

## SUPPLEMENT TO THE THIRD PART, QUESTION 99

### Of God's Mercy and Justice Towards the Damned (In Five Articles)

We must next consider God's justice and mercy towards the damned: under which head there are five points of inquiry:

- (1) Whether by Divine justice an eternal punishment is inflicted on sinners?
- (2) Whether by God's mercy all punishment both of men and of demons comes to an end?
- (3) Whether at least the punishment of men comes to an end?
- (4) Whether at least the punishment of Christians has an end?
- (5) Whether there is an end to the punishment of those who have performed works of mercy?

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#### Whether by Divine justice an eternal punishment is inflicted on sinners?\*

Suppl. q. 99 a. 1

**Objection 1.** It would seem that an eternal punishment is not inflicted on sinners by Divine justice. For the punishment should not exceed the fault: "According to the measure of the sin shall the measure also of the stripes be" (Dt. 25:2). Now fault is temporal. Therefore the punishment should not be eternal.

**Objection 2.** Further, of two mortal sins one is greater than the other. and therefore one should receive a greater punishment than the other. But no punishment is greater than eternal punishment, since it is infinite. Therefore eternal punishment is not due to every sin; and if it is not due to one, it is due to none, since they are not infinitely distant from one another.

**Objection 3.** Further, a just judge does not punish except in order to correct, wherefore it is stated (Ethic. ii, 3) that "punishments are a kind of medicine." Now, to punish the wicked eternally does not lead to their correction, nor to that of others, since then there will be no one in future who can be corrected thereby. Therefore eternal punishment is not inflicted for sins according to Divine justice.

**Objection 4.** Further, no one wishes that which is not desirable for its own sake, except on account of some advantage. Now God does not wish punishment for its own sake, for He delights not in punishments<sup>†</sup>. Since then no advantage can result from the perpetuity of punishment, it would seem that He ought not to inflict such a punishment for sin.

**Objection 5.** Further, "nothing accidental lasts for ever" (De Coelo et Mundo i). But punishment is one of those things that happen accidentally, since it is contrary to nature. Therefore it cannot be everlasting.

**Objection 6.** Further, the justice of God would seem to require that sinners should be brought to naught: because on account of ingratitude a person deserves to lose all benefits. and among other benefits of God there is "be-

ing" itself. Therefore it would seem just that the sinner who has been ungrateful to God should lose his being. But if sinners be brought to naught, their punishment cannot be everlasting. Therefore it would seem out of keeping with Divine justice that sinners should be punished for ever.

**On the contrary,** It is written (Mat. 25:46): "These," namely the wicked, "shall go into everlasting punishment."

Further, as reward is to merit, so is punishment to guilt. Now, according to Divine justice, an eternal reward is due to temporal merit: "Every one who seeth the Son and believeth in Him hath [Vulg.: 'that everyone... may have'] life everlasting." Therefore according to Divine justice an everlasting punishment is due to temporal guilt.

Further, according to the Philosopher (Ethic. v, 5), punishment is meted according to the dignity of the person sinned against, so that a person who strikes one in authority receives a greater punishment than one who strikes anyone else. Now whoever sins mortally sins against God, Whose commandments he breaks, and Whose honor he gives another, by placing his end in some one other than God. But God's majesty is infinite. Therefore whoever sins mortally deserves infinite punishment; and consequently it seems just that for a mortal sin a man should be punished for ever.

