

St. Thomas Aquinas

The Summa Theologica

(Benziger Bros. edition, 1947)

Translated by

Fathers of the English Dominican Province

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OF THE ENTRANCE INTO RELIGIOUS LIFE (TEN ARTICLES)

We must now consider the entrance into religious life. Under this head there are ten points of inquiry:

- (1) Whether those who are not practiced in the observance of the commandments should enter religion?
- (2) Whether it is lawful for a person to be bound by vow to enter religion?
- (3) Whether those who are bound by vow to enter religion are bound to fulfil their vow?
- (4) Whether those who vow to enter religion are bound to remain there in perpetuity?
- (5) Whether children should be received into religion?
- (6) Whether one should be withheld from entering religion through deference to one's parents?
- (7) Whether parish priests or archdeacons may enter religion?
- (8) Whether one may pass from one religious order to another?
- (9) Whether one ought to induce others to enter religion?
- (10) Whether serious deliberation with one's relations and friends is requisite for entrance into religion?

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enter religion?

Objection 1: It would seem that none should enter religion but those who are practiced in the observance of the commandments. For our Lord gave the counsel of perfection to the young man who said that he had kept the commandments "from his youth." Now all religious orders originate from Christ. Therefore it would seem that none should be allowed to enter religion but those who are practiced in the observance of the commandments.

Objection 2: Further, Gregory says (Hom. xv in Ezech., and Moral. xxii): "No one comes suddenly to the summit; but he must make a beginning of a good life in the smallest matters, so as to accomplish great things." Now the great things are the counsels which pertain to the perfection of life, while the lesser things are the commandments which belong to common righteousness. Therefore it would seem that one ought not to enter religion for the purpose of keeping the counsels, unless one be already practiced in the observance of the precepts.

Objection 3: Further, the religious state, like the holy orders, has a place of eminence in the Church. Now, as Gregory writes to the bishop Siagrius [*Regist. ix, Ep. 106], "order should be observed in ascending to orders. For he seeks a fall who aspires to mount to the summit by overpassing the steps." [*The rest of the quotation is from Regist. v, Ep. 53, ad Virgil. Episc.]. "For we are well aware that walls when built receive not the weight of the beams until the new fabric is rid of its moisture, lest if they should be burdened with weight before they are seasoned they bring down the whole building" (Dist. xlvi, can. Sicut neophytus). Therefore it would seem that one should not enter religion unless one be practiced in the observance of the precepts.

Objection 4: Further, a gloss on Ps. 130:2, "As a child that is weaned is towards his mother," says: "First we are conceived in the womb of Mother Church, by being taught the rudiments of faith. Then we are nourished as it were in her womb, by progressing in those same elements. Afterwards we are brought forth to the light by being regenerated in baptism. Then the Church bears us as it were in her hands and feeds us with milk, when after baptism we are instructed in good works and are nourished with the milk of simple doctrine while we progress; until having grown out of infancy we leave our mother's milk for a father's control, that is to say, we pass from simple doctrine, by which we are taught the Word made flesh, to the Word that was in the beginning with God." Afterwards it goes on to say: "For those who are just baptized on Holy Saturday are borne in the hands of the Church as it were and fed with milk until Pentecost, during which time nothing arduous is prescribed, no fasts, no rising at midnight. Afterwards they are confirmed by the Paraclete Spirit, and being weaned so to speak, begin to fast and keep other difficult observances. Many, like the heretics and schismatics, have perverted this order by being weaned before the time. Hence they have come to naught." Now this order is apparently perverted by those who enter religion, or induce others to enter religion, before they are practiced in the easier observance of the commandments. Therefore they would seem to be heretics or schismatics.

Objection 5: Further, one should proceed from that which precedes to that which follows after. Now the commandments precede the counsels, because they are more universal, for "the implication of the one by the other is not convertible" [*Categor. ix], since whoever keeps the counsels keeps the commandments, but the converse does not hold. Seeing then that the right order requires one to pass from that which comes first to that which comes after, it follows

[Donate bitcoin](#). St. Isidore [e-book library/forum](#) » [aquinas](#) » [english](#) » [summa](#) » [SS](#) » [SS189.html](#) of all practiced in the observance of the commandments.

On the contrary, Matthew the publican who was not practiced in the observance of the commandments was called by our Lord to the observance of the counsels. For it is stated ([Lk. 5:28](#)) that "leaving all things he... followed Him." Therefore it is not necessary for a person to be practiced in the observance of the commandments before passing to the perfection of the counsels.

I answer that, As shown above ([Question \[188\]](#), [Article \[1\]](#)), the religious state is a spiritual schooling for the attainment of the perfection of charity. This is accomplished through the removal of the obstacles to perfect charity by religious observances; and these obstacles are those things which attach man's affections to earthly things. Now the attachment of man's affections to earthly things is not only an obstacle to the perfection of charity, but sometimes leads to the loss of charity, when through turning inordinately to temporal goods man turns away from the immutable good by sinning mortally. Hence it is evident that the observances of the religious state, while removing the obstacles to perfect charity, remove also the occasions of sin: for instance, it is clear that fasting, watching, obedience, and the like withdraw man from sins of gluttony and lust and all other manner of sins.

Consequently it is right that not only those who are practiced in the observance of the commandments should enter religion in order to attain to yet greater perfection, but also those who are not practiced, in order the more easily to avoid sin and attain to perfection.

Reply to Objection 1: Jerome (Super Matth. xix, 20) says: "The young man lies when he says: 'All these have I kept from my youth.' For if he had fulfilled this commandment, 'Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself,' why did he go away sad when he heard: Go, sell all thou hast and give to the poor?" But this means that he lied as to the perfect observance of this commandment. Hence Origen says (Tract. viii super Matth.) that "it is written in the Gospel according to the Hebrews that when our Lord had said to him: 'Go, sell all thou hast,' the rich man began to scratch his head; and that our Lord said to him: How sayest thou: I have fulfilled the law and the prophets, seeing that it is written in the law: Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself? Behold many of thy brethren, children of Abraham, are clothed in filth, and die of hunger, whilst thy house is full of all manner of good things, and nothing whatever hath passed thence to them. And thus our Lord reproves him saying: If thou wilt be perfect, go, etc. For it is impossible to fulfil the commandment which says, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself, and to be rich, especially to have such great wealth." This also refers to the perfect fulfilment of this precept. on the other hand, it is true that he kept the commandments imperfectly and in a general way. For perfection consists chiefly in the observance of the precepts of charity, as stated above ([Question \[184\]](#), [Article \[3\]](#)). Wherefore in order to show that the perfection of the counsels is useful both to the innocent and to sinners, our Lord called not only the innocent youth but also the sinner Matthew. Yet Matthew obeyed His call, and the youth obeyed not, because sinners are converted to the religious life more easily than those who presume on their innocency. It is to the former that our Lord says ([Mt. 21:31](#)): "The publicans and the harlots shall go into the kingdom of God before you."

