

## QUESTION 95

### Superstition: Divination

Next we have to consider the superstition of divining (*de superstitione divinitiva*). And on this topic there are eight questions: (1) Is divination (*divinatio*) a sin? (2) Is divination a species of superstition? (3) Are there several species of divination? (4) Is divination that is done by invoking demons illicit? (5) Is divination that makes use of the celestial bodies (*per astra*) illicit? (6) Is divination that makes use of dreams illicit? (7) Is divination that makes use of auguries and other such observations of exterior things illicit? (8) Is divination that makes use of lots illicit?

#### Article 1

##### Is divination a sin?

It seems that divination is not a sin:

**Objection 1:** Divination (*divinatio*) takes its name from something divine (*divinum*). But things that are divine pertain more to holiness than to sin. Therefore, it seems that divination is not a sin.

**Objection 2:** In *De Libero Arbitrio* Augustine says, “Who would dare to call learning (*disciplina*) bad?” And again: “There is no way in which I would say that any sort of understanding could be bad.” But as is clear from the Philosopher in *De Memoria*, some learned skills (*artes*) involve divination. It likewise seems that divination has to do with some sort of understanding of truth. Therefore, it seems that divination is not a sin.

**Objection 3:** It is not the case that a natural inclination is ordered toward something bad, since nature inclines a thing only toward what is similar to it. But it is by a natural inclination that men take care to find out ahead of time about future events—and this involves divination. Therefore, it seems that divination is not a sin.

**But contrary to this:** Deuteronomy 18:11 says, “Let there not be any one who consults soothsayers or divines (*non sit qui pythones consulat neque divinos*).” And *Decretals* 26, q. 5 says, “Those who seek out divinations fall under the five-year rules, in accord with the fixed grades of penance.”

**I respond:** The name ‘divination’ implies some sort of foretelling (*praenuntiatio*) of future things. Now there are two ways in which future things can be foreknown: (a) *in their causes* and (b) *in themselves*.

There are three ways in which the *causes* of future things behave:

(a) Some causes produce their effects by necessity and in all cases (*ex necessitate et semper*). And the future effects of causes of this sort can be foreknown with certitude and foretold by considering their causes, in the way that those who study the stars (*astrologi*) predict future eclipses.

(b) On the other hand, some causes produce their effects not by necessity and in all cases, but for the most part (*ut in pluribus*)—though they rarely fail. And through causes of this sort future effects can be known—not, to be sure, with certitude, but through a sort of educated guess (*per quandam coniecturam*), in the way that, by investigating the celestial bodies, those who study them can foreknow and foretell rains and droughts, and in the way that physicians can foreknow and foretell healing or death.

(c) By contrast, there are causes which, if they are considered in their own right, are open to each of two [opposite effects]. This seems true mainly of the rational powers, which, according to the Philosopher, are open to opposite effects. And such effects—or even if there are effects of this sort that proceed in a few cases from natural causes—cannot be foreknown by considering their causes, since their causes do not have a determinate inclination to effects of this sort.

And so effects of this last sort cannot be foreknown unless they are considered *in themselves*. But men are able to consider effects of this sort *in themselves* only while they are present, as when a man sees

Socrates running or walking. But as was established in the First Part (*ST* 1, q. 14, a. 13 and q. 57, a. 3), to consider effects of this sort *before* they occur is proper to God, who alone in His eternity sees future things as present. Hence, Isaiah 41:23 says, “Announce the things that are to come hereafter, and we shall know that you are gods.”

Therefore, if anyone presumes, without a revelation from God, to know or to foretell in any way future things of this last sort, then he is manifestly usurping to himself what belongs to God. And it is because of this that such an individual is called a ‘divine’. Hence, in *Etymologia* Isidore says, “They are called ‘divines’, as if they are full of God. For they pretend to be filled with divinity and by a clever fraud they foretell future things to men.”

Therefore, it is not called ‘divination’ if someone foretells things which happen by necessity or for the most part and which can be foreknown by human reason. Nor is it called ‘divination’ if someone knows other future contingents because God reveals them; for in such a case it is not he himself who does the divining—that is, it is not he himself who is doing something divine—but he is instead receiving what is divine. Rather, one is said to be divining only when he usurps the foretelling of future events in an inappropriate manner. But it is obvious that this is a sin. Hence, divination is always a sin. It is for this reason that Jerome says in *Super Matthaicum*, “‘Divination’ is always taken for something bad.”

