

QUESTION 43

Scandal

What remains is that we have to consider the vices opposed to beneficence. Whereas others among these vices pertain to the nature of justice, viz., those by which one harms his neighbor unjustly, scandal seems to be specifically opposed to charity. And so in this place we have to consider scandal.

On this topic there are eight questions: (1) What is scandal? (2) Is scandal a sin? (3) Is scandal a special sin? (4) Is scandal a mortal sin? (5) Does it belong to those who are perfect to be scandalized? (6) Does it belong to those who are perfect to give scandal? (7) Should one forego spiritual goods in order to avoid scandal (*propter scandalum*)? (8) Should one forego temporal goods in order to avoid scandal?

Article 1

Is scandal appropriately defined as “a less upright word or deed that presents someone with an occasion for a downfall”?

It seems that scandal is not appropriately defined as “a less upright word or deed that presents someone with an occasion for a downfall” (*dictum vel factum minus rectum praebens occasionem ruinae*):

Objection 1: As will be explained below (a. 2), scandal is a sin. But according to Augustine in *Contra Faustum* 12, a sin is “a word or deed or desire (*concupitum*) contrary to God’s law.” Therefore, the definition in question is insufficient, since it omits ‘thought’ (*cogitatum*) or ‘desire’.

Objection 2: Since, among virtuous or upright acts, one is more virtuous or more upright than another, the only thing that is not “less upright” seems to be that which is maximally upright (*rectissimum*). Therefore, if scandal were a less upright word or deed, then it would follow that every virtuous act except for the very best act would be an instance of scandal.

Objection 3: An occasion is a *per accidens* cause. But what is *per accidens* should not be posited in a definition, because it does not yield a species. Therefore, ‘occasion’ is inappropriately posited in the definition of scandal.

Objection 4: Any deed whatsoever done by another is such that someone might take it as an occasion for a downfall, since *per accidens* causes are indeterminate. Therefore, if scandal is what “presents someone with an occasion for a downfall,” then any word or deed whatsoever can constitute a scandal—which seems absurd.

Objection 5: An occasion for a downfall is presented to one’s neighbor when he is offended or weakened. But scandal is distinct from an offense or a weakness; for in Romans 14:21 the Apostle says, “It is good not to eat meat or drink wine, or anything else by which your brother is offended or scandalized or weakened.” Therefore, the definition of scandal laid out above is inappropriate.

But contrary to this: In commenting on Matthew 15:12 (“Do you know that the Pharisees, when they heard this word, were scandalized?”), Jerome says, “When we read, ‘Anyone who scandalizes ...’, we understand, ‘Anyone who by word or deed presents someone with an occasion for a downfall.’”

I respond: As Jerome says in the same place, “When the Greek says *skandalon*, we can say ‘offense’ (*offensio*) or ‘downfall’ (*ruina*) or ‘stumbling block’ (*impactio pedis*).” For it happens that sometimes an obstacle is placed in someone’s corporeal path and when he comes upon it, he is disposed to fall down; and such an obstacle is called a ‘scandal’. Similarly, in walking along the spiritual path someone might be disposed toward a downfall by the word or deed of another, viz., insofar as some individual, by his advice or inducement or example, draws another individual toward sinning. And this is what is properly called scandal.

Now there is nothing that by its proper nature disposes one toward a spiritual downfall unless it has

some deficiency in uprightness, since what is perfectly upright fortifies a man against a fall rather than leading him to ruin. And so it is appropriate to say that scandal is “a less upright word or deed that presents someone with an occasion for a downfall.”

Reply to objection 1: A thought or a desire for what is bad lies hidden in the heart, and hence it is not being proposed to another individual as an obstacle that disposes him toward a downfall. And because of this, a thought or desire cannot have the character of scandal.