Reply to Objection 2: The highest and the lowest place can be taken in three ways. First, in reference to the same state and the same man; and thus it is evident that no one comes to the summit suddenly, since every man that lives aright, progresses during the whole course of his life, so as to arrive at the summit. Secondly, in comparison with various states; and thus he who desires to reach to a higher state need not begin from a lower state: for instance, if a man wish to be a cleric he need not first of all be practiced in the life of a layman. Thirdly, in

[Donate bitcoin](#). St. Isidore [e-book library/forum](#) » [aquinas](#) » [english](#) » [summa](#) » [SS](#) » [SS189.html](#)ray not only from a higher state, but even from a higher degree of holiness, than the highest degree to which another man attains throughout his whole life. Hence Gregory says (Dial. ii, 1): "All are agreed that the boy Benedict began at a high degree of grace and perfection in his daily life."

Reply to Objection 3: As stated above ([Question \[184\]](#), [Article \[6\]](#)) the holy orders prerequisite holiness, whereas the religious state is a school for the attainment of holiness. Hence the burden of orders should be laid on the walls when these are already seasoned with holiness, whereas the burden of religion seasons the walls, i.e. men, by drawing out the damp of vice.

Reply to Objection 4: It is manifest from the words of this gloss that it is chiefly a question of the order of doctrine, in so far as one has to pass from easy matter to that which is more difficult. Hence it is clear from what follows that the statement that certain "heretics" and "schismatics have perverted this order" refers to the order of doctrine. For it continues thus: "But he says that he has kept these things, namely the aforesaid order, binding himself by an oath [*Referring to the last words of the verse, and taking 'retributio,' which Douay renders 'reward,' as meaning 'punishment']. Thus I was humble not only in other things but also in knowledge, for 'I was humbly minded'; because I was first of all fed with milk, which is the Word made flesh, so that I grew up to partake of the bread of angels, namely the Word that is in the beginning with God." The example which is given in proof, of the newly baptized not being commanded to fast until Pentecost, shows that no difficult things are to be laid on them as an obligation before the Holy Ghost inspires them inwardly to take upon themselves difficult things of their own choice. Hence after Pentecost and the receiving of the Holy Ghost the Church observes a fast. Now the Holy Ghost, according to Ambrose (Super Luc. 1:15), "is not confined to any particular age; He ceases not when men die, He is not excluded from the maternal womb." Gregory also in a homily for Pentecost (xxx in Ev.) says: "He fills the boy harpist and makes him a psalmist: He fills the boy abstainer and makes him a wise judge [*Dan. 1:8-17]," and afterwards he adds: "No time is needed to learn whatsoever He will, for He teaches the mind by the merest touch." Again it is written ([Eccles. 8:8](#)), "It is not in man's power to stop the Spirit," and the Apostle admonishes us ([1 Thess. 5:19](#)): "Extinguish not the Spirit," and ([Acts 7:51](#)) it is said against certain persons: "You always resist the Holy Ghost."

Reply to Objection 5: There are certain chief precepts which are the ends, so to say, of the commandments and counsels. These are the precepts of charity, and the counsels are directed to them, not that these precepts cannot be observed without keeping the counsels, but that the keeping of the counsels conduces to the better observance of the precepts. The other precepts are secondary and are directed to the precepts of charity; in such a way that unless one observe them it is altogether impossible to keep the precepts of charity. Accordingly in the intention the perfect observance of the precepts of charity precedes the counsels, and yet sometimes it follows them in point of time. For such is the order of the end in relation to things directed to the end. But the observance in a general way of the precepts of charity together with the other precepts, is compared to the counsels as the common to the proper, because one can observe the precepts without observing the counsels, but not vice versa. Hence the common observance of the precepts precedes the counsels in the order of nature; but it does not follow that it precedes them in point of time, for a thing is not in the genus before being in one of the species. But the observance of the precepts apart from the counsels is directed to the observance of the precepts together with the counsels; as an imperfect to a perfect species, even as the irrational to the rational animal. Now the perfect is naturally prior to the imperfect, since "nature," as Boethius says (De Consol. iii, 10), "begins with perfect things." And yet it is not necessary for the precepts first of all to be observed without the counsels, and afterwards with the counsels, just as it is not necessary for one to be an ass before being a

Whether one ought to be bound by vow to enter religion?

Objection 1: It would seem that one ought not to be bound by vow to enter religion. For in making his profession a man is bound by the religious vow. Now before profession a year of probation is allowed, according to the rule of the Blessed Benedict (lviii) and according to the decree of Innocent IV [*Sext. Decret., cap. Non solum., de Regular. et Transeunt, ad Relig.] who moreover forbade anyone to be bound to the religious life by profession before completing the year of probation. Therefore it would seem that much less ought anyone while yet in the world to be bound by vow to enter religion.

Objection 2: Further, Gregory says (Regist. xi, Ep. 15): Jews "should be persuaded to be converted, not by compulsion but of their own free will" (Dist. xlv, can. De Judaeis). Now one is compelled to fulfil what one has vowed. Therefore no one should be bound by vow to enter religion.

Objection 3: Further, no one should give another an occasion of falling; wherefore it is written ([Ex. 21:33,34](#)): "If a man open a pit... and an ox or an ass fall into it, the owner of the pit shall pay the price of the beasts." Now through being bound by vow to enter religion it often happens that people fall into despair and various sins. Therefore it would seem that one ought not to be bound by vow to enter religion.

On the contrary, It is written, ([Ps. 75:12](#)): "Vow ye, and pay to the Lord your God"; and a gloss of Augustine says that "some vows concern the individual, such as vows of chastity, virginity, and the like." Consequently Holy Scripture invites us to vow these things. But Holy Scripture invites us only to that which is better. Therefore it is better to bind oneself by vow to enter religion.

I answer that, As stated above ([Question \[88\]](#), [Article \[6\]](#)), when we were treating of vows, one and the same work done in fulfilment of a vow is more praiseworthy than if it be done apart from a vow, both because to vow is an act of religion, which has a certain pre-eminence among the virtues, and because a vow strengthens a man's will to do good; and just as a sin is more grievous through proceeding from a will obstinate in evil, so a good work is the more praiseworthy through proceeding from a will confirmed in good by means of a vow. Therefore it is in itself praiseworthy to bind oneself by vow to enter religion.

