

## St. Thomas Aquinas

# The Summa Theologica

(Benziger Bros. edition, 1947)

Translated by

Fathers of the English Dominican Province

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### OF SCANDAL (EIGHT ARTICLES)

It remains for us to consider the vices which are opposed to beneficence, among which some come under the head of injustice, those, to wit, whereby one harms one's neighbor unjustly. But scandal seems to be specially opposed to charity. Accordingly we must here consider scandal, under which head there are eight points of inquiry:

- [\(1\)](#) What is scandal?
  - [\(2\)](#) Whether scandal is a sin?
  - [\(3\)](#) Whether it is a special sin?
  - [\(4\)](#) Whether it is a mortal sin?
  - [\(5\)](#) Whether the perfect can be scandalized?
  - [\(6\)](#) Whether they can give scandal?
  - [\(7\)](#) Whether spiritual goods are to be foregone on account of scandal?
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**Whether scandal is fittingly defined as being something less rightly said or done that occasions spiritual downfall?**

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[Donate bitcoin](#). St. Isidore [e-book library/forum](#) » [aquinas](#) » [english](#) » [summa](#) » [SS](#) » [SS043.html](#) or done that occasions spiritual downfall." For scandal is a sin as we shall state further on ([Article \[2\]](#)). Now, according to Augustine (Contra Faust. xxii, 27), a sin is a "word, deed, or desire contrary to the law of God." Therefore the definition given above is insufficient, since it omits "thought" or "desire."

**Objection 2:** Further, since among virtuous or right acts one is more virtuous or more right than another, that one alone which has perfect rectitude would not seem to be a "less" right one. If, therefore, scandal is something "less" rightly said or done, it follows that every virtuous act except the best of all, is a scandal.

**Objection 3:** Further, an occasion is an accidental cause. But nothing accidental should enter a definition, because it does not specify the thing defined. Therefore it is unfitting, in defining scandal, to say that it is an "occasion."

**Objection 4:** Further, whatever a man does may be the occasion of another's spiritual downfall, because accidental causes are indeterminate. Consequently, if scandal is something that occasions another's spiritual downfall, any deed or word can be a scandal: and this seems unreasonable.

**Objection 5:** Further, a man occasions his neighbor's spiritual downfall when he offends or weakens him. Now scandal is condivided with offense and weakness, for the Apostle says ([Rm. 14:21](#)): "It is good not to eat flesh, and not to drink wine, nor anything whereby thy brother is offended or scandalized, or weakened." Therefore the aforesaid definition of scandal is unfitting.

**On the contrary,** Jerome in expounding Mt. 15:12, "Dost thou know that the Pharisees, when they heard this word," etc. says: "When we read 'Whosoever shall scandalize,' the sense is 'Whosoever shall, by deed or word, occasion another's spiritual downfall.'"

**I answer that,** As Jerome observes the Greek {skandalon} may be rendered offense, downfall, or a stumbling against something. For when a body, while moving along a path, meets with an obstacle, it may happen to stumble against it, and be disposed to fall down: such an obstacle is a {skandalon}.

In like manner, while going along the spiritual way, a man may be disposed to a spiritual downfall by another's word or deed, in so far, to wit, as one man by his injunction, inducement or example, moves another to sin; and this is scandal properly so called.

Now nothing by its very nature disposes a man to spiritual downfall, except that which has some lack of rectitude, since what is perfectly right, secures man against a fall, instead of conducing to his downfall. Scandal is, therefore, fittingly defined as "something less rightly done or said, that occasions another's spiritual downfall."

**Reply to Objection 1:** The thought or desire of evil lies hidden in the heart, wherefore it does not suggest itself to another man as an obstacle conducing to his spiritual downfall: hence it cannot come under the head of scandal.