Reply to objection 2: ‘Less upright’ is being used here not in the sense of being surpassed in rectitude by something else, but rather in the sense either (a) of having some deficiency in rectitude, or (b) of being bad in its own right, like a sin, or (c) of having the appearance of something bad, as when someone sits down to eat in the temple of an idol. For even though this last act is not in its own right a sin as long as one does it without a corrupt intention, still, because it has a certain appearance of, or similarity to, venerating an idol, it can present another individual with an occasion for a downfall. This is why, in 1 Thessalonians 5:22, the Apostle warns, “You should abstain from every appearance of evil.” And so “less upright” is correctly used in the definition in order to include both things that are bad in their own right and things that have the appearance of being bad.

Reply to objection 3: As was established above (*ST* 1-2, q. 75, aa. 1-2 and q. 80, a. 1), nothing except a man’s own will can be a sufficient cause for him of sin, i.e., of spiritual ruin. And so the words or deeds of another man can be only an incomplete cause that in some way or other leads him toward a downfall. For this reason, the definition does not say, “presents him with a cause for a downfall,” but instead says, “presents him with an occasion for a downfall,” where the latter signifies an incomplete cause and not always a *per accidens* cause.

Yet nothing prevents what is *per accidens* from being posited in certain definitions. For what is incidental to one thing can belong *per se* to something else, in the way that, in *Physics* 7, ‘*per accidens* cause’ is posited in the definition of fortune.

Reply to objection 4: There are two ways in which the word or deed of another can be a cause of one’s sinning: (a) *per se* and (b) *per accidens*.

It is a cause *per se* when, by his own bad word or deed, one intends to induce someone else to sin—or when, even if he does not intend this, the deed itself is such that by its very nature it induces the other to sin, e.g., when one publicly does something that is a sin or that has the appearance of being a sin. In that case, the one who does an act of this sort properly speaking provides an occasion for a downfall, and so this is called active scandal.

On the other hand, the word or deed of one individual is a cause *per accidens* of another’s sinning when, beyond the intention of the agent and beyond the nature of the act, someone who is badly disposed is induced to sin by this sort of act, e.g., when someone envies the goods of others. And in such a case one who does an upright act of this sort does not provide an occasion, as far as he himself is concerned, but instead the other individual takes it as an occasion to sin—this according to Romans 7:8 (“Sin taking occasion by the commandment ...”). And so this is passive scandal without active scandal, since the one who acts in an upright way, as far as he himself is concerned, does not provide an occasion for the downfall that the other individual experiences.

Therefore, sometimes it happens that there is simultaneously active scandal in the one individual and passive scandal in the other, viz., when the second individual sins at the inducement of the first individual. Again, sometimes there is active scandal without passive scandal, viz., when someone induces another to sin by word or by deed, but the latter does not consent. And sometimes there is passive scandal without active scandal, in the way just explained.

Reply to objection 5: ‘Weakness’ names a readiness for scandal, whereas ‘offense’ names one’s indignation against someone who sins (and this can sometimes occur without a downfall), and ‘scandal’ implies the stumbling itself to a downfall.

Article 2

Is scandal a sin?

It seems that scandal is not a sin:

Objection 1: Sins do not occur by necessity, since, as was established above (*ST* 1-2, q. 71, a. 6 and q. 74, a. 1 and q. 80, a.1), every sin is voluntary. But Matthew 18:7 says, “It is necessary for scandals to occur.” Therefore, scandal is not a sin.

Objection 2: No sin proceeds from an affection of piety, since, as Matthew 7:18 says, “No good tree can bear bad fruit.” But some instances of scandal arise from an affection of piety. For in Matthew 16:23 our Lord says to Peter, “You are a scandal to me,” and Jerome comments on this passage, “The apostle’s mistake, arising from an affection of piety, does not at all seem to be incited by the devil.” Therefore, not every instance of scandal is a sin.

Objection 3: Scandal implies a certain sort of stumbling. But not everyone who stumbles falls. Therefore, scandal can exist without sin, which is a spiritual fall.

But contrary to this: Scandal is “a less upright word or deed ...” (a. 1). But by the fact that an act is deficient in rectitude, it has something of the character of a sin. Therefore, scandal always exists with sin.

I respond: As has already been explained above (a. 1), there are two types of scandal, viz., *passive scandal* in the one who is scandalized, and *active scandal* in the one who gives scandal and provides the occasion for a downfall.