Reply to Objection 1: The religious vow is twofold. One is the solemn vow which makes a man a monk or a brother in some other religious order. This is called the profession, and such a vow should be preceded by a year's probation, as the objection proves. The other is the simple

[Donate bitcoin](#). St. Isidore [e-book library/forum](#) » [aquinas](#) » [english](#) » [summa](#) » [SS](#) » [SS189.html](#), and such a vow need not be preceded by a year's probation.

Reply to Objection 2: The words quoted from Gregory must be understood as referring to absolute violence. But the compulsion arising from the obligation of a vow is not absolute necessity, but a necessity of end, because after such a vow one cannot attain to the end of salvation unless one fulfil that vow. Such a necessity is not to be avoided; indeed, as Augustine says (Ep. cxxvii ad Armentar. et Paulin.), "happy is the necessity that compels us to better things."

Reply to Objection 3: The vow to enter religion is a strengthening of the will for better things, and consequently, considered in itself, instead of giving a man an occasion of falling, withdraws him from it. But if one who breaks a vow falls more grievously, this does not derogate from the goodness of the vow, as neither does it derogate from the goodness of Baptism that some sin more grievously after being baptized.

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Whether one who is bound by a vow to enter religion is under an obligation of entering religion?

Objection 1: It would seem that one who is bound by the vow to enter religion is not under an obligation of entering religion. For it is said in the Decretals (XVII, qu. ii, can. Consaldus): "Consaldus, a priest under pressure of sickness and emotional fervour, promised to become a monk. He did not, however, bind himself to a monastery or abbot; nor did he commit his promise to writing, but he renounced his benefice in the hands of a notary; and when he was restored to health he refused to become a monk." And afterwards it is added: "We adjudge and by apostolic authority we command that the aforesaid priest be admitted to his benefice and sacred duties, and that he be allowed to retain them in peace." Now this would not be if he were bound to enter religion. Therefore it would seem that one is not bound to keep one's vow of entering religion.

Objection 2: Further, no one is bound to do what is not in his power. Now it is not in a person's power to enter religion, since this depends on the consent of those whom he wishes to join. Therefore it would seem that a man is not obliged to fulfil the vow by which he bound himself to enter religion.

Objection 3: Further, a less useful vow cannot remit a more useful one. Now the fulfilment of a vow to enter religion might hinder the fulfilment of a vow to take up the cross in defense of the Holy Land; and the latter apparently is the more useful vow, since thereby a man obtains the forgiveness of his sins. Therefore it would seem that the vow by which a man has bound himself to enter religion is not necessarily to be fulfilled.

On the contrary, It is written ([Eccles. 5:3](#)): "If thou hast vowed anything to God, defer not to pay it, for an unfaithful and foolish promise displeaseth him"; and a gloss on Ps. 75:12, "Vow

I answer that, As stated above ([Question \[88\]](#), [Article \[1\]](#)), when we were treating of vows, a vow is a promise made to God in matters concerning God. Now, as Gregory says in a letter to Boniface [*Innoc. I, Epist. ii, Victricio Epo. Rotomag., cap. 14; Cf. can. Viduas: cause. xxvii, qu. 1]: "If among men of good faith contracts are wont to be absolutely irrevocable, how much more shall the breaking of this promise given to God be deserving of punishment!" Therefore a man is under an obligation to fulfil what he has vowed, provided this be something pertaining to God.

Now it is evident that entrance into religion pertains very much to God, since thereby man devotes himself entirely to the divine service, as stated above ([Question \[186\]](#), [Article \[1\]](#)). Hence it follows that he who binds himself to enter religion is under an obligation to enter religion according as he intends to bind himself by his vow: so that if he intend to bind himself absolutely, he is obliged to enter as soon as he can, through the cessation of a lawful impediment; whereas if he intend to bind himself to a certain fixed time, or under a certain fixed condition, he is bound to enter religion when the time comes or the condition is fulfilled.

Reply to Objection 1: This priest had made, not a solemn, but a simple vow. Hence he was not a monk in effect, so as to be bound by law to dwell in a monastery and renounce his cure. However, in the court of conscience one ought to advise him to renounce all and enter religion. Hence (Extra, De Voto et Voti Redemptione, cap. Per tuas) the Bishop of Grenoble, who had accepted the episcopate after vowing to enter religion, without having fulfilled his vow, is counseled that if "he wish to heal his conscience he should renounce the government of his see and pay his vows to the Most High."

Reply to Objection 2: As stated above ([Question \[88\]](#), [Article \[3\]](#), ad 2), when we were treating of vows, he who has bound himself by vow to enter a certain religious order is bound to do what is in his power in order to be received in that order; and if he intend to bind himself simply to enter the religious life, if he be not admitted to one, he is bound to go to another; whereas if he intend to bind himself only to one particular order, he is bound only according to the measure of the obligation to which he has engaged himself.

Reply to Objection 3: The vow to enter religion being perpetual is greater than the vow of pilgrimage to the Holy Land, which is a temporal vow; and as Alexander III says (Extra, De Voto et Voti Redemptione, cap. Scripturae), "he who exchanges a temporary service for the perpetual service of religion is in no way guilty of breaking his vow."

Moreover it may be reasonably stated that also by entrance into religion a man obtains remission of all his sins. For if by giving alms a man may forthwith satisfy for his sins, according to Dan. 4:24, "Redeem thou thy sins with alms," much more does it suffice to satisfy for all his sins that a man devote himself wholly to the divine service by entering religion, for this surpasses all manner of satisfaction, even that of public penance, according to the Decretals (XXXIII, qu. i, cap. Admonere) just as a holocaust exceeds a sacrifice, as Gregory declares (Hom. xx in Ezech.). Hence we read in the Lives of the Fathers (vi, 1) that by entering religion one receives the same grace as by being baptized. And yet even if one were not thereby absolved from all debt of punishment, nevertheless the entrance into religion is more profitable than a pilgrimage to the Holy Land, as regards the advancement in good, which is preferable to absolution from punishment.

Whether he who has vowed to enter religion is bound to remain in religion in perpetuity?