**Reply to Objection 2:** A thing is said to be less right, not because something else surpasses it in rectitude, but because it has some lack of rectitude, either through being evil in itself, such as sin, or through having an appearance of evil. Thus, for instance, if a man were to "sit at meat in the idol's temple" ([1 Cor. 8:10](#)), though this is not sinful in itself, provided it be done with no evil intention, yet, since it has a certain appearance of evil, and a semblance of worshipping

[Donate bitcoin](#). St. Isidore [e-book library/forum](#) » [aquinas](#) » [english](#) » [summa](#) » [SS](#) » [SS043.html](#), [5:22](#)): "From all appearance of evil refrain yourselves." Scandal is therefore fittingly described as something done "less rightly," so as to comprise both whatever is sinful in itself, and all that has an appearance of evil.

**Reply to Objection 3:** As stated above ([FS, Question \[75\]](#), [Articles \[2\],3](#); [FS, Question \[80\]](#), [Article \[1\]](#)), nothing can be a sufficient cause of a man's spiritual downfall, which is sin, save his own will. Wherefore another man's words or deeds can only be an imperfect cause, conducing somewhat to that downfall. For this reason scandal is said to afford not a cause, but an occasion, which is an imperfect, and not always an accidental cause. Nor is there any reason why certain definitions should not make mention of things that are accidental, since what is accidental to one, may be proper to something else: thus the accidental cause is mentioned in the definition of chance (Phys. ii, 5).

**Reply to Objection 4:** Another's words or deed may be the cause of another's sin in two ways, directly and accidentally. Directly, when a man either intends, by his evil word or deed, to lead another man into sin, or, if he does not so intend, when his deed is of such a nature as to lead another into sin: for instance, when a man publicly commits a sin or does something that has an appearance of sin. In this case he that does such an act does, properly speaking, afford an occasion of another's spiritual downfall, wherefore his act is called "active scandal." One man's word or deed is the accidental cause of another's sin, when he neither intends to lead him into sin, nor does what is of a nature to lead him into sin, and yet this other one, through being ill-disposed, is led into sin, for instance, into envy of another's good, and then he who does this righteous act, does not, so far as he is concerned, afford an occasion of the other's downfall, but it is this other one who takes the occasion according to Rm. 7:8: "Sin taking occasion by the commandment wrought in me all manner of concupiscence." Wherefore this is "passive," without "active scandal," since he that acts rightly does not, for his own part, afford the occasion of the other's downfall. Sometimes therefore it happens that there is active scandal in the one together with passive scandal in the other, as when one commits a sin being induced thereto by another; sometimes there is active without passive scandal, for instance when one, by word or deed, provokes another to sin, and the latter does not consent; and sometimes there is passive without active scandal, as we have already said.

**Reply to Objection 5:** "Weakness" denotes proneness to scandal; while "offense" signifies resentment against the person who commits a sin, which resentment may be sometimes without spiritual downfall; and "scandal" is the stumbling that results in downfall.

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## Whether scandal is a sin?

**Objection 1:** It would seem that scandal is not a sin. For sins do not occur from necessity, since all sin is voluntary, as stated above ([FS, Question \[74\]](#), [Articles \[1\],2](#)). Now it is written ([Mt. 18:7](#)): "It must needs be that scandals come." Therefore scandal is not a sin.

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bring forth evil fruit" ([Mt. 7:18](#)). But scandal may come from a sense of dutifulness, for Our Lord said to Peter ([Mt. 16:23](#)): "Thou art a scandal unto Me," in reference to which words Jerome says that "the Apostle's error was due to his sense of dutifulness, and such is never inspired by the devil." Therefore scandal is not always a sin.

**Objection 3:** Further, scandal denotes a stumbling. But he that stumbles does not always fall. Therefore scandal, which is a spiritual fall, can be without sin.

**On the contrary,** Scandal is "something less rightly said or done." Now anything that lacks rectitude is a sin. Therefore scandal is always with sin.

**I answer that,** As already said ([Article \[1\]](#), ad 4), scandal is of two kinds, passive scandal in the person scandalized, and active scandal in the person who gives scandal, and so occasions a spiritual downfall. Accordingly passive scandal is always a sin in the person scandalized; for he is not scandalized except in so far as he succumbs to a spiritual downfall, and that is a sin.