Therefore, passive scandal is always a sin in the one who is scandalized, since he is scandalized only insofar as he in some way falls into spiritual ruin, i.e., into sin. However, there can be passive scandal without sin on the part of the one by whose deed someone is scandalized, as when one individual is scandalized because of things that the other individual does in an upright way (*de his quae alius bene facit*).

Similarly, active scandal is always a sin in the one who gives scandal. For either (a) the deed that he does is a sin or else (b), if his deed has the appearance of a sin, he should always forego it because of charity for his neighbor. For out of charity each individual tries to provide for his neighbor’s salvation, and so one who does not forego such a deed acts against charity. On the other hand, as was explained above (a. 1), there can be active scandal without the one who is scandalized having any sin.

Reply to objection 1: The words, “It is necessary for scandals to occur,” should be understood to imply not absolute necessity, but rather a conditional necessity, more specifically, a necessity by which it is necessary that what is foreknown or foretold by God should occur (*necesse est praescita vel praenuntiata a Deo evenire*)—as long as this is taken in the composed sense (*si tamen coniunctim accipiatur*), as was explained in the First Part (*ST* 1, q. 14, a. 13).

An alternative reply is that it is by a necessity of the end that scandals necessarily occur, since scandals are useful “in order that they who are approved may be made manifest” (1 Corinthians 11:19).

An alternative reply is that scandals will necessarily occur given the condition of men, who are not on their guard against sin. In the same way, if a physician, seeing those who have an inappropriate diet, says, “Such people will necessarily get sick,” this is to be understood under the condition that they will not change their diet. Similarly, scandals will necessarily occur if men do not change their evil way of life.

Reply to objection 2: In the passage in question ‘scandal’ is being used broadly for any sort of obstacle. For Peter wanted to prevent Christ’s passion because of his affection of piety for Christ.

Reply to objection 3: No one stumbles spiritually unless his progress in the way of God is in some way retarded, and this occurs at least through venial sin.

Article 3

Is scandal a special sin?

It seems that scandal is not a special sin:

Objection 1: Scandal is “a less upright word or deed ...” (a. 1). But every sin is of this sort. Therefore, every sin is scandal. Therefore, scandal is not a special sin.

Objection 2: As *Ethics* 5 says, every special sin, or every special sort of injustice, is found to exist separately from the other sins. But scandal is not found to exist separately from the other sins. Therefore, scandal is not a special sin.

Objection 3: Every special sin is constituted by something that gives a species to the moral act. But the nature of scandal is constituted by someone’s sinning before the eyes of others (*coram aliis*), and even if sinning openly (*in manifesto peccare*) is an aggravating circumstance, it does not seem to constitute a species. Therefore, scandal is not a special sin.

But contrary to this: A special sin is opposed to a special virtue. But scandal is opposed to a special virtue, viz., charity; for Romans 14:15 says, “If your brother is grieved because of what you are eating, then you are already not walking in accord with charity.” Therefore, scandal is a special sin.

I respond: As was explained above (aa. 1-2), there are two sorts of scandal, viz., active scandal and passive scandal.

To be sure, passive scandal cannot be a special sin, since one can fall into a sin of any genus because of the word or deed of someone else. Nor does the very fact that one takes an occasion for sinning from the word or deed of another constitute a special type of sin, since it does not imply a special deformity that is opposed to a special virtue.

On the other hand, active scandal can be understood in two ways, viz., *per se* and *per accidens*.

Per accidens active scandal occurs when the scandal lies outside of the agent’s intention, as when someone does not intend by his disordered deed or word to give anyone an occasion for a downfall, but intends only to fulfill his own will. Active scandal in this sense is not a special sin, since what exists *per accidens* does not constitute a species.

By contrast, *per se* active scandal occurs when one intends by his disordered word or deed to draw someone else toward a sin. And this constitutes a special type of sin because of the intending of a special end; for as was explained above (*ST* 1-2, q. 1 and 3, and q. 18, aa. 4 and 6), the end confers a species in moral matters. Hence, just as theft or homicide is a special sin because of the special sort of harm to one’s neighbor which is intended, so, too, scandal is a special sin because it intends a special sort of harm to one’s neighbor. And it is directly opposed to fraternal correction, in which there is the removal of a special harm.