Objection 1: It would seem that he who has vowed to enter religion, is bound in perpetuity to remain in religion. For it is better not to enter religion than to leave after entering, according to 2 Pt. 2:21, "It had been better for them not to have known the way of justice, than after they have known it to turn back," and Lk. 9:62, "No man putting his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God." But he who bound himself by the vow to enter religion, is under the obligation to enter, as stated above ([Article \[3\]](#)). Therefore he is also bound to remain for always.

Objection 2: Further, everyone is bound to avoid that which gives rise to scandal, and is a bad example to others. Now by leaving after entering religion a man gives a bad example and is an occasion of scandal to others, who are thereby withdrawn from entering or incited to leave. Therefore it seems that he who enters religion in order to fulfil a vow which he had previously taken, is bound to remain evermore.

Objection 3: Further, the vow to enter religion is accounted a perpetual vow: wherefore it is preferred to temporal vows, as stated above ([Article \[3\]](#), ad 3; [Question \[88\]](#), [Article \[12\]](#), ad 1). But this would not be so if a person after vowing to enter religion were to enter with the intention of leaving. It seems, therefore, that he who vows to enter religion is bound also to remain in perpetuity.

On the contrary, The vow of religious profession, for the reason that it binds a man to remain in religion for evermore, has to be preceded by a year of probation; whereas this is not required before the simple vow whereby a man binds himself to enter religion. Therefore it seems that he who vows to enter religion is not for that reason bound to remain there in perpetuity.

I answer that, The obligation of a vow proceeds from the will: because "to vow is an act of the will" according to Augustine [*Gloss of Peter Lombard on Ps. 75:12]. Consequently the obligation of a vow extends as far as the will and intention of the person who takes the vow. Accordingly if in vowing he intend to bind himself not only to enter religion, but also to remain there evermore, he is bound to remain in perpetuity. If, on the other hand, he intend to bind himself to enter religion for the purpose of trial, while retaining the freedom to remain or not remain, it is clear that he is not bound to remain. If, however, in vowing he thought merely of entering religion, without thinking of being free to leave, or of remaining in perpetuity, it would seem that he is bound to enter religion according to the form prescribed by common law, which is that those who enter should be given a year's probation. Wherefore he is not bound to remain for ever.

Reply to Objection 1: It is better to enter religion with the purpose of making a trial than not to enter at all, because by so doing one disposes oneself to remain always. Nor is a person accounted to turn or to look back, save when he omits to do that which he engaged to do: else

Reply to Objection 2: A man who has entered religion gives neither scandal nor bad example by leaving, especially if he do so for a reasonable motive; and if others are scandalized, it will be passive scandal on their part, and not active scandal on the part of the person leaving, since in doing so, he has done what was lawful, and expedient on account of some reasonable motive, such as sickness, weakness, and the like.

Reply to Objection 3: He who enters with the purpose of leaving forthwith, does not seem to fulfil his vow, since this was not his intention in vowing. Hence he must change that purpose, at least so as to wish to try whether it is good for him to remain in religion, but he is not bound to remain for evermore.

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Whether children should be received in religion?

Objection 1: It would seem that children ought not to be received in religion. Because it is said (Extra, De Regular. et Transeunt. ad Relig., cap. Nullus): "No one should be tonsured unless he be of legal age and willing." But children, seemingly, are not of legal age; nor have they a will of their own, not having perfect use of reason. Therefore it seems that they ought not to be received in religion.

Objection 2: Further, the state of religion would seem to be a state of repentance; wherefore religion is derived [*Cf. Question [81], Article [1]] from "religare" [to bind] or from "re-eligere" [to choose again], as Augustine says (De Civ. Dei x, 3 [*Cf. De Vera Relig. lv]). But repentance does not become children. Therefore it seems that they should not enter religion.

Objection 3: Further, the obligation of a vow is like that of an oath. But children under the age of fourteen ought not to be bound by oath (Decret. XXII, qu. v, cap. Pueri and cap. Honestum.). Therefore it would seem that neither should they be bound by vow.

Objection 4: Further, it is seemingly unlawful to bind a person to an obligation that can be justly canceled. Now if any persons of unripe age bind themselves to religion, they can be withdrawn by their parents or guardians. For it is written in the Decretals (XX, qu. ii, can. Puella) that "if a maid under twelve years of age shall take the sacred veil of her own accord, her parents or guardians, if they choose, can at once declare the deed null and void." It is therefore unlawful for children, especially of unripe age, to be admitted or bound to religion.

On the contrary, our Lord said ([Mt. 19:14](#)): "Suffer the little children, and forbid them not to come to Me." Expounding these words Origen says (Tract. vii in Matth.) that "the disciples of Jesus before they have been taught the conditions of righteousness [*Cf. Mt. 19:16-30], rebuke those who offer children and babes to Christ: but our Lord urges His disciples to stoop to the service of children. We must therefore take note of this, lest deeming ourselves to excel in

I answer that, As stated above ([Article \[2\]](#), ad 1), the religious vow is twofold. One is the simple vow consisting in a mere promise made to God, and proceeding from the interior deliberation of the mind. Such a vow derives its efficacy from the divine law. Nevertheless it may encounter a twofold obstacle. First, through lack of deliberation, as in the case of the insane, whose vows are not binding [*Extra, De Regular. et Transeunt. ad Relig., cap. Sicut tenor]. The same applies to children who have not reached the required use of reason, so as to be capable of guile, which use boys attain, as a rule, at about the age of fourteen, and girls at the age of twelve, this being what is called "the age of puberty," although in some it comes earlier and in others it is delayed, according to the various dispositions of nature. Secondly, the efficacy of a simple vow encounters an obstacle, if the person who makes a vow to God is not his own master; for instance, if a slave, though having the use of reason, vows to enter religion, or even is ordained, without the knowledge of his master: for his master can annul this, as stated in the Decretals (Dist. LIV, cap. Si servus). And since boys and girls under the age of puberty are naturally in their father's power as regards the disposal of their manner of life, their father may either cancel or approve their vow, if it please him to do so, as it is expressly said with regard to a woman ([Num. 30:4](#)).

Accordingly if before reaching the age of puberty a child makes a simple vow, not yet having full use of reason, he is not bound in virtue of the vow; but if he has the use of reason before reaching the age of puberty, he is bound, so far as he is concerned, by his vow; yet this obligation may be removed by his father's authority, under whose control he still remains, because the ordinance of the law whereby one man is subject to another considers what happens in the majority of cases. If, however, the

child has passed the age of puberty, his vow cannot be annulled by the authority of his parents; though if he has not the full use of reason, he would not be bound in the sight of God.

