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Lives, (2a2ae. 183-189)

Jordan Aumann O.P.

Excerpt

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## States of Perfection

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## SUMMA THEOLOGIAE, 2a2ae. 183, 1

CONSEQUENTER CONSIDERANDUM est de diversitate statuum et officiorum humanorum. Et primo considerandum est de officiis et statibus hominum in generali; secundo, specialiter de statu perfectorum.

## Quæstio 183. de officiis et statibus hominum in generali

Circa primum quærentur quatuor:

1. quid faciat in hominibus statum;
2. utrum in hominibus debeant esse diversi status sive diversa officia;
3. de differentia officiorum;
4. de differentia statuum.

*articulus 1. utrum status in sui ratione importet conditionem libertatis vel servitutis*

AD PRIMUM sic proceditur:<sup>1</sup> 1. Videtur quod status in sui ratione non importet conditionem libertatis vel servitutis. *Status enim a stando dicitur. Sed stare dicitur aliquis ratione rectitudinis: unde dicitur Ezech., Fili hominis, sta super pedes tuos;*<sup>2</sup> et Gregorius dicit, *Ab omni statu rectitudinis dispereunt qui per noxia verba dilabuntur.*<sup>3</sup> Sed rectitudinem spiritualem acquirit homo per hoc quod subijcit suam voluntatem Deo: unde super illud *Psalm., Rectos decet collaudatio,*<sup>4</sup> dicit *Glossa, Recti sunt qui dirigunt cor suum secundum voluntatem Dei.*<sup>5</sup> Ergo videtur quod sola obedientia divinorum mandatorum sufficiat ad rationem status.

2. Præterea, nomen *status* immobilitatem importare videtur: secundum illud 1 *ad Cor., Stabiles estote et immobiles.*<sup>6</sup> Unde Gregorius dicit, *Lapis quadrus est, et quasi ex omni latere statum habet, qui casum in aliqua permutatione non habet.*<sup>7</sup> Sed virtus est quæ facit *immobilitate operari*, ut dicitur in *Ethic.*<sup>8</sup> Ergo videtur quod ex omni operatione virtuosa aliquis statum nanciscatur.

<sup>1</sup>cf. *De Perfectione Vitæ Spiritualis* 23. *Quod.* III, 6, 3

<sup>2</sup>*Ezekiel* 2, 1

<sup>3</sup>*Moralia VII*, 37. PL 75, 800

<sup>4</sup>*Psalms* 32, 1

<sup>5</sup>*Ordinaria.* Lombard, PL 191, 325

<sup>6</sup>1 *Corinthians* 15, 58

<sup>7</sup>*Super Ezech.*, 11, 9. PL 76, 1044

<sup>8</sup>*Ethics* II, 4. 1105a32

<sup>a</sup>As announced in his Prologue to the 1a2ae, after considering the virtues in particular so far as they pertain to Christians of all states of life, and after explaining how the Christian life is divided into the contemplative and the active life-styles, the author now proceeds to consider the various states of life within the Church.

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## OFFICES AND STATES

NEXT TO BE CONSIDERED is the variety of states and offices of men.<sup>a</sup> We first consider them in general, then the state of perfection in particular.

### Question 183. offices and states of men in general

Under this heading there are four points of inquiry:

1. what constitutes a state among men;
2. whether there should be a variety of states or offices among men;
3. the distinction of offices;
4. the distinction of states.

*article 1. whether the concept of state denotes a condition of freedom or slavery<sup>b</sup>*

THE FIRST POINT:<sup>1</sup> 1. It seems that the concept of state does not denote a condition of freedom or slavery. 'State' comes from the verb 'to stand', and one is said to stand by reason of his upright position. Thus *Ezekiel* says, *Son of man, stand upon thy feet*;<sup>2</sup> and Gregory says, *Those who speak harmful words fall from any state of uprightness*.<sup>3</sup> But a man attains spiritual uprightness by subjecting his will to God. Therefore, commenting on the verse, *Praise becometh the upright*,<sup>4</sup> the Gloss says, *They are upright who govern their heart according to God's will*.<sup>5</sup> Therefore it seems that obedience to the divine precepts suffices to constitute a state.

