preferred to other religious orders—just as active works are in some cases preferred to contemplation.

**Reply to objection 3:** As Saint Anthony explains, it is not the strictness of observances that is mainly commended in a religious order. And Isaiah 58:5 says, “Is this the sort of fast that I have chosen, to afflict one’s soul for a day?” Yet strictness of observances is taken up in a religious order as something which is necessary for the weakening of the flesh and which, if done without discretion, has annexed to it the danger of falling short, as Saint Anthony said. And so a religious order is better not from the fact that it has stricter observances, but from the fact that its observances are ordered with greater discretion toward the end of the religious order. For instance, the weakening of the flesh is more effectively ordered toward continence by abstinence from food and drink, which involves hunger and thirst, than either by the removal of clothes, which involves cold and nakedness, or by bodily labor.

## Article 7

### Does possessing things in common detract from the perfection of a religious order?

It seems that possessing things in common detracts from the perfection of a religious order:

**Objection 1:** In Matthew 19:21 our Lord says, “If you wish to be perfect, go and sell all that you possess and give it to the poor.” From this it is clear that the perfection of the Christian life involves lacking worldly riches. But those who possess things in common do not lack worldly riches. Therefore, it seems that they do not altogether attain to the perfection of the Christian life.

**Objection 2:** The perfection of the [evangelical] counsels involves a man’s lacking worldly anxiety (*ad perfectionem consiliorum pertinet ut homo mundana sollicitudine careat*); hence, in 1 Corinthians 7:32, in giving advice about virginity, the Apostle says, “I want you to be without anxiety.” But individuals’ holding something back for themselves for the future involves anxiety over the present life, which our Lord forbade to His disciples when He said in Matthew 6:34, “Do not be anxious about tomorrow.” Therefore, it seems that possessing things in common detracts from the perfection of the Christian life.

**Objection 3:** Riches held in common belong in some sense to the individuals who are in the community; hence, in *Ad Heliodorum Episcopum* Jerome says of certain individuals, “They are richer as monks than they were as seculars. Under the poor man, Christ, they possess riches which they had not possessed under the rich devil. The Church sighs over them now that they are rich, whereas the world previously thought of them as beggars.” But an individual’s having his own riches detracts from the perfection of the religious state. Therefore, for things to be possessed in common likewise detracts from the perfection of a religious order.

**Objection 4:** In *Dialogi* 3 Gregory reports of a certain very holy man named Isaac, that “when his disciples humbly intimated that he should accept possessions that were being offered to him for the use of the monastery, he, being anxious to safeguard his poverty, held firmly to his opinion, saying, ‘A monk who seeks earthly possessions is no monk at all’”—and this meant *common possessions* that were being offered to him for the common use of the monastery. Therefore, it seems that holding possessions in common destroys the perfection of a religious order.

**Objection 5:** In Matthew 10:9-10 our Lord, in teaching His disciples about the perfection of the religious state, says, “Do not have gold or silver or money in your money-belts, or a wallet for your journey.” By this, as Jerome explains, “He is reproving the philosophers commonly called the Bactroperatae, who, though disdainful of the world and reckoning all things as nothing, carry their pantry around with them.” Therefore, it seems that holding something back, whether in private or in common, diminishes the perfection of a religious order.

**But contrary to this:** In *De Vita Contemplationis*—and this can be found in *Decretals* 12, q. 1—Prosper says, “It is sufficiently clear both that (a) having one’s own *private* possessions (*propria*) should be disdained for the sake of perfection, and that (b) one can possess the Church’s resources, which are most assuredly *common* property (*profecto communia*), without hindering perfection.”

**I respond:** As was explained above (q. 184, a. 3 and q. 185, a. 6), perfection consists *essentially* not in poverty, but in *following Christ*—this according to Jerome in *Super Matthaem*: “Because it is not sufficient to leave everything, Peter adds what is perfect, viz., ‘... and we have followed you’.” Poverty, on the other hand, is like an *instrument* or *practice* for arriving at perfection. Hence, in *Collationes Patrum* the abbot Moses says, “Fasts, vigils, meditation on the Scriptures, nakedness, and privation of all resources are not themselves perfection, but are instruments of perfection.”