**I answer that,** Since punishment is measured in two ways, namely according to the degree of its severity, and according to its length of time, the measure of punishment corresponds to the measure of fault, as regards the degree of severity, so that the more grievously a person sins the more grievously is he punished: "As much as she hath glorified herself and lived in delicacies, so much torment and sorrow give ye to her" (Apoc. 18:7). The duration of the punishment does not, however, correspond with the duration of the fault, as Augustine says (De Civ. Dei xxi, 11),

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\* Cf. Ia IIae, q. 87, Aa. 3,4 † The allusion is to Wis. 1:13: "Neither hath He pleasure in the destruction of the living," as may be gathered from Ia IIae, q. 87, a. 3, obj. 3

for adultery which is committed in a short space of time is not punished with a momentary penalty even according to human laws<sup>‡</sup>. But the duration of punishment regards the disposition of the sinner: for sometimes a person who commits an offense in a city is rendered by his very offense worthy of being cut off entirely from the fellowship of the citizens, either by perpetual exile or even by death: whereas sometimes he is not rendered worthy of being cut off entirely from the fellowship of the citizens. wherefore in order that he may become a fitting member of the State, his punishment is prolonged or curtailed, according as is expedient for his amendment, so that he may live in the city in a becoming and peaceful manner. So too, according to Divine justice, sin renders a person worthy to be altogether cut off from the fellowship of God's city, and this is the effect of every sin committed against charity, which is the bond uniting this same city together. Consequently, for mortal sin which is contrary to charity a person is expelled for ever from the fellowship of the saints and condemned to everlasting punishment, because as Augustine says (*De Civ. Dei* xxi, 11), "as men are cut off from this perishable city by the penalty of the first death, so are they excluded from that imperishable city by the punishment of the second death." That the punishment inflicted by the earthly state is not deemed everlasting is accidental, either because man endures not for ever, or because the state itself comes to an end. Wherefore if man lived for ever, the punishment of exile or slavery, which is pronounced by human law, would remain in him for ever. On the other hand, as regards those who sin in such a way as not to deserve to be entirely cut off from the fellowship of the saints, such as those who sin venially, their punishment will be so much the shorter or longer according as they are more or less fit to be cleansed, through sin clinging to them more or less: this is observed in the punishments of this world and of purgatory according to Divine justice.

We find also other reasons given by the saints why some are justly condemned to everlasting punishment for a temporal sin. One is because they sinned against an eternal good by despising eternal life. This is mentioned by Augustine (*De Civ. Dei* xii, 12): "He is become worthy of eternal evil, who destroyed in himself a good which could be eternal." Another reason is because man sinned in his own eternity\*; wherefore Gregory says (*Dial.* iv), it belongs to the great justice of the judge that those should never cease to be punished, who in this life never ceased to desire sin. And if it be objected that some who sin mortally propose to amend their life at some time, and that these accordingly are seemingly not deserving of eternal punishment, it must be replied according to some that Gregory speaks of the will that is made manifest by the deed. For he who falls into mortal sin of his own will puts himself in a state whence he cannot be rescued, ex-

cept God help him: wherefore from the very fact that he is willing to sin, he is willing to remain in sin for ever. For man is "a wind that goeth," namely to sin, "and returneth not by his own power" (*Ps.* 77:39). Thus if a man were to throw himself into a pit whence he could not get out without help, one might say that he wished to remain there for ever, whatever else he may have thought himself. Another and a better answer is that from the very fact that he commits a mortal sin, he places his end in a creature; and since the whole of life is directed to its end, it follows that for this very reason he directs the whole of his life to that sin, and is willing to remain in sin forever, if he could do so with impunity. This is what Gregory says on *Job* 41:23, "He shall esteem the deep as growing old" (*Moral.* xxxiv): "The wicked only put an end to sinning because their life came to an end: they would indeed have wished to live for ever, that they might continue in sin for ever for they desire rather to sin than to live." Still another reason may be given why the punishment of mortal sin is eternal: because thereby one offends God Who is infinite. Wherefore since punishment cannot be infinite in intensity, because the creature is incapable of an infinite quality, it must needs be infinite at least in duration. And again there is a fourth reason for the same: because guilt remains for ever, since it cannot be remitted without grace, and men cannot receive grace after death; nor should punishment cease so long as guilt remains.