2. Further, the word 'state' seems to imply immobility, according to *1 Corinthians*, *Be ye steadfast and unmovable*.<sup>6</sup> Therefore Gregory says, *He who does not fall by reason of any change is a foursquare stone and stable on all sides*.<sup>7</sup> But as Aristotle says, it is virtue that causes *steadfast action*.<sup>8</sup> Therefore it seems that one is constituted in a state by any virtuous activity.

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<sup>b</sup>The concept of state (*status*) originates in Roman civil law. It is here applied in an analogical sense to the various states in the Christian life and the Church. In the strict sense state signifies a stable and permanent condition of life resulting from an obligation or an exemption from an obligation, clearly seen in the contrast between freedom and slavery. In later theology, particularly in spiritual authors of the 17th century, the word state is used in an even wider sense; e.g., state of grace, passive state, mystical state, grace of state, duties of state, state of prayer, etc. Canon law classifies states according to their visible, external aspects so far as they relate to the Church and are characterized by obligation, permanence and solemnity. Further, a state may be *absolutely* permanent (marriage, priesthood, religious state) or only *relatively* so (celibate state, state of a diocesan priest in view of possibility of transferring to religious state). In the considerations which follow the word is used in both senses.

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## SUMMA THEOLOGIAE, 2a2ae. 183, 1

3. Præterea, nomen *status* videtur ad quandam altitudinem pertinere: nam ex hoc aliquis stat quod in altum erigitur. Sed per diversa officia aliquis fit altior altero. Similiter etiam per gradus vel ordines diversos diversimode homines in quadam altitudine constituuntur. Ergo sola diversitas graduum vel ordinum vel officiorum sufficit ad diversificandum statum.

SED CONTRA est quod in *Decretis* dicitur, *Si quando in causa capitali vel causa status interpellatum fuerit, non per exploratores, sed per seipsum est agendum*:<sup>9</sup> ubi *causa status* appellatur pertinens ad libertatem vel ad servitutem. Ergo videtur quod non variet statum hominis nisi id quod pertinet ad libertatem vel servitutem.

RESPONSIO: Dicendum quod *status*, proprie loquendo, significat quandam positionis differentiam secundum quam aliquis disponitur secundum modum suæ naturæ cum quadam immobilitate. Est enim naturale homini ut caput ejus in superiora tendat, et pedes in terra firmentur, et cetera membra media convenienti ordine disponantur: quod quidem non accidit si homo jaceat vel sedeat vel accumbat, sed solum quando erectus stat. Nec rursus stare dicitur si moveatur, sed quando quiescit. Et inde est quod etiam in ipsis humanis actionibus dicitur negotium aliquem statum habere secundum ordinem propriæ dispositionis, cum quadam immobilitate seu quiete. Unde et circa homines, ea quæ de facili circa eos variantur et extrinseca sunt non constituunt statum, puta quod aliquis sit dives vel pauper, in dignitate constitutus vel plebejus, vel si quid aliud est hujusmodi: unde et in jure civili dicitur<sup>10</sup> quod ei qui a senatu amovetur magis dignitas quam status aufertur. Sed solum illud videtur ad statum hominis pertinere quod respicit obligationem personæ hominis, prout scilicet aliquis est sui juris vel alieni, et hoc non ex aliqua causa levi vel de facili mutabili, sed ex aliquo permanente. Et hoc est quod pertinet ad rationem libertatis vel servitutis. Unde status pertinet proprie ad libertatem vel servitutem, sive in spiritualibus sive in civilibus.

1. Ad primum ergo dicendum quod rectitudo, in quantum hujusmodi, non pertinet ad rationem status, sed solum in quantum est connaturalis homini, simul addita quadam quiete. Unde in aliis animalibus non requiritur rectitudo ad hoc quod stare dicantur. Nec etiam homines stare dicuntur, quantumcumque sint recti, nisi quiescat.

<sup>9</sup>Gratian, *Decretum*, II, II, 6, 40. Richter-Freidberg I, 481

<sup>10</sup>*Justiniani Digesta*, I, IX, 3 & 7. Krueger I, 40a

<sup>c</sup>The *Decretum*, the first systematic arrangement of canon law, composed c. 1148, by Gratian, a Camaldolese monk at Bologna, reputed at one time to be the brother

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#### OFFICES AND STATES

3. Further, the word 'state' seems to refer to a certain height, since when a person stands he rises to his full height. But through different offices one is higher than another. Likewise, through different grades and orders men are variously constituted at a given level. Therefore the mere difference of grades, orders, or offices suffices to diversify states.

