254 Obedience (*Obediencia*)

Obedience is double. One is perfect which extends to all things which are not against God, nor against reason which one has professed to this obedience. No one is held from the beginning for owed necessity, but from the zeal of perfection. In the same way we are always held to emulate a better gift, but the Apostle to [2] Cor. [7:15], there is another imperfect obedience enough for salvation by which one obeys these things which he explicitly promised or these things which are contained in those implicitly. Just as there are those things without which one professed in religion does not serve, and such obedience is of necessity.

¶ Again, it is to be known that a vow of obedience is most powerful among other vows of religion. However, because through that something greater is offered to God, namely, the will itself which is more powerful as if oneself that is offered through chastity or than temporal goods which are offered through poverty.

Second, because the vow of obedience comprehends under itself two other vows, namely, chastity and poverty, but not the reverse.

Third, because the vow of obedience extends nearer to the end and perfection of religion than the other two vows. For the vow of continence and poverty without the vow of obedience do not make the state of religion which state of religion certainly is preferred to virginity. Also, from a confirmed vow and this because of obedience which is preeminent among vows. Wherefore Augustine says in the book *De virginitate*,[[1]](#endnote-1) no one dares to prefer virginity to the monastery.

Again, how much obedience excels the other virtues is evident through the unworthiness of his fitness.

¶ For since disobedience is the worst vice and even a species of idolatry, 1 Kings 15[:23]: “It is like the crime of idolatry, to refuse to obey.” It corresponds that obedience is the best virtue, for Christ taught this most powerfully by his example of coming to the world, John 6[:38]: “Because I came down from heaven, not to do my own will, but the will of him that sent me.” He taught this remaining in the world, Phil. 2[:8]: “Becoming obedient unto death.” Going from the world, Matt. 26[:39]: “Not as I will, but as you will.” It is no marvel if this virtue of obedience is much praised and much sought for since this is the propter ladder to paradise of which there are seven steps. For a man ought to obey gratuitously without any recalcitrance.

¶ The example of Paul who said, Acts 9[:6]: “Lord, what will you have me to do.” This is against those obeying in a pleasing way, but they do not wish to obey with displeasure.

¶ Such ones do not seek with Paul “Lord, what will you have me to do?” But they wish that the Lord would seek from them what they themselves wish, as was the case with the blind one wishing to be healed, to whom Christ said, [Mark 10:51]: “What will you that I should do to you?” Col. 3[:22]: “Servants, obey in all things your masters.” For whoever offends in one is made guilty of all simply without simulation.[[2]](#endnote-2)

¶ The example[[3]](#endnote-3) concerning David in the Psal. [72:23]: “I am become as a beast before you.” Cheerfully without murmuring. The example in Simon of Cyrene who carried the cross [Matt. 27:32]. In compulsory service quickly without procrastination.[[4]](#endnote-4) The example in Peter and hearing the single voice of the Lord commanding they followed, [Matt. 4:19-20]. Humbly without pride.[[5]](#endnote-5) The example of Peter,[[6]](#endnote-6) Luke 22[:33], who said, “I am ready to go with you, and to death.” Perseveringly without any hesitation.[[7]](#endnote-7) The example of Christ, Phil. 2[:8]: “Becoming obedient unto death.”

Therefore,[[8]](#endnote-8) obedience is like a ship sailing which is like a man going to heaven where he can rest, Prov. 31[:14]: “She is like the merchant's ship.”

¶ Again,[[9]](#endnote-9) it is like a key opening heaven. In the figure of which Christ gave to Simon who is interpreted as obeying the keys of the kingdom (of heaven), Matt. 16[:19].

¶ Again, six things move to obeying of which the first is price of the thing like gold is chosen before copper, 1 Kings 15[:22]: “Obedience is better than sacrifices.” Second is the commandment of God that excels the command of man, Deut. 26[:14], you should choose the Lord that you may obey him. Psal. [118:4]: “You have commanded your commandments to be kept.”

¶ Third, there is the example of Christ. For the good leader very much ought to be followed. According to the Philosopher,[[10]](#endnote-10) in time because the good man and wise choose what is most powerfully to be chosen. But Christ choose obedience, Phil. 2[:12], therefore he ought to be followed.