**Reply to Objection 1.** Punishment has not to be equal to fault as to the amount of duration as is seen to be the case also with human laws. We may also reply with Gregory (*Dial.* xlv) that although sin is temporal in act, it is eternal in will.

**Reply to Objection 2.** The degree of intensity in the punishment corresponds to the degree of gravity in the sin; wherefore mortal sins unequal in gravity will receive a punishment unequal in intensity but equal in duration.

**Reply to Objection 3.** The punishments inflicted on those who are not altogether expelled from the society of their fellow-citizens are intended for their correction: whereas those punishments, whereby certain persons are wholly banished from the society of their fellow-citizens, are not intended for their correction; although they may be intended for the correction and tranquillity of the others who remain in the state. Accordingly the damnation of the wicked is for the correction of those who are now in the Church; for punishments are intended for correction, not only when they are being inflicted, but also when they are decreed.

**Reply to Objection 4.** The everlasting punishment of the wicked will not be altogether useless. For they are useful for two purposes. First, because thereby the Divine justice is safeguarded which is acceptable to God for its own sake. Hence Gregory says (*Dial.* iv): "Almighty

<sup>‡</sup> Cf. *Ia IIae*, q. 87, a. 3, ad 1 \* Cf. *Ia IIae*, q. 87, a. 3, ad 1

God on account of His loving kindness delights not in the torments of the unhappy, but on account of His justice. He is for ever unappeased by the punishment of the wicked.” Secondly, they are useful, because the elect rejoice therein, when they see God’s justice in them, and realize that they have escaped them. Hence it is written (Ps. 57:12): “The just shall rejoice when he shall see the revenge,” etc., and (Is. 66:24): “They,” namely the wicked, “shall be a loathsome sight<sup>†</sup> to all flesh,” namely to the saints, as a gloss says. . Gregory expresses himself in the same sense (Dial. iv): “The wicked are all condemned to eternal punishment, and are punished for their own wickedness. Yet they will burn to some purpose, namely that the just may all both see in God the joys they receive, and perceive in them the torments they have escaped: for which reason they will acknowledge themselves for ever the debtors of Divine grace the more that they will see how the evils which they overcame by

its assistance are punished eternally.”

**Reply to Objection 5.** Although the punishment relates to the soul accidentally, it relates essentially to the soul infected with guilt. And since guilt will remain in the soul for ever, its punishment also will be everlasting.

**Reply to Objection 6.** Punishment corresponds to fault, properly speaking, in respect of the inordinateness in the fault, and not of the dignity in the person offended: for if the latter were the case, a punishment of infinite intensity would correspond to every sin. Accordingly, although a man deserves to lose his being from the fact that he has sinned against God the author of his being, yet, in view of the inordinateness of the act itself, loss of being is not due to him, since being is presupposed to merit and demerit, nor is being lost or corrupted by the inordinateness of sin\*: and consequently privation of being cannot be the punishment due to any sin.

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**Whether by God’s mercy all punishment of the damned, both men and demons, comes to an end?**

Suppl. q. 99 a. 2

**Objection 1.** It would seem that by God’s mercy all punishment of the damned, both men and demons, comes to an end. For it is written (Wis. 11:24): “Thou hast mercy upon all, O Lord, because Thou canst do all things.” But among all things the demons also are included, since they are God’s creatures. Therefore also their punishment will come to an end.

**Objection 2.** Further, “God hath concluded all in sin [Vulg.: ‘unbelief’], that He may have mercy on all” (Rom. 11:32). Now God has concluded the demons under sin, that is to say, He permitted them to be concluded. Therefore it would seem that in time He has mercy even on the demons.

**Objection 3.** Further, as Anselm says (Cur Deus Homo ii), “it is not just that God should permit the utter loss of a creature which He made for happiness.” Therefore, since every rational creature was created for happiness, it would seem unjust for it to be allowed to perish altogether.

**On the contrary,** It is written (Mat. 25:41): “Depart from Me, you cursed, into everlasting fire, which is prepared for the devil and his angels.” Therefore they will be punished eternally.