ON THE OTHER HAND, the *Decretum*<sup>c</sup> states, *When one is indicted in a capital case or one regarding his state, he must be defended by himself and not by advocates.*<sup>9</sup> A case regarding a state here refers to freedom or slavery.<sup>d</sup> Therefore it seems that the state of a man varies only by reason of freedom or slavery.

REPLY: Properly speaking, 'state' signifies a certain difference of position according as one is disposed according to the mode of his nature and with a certain immobility. Now it is natural for man that his head be upright, his feet planted on the ground, and his intervening members disposed in orderly fashion, which does not happen if a man lies down, sits, or reclines, but only when he stands erect. Nor is he said to stand when moving, but only when he is still. So also in human actions, an affair is said to be in a certain state by reason of its proper condition and order, with a certain immobility or rest. Consequently that does not constitute a state among men which is easily changed or external, e.g., that one be wealthy or poor, a dignitary or ordinary citizen, etc. Thus, the Civil Law declares<sup>10</sup> that expulsion from the Senate deprives one of a dignity but not of state.<sup>e</sup> Only that pertains to a man's state which refers to the obligation of a man's person, as far as he is under his own dominion or another's, and this is not changed easily or for any light reason, but for some permanent cause. And this applies to the concept of freedom or slavery. Therefore state pertains to freedom or slavery, whether in the spiritual or civil order.

Hence: 1. Being upright as such does not pertain to the notion of a state, but only when a man is devoted to it and with a certain permanence. Thus in other animals an upright position is not required for them to be said to stand, and not even men, however upright their position may be, are said to stand unless they stand fast and steady.

of Peter Lombard. Its original title was *Concordia Discordantium Canonum*. Its authority in canon law rivalled that of the *Sentences* in theology.

<sup>d</sup>A case regarding a state in this particular law was not one in which a judgment had to be made concerning a person's condition of freedom or slavery, but refers to those cases in which the judgment could result in death or the loss of one's state of freedom. The conclusion of the statement, quoted in part, is *quia nemo absens aut capite damnari potest aut sententiam servitutis excipere*.

<sup>e</sup>From the *Digest*, a compilation of decisions and qualified judgments of Roman Law, published in 533 by order of the Emperor Justinian.

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## SUMMA THEOLOGIAE, 2a2æ. 183, 2

2. Ad secundum dicendum quod immobilitas non sufficit ad rationem status. Nam etiam sedens et jacens quiescunt: qui tamen non dicuntur stare.

3. Ad tertium dicendum quod officium dicitur per comparisonem ad actum, gradus autem dicitur secundum ordinem superioritatis et inferioritatis; sed ad statum requiritur immobilitas in eo quod pertinet ad conditionem personæ.

*articulus 2. utrum in Ecclesia debeat esse diversitas officiorum vel statuum*

AD SECUNDUM sic proceditur: 1. Videtur quod in Ecclesia non debeat esse diversitas officiorum vel statuum. Diversitas enim unitati repugnat. Sed fideles Christi ad unitatem vocantur: secundum illud *Joan.*, *Ut sint unum in nobis, sicut et nos unum sumus.*<sup>1</sup> Ergo in Ecclesia non debet esse diversitas officiorum vel statuum.

2. Præterea, natura non facit per multa quod potest per unum facere. Sed operatio gratiæ est multo ordinatior quam operatio naturæ. Ergo convenientius esset quod ea quæ pertinent ad actus gratiæ per eosdem homines administrarentur ita ut non esset in Ecclesia diversitas officiorum et statuum.

3. Præterea, bonum Ecclesiæ maxime videtur in pace consistere: secundum illud *Psal.*, *Qui posuit fines tuos pacem.*<sup>2</sup> Et 2 ad *Cor.* dicitur, *Pacem habete: et Deus pacis erit vobiscum.*<sup>3</sup> Sed diversitas est impeditiva pacis, quam similitudo causare videtur: secundum illud *Eccl.*, *Omne animal diligit simile sibi.*<sup>4</sup> Et Philosophus dicit, in *Polit.*, quod modica differentia facit in civitate dissidium.<sup>5</sup> Ergo videtur quod non oporteat in Ecclesia esse diversitatem statuum et officiorum.