Reply to objection 1: Materially speaking, every sin can be related to active scandal. But as has been explained, it is possible to get the formal character of a special sin from the intending of its end.

Reply to objection 2: Active scandal can indeed be found to exist separately from other sins, as when someone scandalizes his neighbor by a deed which is not in its own right a sin but has the appearance of evil.

Reply to objection 3: Scandal does not have the character of a special sin from the circumstance alluded to in the objection; rather, as has been explained, it has that character from the intending of its end.

Article 4

Is scandal a mortal sin?

It seems that scandal is a mortal sin:

Objection 1: As was explained above (q. 35, a. 3), every sin that is contrary to charity is a mortal sin. But as has been shown (aa. 2-3), scandal is contrary to charity. Therefore, scandal is a mortal sin.

Objection 2: The punishment of eternal damnation is not deserved for any sin except a mortal sin. But the punishment of eternal damnation is deserved for scandal—this according to Matthew 18:6 (“Whoever scandalizes one of these little ones who believe in me, it is better for him to have a great millstone hung around his neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea”). For, as Jerome says, “It is much better to receive a brief punishment for a sin than to undergo eternal torments.” Therefore, scandal is a mortal sin.

Objection 3: Every sin that is committed against God is a mortal sin, since only a mortal sin turns a man away from God. But scandal is a sin against God; for in 1 Corinthians 8:12 the Apostle says, “When you wound the weak conscience of your brothers, you sin against Christ.” Therefore, scandal is always a mortal sin.

But contrary to this: Inducing someone to sin venially can be a venial sin. But this belongs to the nature of scandal. Therefore, scandal can be a venial sin.

I respond: As was explained above (a. 1), scandal involves a sort of stumbling by which one is disposed toward ruin.

And so passive scandal can sometimes be a venial sin—involving, as it were, only the stumbling—as when someone is moved by a movement of venial sin because of the disordered word or deed of another. Sometimes, however, it is a mortal sin—having, as it were, the ruin along with the stumbling—as when someone, because of the disordered word or deed of another, proceeds all the way to a mortal sin.

On the other hand, active scandal, if it is *per accidens*, can sometimes be a venial sin, as when one either commits an act of venial sin or else an act which is not a sin in its own right but which has the appearance of evil along with some slight indiscretion. However, sometimes it is a mortal sin, either because one commits an act of mortal sin or because he shows disdain for his neighbor’s salvation, in the sense that he does not forego doing what pleases him for the sake of preserving it.

What’s more, if the active scandal is *per se*, viz., when one intends to induce the other to sin, then if he intends to induce him to sin mortally, it is a mortal sin. And the same thing holds if, through an act of mortal sin, he intends to induce his neighbor to sin venially. And if he intends to induce his neighbor to sin venially through an act of a venial sin, then it is a venial sin.

Reply to objection 1 and objection 2 and objection 3: The reply to the objections is clear from what has been said.

Article 5

Can passive scandal occur even to the perfect?

It seems that passive scandal can occur to the perfect (*possit etiam in perfectos cadere*):

Objection 1: Christ was the most perfect of all. But He said to Peter, “You are a scandal to me.” Therefore, *a fortiori*, other perfect individuals can be subject to scandal.

Objection 2: Scandal implies an obstacle which is posed for someone in the spiritual life. But even perfected men can be impeded in living out the spiritual life—this according to 1 Thessalonians

2:18 (“We wanted to come to you—I, Paul, more than once—but Satan hindered us”). Therefore, even perfected men can be subject to scandal.

Objection 3: Venial sins can be found even in perfected men—this according to 1 John 1:8 (“If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves”). Therefore, passive scandal can be found even in perfected men.

But contrary to this: In commenting on Matthew 18:6 (“Whoever scandalizes one of these little ones ...”), Jerome says, “Notice that the one who is scandalized is little, since the greater ones are not subject to scandal.”