Further, just as the good angels were made happy through turning to God, so the bad angels were made unhappy through turning away from God. Therefore if the unhappiness of the wicked angels comes at length to an end, the happiness of the good will also come to an end, which is inadmissible.

**I answer that,** As Augustine says (De Civ. Dei xxi) Origen<sup>†</sup> “erred in maintaining that the demons will at length, through God’s mercy, be delivered from their punishment.” But this error has been condemned by the Church for two reasons. First because it is clearly contrary to the authority of Holy Writ (Apoc. 20:9,10): “The devil who seduced them was cast into the pool of fire and brimstone, where both the beasts and the false prophets<sup>‡</sup> shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever,” which is the Scriptural expression for eternity. Secondly, because this opinion exaggerated God’s mercy in one direction and depreciated it in another. For it would seem equally reasonable for the good angels to remain in eternal happiness, and for the wicked angels to be eternally punished. Wherefore just as he maintained that the demons and the souls of the damned are to be delivered at length from their sufferings, so he maintained that the angels and the souls of the blessed will at length pass from their happy state to the unhappiness of this life.

**Reply to Objection 1.** God, for His own part, has mercy on all. Since, however, His mercy is ruled by the order of His wisdom, the result is that it does not reach to certain people who render themselves unworthy of that mercy, as do the demons and the damned who are obstinate in wickedness. And yet we may say that even in them His mercy finds a place, in so far as they are punished less than they deserve condignly, but not that they are entirely delivered from punishment.

**Reply to Objection 2.** In the words quoted the distri-

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<sup>†</sup> “Ad satietatem visionis,” which St. Thomas takes to signify being satiated with joy; Cf. q. 94, a. 3 \* Cf. Ia IIae, q. 85, a. 1 <sup>†</sup> Cf. Ia, q. 64, a. 2 <sup>‡</sup> Vulg.: ‘the beast and false prophet,’ etc.

bution (of the predicate) regards the genera and not the individuals: so that the statement applies to men in the state of wayfarer, inasmuch as He had mercy both on Jews and on Gentiles, but not on every Gentile or every Jew.

**Reply to Objection 3.** Anselm means that it is not just in the sense of becoming God's goodness, and is speaking of the creature generically. For it becomes not the Divine

goodness that a whole genus of creature fail of the end for which it was made: wherefore it is unbecoming for all men or all angels to be damned. But there is no reason why some men or some angels should perish for ever, because the intention of the Divine will is fulfilled in the others who are saved.

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## Whether God's mercy suffers at least men to be punished eternally?

Suppl. q. 99 a. 3

**Objection 1.** It would seem that God's mercy does not suffer at least men to be punished eternally. For it is written (Gn. 6:3): "My spirit shall not remain in man for ever because he is flesh"; where "spirit" denotes indignation, as a gloss observes. Therefore, since God's indignation is not distinct from His punishment, man will not be punished eternally.

**Objection 2.** Further, the charity of the saints in this life makes them pray for their enemies. Now they will have more perfect charity in that life. Therefore they will pray then for their enemies who are damned. But the prayers of the saints cannot be in vain, since they are most acceptable to God. Therefore at the saints' prayers the Divine mercy will in time deliver the damned from their punishment.

**Objection 3.** Further, God's foretelling of the punishment of the damned belongs to the prophecy of commination. Now the prophecy of commination is not always fulfilled: as appears from what was said of the destruction of Nineve (Jonas 3); and yet it was not destroyed as foretold by the prophet, who also was troubled for that very reason (Jonah 4:1). Therefore it would seem that much more will the threat of eternal punishment be commuted by God's mercy for a more lenient punishment, when this will be able to give sorrow to none but joy to all.

**Objection 4.** Further, the words of Ps. 76:8 are to the point, where it is said: "Will God then be angry for ever?\*" But God's anger is His punishment. Therefore, etc.