The other is the solemn vow which makes a man a monk or a religious. Such a vow is subject to the ordinance of the Church, on account of the solemnity attached to it. And since the Church considers what happens in the majority of cases, a profession made before the age of puberty, however much the person who makes profession may have the use of reason, or be capable of guile, does not take effect so as to make him a religious (Extra, De Regular., etc. cap. Significatum est.).

Nevertheless, although they cannot be professed before the age of puberty, they can, with the consent of their parents, be received into religion to be educated there: thus it is related of John the Baptist ([Lk. 1:80](#)) that "the child grew and was strengthened in spirit, and was in the deserts." Hence, as Gregory states (Dial. ii, 3), "the Roman nobles began to give their sons to the blessed Benedict to be nurtured for Almighty God"; and this is most fitting, according to Lam. 3:27, "It is good for a man when he has borne the yoke from his youth." It is for this reason that by common custom children are made to apply themselves to those duties or arts with which they are to pass their lives.

Reply to Objection 1: The legal age for receiving the tonsure and taking the solemn vow of religion is the age of puberty, when a man is able to make use of his own will; but before the age of puberty it is possible to have reached the lawful age to receive the tonsure and be educated in a religious house.

[Donate bitcoin](#). St. Isidore [e-book library/forum](#) » [aquinas](#) » [english](#) » [summa](#) » [SS](#) » [SS189.html](#) as stated above ([Question \[186\]](#), [Article \[1\]](#), ad 4); and accordingly it is becoming to children, who are easily drawn to it. But as a consequence it is called a state of repentance, inasmuch as occasions of sin are removed by religious observances, as stated above ([Question \[186\]](#), [Article \[1\]](#), ad 4).

Reply to Objection 3: Even as children are not bound to take oaths (as the canon states), so are they not bound to take vows. If, however, they bind themselves by vow or oath to do something, they are bound in God's sight, if they have the use of reason, but they are not bound in the sight of the Church before reaching the age of fourteen.

Reply to Objection 4: A woman who has not reached the age of puberty is not rebuked ([Num. 30:4](#)) for taking a vow without her parents' consent: but the vow can be made void by her parents. Hence it is evident that she does not sin in vowing. But we are given to understand that she binds herself by vow, so far as she may, without prejudice to her parents' authority.

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Whether one ought to be withdrawn from entering religion through deference to one's parents?

Objection 1: It would seem that one ought to be withdrawn from entering religion through deference to one's parents. For it is not lawful to omit that which is of obligation in order to do that which is optional. Now deference to one's parents comes under an obligation of the precept concerning the honoring of our parents ([Ex. 20:12](#)); wherefore the Apostle says ([1 Tim. 5:4](#)): "If any widow have children or grandchildren, let her learn first to govern her own house, and to make a return of duty to her parents." But the entrance to religion is optional. Therefore it would seem that one ought not to omit deference to one's parents for the sake of entering religion.

Objection 2: Further, seemingly the subjection of a son to his father is greater than that of a slave to his master, since sonship is natural, while slavery results from the curse of sin, as appears from Gn. 9:25. Now a slave cannot set aside the service of his master in order to enter religion or take holy orders, as stated in the Decretals (Dist. LIV, cap. Si servus). Much less therefore can a son set aside the deference due to his father in order to enter religion.

Objection 3: Further, a man is more indebted to his parents than to those to whom he owes money. Now persons who owe money to anyone cannot enter religion. For Gregory says (Regist. viii, Ep. 5) that "those who are engaged in trade must by no means be admitted into a monastery, when they seek admittance, unless first of all they withdraw from public business" (Dist. liii, can. Legem.). Therefore seemingly much less may children enter religion in despite of their duty to their parents.

On the contrary, It is related ([Mt. 4:22](#)) that James and John "left their nets and father, and followed our Lord." By this, says Hilary (Can. iii in Matth.), "we learn that we who intend to

I answer that, As stated above ([Question \[101\]](#), [Article \[2\]](#), ad 2) when we were treating of piety, parents as such have the character of a principle, wherefore it is competent to them as such to have the care of their children. Hence it is unlawful for a person having children to enter religion so as altogether to set aside the care for their children, namely without providing for their education. For it is written ([1 Tim. 5:8](#)) that "if any man have not care of his own... he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel."

Nevertheless it is accidentally competent to parents to be assisted by their children, in so far, to wit, as they are placed in a condition of necessity. Consequently we must say that when their parents are in such need that they cannot fittingly be supported otherwise than by the help of their children, these latter may not lawfully enter religion in despite of their duty to their parents. If, however, the parents' necessity be not such as to stand in great need of their children's assistance, the latter may, in despite of the duty they owe their parents, enter religion even against their parents' command, because after the age of puberty every freeman enjoys freedom in things concerning the ordering of his state of life, especially in such as belong to the service of God, and "we should more obey the Father of spirits that we may live [*Shall we not much more obey the Father of Spirits, and live?]," as says the Apostle ([Heb. 12:9](#)), than obey our parents. Hence as we read ([Mt. 8:22](#); [Lk. 9:62](#)) our Lord rebuked the disciple who was unwilling to follow him forthwith on account of his father's burial: for there were others who could see to this, as Chrysostom remarks [*Hom. xxvii in Matth.].

Reply to Objection 1: The commandment of honoring our parents extends not only to bodily but also to spiritual service, and to the paying of deference. Hence even those who are in religion can fulfil the commandment of honoring their parents, by praying for them and by revering and assisting them, as becomes religious, since even those who live in the world honor their parents in different ways as befits their condition.

Reply to Objection 2: Since slavery was imposed in punishment of sin, it follows that by slavery man forfeits something which otherwise he would be competent to have, namely the free disposal of his person, for "a slave belongs wholly to his master" [*Aristotle, Polit. i, 2]. On the other hand, the son, through being subject to his father, is not hindered from freely disposing of his person by transferring himself to the service of God; which is most conducive to man's good.

Reply to Objection 3: He who is under a certain fixed obligation cannot lawfully set it aside so long as he is able to fulfil it. Wherefore if a person is under an obligation to give an account to someone or to pay a certain fixed debt, he cannot lawfully evade this obligation in order to enter religion. If, however, he owes a sum of money, and has not wherewithal to pay the debt, he must do what he can, namely by surrendering his goods to his creditor. According to civil law [*Cod. IV, x, de Oblig. et Action, 12] money lays an obligation not on the person of a freeman, but on his property, because the person of a freeman "is above all pecuniary consideration" [*Dig. L, xvii, de div. reg. Jur. ant. 106,176]. Hence, after surrendering his property, he may lawfully enter religion, nor is he bound to remain in the world in order to earn the means of paying the debt.