¶ Fourth, it is a detriment to what is opposed, just as theft is avoided because of the gallows, Deut. 21[:22]. The example in our first parents.

¶ Fifth, there is the prospect of the kingdom, Deut. 11[:26]: “Behold I set forth in your sight this day a blessing” if you obey.

Again, all things obey the one obeying, from which Christ himself obeyed the one obeying. The example of Jos. 10[:14]: “There was not before nor after so long a day.” For the sun then stood still in the heaven at the command of Joshua.

Again,[[11]](#endnote-11) because obedience is near to God.

¶ The figure is because Christ freely[[12]](#endnote-12) reclined in the house of Simon who is interpreted as obeying, Luke 4[:38]. And Christ loved all those who dwelt in Bethany which is interpreted as the house of obedience, John 11[:18]. And Christ from Bethany ascended “to heaven,” Luke 24[:50-51].

¶ Again,[[13]](#endnote-13) there are three things which help obedience and promote and sway humility, Phil. 2[:8]: “He humbled himself, becoming obedient unto death.”

¶ Second,[[14]](#endnote-14) there is frequently accustoming oneself, as is evident in an untamed horse, Prov. 21[:31]: “The horse is prepared for the day of battle.”

¶ Third,[[15]](#endnote-15) there is the superior modestly commanding. The example in God who prohibited only one tree to the first parents, and conceded all the others, Gen. 2[:9].

Again,[[16]](#endnote-16) we ought to obey three kinds of precepts, because there is the precept of the judge through nature, Tob. 4[:16]: “See you never do to another what you would hate to have done to you by another.” And Matt. 7[:12]: “All things therefore whatsoever you would that men should do to you, do you also to them.”

¶ Second,[[17]](#endnote-17) the precept enjoined by the scripture, Exod. 20[:3-17 where the ten commandments are placed.

Third,[[18]](#endnote-18) the precept inspired by grace, Matt. 22[:14]: “Many are called,” but against these divers obey diverse precepts and this in diverse ways.

¶ For some obey evil prelates because they have evil desires as the one being feverish and gluttonous with an inordinate appetite in wine and carnal usages, Rom. 6[:12]: “Let no sin reign in your mortal body, so as to obey the lusts thereof.”

¶ Certainly a prelate is evil whose obedience is sin, whose reward is punishment. Others obey an evil tongue like a weathercock to the wind, Prov. 17[:4]: “The evil man obeys an unjust tongue.” Others obey evil money like a cow to the goad, Eccli. 10[:10]. Money obeys the good prelate like a boy obeys his father, like a student his teacher, Eph. 6[:1]: “Children, obey your parents in the Lord.” Some obey God like the clay to the potter, the effect to the cause, as one fulfilling his will, Acts 5[:29]: “We ought to obey God, rather than men.” And that obedience is best. Nor according to Augustine, *De XII. abusionibus,* c. 3,[[19]](#endnote-19) without obedience the world is perverted from the right order of reason. Wherefore also through the disobedience of our first parents, what is owed from three to three: because from man to God, from man to man, and from body to soul.

Concerning the first, Acts 5[:29]: “We ought to obey God, rather than men.” The reason is because God is the highest prelate among all. According to the naturalists,[[20]](#endnote-20) all the birds thus obey the eagle because after his call is heard on that day none fly to their prey.

Again, when the roar of the lion is heard the beasts pause their step nor do they proceed further.

¶ If therefore obedience is so greatly rewarded to his king, how much greater ought it to be for man to God who made and sustains them. Because of this it is said in Deut. 30[:20]: “Love the Lord your God, and obey his voice,” etc. Therefore, it is said in Num. 14[:22-23]: “The men that have contemned me and have not obeyed my voice, shall not see the land for which I swore to their fathers.” A ship does not arrive well to its port unless it obeys its pilot and the wind of the Holy Spirit. Wherefore the Apostle, Tit. 3[:1]: “Admonish them to obey God and to be ready to work.” Wherefore Samuel says, 1 Kings [15:22]: “Does the Lord desire holocausts and victims, and not rather that the voice of the Lord should be obeyed? For obedience is better than sacrifices.” To these things Augustine speaks in the second tractate, *Super canonica Joanne*.[[21]](#endnote-21) If man obeys God perfectly all creatures obeyed man. For the beasts obeyed Noah. And David “played with lions,” Eccli. [47:3].