I respond: Passive scandal implies a certain movement of the mind away from the good in the one who is subject to the scandal. But no one who is firmly adhering to something immovable undergoes movement. Now the greater individuals, i.e., the perfect, adheres to God alone, whose goodness is unchangeable, since even if they adhere to their prelates, they adhere to them only insofar as they adhere to Christ—this according to 1 Corinthians 4:16 (“Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ”). Hence, no matter how many times they see others behaving in a disordered way in word or deed, they themselves do not recede from their own rectitude—this according to Psalm 124:1-2 (“Those who trust in the Lord are like Mount Sion; the one who lives in Jerusalem is not moved forever”). And so scandal is not found in those who adhere completely (*perfecte*) to God through love—this according to Psalm 118:165 (“Great peace have those who love Your law, and there is no scandal in them”).

Reply to objection 1: As was explained above (a. 2), ‘scandal’ is used broadly in this passage for any sort of impediment. Hence, our Lord says to Peter, “You are a scandal to me,” because Peter was trying to impede His intentions with regard to undergoing His passion.

Reply to objection 2: Perfected men can be impeded in their exterior acts. But in their interior will they are not prevented by the words or deeds of others from tending toward God—this according to Romans 8:38-39 (“Neither death nor life can separate us from the charity of God”).

Reply to objection 3: Perfected men occasionally fall into venial sins because of the weakness of the flesh, but they are not scandalized by the words or deeds of others in the true sense of scandal. However, a certain approximation to scandal can exist in them—this according to Psalm 72:2 (“My feet have almost stumbled”).

Article 6

Can active scandal be found in perfected men?

It seems that active scandal can be found in perfected men:

Objection 1: An instance of being act upon (*passio*) is the effect of an action. But certain individuals are passively scandalized by the words and deeds of the perfect—this according to Matthew 15:12 (“Do you know that the Pharisees were scandalized upon hearing this statement?”). Therefore, active scandal can be found in perfected men.

Objection 2: Peter was in the state of the perfect after having received the Holy Spirit. But he later scandalized the gentiles; for Galatians 2:14 says, “After I had seen that they were not walking uprightly according to the truth of the Gospel, I said to Cephas [i.e., Peter] before them all, ‘If you, though a Jew, live like the gentiles and not like the Jews, how is it that you compel the gentiles to live like the Jews?’” Therefore, active scandal can exist in perfected men.

Objection 3: Active scandal is sometimes a venial sin. But venial sins can exist even in perfected men. Therefore, active scandal can exist in perfected men.

But contrary to this: Active scandal is in more tension (*plus repugnant*) with perfection than passive scandal is. But passive scandal cannot be found in perfected men. Therefore, *a fortiori*, neither

can active scandal.

I respond: Active scandal properly speaking occurs when someone says or does something which is *of itself* such that it is apt to induce another toward a downfall, and this is only something that is done or said in a disordered way.

By contrast, it belongs to the perfect to order what they do in accord with the rule of reason—this according to 1 Corinthians 14:40 (“Let all things be done among you in an upright way and with order”). And they exercise this caution especially in matters in which they might not only offend others, but even give the appearance of offense to others. And if they lack moderation in their manifest words or deeds, this stems from human weakness, and in this respect they fall short of perfection. Yet they do not fall short to such a degree that they recede very far from the order of reason; rather, they recede a little bit and in slight matters, i.e., in a way that is not so great that another individual could reasonably take an occasion of sinning from it.

Reply to objection 1: Passive scandal is always caused by active scandal, but not always by another’s active scandal. Sometimes it is caused by the active scandal of the same individual, because, namely, he scandalizes himself.

Reply to objection 2: To be sure, Peter sinned and was blameworthy—this according to the opinion of Augustine and of Paul himself—because he removed himself from the gentiles in order to avoid scandalizing the Jews. For he did this in some sense incautiously, so that the gentiles who had been converted to the Faith were scandalized.