Yet there can be passive scandal, without sin on the part of the person whose action has occasioned the scandal, as for instance, when a person is scandalized at another's good deed. In like manner active scandal is always a sin in the person who gives scandal, since either what he does is a sin, or if it only have the appearance of sin, it should always be left undone out of that love for our neighbor which binds each one to be solicitous for his neighbor's spiritual welfare; so that if he persist in doing it he acts against charity.

Yet there can be active scandal without sin on the part of the person scandalized, as stated above ([Article \[1\]](#), ad 4).

**Reply to Objection 1:** These words, "It must needs be that scandals come," are to be understood to convey, not the absolute, but the conditional necessity of scandal; in which sense it is necessary that whatever God foresees or foretells must happen, provided it be taken conjointly with such foreknowledge, as explained in the FP, Question [14], Article [13], ad 3; FP, Question [23], Article [6], ad 2.

Or we may say that the necessity of scandals occurring is a necessity of end, because they are useful in order that "they... who are reprov'd may be made manifest" ([1 Cor. 11:19](#)).

Or scandals must needs occur, seeing the condition of man who fails to shield himself from sin. Thus a physician on seeing a man partaking of unsuitable food might say that such a man must needs injure his health, which is to be understood on the condition that he does not change his diet. In like manner it must needs be that scandals come, so long as men fail to change their evil mode of living.

**Reply to Objection 2:** In that passage scandal denotes any kind of hindrance: for Peter wished to hinder Our Lord's Passion out of a sense of dutifulness towards Christ.

**Reply to Objection 3:** No man stumbles spiritually, without being kept back somewhat from advancing in God's way, and that is at least a venial sin.

## Whether scandal is a special sin?

**Objection 1:** It would seem that scandal is not a special sin. For scandal is "something said or done less rightly." But this applies to every kind of sin. Therefore every sin is a scandal, and consequently, scandal is not a special sin.

**Objection 2:** Further, every special kind of sin, or every special kind of injustice, may be found separately from other kinds, as stated in Ethic. v, 3,5. But scandal is not to be found separately from other sins. Therefore it is not a special kind of sin.

**Objection 3:** Further, every special sin is constituted by something which specifies the moral act. But the notion of scandal consists in its being something done in the presence of others: and the fact of a sin being committed openly, though it is an aggravating circumstance, does not seem to constitute the species of a sin. Therefore scandal is not a special sin.

**On the contrary,** A special virtue has a special sin opposed to it. But scandal is opposed to a special virtue, viz. charity. For it is written ([Rm. 14:15](#)): "If, because of thy meat, thy brother be grieved, thou walkest not now according to charity." Therefore scandal is a special sin.

**I answer that,** As stated above ([Article \[2\]](#)), scandal is twofold, active and passive. Passive scandal cannot be a special sin, because through another's word or deed a man may fall into any kind of sin: and the fact that a man takes occasion to sin from another's word or deed, does not constitute a special kind of sin, because it does not imply a special deformity in opposition to a special virtue.

On the other hand, active scandal may be understood in two ways, directly and accidentally. The scandal is accidental when it is beside the agent's intention, as when a man does not intend, by his inordinate deed or word, to occasion another's spiritual downfall, but merely to satisfy his own will. In such a case even active scandal is not a special sin, because a species is not constituted by that which is accidental.

Active scandal is direct when a man intends, by his inordinate word or deed, to draw another into sin, and then it becomes a special kind of sin on account of the intention of a special kind of end, because moral actions take their species from their end, as stated above ([FS, Question \[1\]](#), [Article \[3\]](#); [FS, Question \[18\]](#), [Articles \[4\]](#),6). Hence, just as theft and murder are special kinds of sin, on account of their denoting the intention of doing a special injury to one's neighbor: so too, scandal is a special kind of sin, because thereby a man intends a special harm to his neighbor, and it is directly opposed to fraternal correction, whereby a man intends the removal of a special kind of harm.