¶ And “Sampson tore the lion because the Spirit of God was in him,” Judges 14[:6]. The sun obeyed Joshua himself, Jos. 10[:12]. The fire obeyed the boys, Dan. 3[:25]. But on the contrary because Saul did not obey, he lost the kingdom, 1 Reg. 13[:13]. The lion killed the prophet because he was disobedient to the voice of God, 1 Reg. [13:24]. Wherefore Ambrose *Super Lucam*,[[22]](#endnote-22) learn to be subject to Christ if you wish to rule the world.

¶ About that obedience, which is of man to man Bernard says,[[23]](#endnote-23) the prince of the apostles afterward he was called Simon, that is, obeying, then Peter which is recognizing because the Church was first founded in obedience, then in knowledge and doctrine. Wherefore for obeying another the example of the son of God greatly moves, Philip. 2[:8]: “Becoming obedient unto death.” And, the example of the animals. Wherefore the Philosopher, book 8, *De animalibus,* c. 7,[[24]](#endnote-24) says that the elephant is greatly obedient to his master. Therefore, they live many years. So those who obey their chiefs because of God. Or [Col. 3:20, 22]: “Sons, obey your parents. For this is pleasing to God.” And it follows there, “Servants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh, not serving to the eye, as pleasing men, but in simplicity of heart, fearing God.” Deut. [17:12]: “He that will be proud and refuse to obey the commandment of the priest … that man shall die.” And it follows in the chapter 17[:5]: If a son was disobeying the father and is dwelling with him and contemns to obey let him be led to the gates of the city to the judges and is still contumacious let him be stoned. Wherefore Gen. 41[:40]: Pharaoh commanded that “all obey” Joseph. So, God wants that all the people obey his prelate. Wherefore Chrysostom, *Ad Monachos,* homily 8,[[25]](#endnote-25) whatever was imparted to you by your superiors, so accept it as if from heaven it were from the mouth of God. The prelate is not to be reprehended, nor to be discussed, nor should you presume to murmur. You have come into the monastery to serve not to give orders, to obey rather than to command, judge everything holy that is commanded of you by others. According to the Philosopher, 2 *Politicis*, c. 13,[[26]](#endnote-26) the life of a soldier has many parts and virtues. For such life has obedience to the prince, abstinence from delicacies, perseverance in labors, so in the soldiery of Christ is required obedience to the prelate, with abstinence and perseverance in virtuous labors.

Concerning the third obedience which is of corruption to the mind, Rom. 6[:12]: “Let no sin reign in your mortal body, so as to obey the lusts thereof.” Glass that is molten and liquid much obeys the craftsman for receiving the figure and color, but glass that is cold more quickly is broken than that it would receive such a thing. So, a body inflamed by desire, evil without any good, obeys the soul to one thing or another. Wherefore Isidore, *De summo bono*, book one, chapter 9,[[27]](#endnote-27) the flesh will not be subjected to the soul, nor vices to reason, if the soul of man is not subjected to the creator. For then rightly all things are subjected to us which are subject to us, if we are subject to them by which those things are subject to us.

¶ For if somethings seem subject to him who is subject to God, he is not rather subject to them. Wherefore Anselm in his *Meditationes*,[[28]](#endnote-28)this the most perfect and free obedience to human nature when man subjects his free will spontaneously to the will of God. Wherefore Augustine, *Super canonica Joanne* at the end,[[29]](#endnote-29) men do his will, when they do what they want, not what God commands. When however, they do these things that they want, and however they follow the will of God, then they do not follow their will, although they do what they want.