Yet Peter’s deed was not so grave a sin that the others could have been rightly scandalized. Hence, they were subject to passive scandal, but active scandal did not exist in Peter.

Reply to objection 3: The venial sins of the perfect principally consist in sudden movements which, since they are hidden, cannot give scandal. But if they do commit some venial sins in their exterior words or deeds, these sins are so slight that they do not of themselves have the power to give scandal.

Article 7

Should one forego spiritual goods for the sake of avoiding scandal?

It seems that one should forego spiritual goods for the sake of avoiding scandal (*propter scandalum*):

Objection 1: In *Contra Epistolam Parmeniani* Augustine teaches that when the danger of schism is feared, the punishment of sinners should come to a stop. But the punishment of sinners is something spiritual, since it is an act of justice. Therefore, one should forego a spiritual good because of scandal.

Objection 2: Sacred doctrine seems to be especially spiritual. But one should stop teaching it because of scandal—this according to Matthew 7:6 (“Do not give to dogs what is holy, neither cast your pearls before swine, lest having turned, they tear you”). Therefore, one should forego spiritual goods because of scandal.

Objection 3: Since fraternal correction is an act of charity, it is a certain spiritual good. But, as Augustine points out in *De Civitate Dei* 1, sometimes one forgoes it for the sake of charity, in order to avoid scandalizing others. Therefore, one should forego a spiritual good because of scandal.

Objection 4: Jerome says that, to avoid scandal, one should forego everything that can be omitted while still preserving the “threefold truth,” viz., the truth “of life, of justice, and of doctrine.” But the fulfillment of the counsels and the giving of alms can on many occasions be omitted while preserving this threefold truth; otherwise, everyone would always sin in omitting them. And yet these are the greatest among the spiritual works. Therefore, spiritual works ought to be omitted because of scandal.

Objection 5: The avoidance of a sin is a certain spiritual good, since each sin inflicts some spiritual loss on the one who commits it. But it seems that one ought sometimes to commit a venial sin in order to avoid giving scandal to his neighbor, e.g., when by committing a venial sin he prevents a mortal sin on the part of the other. For a man ought to prevent the damnation of his neighbor to the extent that he can without the loss of his own salvation, which is not lost through a venial sin. Therefore, a man should forego some spiritual goods for the sake of avoiding scandal.

But contrary to this: In *Super Ezechiel* Gregory says, “If scandal is taken concerning the truth, it is more advantageous for a scandal to be born than for the truth to be abandoned.” But spiritual goods have to do especially with the truth. Therefore, one should not forego spiritual goods because of scandal.

I respond: Given that there are two kinds of scandal, viz., active and passive, the present question has no place in the case of active scandal; for since active scandal is “a less upright word or deed,” nothing should be done that involves active scandal.

However, the question does have a place if it is understood with respect to passive scandal. Therefore, we have to consider what one should forego in order that someone else might not be scandalized.

Now we have to draw a distinction among spiritual goods. For some of them are necessary for salvation, and one cannot forego such goods without mortal sin. But it is clear that no one should commit a mortal sin in order to prevent someone else’s sin, since in accord with the ordering of charity a man ought to love his own spiritual salvation more than that of anyone else. And so one must not forego what is necessary for salvation in order to prevent scandal.

On the other hand, in the case of those spiritual goods that are not necessary for salvation, it seems that we must draw a distinction.

For scandal that arises from spiritual goods of this sort sometimes proceeds from *malice*, viz., when someone wills to prevent spiritual goods of this sort by piling up scandals, and this is ‘the scandal of the Pharisees’, who were scandalized by our Lord’s teaching. In Matthew 15:14 our Lord teaches that this sort of scandal is not to be feared (*esse contemnendum*).

By contrast, sometimes the scandal proceeds from *weakness* or *ignorance*, and scandal of this sort is ‘the scandal of the little ones’. And it is because of this sort of scandal that spiritual goods are to be hidden or sometimes even deferred when no [spiritual] danger is imminent, up until the point where, after an explanation has been given, scandal of this sort ceases. However, if the scandal endures after an explanation is given, then at that point it seems to stem from malice, and so one should not forego any spiritual goods of the sort in question because of it.