**Reply to objection 1:** As has been explained, [the name] ‘divination’ is taken not from a well-ordered participation in something divine, but from an undue usurpation.

**Reply to objection 2:** There are certain arts for foreknowing future events that proceed with necessity or very frequently; these arts do not belong to divination. But there are no true arts or disciplines for having cognition of other future events. Instead, as Augustine explains in *De Civitate Dei* 21, those arts are fallacious and vain and were introduced by the deception of demons.

**Reply to objection 3:** A man has a natural inclination to have cognition of the future in a human manner, but not in the inappropriate manner that belongs to divination.

## Article 2

### Is divination a species of superstition?

It seems that divination is not a species of superstition:

**Objection 1:** The same thing cannot be a species of diverse genera. But, as Augustine points out in *De Vera Religione*, divination seems to be a species of curiosity. Therefore, it seems that it is not a species of superstition.

**Objection 2:** Just as religion is appropriate worship, so superstition is inappropriate worship. But divination does not seem to have anything to do with inappropriate worship. Therefore, divination does not have to do with superstition.

**Objection 3:** Superstition is opposed to religion. But in true religion there is nothing that corresponds to divination as its contrary. Therefore, divination is not a species of superstition.

**But contrary to this:** In *Periarchon* Origen says, “There is an operation of the demons in administering foreknowledge that seems to be comprehended, via certain arts, by those who have enslaved themselves to the demons—now through lots, now through auguries, now through the examination of shadows. I have no doubt that all these things are done by the operation of demons.” But as Augustine explains in *De Doctrina Christiana* 2, whatever proceeds from an alliance between demons and men is superstitious. Therefore, divination is a species of superstition.

**I respond:** As was explained above (q. 92, aa. 1-2 and q. 94, a. 1), superstition implies an inappropriate worship of the divine nature. Now there are two ways in which something involves the worship of God: (a) when *something is offered to God*, whether a sacrifice or an oblation or something

else of this sort; and (b) when *something divine is taken up*, as was explained above in the case of swearing an oath (q. 89, introduction and a. 4). And superstition is involved not only when a sacrifice is offered to the demons through idolatry, but also when someone takes up the assistance of the demons in order to do something or in order to learn something.

Now every instance of divination comes from an operation of the demons, either (a) because the demons are explicitly invoked to reveal future events or (b) because the demons insert themselves into vain inquiries about the future in order to entangle men's minds in vanity. Psalm 39:5 says of this vanity, "[Blessed is the man who] ... has not paid attention to vanities and deceitful follies."

Now a vain inquiry about the future occurs when someone tries to get precognition of the future from a source from which the precognition cannot be gotten. Hence, it is clear that divination is a species of superstition.

**Reply to objection 1:** Divination involves curiosity as regards its intended *end*, which is the precognition of future things. But it involves superstition as regards its *mode of operation*.

**Reply to objection 2:** Divination of the sort in question belongs to the worship of the demons insofar as it makes use of an implicit or explicit pact with the demons.

**Reply to objection 3:** In the New Law men are restrained in their solicitude about temporal things, and so there is nothing instituted in the New Law for the precognition of future events concerning temporal things. However, in the Old Law, which promised earthly goods, there were consultations about the future that involved religion; hence, Isaiah 8:19 says, "And when they say to you, 'Inquire of the sorcerers and divines, who make harsh noises in their incantations'—and he adds, as if responding—"should not the people ask their God for a vision on behalf of the living and the dead?"

Still, even in the New Testament there have been certain individuals with the spirit of prophecy who have predicted many things about future events.

### Article 3

#### Is it appropriate to designate several species of divination?

It seems that it is not appropriate to designate several species of divination:

**Objection 1:** Where there is a single formal character (*una ratio*) of sinning, there does not seem to be more than a single species of sinning. But in every case of divination there is a single formal character of sinning, viz., that someone makes use of a pact with demons to find out about the future. Therefore, it is not the case that there are diverse species of divination.

**Objection 2:** As was established above (*ST* 1-2, q. 1, a. 3 and q. 18, a. 6), a human act receives its species from its end. But every case of divination is ordered toward a single end, viz., foretelling future events. Therefore, every case of divination belongs to a single species.