Now the privation of all resources, i.e., poverty, is an instrument of perfection insofar as certain impediments to charity are destroyed by the removal of riches. There are mainly three such impediments: The *first* is *anxiety* (*sollicitudo*), which riches bring with them. Hence, in Matthew 13:22 our Lord says, “What was sown among the thorns is the one who hears the word, but the anxieties of this world, along with the lure of riches, suffocates the word.” The *second* is *the love of riches as increased by riches already possessed*. Hence, in *Super Matthaem* Jerome says, “Given that riches already possessed are disdained with difficulty, our Lord does not say in Matthew 19:23, ‘It is *impossible* for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven’. Instead, He says, ‘*difficult*’.” The *third* is the *vainglory* or *elation* that is born of riches—this according to Psalm 48:7 (“They who trust in their own strength and glory in the multitude of their riches ...”).

Of these three, the *first* cannot be totally separated from riches, whether they are great or small, since a man has to be concerned in some way about acquiring or preserving exterior things. But if exterior things are sought or possessed only in a moderate quantity, insofar as they suffice for the simple necessities of life, then the anxiety does not impede a man very much, and so it is not incompatible with the Christian life. For not every kind of anxiety is forbidden by our Lord; instead, it is *excessive* and *harmful* anxiety (*sollicitudo superflua et novica*) that is forbidden. Hence, in *De Sermone Domini in Monte*, commenting on Matthew 6:25 (“Do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat, etc.”), Augustine says, “He says this not to keep them from procuring these things insofar as they need them, but instead to keep them from *being intent on these things* and from *doing for their sake* whatever they are

commanded to do in the preaching of the Gospel.” But the abundant possession of riches engenders more abundant anxiety, and because of this a man’s mind is very much distracted and impeded from being led totally into serving God.

Now *the other two things*, viz. *the love of riches* and *the elation or boasting that stems from riches*, follow only upon abundant riches. However, they differ from one another with regard to whether the riches, abundant or moderate, are possessed privately or in common. For the sort of anxiety that is applied to one’s own riches involves the private love by which one loves himself in temporal matters, whereas the sort of anxiety that is applied to things held in common involves the love of charity, which “does not seek things her own” (1 Corinthians 13:5), but looks toward what is shared. And since the religious state is ordered toward the perfection of charity, which the love of God brings to completion to the point of contempt for oneself, having something that belongs to oneself is incompatible with the perfection of the religious state. By contrast, the anxiety that is applied to common goods can involve charity, even though a higher act of charity, e.g., contemplating divine things or instructing one’s neighbor, can be impeded by it. From this it is clear that having abundant riches in common, whether in movable things or immovable things, is an impediment to perfection, though it does not totally exclude perfection.

On the other hand, having *some* exterior things in common, whether movable or immovable, to the extent that this suffices for the simple necessities of life, does not impede the perfection of the religious state if poverty is thought of in relation to the *general* end of religious orders, which is to make time for serving God. However, if poverty is thought of in relation to the *specific* ends of different religious orders, then with such-and-such an end presupposed, greater or lesser poverty is fitting for a given religious order, and so each religious order will be more perfect with respect to poverty to the extent that it has a sort of poverty that is more proportioned to its own end. Now it is clear that a man needs a lot of exterior things for the exterior and corporeal works of the active life, whereas few exterior things are needed for contemplation. Hence, in *Ethics* 10 the Philosopher says, “Many things are needed for actions, and the greater and better the actions are, the more things are needed. But the speculative man requires no such things for his operations; he needs only the necessities, whereas other things are impediments to his speculations.” So, then it is clear that a religious order that is directed toward the bodily actions of the active life, e.g., toward military combat or providing hospitality, would be imperfect if it lacked riches held in common. On the other hand, religious orders that are directed toward contemplation are more perfect to the extent that their poverty engenders in them less anxiety about temporal things. And anxiety about temporal things impedes a religious order more to the extent that more anxiety about spiritual things is required for that religious order. Now it is clear that a religious order which is instituted for contemplating and handing down what has been contemplated to others through teaching and preaching requires more anxiety about spiritual things than a religious order which is instituted for contemplating alone. Hence, the fitting sort of poverty for such a religious order is that which engenders the least anxiety. Again, it is clear that what engenders the least amount of anxiety is to *preserve* the things that are necessary for men to use, once those things have been procured at an appropriate time.