SED CONTRA est quod in *Psalmo* in laudem Ecclesiæ dicitur quod est *circumamicta varietate*,<sup>6</sup> ubi dicit *Glossa* quod *doctrina apostolorum, et confessione martyrum, et puritate virginum, et lamento pœnitentium, ornatur Regina*, idest Ecclesia.<sup>7</sup>

RESPONSIO: Dicendum quod diversitas statuum et officiorum in Ecclesia ad tria pertinet. Primo quidem, ad perfectionem ipsius Ecclesiæ. Sicut enim in rerum naturalium ordine perfectio, quæ in Deo simpliciter et uniformiter invenitur, in universitate creaturarum inveniri non potuit nisi difformiter et multipliciter; ita etiam plenitudo gratiæ, quæ in Christo sicut in capite adunatur, ad membra ejus diversimode redundat, ad hoc quod corpus Ecclesiæ sit perfectum. Et hoc est quod Apostolus dicit, *Ipsæ*

<sup>1</sup>*John* 17, 21-2<sup>4</sup>*Ecclesiasticus* 13, 19<sup>2</sup>*Psalms* 147, 3<sup>5</sup>*Politics* VII, 5. 1303b14<sup>3</sup>*II Corinthians* 13, 11<sup>6</sup>*Psalms* 44, 10

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2. Being unmoved does not alone suffice for the notion of state, for one who is seated or reclining is still, but he is not said to stand.

3. An office is defined in relation to function, whereas a grade denotes an order of superior and inferior; a state, however, requires stability in that which regards the condition of the person himself.<sup>1</sup>

*article 2. whether there should be a variety of offices and states in the Church*

THE SECOND POINT: 1. It seems that there should not, because diversity is opposed to unity. But the Christian faithful are called to unity, according to *John*, *That they also may be one in us as we also are one.*<sup>1</sup> Therefore there should not be a variety of offices and states in the Church.

2. Further, nature does not do by many means what it can do by one. But the operation of grace is much more orderly than that of nature. Therefore it would be more proper that what pertains to the activity of grace be administered by the same persons so that there would be no diversity of offices and states in the Church.

3. Further, the good of the Church would seem to consist especially in peace, according to *Psalms*, *Who hath placed peace in thy borders;*<sup>2</sup> and *II Corinthians*, *Have peace, and the God of peace shall be with you.*<sup>3</sup> But diversity is an obstacle to peace, which springs from likeness, according to *Ecclesiasticus*, *Every beast loveth its like.*<sup>4</sup> Also, Aristotle says that a slight difference causes dissension in a city.<sup>5</sup> Therefore it seems that there should not be a diversity of states and offices in the Church.

ON THE OTHER HAND: A psalm says in praise of the Church that it is *surrounded with variety,*<sup>6</sup> and the Gloss comments, *The queen (the Church) is bedecked with the teaching of the apostles, the confession of martyrs, the purity of virgins, and the lamentations of penitents.*<sup>7</sup>

REPLY: The diversity of states and offices in the Church is threefold. First, as regards the perfection of the Church itself; for just as in the natural order, perfection, which is found in God simply and uniformly, can only be found in the created universe in variety and complexity, so the plenitude of grace, which is unified in Christ the head, redounds to the members variously so that the body of the Church might be perfect.

<sup>7</sup>*Ordinaria. Lombard*, PL 191, 444

<sup>1</sup>These distinctions would not seem to allow that the vocation, career, or function of a doctor, lawyer, soldier, teacher, priest, etc., suffice to constitute a state of life. They may be so classified by civil or canon law, but theologically the basis for distinction of states is slavery to sin or the freedom of the children of God who live in his grace: cf art. 4.