Reply to objection 1: The infliction of punishments is not to be sought for its own sake; instead, punishments are inflicted as a certain sort of medicine for restraining sins. And so they have the character of justice to the extent that sins are restrained because of them. However, if it is clear that because of the infliction of punishment more sins and greater sins will ensue, then the infliction of punishments will not be contained under justice. And it is of this sort of case that Augustine is speaking. More specifically, when the danger of schism threatens because of the excommunication of certain individuals, then it does not belong to the truth of justice to carry out the excommunication.

Reply to objection 2: Concerning doctrine, there are two things to consider, viz., (a) the truth that is being taught and (b) the act of teaching it. The first of these is necessary for salvation in the sense that one may not teach contrary to the truth; however, someone to whom the duty of teaching falls may propose the truth in a way that fits the time and the people. And so there is no scandal such that, for the sake of avoiding it, a man ought to forego the truth and teach falsehood instead. But as was explained above (q. 32, a. 2), the act itself of teaching is numbered among the spiritual acts of mercy. And so the same reasoning holds for teaching as for the other works of mercy, and this will be explained in a moment.

Reply to objection 3: As was explained above (q. 33, a. 1), fraternal correction is ordered toward

our brother's improvement. And so it is to be counted among the spiritual goods to the extent that it is able to attain this—which does not happen if our brother is scandalized by the correction. And so if one foregoes a correction because of scandal, then it is not the case that one is foregoing a spiritual good.

Reply to objection 4: It is not just what is necessary for salvation that is included in the truth “of life, of doctrine, and of justice,” but also that through which salvation is arrived at in a more perfect way—this according to 1 Corinthians 12:31 (“Strive after the greater gifts”). Hence, it is not the case that because of scandal one should forego, absolutely speaking, even the counsels or even the works of mercy; instead, as has been explained, they are sometimes to be hidden or deferred because of the scandal of the little ones.

Still, in some cases the observance of the counsels or even the fulfillment of the works of mercy is necessary for salvation. This is clear in the case of those who have already vowed the counsels and in cases in which one has an obligation to supply the needs of others, regardless of whether those needs lie in temporal things, e.g., feeding the hungry, or in spiritual things, e.g., instructing the ignorant, and regardless of whether the obligation arises because of some enjoined office, as is clear in the case of prelates, or because of necessity on the part of the needy individual. And in such a case the same line of reasoning holds for acts of this sort as for others that are necessary for salvation.

Reply to objection 5: Some have claimed that venial sin should be committed in order to avoid scandal.

However, this position implies contraries. For if something should be done, then it is already not bad or a sin; for a sin cannot be worthy of being chosen (*eligibile*). Still, it is possible for something that, because of some circumstance, is not a venial sin to be such that, if that circumstance were removed, then it would be a venial sin. For instance, a joke is a venial sin when it is told without any usefulness, but if it is told for some reasonable cause, it is neither idle nor a sin.

Moreover, even though the grace by which a man is saved is not destroyed by a venial sin, still, insofar as a venial sin disposes one toward mortal sin, it inclines one toward a loss of salvation.

Article 8

Should one forego temporal goods in order to avoid scandal?

It seems that one should forego temporal goods in order to avoid scandal (*propter scandalum*):

Objection 1: We should love the spiritual salvation of our neighbor, which is impeded by scandal, more than any temporal goods. But what we love less, we forego for the sake of what we love more. Therefore, we ought to forego temporal goods in order to avoid scandalizing our neighbor.

Objection 2: According to the rule of Jerome, one should forego because of scandal everything that he can forego while preserving the threefold truth. But one can forego temporal goods while preserving the threefold truth. Therefore, one ought to forego them because of scandal.

Objection 3: Among temporal goods, nothing is more necessary than food. But one ought to forego food because of scandal—this according to Romans 14:15 (“Do not by your food destroy him for whom Christ died”). Therefore, *a fortiori*, one ought to forego all other temporal goods because of scandal.