And so three levels of poverty are appropriate for the three levels of religious orders posited above (a. 6). For it is fitting for those religious orders that are directed toward the bodily actions of the active life to have an abundance of common riches. And it is more fitting for those religious orders which are directed toward contemplation to have a moderate amount of possessions, unless it is simultaneously necessary for such religious, either on their own or through others, to provide hospitality and to assist the poor. On the other hand, it is especially fitting for those religious orders which are directed toward passing on to others what has been contemplated to have freedom from exterior anxieties—something that is done when moderate holdings that are necessary for life are preserved, once those things have been procured at an appropriate time. And this is what our Lord, the founder of poverty, taught by His own example. For He had a purse, entrusted to Judas, in which, as John 12:6 reports, the offerings made

to Him were kept.

Nor does it matter that in *Super Matthaeum* (17:26) Jerome says, “Suppose you want to object, ‘For what purpose was Judas carrying money in the purse?’ We will reply that [our Lord] thought it unlawful to turn the property of the poor to His own use,” viz., for paying the tribute. For among the poor in question, the main ones were His disciples, for whose necessities the money in Christ’s purse was spent. For John 4:8 says, “The disciples had gone into the city to buy food,” and John 13:29 says that the other disciples “thought that Jesus had told [Judas] to buy what they needed for the feast day, or to give something to the poor.”

From this it is clear that to save money or any other common property in order to sustain religious who belong to the same congregation or any other poor people is something which is compatible with perfection and something which Christ taught by His own example. And likewise after the resurrection, the disciples, from whom every religious order takes its origin, saved the sale price of the relevant real estate and “distributed it to each one according to his need” (Acts 2:45).

**Reply to objection 1:** As was explained above (q. 184, a. 3, ad 10), this saying of our Lord means not that poverty itself is a perfection, but that poverty is an *instrument* of perfection and, as been shown (q. 186, a. 8), that it is the least among the three principal instruments of perfection. For the vow of continence is more important than the vow of poverty, and the vow of obedience is more important than both of the others.

However, since an instrument is sought not for its own sake, but for the sake of the end, something becomes better not to the extent that it is a greater instrument, but to the extent that it is better proportioned to the end, in the way that a physician heals better not to the extent that he gives more medicine, but to the extent that the medicine he gives is proportioned to the sickness.

So, then, it does not have to be the case that a religious order is more perfect to the extent that it has more poverty; instead, it is more perfect to the extent that its poverty is better proportioned to its common end and its specific end. Even if it were granted that an excess of poverty makes a religious order more perfect insofar as it is poorer, it would still not make it more perfect absolutely speaking. For it could be the case that another religious order exceeds it in those matters that pertain to continence and obedience, and in that case the latter would be more perfect absolutely speaking. For that which excels in better things is better absolutely speaking.

**Reply to objection 2:** The fact that our Lord says, “Do not be anxious about tomorrow,” does not mean that nothing is to be held back for the future. For in *Collationes Patrum* Saint Anthony shows that this is dangerous when he says, “We ourselves have seen that those who eagerly follow the way of depriving themselves of all resources to such an extent that they do not allow themselves to exceed the cost of the necessities of life for one day, or to exceed one day’s wage, or to do other things of this sort, have been suddenly trapped in such a way that they are unable to finish long-term work with an appropriate outcome.” Again, as Augustine explains in *De Operibus Monachus*, if our Lord’s words, “Do not be anxious about tomorrow,” are taken to mean that nothing is to be set aside for tomorrow, then “those who seclude themselves away from the sight of men for many days, living in very intense prayer, would not be able to put things aside for themselves.” And later he adds, “Are we to suppose that the holier they are, the more dissimilar they are to birds?” And, again, later on: “For if they are urged, on the basis of the Gospel, to put nothing aside for tomorrow, they respond, ‘Why, then, did our Lord Himself have a purse in which to keep the money that had been collected? Why, in days long gone by, when famine was imminent, was grain sent to the holy fathers? Why did the apostles procure the necessities needed by the saints?’”

Therefore, the passage, “Do not be anxious about tomorrow,” is to be explained as follows according to Jerome: “Thinking about the present time is sufficient for us; let us leave the future, which is uncertain, to God.” And as follows according to Chrysostom: “The labor that we undergo for the sake of necessities is sufficient; do not work for what is unnecessary.” And as follows according to Augustine:

“When we do something good, let us think about eternal things and not temporal things, which are signified by ‘tomorrow’.”