On the other hand, he does not owe his father a special debt, except as may arise in a case of necessity, as stated above.

Whether parish priests may lawfully enter religion?

Objection 1: It would seem that parish priests cannot lawfully enter religion. For Gregory says (Past. iii, 4) that "he who undertakes the cure of souls, receives an awful warning in the words: 'My son, if thou be surety for thy friend, thou hast engaged fast thy hand to a stranger'" ([Prov. 6:1](#)); and he goes on to say, "because to be surety for a friend is to take charge of the soul of another on the surety of one's own behavior." Now he who is under an obligation to a man for a debt, cannot enter religion, unless he pay what he owes, if he can. Since then a priest is able to fulfil the cure of souls, to which obligation he has pledged his soul, it would seem unlawful for him to lay aside the cure of souls in order to enter religion.

Objection 2: Further, what is lawful to one is likewise lawful to all. But if all priests having cure of souls were to enter religion, the people would be left without a pastor's care, which would be unfitting. Therefore it seems that parish priests cannot lawfully enter religion.

Objection 3: Further, chief among the acts to which religious orders are directed are those whereby a man gives to others the fruit of his contemplation. Now such acts are competent to parish priests and archdeacons, whom it becomes by virtue of their office to preach and hear confessions. Therefore it would seem unlawful for a parish priest or archdeacon to pass over to religion.

On the contrary, It is said in the Decretals (XIX, qu. ii, cap. Duce sunt leges.): "If a man, while governing the people in his church under the bishop and leading a secular life, is inspired by the Holy Ghost to desire to work out his salvation in a monastery or under some canonical rule, even though his bishop withstand him, we authorize him to go freely."

I answer that, As stated above ([Article \[3\]](#), ad 3; [Question \[88\]](#), [Article \[12\]](#), ad 1), the obligation of a perpetual vow stands before every other obligation. Now it belongs properly to bishops and religious to be bound by perpetual vow to devote themselves to the divine service [*Cf. [Question \[184\]](#), [Article \[5\]](#)], while parish priests and archdeacons are not, as bishops are, bound by a perpetual and solemn vow to retain the cure of souls. Wherefore bishops "cannot lay aside their bishopric for any pretext whatever, without the authority of the Roman Pontiff" (Extra, De Regular. et Transeunt. ad Relig., cap. Licet.): whereas archdeacons and parish priests are free to renounce in the hands of the bishop the cure entrusted to them, without the Pope's special permission, who alone can dispense from perpetual vows. Therefore it is evident that archdeacons and parish priests may lawfully enter religion.

Reply to Objection 1: Parish priests and archdeacons have bound themselves to the care of their subjects, as long as they retain their archdeaconry or parish, but they did not bind themselves to retain their archdeaconry or parish for ever.

Reply to Objection 2: As Jerome says (Contra Vigil.): "Although they," namely religious, "are sorely smitten by thy poisonous tongue, about whom you argue, saying: 'If all shut themselves up and live in solitude, who will go to church? who will convert worldlings? who will be able

[Donate bitcoin](#). St. Isidore [e-book library/forum](#) » [aquinas](#) » [english](#) » [summa](#) » [SS](#) » [SS189.html](#) will virginity be commendable, for if all be virgins, and none marry, the human race will perish. Virtue is rare, and is not desired by many." It is therefore evident that this is a foolish alarm; thus might a man fear to draw water lest the river run dry. [*St. Thomas gives no reply to the third objection, which is sufficiently solved in the body of the article.]

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Whether it is lawful to pass from one religious order to another?

Objection 1: It seems unlawful to pass from one religious order to another, even a stricter one. For the Apostle says ([Heb. 10:25](#)): "Not forsaking our assembly, as some are accustomed"; and a gloss observes: "Those namely who yield through fear of persecution, or who presuming on themselves withdraw from the company of sinners or of the imperfect, that they may appear to be righteous." Now those who pass from one religious order to another more perfect one would seem to do this. Therefore this is seemingly unlawful.

Objection 2: Further, the profession of monks is stricter than that of canons regular (Extra, De Statu Monach. et Canonic. Reg., cap. Quod Dei timorem). But it is unlawful for anyone to pass from the state of canon regular to the monastic state. For it is said in the Decretals (XIX, qu. iii, can. Mandamus): "We ordain and without any exception forbid any professed canon regular to become a monk, unless (which God forbid) he have fallen into public sin." Therefore it would seem unlawful for anyone to pass from one religious order to another of higher rank.

Objection 3: Further, a person is bound to fulfil what he has vowed, as long as he is able lawfully to do so; thus if a man has vowed to observe continence, he is bound, even after contracting marriage by words in the present tense, to fulfil his vow so long as the marriage is not consummated, because he can fulfil the vow by entering religion. Therefore if a person may lawfully pass from one religious order to another, he will be bound to do so if he vowed it previously while in the world. But this would seem objectionable, since in many cases it might give rise to scandal. Therefore a religious may not pass from one religious order to another stricter one.

On the contrary, It is said in the Decretals (XX, qu. iv, can. Virgines): "If sacred virgins design for the good of their soul to pass to another monastery on account of a stricter life, and decide to remain there, the holy synod allows them to do so": and the same would seem to apply to any religious. Therefore one may lawfully pass from one religious order to another.

I answer that, It is not commendable to pass from one religious order to another: both because this frequently gives scandal to those who remain; and because, other things being equal, it is easier to make progress in a religious order to which one is accustomed than in one to which one is not habituated. Hence in the Conferences of the Fathers (Coll. xiv, 5) Abbot Nesteros says: "It is best for each one that he should, according to the resolve he has made, hasten with the greatest zeal and care to reach the perfection of the work he has undertaken, and nowise forsake the profession he has chosen." And further on he adds (cap. 6) by way of

[Donate bitcoin](#). St. Isidore [e-book library/forum](#) » [aquinas](#) » [english](#) » [summa](#) » [SS](#) » [SS189.html](#)ce, since if he endeavor to practice them equally, he will of necessity, while trying to attain them all, end in acquiring none of them perfectly": because the various religious orders excel in respect of various works of virtue.

