

**Objection 1.** It would seem that prayer is not an act of religion. Since religion is a part of justice, it resides in the will as in its subject. But prayer belongs to the intellectual part, as stated above (a. 1). Therefore prayer seems to be an act, not of religion, but of the gift of understanding whereby the mind ascends to God.

**Objection 2.** Further, the act of “latria” falls under a necessity of precept. But prayer does not seem to come under a necessity of precept, but to come from the mere will, since it is nothing else than a petition for what we will. Therefore prayer seemingly is not an act of religion.

**Objection 3.** Further, it seems to belong to religion that one “offers worship and ceremonial rites to the Godhead”\*. But prayer seems not to offer anything to God, but to ask to obtain something from Him. Therefore prayer is not an act of religion.

**On the contrary,** It is written (Ps. 140:2): “Let my prayer be directed as incense in Thy sight”: and a gloss on the passage says that “it was to signify this that under the old Law incense was said to be offered for a sweet smell to the Lord.” Now this belongs to religion. Therefore prayer is an act of religion.

**I answer that,** As stated above (q. 81, Aa. 2,4), it belongs properly to religion to show honor to God, wherefore all those things through which reverence is shown to God, belong to religion. Now man shows reverence to God by means of prayer, in so far as he subjects himself

to Him, and by praying confesses that he needs Him as the Author of his goods. Hence it is evident that prayer is properly an act of religion.

**Reply to Objection 1.** The will moves the other powers of the soul to its end, as stated above (q. 82, a. 1, ad 1), and therefore religion, which is in the will, directs the acts of the other powers to the reverence of God. Now among the other powers of the soul the intellect is the highest, and the nearest to the will; and consequently after devotion which belongs to the will, prayer which belongs to the intellectual part is the chief of the acts of religion, since by it religion directs man’s intellect to God.

**Reply to Objection 2.** It is a matter of precept not only that we should ask for what we desire, but also that we should desire aright. But to desire comes under a precept of charity, whereas to ask comes under a precept of religion, which precept is expressed in Mat. 7:7, where it is said: “Ask and ye shall receive”†.

**Reply to Objection 3.** By praying man surrenders his mind to God, since he subjects it to Him with reverence and, so to speak, presents it to Him, as appears from the words of Dionysius quoted above (a. 1, obj. 2). Wherefore just as the human mind excels exterior things, whether bodily members, or those external things that are employed for God’s service, so too, prayer surpasses other acts of religion.

\* Cicero, Rhet. ii, 53 † Vulg.: ‘Ask and it shall be given you.’