1. Cf. Augustine, *De sancta virginitate*, 44.45 (PL 40:422): Quid cogitandum virgini, ut veraciter se non audeat muliere vel conjugatae praeferre. Proinde quid dicemus? Estne aliquid quod virgo Dei veraciter cogitet, unde se fideli mulieri, non tantum viduae, verum etiam conjugatae praeferre non audeat? Non ego reprobam dico: nam quis nesciat obedientem mulierem inobedienti virgini praeponendam? Sed cum ambae sunt obedientes praeceptis Dei, itane trepidabit sanctam virginitatem etiam castis nuptiis et continentiam praeferre connubio, fructum centenum praeire triceno? Imo vero non dubitet hanc rem illi rei praeponere. Haec tamen vel haec virgo obediens et Deum timens, illi vel illi mulieri obedienti et Deum timenti se anteferre non audeat: alioquin non erit humilis, et Deus superbis resistit (Jacobi IV, 6). [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. Cf.William de Lancea, *Diaetae Salutis* 4.2 (8:286a): Secundus gradus est obedire simpliciter sine simulatione. [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. Cf. William de Lancea, *Diaetae Salutis* 4.2 (8:286a): Tertius gradus, obedire hilariter sine murmuratione; exemplum de Simone Cyrenaeo, qui portavit in angaria, id est, in dolore crucem Christi, ut habetur in *Matthaeo* [27:32]. [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. Cf. William de Lancea, *Diaetae Salutis* 4.2 (8:286a): Quartus gradus est obedire velociter, sine recrastinatione; exemplum de Petro et Andrea, qui ad unam Domini vocem, relictis retibus omnibus, secuti sunt eum, sicut etiam dicitur in eodem *Matthaeo* [4:20]. [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
5. Cf. William de Lancea, *Diaetae Salutis* 4.2 (8:286a): Sextus gradus est obedire humiliter, sine elatione.... [↑](#endnote-ref-5)
6. Cf. William de Lancea, *Diaetae Salutis* 4.2 (8:286a): Quintus gradus est obedire viriliter, sine haesitatione; exemplum de Petro, qui dixit: *Domine, paratus sum tecum in carcerem, et in mortem ire*. [↑](#endnote-ref-6)
7. Cf. William de Lancea, *Diaetae Salutis* 4.2 (8:286a): Septimus gradus est obedire perseveranter, sine discontinuatione; exemplum de Christo, de quo dicit Apostolus: *Factus est obediens usque ad mortem*. [↑](#endnote-ref-7)
8. Cf. William de Lancea, *Diaetae Salutis* 4.2 (8:286a): Item nota, quod obedientia est navis ad coelum transvehens, clavis coelum aperiens, et avis ad coelum ascendens. Est ita que obedientia sicut navis: nam sicut qui est in navi semper procedit, et tamen ipse quiescit; sic qui est in navi obedientiae, semper proficit in mundo, dormendo, vigilando, comedendo, abstinendo, ambulando, quiescendo: quia instar nautae non movetur motu proprio, sed alieno. De had navi habetur in *Proverbiis: Facta est quasi navis institoris*, id est, mercatoris. [↑](#endnote-ref-8)
9. Cf. William de Lancea, *Diaetae Salutis* 4.2 (8:286b): Est etiam obdientia sicut clavis paradisi: sicut enim inobedientia clausit paradisum, ut habetur ex *Genesi*; sic obedientia paradisum aperuit. Et in figura hujus, Christus dedit Simoni, qui interpretatur obediens, *claves regni caelorum*, ut dicitur in *Matthaeo*. [↑](#endnote-ref-9)
10. Aristoble, *Politics* 3.4 1276b16-17 (Barnes 2:2025): There is a point nearly allied to the preceeding: Whether the excellence of a good man and a good citizen is the same or not. [↑](#endnote-ref-10)
11. Cf. William de Lancea, *Diaetae Salutis* 4.2 (8:286b): Est etiam obedientia Deo vicina, in cujus figura Dominus *recubuit in domo Simonis*, ut dicitur in *Luca*. Et omnes qui erant in Bethania diligebat, ut dicitur in *Joanne*: Bethania quippe *domus obedientiae* dicitur. Est etiam obedientia scala coeli, et Deo proxima; et in figura hujus, Dominus ascendit in coelum de Bethania, sicut habetur in *Luca*. [↑](#endnote-ref-11)
12. Cf. William de Lancea, *Diaetae Salutis* 4.2 (8:285b-286a): Primus gradus obedientiae, est obedire libenter sine recalcitratione.... [↑](#endnote-ref-12)
13. Cf. William de Lancea, *Diaetae Salutis* 4.2 (8:286b-287a): Habet etiam obedientia auxilia, quae ipsam juvant. Unde notandum est, quod sex sunt, quae juvant obedientiam, scilicet humilitas flectens, consuetudo frequens, dilectio fervens, affectus terrena contemnens, gratia interius ungens, et prelatus modeste praecipiens. Humilitas igitur juvat, et facit hominem obedientem. Humilitas reddit hominem flexibilem: sicut enim gracilitas et subtilitas virgae facit virgam faciliter inclinare, sic gracilitas humilitatis facit homines faciliter obedire. Ideo dicit Apostolus de Christo: *Humiliavit semetipsum, factus obediens usque ad mortem*. [↑](#endnote-ref-13)
14. Cf. William de Lancea, *Diaetae Salutis* 4.2 (8:287a): Juvat etiamk obedientiam consuetudo; nam sicut equus assuescit circumvolutionibus, ut sciat se ad omnem partem flectere; sic assuefactio obedientiae facit homines ad nutum obedire. De tali equo bene ductibili dicitur in *Proverbiis: Equus paratur ad diem belli: Dominus autem salutem tribuit.* [↑](#endnote-ref-14)
15. Cf. William de Lancea, *Diaetae Salutis* 4.2 (8:287a): Tandem juvat obedientiam modestia praecipientis; exemplum de Deo, qui unum solum lignum prohibuit, et omnkia alia concessit, dicens: *De omni ligno paradisi comede; de ligno autem scientiae bone et mali ne comedas.* [↑](#endnote-ref-15)
16. Cf. William de Lancea, *Diaetae Salutis* 4.2 (8:287a): Habet etiam obedientia officia, quae ipsam occupant, scilicet tria genera praeceptorum. Unde nota, quod debet quilibet obedire praeceptis inditis (*a* = *Caet. edit.* judicis) per naturam, quae scripta sunt a Tobia dicente: *Quod ab alio oderis tibi fieri, vide ne tu aliquando alteri facias*; et in Matthaeo: *Omnia quaecumque vultis ne faciant vobis homines, ea nolite facere eis*. [↑](#endnote-ref-16)
17. Cf. William de Lancea, *Diaetae Salutis* 4.2 (8:287a): Vel debemus obedire praeceptis injunctis per scripturam, quae scripta sunt in *Exodo*, ubi ponuntur decem praecepta: *Non habebis deos alienos,* etc. [↑](#endnote-ref-17)
18. Cf. William de Lancea, *Diaetae Salutis* 4.2 (8:287a-b): Debemus etiam obedire praeceptis inspiratis per gratiam, ut de dilectione Dei et prosimi, quae scripta sunt in *Matthaeo* [22:37-39]. [↑](#endnote-ref-18)
19. Augustine, cf. Cyprian of Carthage, *De XII. abusionibus*, 3 (Paris: Claudium chappelet, 1616), p. 591a): Tertius abusionis gradus est, si adolescens sine obedientia deprehenditur; quo mundus a recto rationis ordine deprauatur. [↑](#endnote-ref-19)
20. Cf. Bartholomaeus Anglicus, *De proprietatibus rerum* 12.1 (1505, col. 223a): Et primo de aquila que velut regina inter volucrest obtinet principatum inter omnes auium diversarum spes aquila est maxime liberalis, vt dicit philosophus (alius Plinius) Name predam quam arripit (nisi nimia fame arceatur) sola enim comedit. Immo auibus eam sequentibus quasi communem exponit sua tamen recepta primitus portione. [↑](#endnote-ref-20)
21. Augustine, cf. Raimundi de Sabunde, *Theologia Naturalis* Titulus CCXXXV. (Solisbaci, Sumtibus J. E. de Seidel, 1852, p. 379): Ergo si homo obediebat totaliter Deo, omnia, que erant sub homine, obdiebant homini et faciebant voluntatem ejus.