**Reply to Objection 1:** Any sin may be the matter of active scandal, but it may derive the formal aspect of a special sin from the end intended, as stated above.

**Reply to Objection 2:** Active scandal can be found separate from other sins, as when a man scandalizes his neighbor by a deed which is not a sin in itself, but has an appearance of evil.

**Reply to Objection 3:** Scandal does not derive the species of a special sin from the circumstance in question, but from the intention of the end, as stated above.

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## Whether scandal is a mortal sin?

**Objection 1:** It would seem that scandal is a mortal sin. For every sin that is contrary to charity is a mortal sin, as stated above ([Question \[24\]](#), [Article \[12\]](#); [Question \[35\]](#), [Article \[3\]](#)). But scandal is contrary to charity, as stated above ([Articles \[2\]](#),3). Therefore scandal is a mortal sin.

**Objection 2:** Further, no sin, save mortal sin, deserves the punishment of eternal damnation. But scandal deserves the punishment of eternal damnation, according to Mt. 18:6: "He that shall scandalize one of these little ones, that believe in Me, it were better for him that a mill-stone should be hanged about his neck, and that he should be drowned in the depth of the sea." For, as Jerome says on this passage, "it is much better to receive a brief punishment for a fault, than to await everlasting torments." Therefore scandal is a mortal sin.

**Objection 3:** Further, every sin committed against God is a mortal sin, because mortal sin alone turns man away from God. Now scandal is a sin against God, for the Apostle says ([1 Cor. 8:12](#)): "When you wound the weak conscience of the brethren [\*Vulg.: 'When you sin thus against the brethren and wound their weak conscience'], you sin against Christ." Therefore scandal is always a mortal sin.

**On the contrary,** It may be a venial sin to lead a person into venial sin: and yet this would be to give scandal. Therefore scandal may be a venial sin.

**I answer that,** As stated above ([Article \[1\]](#)), scandal denotes a stumbling whereby a person is disposed to a spiritual downfall. Consequently passive scandal may sometimes be a venial sin, when it consists in a stumbling and nothing more; for instance, when a person is disturbed by a movement of venial sin occasioned by another's inordinate word or deed: while sometimes it is a mortal sin, when the stumbling results in a downfall, for instance, when a person goes so far as to commit a mortal sin through another's inordinate word or deed.

Active scandal, if it be accidental, may sometimes be a venial sin; for instance, when, through a slight indiscretion, a person either commits a venial sin, or does something that is not a sin in itself, but has some appearance of evil. On the other hand, it is sometimes a mortal sin, either because a person commits a mortal sin, or because he has such contempt for his neighbor's spiritual welfare that he declines, for the sake of procuring it, to forego doing what he wishes to do. But in the case of active direct scandal, as when a person intends to lead another into sin, if he intends to lead him into mortal sin, his own sin will be mortal; and in like manner if he intends by committing a mortal sin himself, to lead another into venial sin; whereas if he intends, by committing a venial sin, to lead another into venial sin, there will be a venial sin of scandal.

And this suffices for the Replies to the Objections.

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## Whether passive scandal may happen even to the perfect?

**Objection 1:** It would seem that passive scandal may happen even to the perfect. For Christ was supremely perfect: and yet He said to Peter ([Mt. 16:23](#)): "Thou art a scandal to Me." Much more therefore can other perfect men suffer scandal.

**Objection 2:** Further, scandal denotes an obstacle which is put in a person's spiritual way. Now even perfect men can be hindered in their progress along the spiritual way, according to 1 Thess. 2:18: "We would have come to you, I Paul indeed, once and again; but Satan hath hindered us." Therefore even perfect men can suffer scandal.

**Objection 3:** Further, even perfect men are liable to venial sins, according to 1 Jn. 1:8: "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves." Now passive scandal is not always a mortal sin, but is sometimes venial, as stated above ([Article \[4\]](#)). Therefore passive scandal may be found in perfect men.