**Objection 3:** Signs do not make for diverse species; for instance, regardless of whether one engages in detraction by means of spoken words or by means of writing or by means of nodding, it is the same species of sin. But cases of divination seem to differ only with respect to the different kinds of signs from which the precognition of future events is received. Therefore, it is not the case that there are diverse species of divination.

**But contrary to this:** In *Etymologia* Isidore enumerates diverse species of divination.

**I respond:** As was explained above (a. 2), every case of divination makes use of the advice or assistance of demons in order to get precognition of a future event. Either the demon is *explicitly implored* or else, without any petition on the part of the man, the demon *secretly inserts himself* to foretell certain future events which are unknown to men, but which the demons have cognition of in the ways that were explained in the First Part (*ST* 1, q. 57, a. 3).

Now *when demons are explicitly invoked*, there are many ways in which they are wont to foretell the future.

Sometimes they make themselves visible and audible to men with deceptive apparitions in order to foretell future events. And this species is called *prestidigitation (praestigium)* from the fact that men's eyes are made dull.

Again, sometimes they do it through dreams (*per somnia*). And this is called *divination by dreams (divinatio somniorum)*.

Again, sometimes they do it through apparitions or locutions by the dead. And this species is called *necromancy (nigromantia)*, because, as Isidore explains in *Etymologia*, "in Greek *nekron* means *dead* and *manteia* means *divination*, because after certain incantations and the sprinkling of blood, the dead seem to come to life in order to make divinations and to respond to questions."

Again, sometimes they foretell future events through living men, as is clear in the case of those who suffer from demonic possession (*in arreptitiis*). And this is *divination through soothsayers (divinatio per pythones)*, where, as Isidore explains, "*Pythones* are so-called from Pythius Apollo, who was said to be the author of divination."

Again, sometimes they foretell the future through certain shapes or signs that appear in inanimate things. If they appear in an earthly body such as wood or iron or polished stone, it is called *geomancy (geomantia)*. If they appear in water, it is called hydromancy (*hydromantia*). If they appear in the air, it is called *aeromancy (aeromantia)*. If they appear in fire, it is called *pyromancy (pyromantia)*. And if they appear in the entrails of animals immolated on the altars of the demons, it is called *haruspicy (aruspicium)*.

On the other hand, divination that is done *without an explicit invocation of demons* is divided into two genera.

(a) The first genus occurs when we find something for foretelling the future *in the arrangements of certain things*.

And so if someone tries to foreknow the future by considering the positions and movements of celestial bodies, then this belongs to *astrologers (astrologi)*, who are also called *genealogists (geneatici)* because they take into account dates of birth.

On the other hand, if they do it on the basis of the movements and sounds made by birds—or by any other animals—or on the basis of the sneezes of men or sudden movements of their limbs, then this pertains in general to *augury (augurium)*, a name that comes from the chirping of birds (*a garritu avium*), in the same way that *auspice (auspicium)* comes from the inspection of birds. The first of these pertains to the ears and the second to the eyes, since these are the customarily the parts that are mainly considered in birds.

Again, if consideration is made of the words of men, spoken with some other intention, which someone then twists toward the future that he wishes to have a precognition of, then this is called an *omen*. And so as Maximus Valerius says, "The observance of omens is connected with religion by a certain sort of mingling, since it is thought to be based not on a fortuitous happening, but on divine providence. Thus, when the Romans were thinking about moving on to another position, at that very moment a centurion happened to exclaim, 'Standard-bearer, plant the banner, this is a good place for us to stop!' And when they heard his voice, they took it as an omen and set aside their plan to go on farther."

Again, if certain arrangements of shapes that can be seen in bodies are taken into account, there is another species of divination. For divination taken from an inspection of the lines in a hand is called *chiromancy (chiromantia)*, i.e., divination of the hand, since *chiros* is the Greek for *hand*.

(b) Now the second genus of divination that occurs without an explicit invocation of demons has to do with divination that is done on the basis of consideration of things that happen because of certain things which are done seriously in order to examine the occult, whether through the drawing of lots

(which is called *geomancy (geomantia)*); or through an examination of shapes that form from molten lead being poured into water (*ex plumbo liquefacto in aquam proiecto*); or by seeing who draws which sheet of paper, either with or without writing on it, from a hidden stack of sheets; or observing who takes the longer or shorter of unequal straws presented to them; or who tosses the most points when he throws the dice; or, again, when they look to see what shows up when a book is opened [at random]. All of this goes under the name *making use of lots (sortes)*.