Nevertheless one may commendably pass from one religious order to another for three reasons. First, through zeal for a more perfect religious life, which excellence depends, as stated above ([Question \[188\]](#), [Article \[6\]](#)), not merely on severity, but chiefly on the end to which a religious order is directed, and secondarily on the discretion whereby the observances are proportionate to the due end. Secondly, on account of a religious order falling away from the perfection it ought to have: for instance, if in a more severe religious order, the religious begin to live less strictly, it is commendable for one to pass even to a less severe religious order if the observance is better. Hence in the Conferences of the Fathers (Coll. xix, 3,5,6) Abbot John says of himself that he had passed from the solitary life, in which he was professed, to a less severe life, namely of those who lived in community, because the hermetical life had fallen into decline and laxity. Thirdly, on account of sickness or weakness, the result of which sometimes is that one is unable to keep the ordinances of a more severe religious order, though able to observe those of a less strict religion.

There is, however, a difference in these three cases. For in the first case one ought, on account of humility, to seek permission: yet this cannot be denied, provided it be certain that this other religion is more severe. "And if there be a probable doubt about this, one should ask one's superior to decide" (Extra, De Regular. et Transeunt. ad Relig., cap. Licet.). In like manner the superior's decision should be sought in the second case. In the third case it is also necessary to have a dispensation.

Reply to Objection 1: Those who pass to a stricter religious order, do so not out of presumption that they may appear righteous, but out of devotion, that they may become more righteous.

Reply to Objection 2: Religious orders whether of monks or of canons regular are destined to the works of the contemplative life. Chief among these are those which are performed in the divine mysteries, and these are the direct object of the orders of canons regular, the members of which are essentially religious clerics. On the other hand, monastic religious are not essentially clerics, according to the Decretals (XVI, qu. i, cap. Alia causa). Hence although monastic orders are more severe, it would be lawful, supposing the members to be lay monks, to pass from the monastic order to an order of canons regular, according to the statement of Jerome (Ep. cxxv, ad Rustic. Monach.): "So live in the monastery as to deserve to become a cleric"; but not conversely, as expressed in the Decretal quoted (XIX, qu. iii). If, however, the monks be clerics devoting themselves to the sacred ministry, they have this in common with canons regular coupled with greater severity, and consequently it will be lawful to pass from an order of canons regular to a monastic order, provided withal that one seek the superior's permission (XIX, qu. iii; cap. Statuimus).

Reply to Objection 3: The solemn vow whereby a person is bound to a less strict order, is more binding than the simple vow whereby a person is bound to a stricter order. For if after taking a simple vow a person were to be married, his marriage would not be invalid, as it would be after his taking a solemn vow. Consequently a person who is professed in a less severe order is not bound to fulfil a simple vow he has taken on entering a more severe order.

Whether one ought to induce others to enter religion?

Objection 1: It would seem that no one ought to induce others to enter religion. For the blessed Benedict prescribes in his Rule (lviii) that "those who seek to enter religion must not easily be admitted, but spirits must be tested whether they be of God"; and Cassian has the same instruction (De Inst. Caenob. iv, 3). Much less therefore is it lawful to induce anyone to enter religion.

Objection 2: Further, our Lord said ([Mt. 23:15](#)): "Woe to you... because you go round about the sea and the land to make one proselyte, and when he is made you make him the child of hell twofold more than yourselves." Now thus would seem to do those who induce persons to enter religion. Therefore this would seem blameworthy.

Objection 3: Further, no one should induce another to do what is to his prejudice. But those who are induced to enter religion, sometimes take harm therefrom, for sometimes they are under obligation to enter a stricter religion. Therefore it would not seem praiseworthy to induce others to enter religion.

On the contrary, It is written ([Ex. 26:3, seqq.](#) [[*St. Thomas quotes the sense, not the words](#)]): "Let one curtain draw the other." Therefore one man should draw another to God's service.

I answer that, Those who induce others to enter religion not only do not sin, but merit a great reward. For it is written ([James 5:20](#)): "He who causeth a sinner to be converted from the error of his way, shall save his soul from death, and shall cover a multitude of sins"; and ([Dan. 12:3](#)): "They that instruct many to justice shall be as stars for all eternity."

Nevertheless such inducement may be affected by a threefold inordinateness. First, if one person force another by violence to enter religion: and this is forbidden in the Decretals (XX, qu. iii, cap. Praesens). Secondly, if one person persuade another simoniacally to enter religion, by giving him presents: and this is forbidden in the Decretal (I, qu. ii, cap. Quam pio). But this does not apply to the case where one provides a poor person with necessaries by educating him in the world for the religious life; or when without any compact one gives a person little presents for the sake of good fellowship. Thirdly, if one person entices another by lies: for it is to be feared that the person thus enticed may turn back on finding himself deceived, and thus "the last state of that man" may become "worse than the first" ([Lk. 11:26](#)).

Reply to Objection 1: Those who are induced to enter religion have still a time of probation wherein they make a trial of the hardships of religion, so that they are not easily admitted to the religious life.

Reply to Objection 2: According to Hilary (Can. xxiv in Matth.) this saying of our Lord was a forecast of the wicked endeavors of the Jews, after the preaching of Christ, to draw Gentiles or even Christians to observe the Jewish ritual, thereby making them doubly children of hell, because, to wit, they were not forgiven the former sins which they committed while adherents

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these words have nothing to do with the case in point.

According to Jerome, however, in his commentary on this passage of Matthew, the reference is to the Jews even at the time when it was yet lawful to keep the legal observances, in so far as he whom they converted to Judaism "from paganism, was merely misled; but when he saw the wickedness of his teachers, he returned to his vomit, and becoming a pagan deserved greater punishment for his treachery." Hence it is manifest that it is not blameworthy to draw others to the service of God or to the religious life, but only when one gives a bad example to the person converted, whence he becomes worse.

Reply to Objection 3: The lesser is included in the greater. Wherefore a person who is bound by vow or oath to enter a lesser order, may be lawfully induced to enter a greater one. unless there be some special obstacle, such as ill-health, or the hope of making greater progress in the lesser order. On the other hand, one who is bound by vow or oath to enter a greater order, cannot be lawfully induced to enter a lesser order, except for some special and evident motive, and then with the superior's dispensation.

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Whether it is praiseworthy to enter religion without taking counsel of many, and previously deliberating for a long time?

Objection 1: It would not seem praiseworthy to enter religion without taking counsel of many, and previously deliberating for a long time. For it is written ([1 Jn. 4:1](#)): "Believe not every spirit, but try the spirits if they be of God." Now sometimes a man's purpose of entering religion is not of God, since it often comes to naught through his leaving the religious life; for it is written ([Acts 5:38,39](#)): "If this counsel or this work be of God, you cannot overthrow it." Therefore it would seem that one ought to make a searching inquiry before entering religion.