**On the contrary,** Jerome, in commenting on Mt. 18:6, "He that shall scandalize one of these little ones," says: "Observe that it is the little one that is scandalized, for the elders do not take scandal."

**I answer that,** Passive scandal implies that the mind of the person who takes scandal is unsettled in its adherence to good. Now no man can be unsettled, who adheres firmly to something immovable. The elders, i.e. the perfect, adhere to God alone, Whose goodness is unchangeable, for though they adhere to their superiors, they do so only in so far as these adhere to Christ, according to 1 Cor. 4:16: "Be ye followers of me, as I also am of Christ." Wherefore, however much others may appear to them to conduct themselves ill in word or deed, they themselves do not stray from their righteousness, according to Ps. 124:1: "They that trust in the Lord shall be as Mount Sion: he shall not be moved for ever that dwelleth in Jerusalem." Therefore scandal is not found in those who adhere to God perfectly by love, according to Ps. 118:165: "Much peace have they that love Thy law, and to them there is no stumbling-block [scandalum]."

**Reply to Objection 1:** As stated above ([Article \[2\]](#), ad 2), in this passage, scandal is used in a broad sense, to denote any kind of hindrance. Hence Our Lord said to Peter: "Thou art a scandal to Me," because he was endeavoring to weaken Our Lord's purpose of undergoing His Passion.

**Reply to Objection 2:** Perfect men may be hindered in the performance of external actions. But they are not hindered by the words or deeds of others, from tending to God in the internal acts of the will, according to Rm. 8:38,39: "Neither death, nor life... shall be able to separate us from the love of God."

**Reply to Objection 3:** Perfect men sometimes fall into venial sins through the weakness of the flesh; but they are not scandalized (taking scandal in its true sense), by the words or deeds of

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## Whether active scandal can be found in the perfect?

**Objection 1:** It would seem that active scandal can be found in the perfect. For passion is the effect of action. Now some are scandalized passively by the words or deeds of the perfect, according to Mt. 15:12: "Dost thou know that the Pharisees, when they heard this word, were scandalized?" Therefore active scandal can be found in the perfect.

**Objection 2:** Further, Peter, after receiving the Holy Ghost, was in the state of the perfect. Yet afterwards he scandalized the gentiles: for it is written ([Gal. 2:14](#)): "When I saw that they walked not uprightly unto the truth of the Gospel, I said to Cephas," i.e. Peter, "before them all: If thou being a Jew, livest after the manner of the gentiles, and not as the Jews do, how dost thou compel the gentiles to live as do the Jews?" Therefore active scandal can be in the perfect.

**Objection 3:** Further, active scandal is sometimes a venial sin. But venial sins may be in perfect men. Therefore active scandal may be in perfect men.

**On the contrary,** Active scandal is more opposed to perfection, than passive scandal. But passive scandal cannot be in the perfect. Much less, therefore, can active scandal be in them.

**I answer that,** Active scandal, properly so called, occurs when a man says or does a thing which in itself is of a nature to occasion another's spiritual downfall, and that is only when what he says or does is inordinate. Now it belongs to the perfect to direct all their actions according to the rule of reason, as stated in 1 Cor. 14:40: "Let all things be done decently and according to order"; and they are careful to do this in those matters chiefly wherein not only would they do wrong, but would also be to others an occasion of wrongdoing. And if indeed they fail in this moderation in such words or deeds as come to the knowledge of others, this has its origin in human weakness wherein they fall short of perfection. Yet they do not fall short so far as to stray far from the order of reason, but only a little and in some slight matter: and this is not so grave that anyone can reasonably take therefrom an occasion for committing sin.

**Reply to Objection 1:** Passive scandal is always due to some active scandal; yet this active scandal is not always in another, but in the very person who is scandalized, because, to wit, he scandalizes himself.