So, then, it is clear that there are *three* genera of divination. The first occurs through an open *invocation of the demons*, and this belongs to *necromancy*. The second occurs through just the *examination* of the arrangement or movement of some other thing, and this belongs to *augury*. The third occurs when we *do something* in order to make something occult manifest itself to us, and this belongs to *making use of lots*. As is clear from what has been said, there are many [species] contained under each of these three [genera].

**Reply to objection 1:** In all the practices discussed above there is same *general* formal character of sinning, but not the same *specific* formal character. For it is much more grievous to invoke the demons than to do certain things which are deserving of the demons' inserting themselves.

**Reply to objection 2:** The cognition of future or hidden things is the ultimate end from which the general formal character of divination is taken. But the diverse species are made distinct by their proper objects or subject matters; that is, they are made distinct insofar as the cognition of what is hidden is looked for in diverse things.

**Reply to objection 3:** The things which the practitioners of divination pay attention to are investigated by them not as signs by which they express what they already know, as happens with [the sin of] detraction, but as sources or principles of cognition. But it is clear that diverse principles diversify species, even in the demonstrative sciences.

#### Article 4

##### Is divination that is done by invoking demons illicit?

It seems that divination that is done by invoking demons is not illicit (*divination quae fit per invocationes daemonum non sit illicita*):

**Objection 1:** Christ did not do anything illicit—this according to 1 Peter 2:22 (“... who committed no sin”). But as Mark 5:9 shows, our Lord asked a demon, “What is your name?” and the demon replied, “Legion, for we are many.” Therefore, it seems licit to ask demons about something that is hidden (*liceat daemonibus aliquid occultum interrogare*).

**Objection 2:** The souls of the saints do not grant favors to those who are asking illicitly. But as we read in 1 Kings 28:8ff, when Saul asked a woman having the spirit of a soothsayer about the outcome of a future war, Samuel appeared and foretold the future event to him. Therefore, divination that is done by asking demons is not illicit.

**Objection 3:** It seems licit to inquire after a truth which it is useful to know from one who knows it. But sometimes, as is clear with the discovery of thefts, it is useful to know something hidden which can be known through demons. Therefore, divination that is done by invoking demons is not illicit.

**But contrary to this:** Deuteronomy 18:10-11 says, “Let there not be anyone among you who makes inquires of fortune tellers or consults soothsayers (*non inveniatur in te qui ariolos sciscitetur, neque pythones consulat*).”

**I respond:** Every instance of divination that is done by invoking demons is illicit, and this for two reasons.

The first reason is taken *from the side of the principle of divination*, viz., a pact explicitly entered

into with a demon through the invocation itself of the demon. And this is altogether illicit. Hence, against certain people Isaiah 28:15 says, “You have said, ‘We have struck a deal with death, and we have made a pact with hell.’” And it would be still more grave if reverence or a sacrifice were offered to the demon who has been invoked.

The second reason is taken *from the side of the future outcome*. For a demon intends the perdition of men by responding to them, and even if he sometimes tells the truth, his intention is to get men accustomed to believing him, and in this way he intends to lead them toward something that is detrimental to their salvation. Hence, in commenting on Luke 4:35 (“Jesus rebuked him, saying, ‘Hold your peace ...’”), Athanasius says, “Even though the demon was uttering truths, Christ nonetheless suppressed his speech, lest the demon should also promulgate his iniquity along with the truth, and so as to accustom us to not paying attention to such demons, even if they seem to be uttering truths. For as long as we have the divine Scriptures, it is wicked for us to be instructed by the devil.”

**Reply to objection 1:** As Bede says in commenting on Luke 8:30, “Our Lord asked not as one who did not know the answer, but in order that, with the evil that the man was suffering having now been exposed, the power of the Healer might go forth in a more gracious way.” Moreover, it is one thing to ask something of a demon spontaneously, which is sometimes permitted for the advantage of others, especially when the demons can be compelled by divine power to speak the truth, and it is another thing to invoke a demon in order to acquire from him the cognition of hidden things.

**Reply to objection 2:** As Augustine says in *Ad Simplicianum*, “It is not absurd to believe that, by some dispensation, the spirit of the just man, who was about to shock the king with God’s decision, was permitted to show itself in the sight of the king, not by a ruling magical art or power, but by some hidden arrangement that was unknown to the soothsayer and to Saul.