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22. Ambrose, *Expositio Evangelii secundum Lucam* 9.11 (PL 15:1796): disce esse sub Christo, ut possis esse supra mundum. [↑](#endnote-ref-22)
23. Cf. Bernard, *Sermo* 41.3 (PL 183:655): Ut autem via ejus evidentius elucescat, ostendamus quantum [Col.0655B] possumus, quae sit obedientia specialis ad Deum, propria ad hominem, communis inter Deum et hominem. [↑](#endnote-ref-23)
24. Aristotle, *History of Animals* 9:1 610a24-29 (Barnes 1:951): they mount tame elephants of approved spirit and proceed in quest of wild animals; when they come up with these they bid the tame brutes to beat the wild ones until they tire the latter completely. Hereupon the driver mounts a wild brute and guides him with the application of his metal prong; after this the creature soon becomes tame, and obeys guidance. [↑](#endnote-ref-24)
25. Chrysostom, cf. Donatus Vesontionensis, *Regula ad Virgines* 20 (PL 87:282): Quidquid vobis a senioribus fuerit imperatum, sic accipite tanquam si de coelo sit ore Dei prolatum. Nihil reprehendas, nihil despicias, in nullo penitus non murmurare praesumas, quia in monasterio servire venisti, non imperare, obedire potius, quam jubere. Totum sanctum, totum justum, totum utile judica, quidquid aut tibi, aut aliis videris [Col.0282B] imperari.