**Reply to Objection 2:** In the opinion of Augustine (Ep. xxviii, xl, lxxxii) and of Paul also, Peter sinned and was to be blamed, in withdrawing from the gentiles in order to avoid the scandal of the Jews, because he did this somewhat imprudently, so that the gentiles who had been converted to the faith were scandalized. Nevertheless Peter's action was not so grave a sin as

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**Reply to Objection 3:** The venial sins of the perfect consist chiefly in sudden movements, which being hidden cannot give scandal. If, however, they commit any venial sins even in their external words or deeds, these are so slight as to be insufficient in themselves to give scandal.

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## Whether spiritual goods should be foregone on account of scandal?

**Objection 1:** It would seem that spiritual goods ought to be foregone on account of scandal. For Augustine (Contra Ep. Parmen. iii, 2) teaches that "punishment for sin should cease, when the peril of schism is feared." But punishment of sins is a spiritual good, since it is an act of justice. Therefore a spiritual good is to be foregone on account of scandal.

**Objection 2:** Further, the Sacred Doctrine is a most spiritual thing. Yet one ought to desist therefrom on account of scandal, according to Mt. 7:6: "Give not that which is holy to dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine lest... turning upon you, they tear you." Therefore a spiritual good should be foregone on account of scandal.

**Objection 3:** Further, since fraternal correction is an act of charity, it is a spiritual good. Yet sometimes it is omitted out of charity, in order to avoid giving scandal to others, as Augustine observes (De Civ. Dei i, 9). Therefore a spiritual good should be foregone on account of scandal.

**Objection 4:** Further, Jerome [\*Hugh de S. Cher., In Matth. xviii; in Luc. xvii, 2] says that in order to avoid scandal we should forego whatever it is possible to omit without prejudice to the threefold truth, i.e. "the truth of life, of justice and of doctrine." Now the observance of the counsels, and the bestowal of alms may often be omitted without prejudice to the aforesaid threefold truth, else whoever omitted them would always be guilty of sin, and yet such things are the greatest of spiritual works. Therefore spiritual works should be omitted on account of scandal.

**Objection 5:** Further, the avoidance of any sin is a spiritual good, since any sin brings spiritual harm to the sinner. Now it seems that one ought sometimes to commit a venial sin in order to avoid scandalizing one's neighbor, for instance, when by sinning venially, one would prevent someone else from committing a mortal sin: because one is bound to hinder the damnation of one's neighbor as much as one can without prejudice to one's own salvation, which is not precluded by a venial sin. Therefore one ought to forego a spiritual good in order to avoid scandal.

**On the contrary,** Gregory says (Hom. Super Ezech. vii): "If people are scandalized at the truth, it is better to allow the birth of scandal, than to abandon the truth." Now spiritual goods

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***I answer that,*** Whereas scandal is twofold, active and passive, the present question does not apply to active scandal, for since active scandal is "something said or done less rightly," nothing ought to be done that implies active scandal. The question does, however, apply to passive scandal, and accordingly we have to see what ought to be foregone in order to avoid scandal. Now a distinction must be made in spiritual goods. For some of them are necessary for salvation, and cannot be foregone without mortal sin: and it is evident that no man ought to commit a mortal sin, in order to prevent another from sinning, because according to the order of charity, a man ought to love his own spiritual welfare more than another's. Therefore one ought not to forego that which is necessary for salvation, in order to avoid giving scandal.

Again a distinction seems necessary among spiritual things which are not necessary for salvation: because the scandal which arises from such things sometimes proceeds from malice, for instance when a man wishes to hinder those spiritual goods by stirring up scandal. This is the "scandal of the Pharisees," who were scandalized at Our Lord's teaching: and Our Lord teaches ([Mt. 15:14](#)) that we ought to treat such like scandal with contempt. Sometimes scandal proceeds from weakness or ignorance, and such is the "scandal of little ones." In order to avoid this kind of scandal, spiritual goods ought to be either concealed, or sometimes even deferred (if this can be done without incurring immediate danger), until the matter being explained the scandal cease. If, however, the scandal continue after the matter has been explained, it would seem to be due to malice, and then it would no longer be right to forego that spiritual good in order to avoid such like scandal.