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## SUMMA THEOLOGIAE, 2a2ae. 183, 2

*dedit quosdam quidem apostolos, quosdam autem prophetas, alios vero evangelistas, alios autem pastores et doctores, ad consummationem sanctorum.*<sup>8</sup>

Secundo autem pertinet ad necessitatem actionum quæ sunt in Ecclesia necessaria. Oportet autem ad diversas actiones diversos homines deputari ad hoc quod expeditus et sine confusione omnia peragantur. Et hoc est quod Apostolus dicit, *Sicut in uno corpore multa membra habemus, omnia autem membra non eundem actum habent, ita multi unum corpus sumus in Christo.*<sup>9</sup>

Tertio hoc pertinet ad dignitatem et pulchritudinem Ecclesie, quæ in quodam ordine consistit. Unde dicitur *Reg. quod videns Regina Saba omnem sapientiam Salomonis, et habitacula servorum et ordines ministrantium, non habebat ultra spiritum.*<sup>10</sup> Unde et Apostolus dicit, quod *in magna domo non solum sunt vasa aurea et argentea, sed et lignea et fictilia.*<sup>11</sup>

1. Ad primum ergo dicendum quod diversitas statuum et officiorum non impedit Ecclesie unitatem, quæ perficitur per unitatem fidei et caritatis et mutue subministrationis: secundum illud Apostoli, *Ex quo totum corpus est compactum, scilicet per fidem, et connexum, scilicet per caritatem, per omnem juncturam subministrationis, dum scilicet unus alii servit.*<sup>12</sup>

2. Ad secundum dicendum quod sicut natura non facit per multa quod potest facere per unum, ita etiam non coarctat in unum id ad quod multa requiruntur: secundum illud Apostoli, *Si totum corpus oculus, ubi auditus?*<sup>13</sup> Unde et in Ecclesia, *quæ est corpus Christi*<sup>14</sup> oportuit membra diversificari secundum diversa officia, status et gradus.

3. Ad tertium dicendum quod sicut in corpore naturali membra diversa continentur in unitate per virtutem spiritus vivificantis, quo abscedente membra corporis separantur, ita etiam in corpore Ecclesie conservatur pax diversorum membrorum virtute Spiritus Sancti, qui corpus Ecclesie vivificat, ut habetur *Joan.*<sup>15</sup> Unde Apostolus dicit, *Solliciti servare unitatem Spiritus in vinculo pacis.*<sup>16</sup> Discedit autem aliquis ab hac unitate Spiritus dum quærit quæ sibi sunt propria: sicut etiam in terrena civitate pax tollitur ex hoc quod cives singuli quæ sua sunt quærunt. Alioquin, per officiorum et statuum distinctionem tam mentis quam in civitate terrena magis pax conservatur, inquantum per hæc plures sunt qui communicant actibus publicis. Unde et Apostolus dicit quod *Deus sic temperavit ut non sit schisma in corpore, sed pro invicem sollicita sint membra.*<sup>17</sup>

<sup>8</sup>*Ephesians 4, 11-12*<sup>9</sup>*Romans 12, 4-5*<sup>10</sup>*III Kings 10, 4-5*<sup>11</sup>*II Timothy 2, 20*<sup>12</sup>*Ephesians 4, 16*<sup>13</sup>*I Corinthians 12, 17*



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Thus, St Paul says, *He gave some apostles, and some prophets, and other some pastors and doctors for the perfecting of the saints.*<sup>8</sup>

Secondly, as regards the performance of functions necessary to the Church, different persons should be assigned to various functions so that all may be effected efficiently and without confusion. This is what St Paul says, *As in one body we have many members, but all the members have not the same office, so we being many are one body in Christ.*<sup>9</sup>

Thirdly, it pertains to the dignity and beauty of the Church, which consists in a certain order. So it is stated in *Kings*, *When the queen of Saba saw all the wisdom of Solomon and the apartments of his servants, and the order of his ministers, she had no longer any spirit in her.*<sup>10</sup> And St Paul says that *in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver, but also of wood and of earth.*<sup>11</sup>

Hence: 1. The diversity of states and offices is no impediment to the unity of the Church, which is perfected in unity of faith, charity, and mutual care, as St Paul says, *From whom the whole body being compacted (by faith), and fitly joined together (by charity) by what every joint supplieth (by one man serving another).*<sup>12</sup>

2. Though nature does not do by many means what it can do by one, neither does it limit itself to one when many are necessary. So St Paul says, *If the whole body were the eye, where would be the hearing?*<sup>13</sup> Hence, in the Church, which is the body of Christ,<sup>14</sup> it was necessary to diversify the members according to different offices, states, and grades.