    cf. L’Expettatione dell’Incarnato Verbo...by D. Alessandro Calamato (Venetia: Appresso I Giunti, 1643) cited as Caesarius Arelatensis, *Homil. 8,* (col. 377a): Quidquid tibi a superioribus fuerit mandatum accipe tanquam de celo, sic vt de ore Dei prolatum: nihil reprehendas, nihil discutias, in nullo poenitus murmurare praesumas, totum justum, totum sanctum, et vtile iudica, quicquid tibi a Praelato videris imperari. [↑](#endnote-ref-25)
26. Cf. Aristotle, *Politics* 2.9 1270a1-6 (Barnes 2:2015): For, during the wars of the Lacedaemonians, first against the Argives,

    and afterwards against the Arcadians and Messenians, the men were long away from home, and, on the return of peace, they gave themselves into the legislator's hand, already prepared by the discipline of a soldier's life (in which there are many elements of virtue), to receive his enactments. [↑](#endnote-ref-26)
27. Isidore, *Sententiarum* 1.9.11 (PL 83:553): Non erit caro subjecta animae, nec vitium rationi, si animus non est subditus Conditori. Tunc [Col.0553C] autem recte subjiciuntur nobis omnia quae sub nobis sunt, si nos subjicimur ei a quo nobis illa subjecta sunt. [↑](#endnote-ref-27)
28. Anselm, *Meditationes* 11(PL 158:766): Haec est enim perfecta [Col.0766C] et liberrima humanae naturae obedientia, cum voluntatem suam liberam sponte voluntati Dei subdit, [↑](#endnote-ref-28)
29. of virtue), to receive his enactments.

    Isidore, *Sententiarum* 1.9.11 (PL 83:553): Non erit caro subjecta animae, nec vitium rationi, si animus non est subditus Conditori. Tunc [Col.0553C] autem recte subjiciuntur nobis omnia quae sub nobis sunt, si nos subjicimur ei a quo nobis illa subjecta sunt.

    Anselm, *Meditationes* 11(PL 158:766): Haec est enim perfecta [Col.0766C] et liberrima humanae naturae obedientia, cum voluntatem suam liberam sponte voluntati Dei subdit,

    Augustine, *In Joannis Evangelium* 19.19 (PL 35:1555): Faciunt enim homines voluntatem suam, non Dei, quando faciunt quod volunt, non quod jubet Deus: quando autem ita faciunt quod volunt, ut tamen sequantur voluntatem Dei, non faciunt voluntatem suam, quamvis quod volunt faciant. Volens fac quod juberis; atque ita et hoc facies quod vis, et non voluntatem tuam facies, sed jubentis. [↑](#endnote-ref-29)