***Reply to Objection 1:*** In the infliction of punishment it is not the punishment itself that is the end in view, but its medicinal properties in checking sin; wherefore punishment partakes of the nature of justice, in so far as it checks sin. But if it is evident that the infliction of punishment will result in more numerous and more grievous sins being committed, the infliction of punishment will no longer be a part of justice. It is in this sense that Augustine is speaking, when, to wit, the excommunication of a few threatens to bring about the danger of a schism, for in that case it would be contrary to the truth of justice to pronounce excommunication.

***Reply to Objection 2:*** With regard to a man's doctrine two points must be considered, namely, the truth which is taught, and the act of teaching. The first of these is necessary for salvation, to wit, that he whose duty it is to teach should not teach what is contrary to the truth, and that he should teach the truth according to the requirements of times and persons: wherefore on no account ought he to suppress the truth and teach error in order to avoid any scandal that might ensue. But the act itself of teaching is one of the spiritual almsdeeds, as stated above ([Question \[32\]](#), [Article \[2\]](#)), and so the same is to be said of it as of the other works of mercy, of which we shall speak further on (ad 4).

***Reply to Objection 3:*** As stated above ([Question \[33\]](#), [Article \[1\]](#)), fraternal correction aims at the correction of a brother, wherefore it is to be reckoned among spiritual goods in so far as this end can be obtained, which is not the case if the brother be scandalized through being corrected. And so, if the correction be omitted in order to avoid scandal, no spiritual good is foregone.

***Reply to Objection 4:*** The truth of life, of doctrine, and of justice comprises not only whatever is necessary for salvation, but also whatever is a means of obtaining salvation more perfectly, according to 1 Cor. 12:31: "Be zealous for the better gifts." Wherefore neither the counsels nor

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[Donate bitcoin.](#) St. Isidore [e-book library/forum](#) » [aquinas](#) » [english](#) » [summa](#) » [SS](#) » [SS043.html](#)hes they should be concealed or deferred, on account of the scandal of the little ones, as stated above. Sometimes, however, the observance of the counsels and the fulfilment of the works of mercy are necessary for salvation. This may be seen in the case of those who have vowed to keep the counsels, and of those whose duty it is to relieve the wants of others, either in temporal matters (as by feeding the hungry), or in spiritual matters (as by instructing the ignorant), whether such duties arise from their being enjoined as in the case of prelates, or from the need on the part of the person in want; and then the same applies to these things as to others that are necessary for salvation.

**Reply to Objection 5:** Some have said that one ought to commit a venial sin in order to avoid scandal. But this implies a contradiction, since if it ought to be done, it is no longer evil or sinful, for a sin cannot be a matter of choice. It may happen however that, on account of some circumstance, something is not a venial sin, though it would be were it not for that circumstance: thus an idle word is a venial sin, when it is uttered uselessly; yet if it be uttered for a reasonable cause, it is neither idle nor sinful. And though venial sin does not deprive a man of grace which is his means of salvation, yet, in so far as it disposes him to mortal sin, it tends to the loss of salvation.

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## Whether temporal goods should be foregone on account of scandal?

**Objection 1:** It would seem that temporal goods should be foregone on account of scandal. For we ought to love our neighbor's spiritual welfare which is hindered by scandal, more than any temporal goods whatever. But we forego what we love less for the sake of what we love more. Therefore we should forego temporal goods in order to avoid scandalizing our neighbor.

**Objection 2:** Further, according to Jerome's rule [\*Cf. Article [7], Objection [4]], whatever can be foregone without prejudice to the threefold truth, should be omitted in order to avoid scandal. Now temporal goods can be foregone without prejudice to the threefold truth. Therefore they should be foregone in order to avoid scandal.

**Objection 3:** Further, no temporal good is more necessary than food. But we ought to forego taking food on account of scandal, according to Rm. 14:15: "Destroy not him with thy meat for whom Christ died." Much more therefore should all other temporal goods be foregone on account of scandal.