**Objection 5.** Further, a gloss on Is. 14:19, "But thou art cast out," etc. says: "Even though all souls shall have rest at last, thou never shalt": and it refers to the devil. Therefore it would seem that all human souls shall at length have rest from their pains.

**On the contrary,** It is written (Mat. 25:46) of the elect conjointly with the damned: "These shall go into everlasting punishment: but the just, into life everlasting." But it is inadmissible that the life of the just will ever have an end. Therefore it is inadmissible that the punishment of the damned will ever come to an end.

Further, as Damascene says (De Fide Orth. ii) "death is to men what their fall was to the angels." Now after

their fall the angels could not be restored<sup>†</sup>. Therefore neither can man after death: and thus the punishment of the damned will have no end.

**I answer that,** As Augustine says (De Civ. Dei xxi, 17,18), some evaded the error of Origen by asserting that the demons are punished everlastingly, while holding that all men, even unbelievers, are at length set free from punishment. But this statement is altogether unreasonable. For just as the demons are obstinate in wickedness and therefore have to be punished for ever, so too are the souls of men who die without charity, since "death is to men what their fall was to the angels," as Damascene says.

**Reply to Objection 1.** This saying refers to man generically, because God's indignation was at length removed from the human race by the coming of Christ. But those who were unwilling to be included or to remain in this reconciliation effected by Christ, perpetuated the Divine anger in themselves, since no other way of reconciliation is given to us save that which is through Christ.

**Reply to Objection 2.** As Augustine (De Civ. Dei xxi, 24) and Gregory (Moral. xxxiv) say, the saints in this life pray for their enemies, that they may be converted to God, while it is yet possible for them to be converted. For if we knew that they were foreknown to death, we should no more pray for them than for the demons. And since for those who depart this life without grace there will be no further time for conversion, no prayer will be offered for them, neither by the Church militant, nor by the Church triumphant. For that which we have to pray for them is, as the Apostle says (2 Tim. 2:25,26), that "God may give them repentance to know the truth, and they may recover themselves from the snares of the devil."

**Reply to Objection 3.** A punishment threatened prophetically is only then commuted when there is a change in the merits of the person threatened. Hence: "I will suddenly speak against a nation and against a kingdom, to root out and to pull down and to destroy it. If that nation. . . shall repent of their evil, I also will repent of the evil that I have thought to do to them" (Jer. 18:7). Therefore, since the merits of the damned cannot be changed, the threatened punishment will ever be fulfilled in them. Nevertheless the prophecy of commination is always ful-

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\* Vulg.: 'Will God then cast off for ever?' † Cf. Ia, q. 64, a. 2

filled in a certain sense, because as Augustine says (De Civ. Dei. xxi, 24): “Nineve has been overthrown, that was evil, and a good Nineve is built up, that was not: for while the walls and the houses remained standing, the city was overthrown in its wicked ways.”

**Reply to Objection 4.** These words of the Psalm refer to the vessels of mercy, which have not made themselves unworthy of mercy, because in this life (which may be called God’s anger on account of its unhappiness) He changes vessels of mercy into something better. Hence the Psalm continues (Ps. 76:11): “This is the change of

the right hand of the most High.” We may also reply that they refer to mercy as granting a relaxation but not setting free altogether if it be referred also to the damned. Hence the Psalm does not say: “Will He from His anger shut up His mercies?” but “in His anger,” because the punishment will not be done away entirely; but His mercy will have effect by diminishing the punishment while it continues.

**Reply to Objection 5.** This gloss is speaking not absolutely but on an impossible supposition in order to throw into relief the greatness of the devil’s sin, or of Nabuchodonosor’s.

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**Whether the punishment of Christians is brought to an end by the mercy of God?**

Suppl. q. 99 a. 4

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**Objection 1.** It would seem that at least the punishment of Christians is brought to an end by the mercy of God. “For he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved” (Mk. 16:16). Now this applies to every Christian. Therefore all Christians will at length be saved.