Objection 4: We can conserve or recover temporal goods in no better way than through judicial proceedings. But it is not permissible to use judicial proceedings, and especially when they involve scandal (*et praecipue cum scandalo*); for Matthew 5:40 says, “If anyone would go to law with you and take your tunic, give him your cloak as well.” And 1 Corinthians 6:7 says, “It is altogether a defect in you that you have lawsuits among yourselves. Why not rather suffer wrong? Why not rather be defrauded?” Therefore, it seems that one should forego temporal goods because of scandal.

Objection 5: Among all temporal goods, the ones we should forego the least seem to be those that are annexed to spiritual goods. But we should forego these goods because of scandal; for as 1 Corinthians 9:12 makes clear, the Apostle, when sowing spiritual goods, did not accept temporal stipends, “lest we offer hindrance to the Gospel of Christ.” And, for similar reasons, in some lands the Church does not require tithes for the sake of avoiding scandal. Therefore, *a fortiori*, one should forego other temporal goods because of scandal.

But contrary to this: Blessed Thomas of Canterbury reclaimed the property of the Church and so scandalized the king.

I respond: We have to draw a distinction concerning temporal goods. For they are either our own goods or they are goods that have been entrusted to us to preserve for others, in the way that the goods of the Church are committed to prelates and in the way that common goods are committed to certain rulers of the republic. And the preservation of such goods, like the preservation of goods that have been deposited with one, is necessarily incumbent on those to whom they have been committed. And so these individuals should not forego such goods because of scandal, in the same way that one should not forego those other goods that are necessary for salvation.

On the other hand, as for those other goods which we ourselves have control over, sometimes we should forego them because of scandal—either by donating them, if we have them in our possession, or by not reclaiming them if they are in the possession of others—and sometimes we should not forego them.

For if the scandal were going to arise out of ignorance or weakness—what we called above ‘the scandal of the little ones’—then either we should totally forego the temporal goods or put the scandal to rest in some other way, e.g., by some sort of friendly explanation (*per aliquam admonitionem*). Hence, in *De Sermone Domini in Monte* Augustine says, “You should give as much as you can lend without harming either yourself or the other man; and if you turn down his request, you should indicate to him what justice demands, and you will give an individual who is making an unjust request something better when you correct him.”

By contrast, sometimes the scandal arises from malice; this is the ‘scandal of the Pharisees’. One should not forego temporal goods because of those who stir up scandals in this way. For this would harm both (a) the common good, since it would provide wicked men with an occasion to plunder, and (b) the plunderers themselves, who would remain in sin by keeping what belongs to others. Hence, in *Moralia* Gregory says, “Sometimes those who rob us of our temporal goods are to be tolerated, whereas sometimes they are to be stopped in order to preserve equity—out of care not only that our goods should not be lost, but also that those who are stealing them should not destroy themselves.”

Reply to objection 1: The reply to the first objection is clear from what has been said.

Reply to objection 2: If bad men were randomly allowed to steal what belongs to others, it would tend toward the loss of the truth of life and of justice. And so one should not forego temporal goods in order to avoid just any scandal at all.

Reply to objection 3: It is not the Apostle’s intention to advise that one should totally forego food because of scandal, since to take food is necessary for one’s welfare; rather, he intends to advise that one should forego particular sorts of food (*talis cibus*) because of scandal—this according to 1 Corinthians 8:13 (“I will never eat meat, lest I should scandalize my brother”)

Reply to objection 4: According to Augustine in *De Sermone Domini in Monte*, this precept of the Lord should be taken to apply to the preparation of one’s mind, so that, namely, a man is prepared from the beginning to suffer injury or fraud rather than to submit to judicial proceedings, if this is expedient. Sometimes, however, it is not expedient, as has been explained. And the words of the Apostle should be understood in this same way.

Reply to objection 5: The scandal that the Apostle was avoiding stemmed from the ignorance of the gentiles, who were not used to this practice. And so he had to abstain [from taking stipends] at the

time, in order that they might first be instructed that this was owed to him. And for a similar reason the Church abstains from demanding tithes in lands in which it is not customary to pay tithes.