**Objection 4:** Further, the most fitting way of safeguarding and recovering temporal goods is the court of justice. But it is unlawful to have recourse to justice, especially if scandal ensues: for it is written ([Mt. 5:40](#)): "If a man will contend with thee in judgment, and take away thy coat, let go thy cloak also unto him"; and ([1 Cor. 6:7](#)): "Already indeed there is plainly a fault among you, that you have lawsuits one with another. Why do you not rather take wrong? why do you not rather suffer yourselves to be defrauded?" Therefore it seems that we ought to forego temporal goods on account of scandal.

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are connected with spiritual goods: and yet we ought to forego them on account of scandal. For the Apostle while sowing spiritual things did not accept a temporal stipend lest he "should give any hindrance to the Gospel of Christ" as we read 1 Cor. 9:12. For a like reason the Church does not demand tithes in certain countries, in order to avoid scandal. Much more, therefore, ought we to forego other temporal goods in order to avoid scandal.

**On the contrary**, Blessed Thomas of Canterbury demanded the restitution of Church property, notwithstanding that the king took scandal from his doing so.

**I answer that**, A distinction must be made in temporal goods: for either they are ours, or they are consigned to us to take care of them for someone else; thus the goods of the Church are consigned to prelates, and the goods of the community are entrusted to all such persons as have authority over the common weal. In this latter case the care of such things (as of things held in deposit) devolves of necessity on those persons to whom they are entrusted, wherefore, even as other things that are necessary for salvation, they are not to be foregone on account of scandal. On the other hand, as regards those temporalities of which we have the dominion, sometimes, on account of scandal, we are bound to forego them, and sometimes we are not so bound, whether we forego them by giving them up, if we have them in our possession, or by omitting to claim them, if they are in the possession of others. For if the scandal arise therefrom through the ignorance or weakness of others (in which case, as stated above, Article [7], it is scandal of the little ones) we must either forego such temporalities altogether, or the scandal must be abated by some other means, namely, by some kind of admonition. Hence Augustine says (De Serm. Dom. in Monte i, 20): "Thou shouldst give so as to injure neither thyself nor another, as much as thou canst lend, and if thou refusest what is asked, thou must yet be just to him, indeed thou wilt give him something better than he asks, if thou reprove him that asks unjustly." Sometimes, however, scandal arises from malice. This is scandal of the Pharisees: and we ought not to forego temporal goods for the sake of those who stir up scandals of this kind, for this would both be harmful to the common good, since it would give wicked men an opportunity of plunder, and would be injurious to the plunderers themselves, who would remain in sin as long as they were in possession of another's property. Hence Gregory says (Moral. xxxi, 13): "Sometimes we ought to suffer those who rob us of our temporalities, while sometimes we should resist them, as far as equity allows, in the hope not only that we may safeguard our property, but also lest those who take what is not theirs may lose themselves."

This suffices for the Reply to the First Objection.

**Reply to Objection 2:** If it were permissible for wicked men to rob other people of their property, this would tend to the detriment of the truth of life and justice. Therefore we are not always bound to forego our temporal goods in order to avoid scandal.

**Reply to Objection 3:** The Apostle had no intention of counselling total abstinence from food on account of scandal, because our welfare requires that we should take food: but he intended to counsel abstinence from a particular kind of food, in order to avoid scandal, according to 1 Cor. 8:13: "I will never eat flesh, lest I should scandalize my brother."

**Reply to Objection 4:** According to Augustine (De Serm. Dom. in Monte i, 19) this precept of Our Lord is to be understood of the preparedness of the mind, namely, that man should be prepared, if it be expedient, to suffer being harmed or defrauded, rather than go to law. But sometimes it is not expedient, as stated above (ad 2). The same applies to the saying of the Apostle.

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gentiles who were not used to this payment. Hence it behooved him to forego it for the time being, so that they might be taught first of all that such a payment was a duty. For a like reason the Church refrains from demanding tithes in those countries where it is not customary to pay them.