**Objection 2.** Further, it is written (Jn. 6:55): “He that eateth My body and drinketh My blood hath eternal life.” Now this is the meat and drink whereof Christians partake in common. Therefore all Christians will be saved at length.

**Objection 3.** Further, “If any man’s work burn, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved, yet so as by fire” (1 Cor. 3:15), where it is a question of those who have the foundation of the Christian faith. Therefore all such persons will be saved in the end.

**On the contrary,** It is written (1 Cor. 6:9): “The unjust shall not possess the kingdom of God.” Now some Christians are unjust. Therefore Christians will not all come to the kingdom of God, and consequently they will be punished for ever.

Further, it is written (2 Pet. 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 from that holy commandment which was delivered to them.” Now those who know not the way of truth will be punished for ever. Therefore Christians who have turned back after knowing it will also be punished for ever.

**I answer that,** According to Augustine (De Civ. Dei xxi, 20,21), there have been some who predicted a delivery from eternal punishment not for all men, but only for Christians. although they stated the matter in different ways. For some said that whoever received the sacraments of faith would be immune from eternal punishment. But this is contrary to the truth, since some receive the sacraments of faith, and yet have not faith, without which “it is impossible to please God” (Heb. 11:6). Wherefore others said that those alone will be exempt from eternal punishment who have received the sacraments of faith, and pro-

fessed the Catholic faith. But against this it would seem to be that at one time some people profess the Catholic faith, and afterwards abandon it, and these are deserving not of a lesser but of a greater punishment, since according to 2 Pet. 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.” Moreover it is clear that heresiarchs who renounce the Catholic faith and invent new heresies sin more grievously than those who have conformed to some heresy from the first. And therefore some have maintained that those alone are exempt from eternal punishment, who persevere to the end in the Catholic faith, however guilty they may have been of other crimes. But this is clearly contrary to Holy Writ, for it is written (James 2:20): “Faith without works is dead,” and (Mat. 7:21) “Not every one that saith to Me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven: but he that doth the will of My Father Who is in heaven”: and in many other passages Holy Scripture threatens sinners with eternal punishment. Consequently those who persevere in the faith unto the end will not all be exempt from eternal punishment, unless in the end they prove to be free from other crimes.

**Reply to Objection 1.** Our Lord speaks there of formed faith\* “that worketh by love [Vulg.: ‘charity’; Gal. 5:6]”: wherein whosoever dieth shall be saved. But to this faith not only is the error of unbelief opposed, but also any mortal sin whatsoever.

**Reply to Objection 2.** The saying of our Lord refers not to those who partake only sacramentally, and who sometimes by receiving unworthily “eat and drink judgment” to themselves (1 Cor. 11:29), but to those who eat spiritually and are incorporated with Him by charity, which incorporation is the effect of the sacramental eating, in those who approach worthily†. Wherefore, so far as the power of the sacrament is concerned, it brings us to eternal life, although sin may deprive us of that fruit, even after we have received worthily.

**Reply to Objection 3.** In this passage of the Apostle

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\* Cf. IIa IIae, q. 4, a. 3 † Cf. IIIa, q. 80, Aa. 1,2,3

the foundation denotes formed faith, upon which whosoever shall build venial sins<sup>‡</sup> “shall suffer loss,” because he will be punished for them by God; yet “he himself shall

be saved” in the end “by fire,” either of temporal tribulation, or of the punishment of purgatory which will be after death.

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**Whether all those who perform works of mercy will be punished eternally?**

Suppl. q. 99 a. 5

**Objection 1.** It would seem that all who perform works of mercy will not be punished eternally, but only those who neglect those works. For it is written (James 2:13): “Judgment without mercy to him that hath not done mercy”; and (Mat. 5:7): “Blessed are the merciful for they shall obtain mercy.”