Objection 2: Further, it is written ([Prov. 25:9](#)): "Treat thy cause with thy friend." Now a man's cause would seem to be especially one that concerns a change in his state of life. Therefore seemingly one ought not to enter religion without discussing the matter with one's friends.

Objection 3: Further, our Lord ([Lk. 14:28](#)) in making a comparison with a man who has a mind to build a tower, says that he doth "first sit down and reckon the charges that are necessary, whether he have wherewithal to finish it," lest he become an object of mockery, for that "this man began to build and was not able to finish." Now the wherewithal to build the tower, as Augustine says (Ep. ad Laetum ccxliii), is nothing less than that "each one should renounce all his possessions." Yet it happens sometimes that many cannot do this, nor keep other religious observances; and in signification of this it is stated ([1 Kgs. 17:39](#)) that David could not walk in Saul's armor, for he was not used to it. Therefore it would seem that one ought not to enter religion without long deliberation beforehand and taking counsel of many.

"immediately leaving their nets, followed Him." Here Chrysostom says (Hom. xiv in Matth.):

"Such obedience as this does Christ require of us, that we delay not even for a moment."

I answer that, Long deliberation and the advice of many are required in great matters of doubt, as the Philosopher says (Ethic. iii, 3); while advice is unnecessary in matters that are certain and fixed. Now with regard to entering religion three points may be considered. First, the entrance itself into religion, considered by itself; and thus it is certain that entrance into religion is a greater good, and to doubt about this is to disparage Christ Who gave this counsel. Hence Augustine says (De Verb. Dom., Serm. c, 2): "The East," that is Christ, "callest thee, and thou turnest to the West," namely mortal and fallible man. Secondly, the entrance into religion may be considered in relation to the strength of the person who intends to enter. And here again there is no room for doubt about the entrance to religion, since those who enter religion trust not to be able to stay by their own power, but by the assistance of the divine power, according to Is. 40:31, "They that hope in the Lord shall renew their strength, they shall take wings as eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint." Yet if there be some special obstacle (such as bodily weakness, a burden of debts, or the like) in such cases a man must deliberate and take counsel with such as are likely to help and not hinder him. Hence it is written (Ecclus. 37:12): "Treat with a man without religion concerning holiness [*The Douay version supplies the negative: 'Treat not... nor with...'], with an unjust man concerning justice," meaning that one should not do so, wherefore the text goes on (Ecclus. 37:14,15), "Give no heed to these in any matter of counsel, but be continually with a holy man." In these matters, however, one should not take long deliberation. Wherefore Jerome says (Ep. and Paulin. liii): "Hasten, I pray thee, cut off rather than loosen the rope that holds the boat to the shore." Thirdly, we may consider the way of entering religion, and which order one ought to enter, and about such matters also one may take counsel of those who will not stand in one's way.

Reply to Objection 1: The saying: "Try the spirits, if they be of God," applies to matters admitting of doubt whether the spirits be of God; thus those who are already in religion may doubt whether he who offers himself to religion be led by the spirit of God, or be moved by hypocrisy. Wherefore they must try the postulant whether he be moved by the divine spirit. But for him who seeks to enter religion there can be no doubt but that the purpose of entering religion to which his heart has given birth is from the spirit of God, for it is His spirit "that leads" man "into the land of uprightness" ([Ps. 142:10](#)).

Nor does this prove that it is not of God that some turn back; since not all that is of God is incorruptible: else corruptible creatures would not be of God, as the Manicheans hold, nor could some who have grace from God lose it, which is also heretical. But God's "counsel" whereby He makes even things corruptible and changeable, is imperishable according to Is. 46:10, "My counsel shall stand and all My will shall be done." Hence the purpose of entering religion needs not to be tried whether it be of God, because "it requires no further demonstration," as a gloss says on 1 Thess. 5:21, "Prove all things."

Reply to Objection 2: Even as "the flesh lusteth against the spirit" ([Gal. 5:17](#)), so too carnal friends often thwart our spiritual progress, according to Mic. 7:6, "A man's enemies are they of his own household." Wherefore Cyril expounding Lk. 9:61, "Let me first take my leave of them that are at my house," says [*Cf. St. Thomas's Catena Aurea]: "By asking first to take his leave of them that were at his house, he shows he was somewhat of two minds. For to communicate with his neighbors, and consult those who are unwilling to relish righteousness, is an indication of weakness and turning back. Hence he hears our Lord say: 'No man putting his

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Reply to Objection 3: The building of the tower signifies the perfection of Christian life; and the renunciation of one's possessions is the wherewithal to build this tower. Now no one doubts or deliberates about wishing to have the wherewithal, or whether he is able to build the tower if he have the wherewithal, but what does come under deliberation is whether one has the wherewithal. Again it need not be a matter of deliberation whether one ought to renounce all that one has, or whether by so doing one may be able to attain to perfection; whereas it is a matter of deliberation whether that which one is doing amounts to the renunciation of all that he has, since unless he does renounce (which is to have the wherewithal) he cannot, as the text goes on to state, be Christ's disciple, and this is to build the tower.

The misgiving of those who hesitate as to whether they may be able to attain to perfection by entering religion is shown by many examples to be unreasonable. Hence Augustine says (Confess. viii, 11): "On that side whither I had set my face, and whither I trembled to go, there appeared to me the chaste dignity of continency... honestly alluring me to come and doubt not, and stretching forth to receive and embrace me, her holy hands full of multitudes of good examples. There were so many young men and maidens here, a multitude of youth and every age, grave widows and aged virgins... And she smiled at me with a persuasive mockery as though to say: Canst not thou what these youths and these maidens can? Or can they either in themselves, and not rather in the Lord their God?... Why standest thou in thyself, and so standest not? Cast thyself upon Him; fear not, He will not withdraw Himself that thou shouldst fall. Cast thyself fearlessly upon Him: He will receive and will heal thee."

The example quoted of David is not to the point, because "the arms of Saul," as a gloss on the passage observes, "are the sacraments of the Law, as being burdensome": whereas religion is the sweet yoke of Christ, for as Gregory says (Moral. iv, 33), "what burden does He lay on the shoulders of the mind, Who commands us to shun all troublesome desires, Who warns us to turn aside from the rough paths of this world?"

To those indeed who take this sweet yoke upon themselves He promises the refreshment of the divine fruition and the eternal rest of their souls.

To which may He Who made this promise bring us, Jesus Christ our Lord, "Who is over all things God blessed for ever. Amen."