**Reply to objection 3:** This passage from Jerome has a place in cases where there are abundant riches (a) which are possessed as if they were someone’s own private riches or (b) through the misuse of which the individuals become proud and lascivious.

By contrast, this passage does not have a place in the case of moderate riches kept in common solely for the necessities of life that each individual stands in need of. For each individual’s making use of things that pertain to the necessities of life is equivalent to those things being kept together for the common use.

**Reply to objection 4:** Isaac disapproved of accepting possessions because he feared that this would lead to excessive riches, through the misuse of which the perfection of the religious life would be impeded. Hence, in the same place Gregory adds, “He feared losing the security of his poverty in the same way that the avaricious rich are wont to guard their perishable wealth.”

However, we do not read that he refused to accept anything necessary that had to be kept for sustaining their life.

**Reply to objection 5:** In *Politics* 1 the Philosopher says that bread and wine and other things of this sort are *natural* wealth, whereas money is *artificial* wealth. And so it is that certain philosophers did not want to make use of money, but made use of other things instead as a way of living according to nature. And this is why, in the same place, Jerome showed that in the opinion of our Lord, who forbade both of sorts of wealth in the same way, having money amounts to the same thing as having other things that are necessary for life.

And yet, even if our Lord commanded that such things not be carried on the road by those who were being sent out to preach, He nonetheless did not forbid these things from being kept in common. But it was shown above (q. 185, a. 6, ad 2 and *ST* 1-2, q. 108, a. 2, ad 3) how the relevant words of our Lord should be understood.

## Article 8

### Is a religious order composed of individuals living a common life more perfect than a religious order composed of individuals leading solitary lives?

It seems that a religious order composed of individuals living a common life is more perfect than a religious order composed of individuals leading solitary lives (*perfectior sit religio in societate viventium quam agentium solitariam vitam*):

**Objection 1:** Ecclesiastes 4:9 says, “It is better for there to be two than just one, since they have the benefit of a social life.” Therefore, it seems that a religious order composed of individuals living a common life is more perfect.

**Objection 2:** Matthew 18:20 says, “Where two or three are gathered in my name, there I am in the midst of them.” But nothing can be better than the company of Christ. Therefore, it seems that living in a community is better than leading a solitary life.

**Objection 3:** Among the vows of the religious state, obedience is the most excellent, and humility is especially acceptable to God. But obedience and humility are better observed in a common life than in solitude. For in *Epistola ad Rusticum Monachum* Jerome says, “In solitude pride creeps in quickly: the man sleeps when he wants to sleep, he does what he wants to do.” By contrast, Jerome instructs the individual who is living in a community by saying, “You may not do what you want to do, you must eat what you are told to eat, you may possess as much as you receive, you must obey someone whom you do not want to obey, you must serve your brothers, you must fear the superior of the monastery as you

would fear God, you must love him as a father.” Therefore, it seems that a religious order composed of individuals who live in a community is more perfect than a religious order which carries on the solitary life.

**Objection 4:** In Luke 11:33 our Lord says, “No one lights [a candle] and puts it in a hidden place or under a bushel.” But those who lead a solitary life seem to be put in a hidden place, not doing any good for men. Therefore, it seems that their religious order is not more perfect.

**Objection 5:** What is contrary to human nature does not seem to involve the perfection of virtue. But as the Philosopher says in *Politics* 1, “Man is naturally a social animal.” Therefore, it seems that leading a solitary life is not more perfect than leading a social life.

**But contrary to this:** In *De Operibus Monachorum* Augustine says that those men are “holier” (*sanctiores*) who, “separated from the sight of men, do not give anyone access to themselves, living in a great intensity of prayer.”

**I respond:** Solitude, like poverty, is not itself the essence of perfection, but is instead an instrument of perfection. Hence, in *Collationes Patrum* the abbot Moses says, “Solitude should be pursued for purity of heart,” just like fasts and other things of this sort. Now it is clear that solitude is an instrument that befits contemplation and not action—this according to Hosea 2:14 (“I will lead her into the wilderness, and I will speak to her heart”). Hence, solitude is not appropriate in the case of religious orders that are directed toward the works of the active life, whether corporeal works or spiritual works—except perhaps temporarily, in imitation of Christ, who, as Luke 6:12, says, “went out to a mountain to pray, and passed the whole night in prayer to God.” Instead, it is fitting in the case of religious orders that are directed toward contemplation.