**Objection 2.** Further, (Mat. 25:35-46) we find a description of our Lord’s discussion with the damned and the elect. But this discussion is only about works of mercy. Therefore eternal punishment will be awarded only to such as have omitted to practice works of mercy: and consequently the same conclusion follows as before.

**Objection 3.** Further, it is written (Mat. 6:12): “Forgive us our debts, as we also forgive our debtors,” and further on (Mat. 6:14): “For if you will forgive men their offenses, your heavenly Father will forgive you also your offenses.” Therefore it would seem that the merciful, who forgive others their offenses, will themselves obtain the forgiveness of their sins, and consequently will not be punished eternally.

**Objection 4.** Further, a gloss of Ambrose on 1 Tim. 4:8, “Godliness is profitable to all things,” says: “The sum total of a Christian’s rule of life consists in mercy and godliness. Let a man follow this, and though he should suffer from the inconstancy of the flesh, without doubt he will be scourged, but he will not perish: whereas he who can boast of no other exercise but that of the body will suffer everlasting punishment.” Therefore those who persevere in works of mercy, though they be shackled with fleshly sins, will not be punished eternally: and thus the same conclusion follows as before.

**On the contrary,** It is written (1 Cor. 6:9,10): “Neither fornicators. . . nor adulterers,” etc. “shall possess the kingdom of God.” Yet many are such who practice works of mercy. Therefore the merciful will not all come to the eternal kingdom: and consequently some of them will be punished eternally.

Further, it is written (James 2:10): “Whosoever shall keep the whole law, but offend in one point, is become guilty of all.” Therefore whoever keeps the law as regards the works of mercy and omits other works, is guilty of transgressing the law, and consequently will be punished eternally.

**I answer that,** As Augustine says in the book quoted above (De Civ. Dei xxi, 22), some have maintained that not all who have professed the Catholic faith will be freed

from eternal punishment, but only those who persevere in works of mercy, although they be guilty of other crimes. But this cannot stand, because without charity nothing can be acceptable to God, nor does anything profit unto eternal life in the absence of charity. Now it happens that certain persons persevere in works of mercy without having charity. Wherefore nothing profits them to the meriting of eternal life, or to exemption from eternal punishment, as may be gathered from 1 Cor. 13:3. Most evident is this in the case of those who lay hands on other people’s property, for after seizing on many things, they nevertheless spend something in works of mercy. We must therefore conclude that all whosoever die in mortal sin, neither faith nor works of mercy will free them from eternal punishment, not even after any length of time whatever.

**Reply to Objection 1.** Those will obtain mercy who show mercy in an ordinate manner. But those who while merciful to others are neglectful of themselves do not show mercy ordinately, rather do they strike at themselves by their evil actions. Wherefore such persons will not obtain the mercy that sets free altogether, even if they obtain that mercy which rebates somewhat their due punishment.

**Reply to Objection 2.** The reason why the discussion refers only to the works of mercy is not because eternal punishment will be inflicted on none but those who omit those works, but because eternal punishment will be remitted to those who after sinning have obtained forgiveness by their works of mercy, making unto themselves “friends of the mammon of iniquity” (Lk. 16:9).

**Reply to Objection 3.** Our Lord said this to those who ask that their debt be forgiven, but not to those who persist in sin. Wherefore the repentant alone will obtain by their works of mercy the forgiveness that sets them free altogether.

**Reply to Objection 4.** The gloss of Ambrose speaks of the inconstancy that consists in venial sin, from which a man will be freed through the works of mercy after the punishment of purgatory, which he calls a scourging. Or, if he speaks of the inconstancy of mortal sin, the sense is that those who while yet in this life fall into sins of the flesh through frailty are disposed to repentance by works of mercy. Wherefore such a one will not perish, that is to say, he will be disposed by those works not to perish, through grace bestowed on him by our Lord, Who is blessed for evermore. Amen.

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<sup>‡</sup> Cf. Ia IIae, q. 89, a. 2