3. As in a physical body the various members are unified by reason of the life-giving spirit, without which the members of the body disintegrate, so in the body of the Church the harmony of the different members is preserved by the power of the Holy Spirit, who vivifies the body of the Church, as we read in *John*.<sup>15</sup> Therefore St Paul bids us be *careful to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.*<sup>16</sup> But when one seeks his own, he departs from this unity of the Spirit, just as peace is destroyed in an earthly city when individual citizens seek their own ends. On the other hand, peace is better preserved, both in the Spirit and in the earthly city, through the distinction of offices and states because thereby more persons share in public works. Hence St Paul says, *God hath tempered the body together that there might be no schism in the body, but the members might be mutually careful one for another.*<sup>17</sup>

<sup>14</sup>*Ephesians* 1, 23

<sup>15</sup>*John* 6, 64

<sup>16</sup>*Ephesians* 4, 3

<sup>17</sup>*I Corinthians* 12, 24-25

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## SUMMA THEOLOGIAE, 2a2æ. 183, 3

*articulus 3. utrum officia distinguantur per actus*

AD TERTIUM sic proceditur: 1. Videtur quod officia non distinguantur per actus. Sunt enim infinitæ diversitates humanorum actuum, tam in spiritualibus quam in temporalibus. Sed infinitorum non potest esse certa distinctio. Ergo per diversitates actuum non potest esse humanorum officiorum certa distinctio.

2. Præterea, vita activa et contemplativa secundum actus distinguuntur, ut dictum est.<sup>1</sup> Sed alia videtur esse distinctio officiorum a distinctione vitarum. Non ergo officia distinguuntur per actus.

3. Præterea, ordines etiam ecclesiastici et status et gradus per actus distingui videntur. Si ergo officia distinguantur per actus, videtur sequi quod eadem sit distinctio officiorum, graduum et statuum. Hoc autem est falsum: quia diversimode in sua partes dividuntur. Non ergo videtur quod officia distinguantur per actus.

SED CONTRA est quod Isidorus dicit quod *officium ab efficiendo est dictum, quasi officium, propter decorem sermonis una mutata littera*.<sup>2</sup> Sed efficere pertinet ad actionem. Ergo officia per actus distinguuntur.

RESPONSIO: Dicendum quod, sicut dictum est,<sup>3</sup> diversitas in membris Ecclesiæ ad tria ordinatur, scilicet ad perfectionem, actionem et decorem. Et secundum hæc tria triplex distinctio diversitatis fidelium accipi potest. Una quidem, per respectum ad perfectionem. Et secundum hoc accipitur differentia statuum, prout quidam sunt aliis perfectiores. Alia vero distinctio accipitur per respectum ad actionem. Et hæc est distinctio officiorum: dicuntur enim in diversis officiis esse qui sunt ad diversas actiones deputati. Alia autem per respectum ad ordinem pulchritudinis ecclesiasticæ. Et secundum hoc accipitur differentia graduum, prout scilicet, etiam in eodem statu vel officio, unus est alio superior. Unde et in *Psalmo* dicitur, secundum aliam litteram, *Deus in gradibus ejus cognoscetur*.<sup>4</sup>

1. Ad primum ergo dicendum quod materialis diversitas humanorum actuum est infinita. Et secundum hanc non distinguuntur officia, sed secundum formalem diversitatem quæ accipitur secundum diversas species actuum; secundum quam actus hominis non sunt infiniti.

2. Ad secundum dicendum quod vita dicitur absolute. Et ideo diversitas

<sup>1</sup>2a2æ. 179, 1<sup>2</sup>*Etymol.* VI, 19. PL 82, 252<sup>3</sup>2a2æ. 183, 2<sup>4</sup>*Psalm* 47, 4 (in Septuagint)<sup>a</sup>This etymology is fanciful: *officium* comes from *opificium*, i.e. *opus, facere*.<sup>b</sup>With this statement the author confines himself to a discussion of the states of perfection in the Church throughout the remainder of this treatise.