Notice, however, that what is solitary should be self-sufficient in its own right (*debet esse sibi per se sufficiens*). But this is to lack nothing that belongs to the nature of the perfect. And so solitude is fitting for a contemplating individual who has already arrived at what is perfect. There are two ways in which this can happen:

In one way, *solely by a gift from God*, as is clear in the case of John the Baptist, who “was filled with the Holy Spirit even from his mother’s womb,” and when he was still a boy, “he was in the desert,” as Luke 1 reports.

In the second way, *through the exercise of virtuous action*—this according to Hebrews 5:14 (“Strong meat is for the perfect, for those who by repetition have their senses trained for discerning good from evil”). Now there are two ways in which a man is helped in training of this sort by the company of others. In one way, as regards *the intellect*, insofar as the intellect is instructed in those things which are to be contemplated; hence, in *Ad Rusticum Monachum* Jerome says, “It pleases me that you have holy companionship and that you do not teach yourself.” Second, as regards the *affections*, viz., insofar as a man’s harmful affections are held back by the example and correction of others. For as Gregory says in *Moralia* 30 when commenting on Job 39:6 (“... to whom I gave a house in the wilderness”), “What good does solitude of the body do, if solitude of the heart is lacking?” And so social life is necessary for working toward perfection, whereas solitude is fitting for those who are already perfect. Hence, in *Ad Rusticum Monachum* Jerome says, “We do not at all attack the solitary life, which we will always praise. But from the school of this sort of monastery we want soldiers to emerge whom the beginnings [in the wilderness] do not frighten and who have given evidence of their having lived in community for a long period of time.”

So, then, just as what has already been perfected is more excellent than what is working toward perfection, so the life of the solitaries, if it has been undertaken in the right way, is more excellent than a social life. However, if a solitary life is undertaken without previous training, then it is extremely dangerous, unless what is acquired by others through training is supplied by God’s grace, as is clear in the cases of Saint Anthony and Saint Benedict.

**Reply to objection 1:** Solomon shows that it is better for there to be two together than just one

because of the help that the one has from the other for lifting him up or for fostering him or for heating him up spiritually. But those who have already attained perfection do not need this sort of assistance.

**Reply to objection 2:** As 1 John 4:16 says, “He who remains in charity remains in God and God in him.” Therefore, just as Christ is in the midst of those who associate with one another through love of neighbor, so He inhabits the heart of an individual who applies himself to contemplating God because of his love for God.

**Reply to objection 3:** Obeying in actuality is necessary for those who stand in need of doing exercises under the direction of others in order to achieve perfection. But those who are already perfect act sufficiently in the spirit of God that they do not need to obey others in actuality. Still, they possess [the virtue of] obedience in their mental preparedness.

**Reply to objection 4:** As Augustine says in *De Civitate Dei* 19, “No one is prohibited from being eager to know truth, which involves a praiseworthy leisure.” But an individual’s “being put on a candlestick” (Luke 11:33) pertains to his superiors and not to himself. “If this burden is not imposed,” as Augustine adds in the same place, “then time should be made for contemplating truth”—to which solitude greatly contributes.

And yet those who lead a solitary life are very useful to the human race. Hence, in talking about them in *De Moribus Ecclesiae*, Augustine says, “Content with bread alone, which is brought to them at certain intervals of time, and with water, they live in the most deserted lands, thoroughly enjoying their conversation with God, to whom they adhere with pure minds. To some it seems that they have deserted human affairs more than they should; such people do not understand how much good their focus on prayer does for us, and how great an example for us is the life of those whom we are not allowed to see in the flesh.”

**Reply to objection 5:** There are two ways in which a man can live a solitary life. In one way, by not, as it were, tolerating the society of human beings because of a harshness of mind; and this is brutish. In a second way, by totally adhering to divine things; and this is super-human. That is why in *Politics* 1 the Philosopher says, “He who does not live together with others is either a beast or a god,” i.e., a divine man.