“An alternative possibility is that the spirit of Samuel was not in reality aroused from its rest, but that instead there was some image or imaginary illusion which was formed by the workings of the devil and which Scripture calls ‘Samuel’, in the way that images are often called by the names of the things of which they are the images.”

**Reply to objection 3:** No sort of temporal advantage can be compared to the loss of spiritual salvation that threatens an inquiry into hidden things by means of the invocation of demons.

## Article 5

### Is divination that makes use of celestial bodies illicit?

It seems that divination that makes use of celestial bodies is not illicit (*divination quae fit per astra non illicita*):

**Objection 1:** It is licit to foretell effects on the basis of an examination of their causes, in the way that physicians foretell death from state of an illness. But as even Dionysius admits in *De Divinis Nominibus*, chap. 4, celestial bodies (*corpora caelestia*) are a cause of those things which occur in this world. Therefore, divination that makes use of celestial bodies (*astra*) is not illicit.

**Objection 2:** As is clear from the Philosopher at the beginning of the *Metaphysics*, human science takes its origin from experiences (*ex experimentis*). But it is through many experiences that some individuals have ascertained by examining the celestial bodies that some future events can be foreknown. Therefore, it does not seem illicit to make use of this sort of divination.

**Objection 3:** Divination is said to be illicit because it relies on a pact entered into with demons. But this does not happen in divination that makes use of celestial bodies; instead, it is only the arrangement of God’s creatures that is examined. Therefore, it seems that divination of this sort is not illicit.

**But contrary to this:** In *Confessiones* 4 Augustine says, “I did not stop consulting those astrologers (*astrologi*) whom they call the mathematicians, because they did not have sacrifices, and no prayers were directed toward any spirit for the sake of divination. Still, Christian piety and true piety drives out and condemns such consultations.”

**I respond:** As has been explained (aa. 1-2), the operation of a demon inserts itself into the sort of divination that begins with false or vain opinions in order to entangle the minds of men in the vanity or the falsehood. Now one makes use of a vain or false opinion if, on the basis of examining the celestial bodies (*stellae*), he wishes to have precognition of future events that cannot in fact be foreknown through them.

Therefore, we must figure out what *can* be foreknown about future events by means of an inspection of the celestial bodies (*caelestia corpora*).

As regards those things that occur by necessity, it is clear that they can be known by inspecting the celestial bodies (*stellae*), in the way that those who study the celestial bodies (*astrologi*) foretell future eclipses.

However, different writers have made different claims about the precognition of future events on the basis of an examination of the celestial bodies (*stellae*):

For instance, some have claimed that the celestial bodies (*stellae*) *signify* rather than *bring about* those things that can be foretold by examining them. But this is an unreasonable claim. For every corporeal sign either (a) is an effect of that which it is a sign of, in the way that smoke is a sign of the fire by which it is caused, or else (b) it proceeds from the same cause and so, as long as it signifies the cause, it signifies the effect as a consequence, in the way that a rainbow sometimes signifies calmness because its cause is [also] the cause of the calmness. However, one cannot claim that the arrangements and movements of the celestial bodies (*caelestia corpora*) are the effects of future events. Nor, again, can those arrangements and movements be traced back to some higher common cause that is corporeal.

Now they can indeed be traced back to a single common cause, viz., divine providence. However, the movements and positions of the celestial bodies (*caelestia corpora*) are arranged by divine providence in one way, whereas the outcomes of future contingents are arranged in another way, since the former are arranged with the character of necessity, so that they always occur in the same way, whereas the latter are arranged with the character of contingency, so that they occur in varying ways. Hence, precognition of future events can be obtained by inspecting the celestial bodies (*sidera*) only in the way in which effects are foreknown from their causes.

Now there are two sorts of effects that can be excluded from the causality of the celestial bodies (*caelestia corpora*):

(a) *Every effect that occurs incidentally (omnes effectus per accidens contingentes)*, whether in human affairs or among natural things. For as is proved in *Metaphysics* 6, a *per accidens* being does not have a cause—especially a natural cause of the sort that the power of celestial bodies (*caelestia corpora*) is. For what comes to be incidentally (*per accidens*) is neither a being nor a unity properly speaking (*neque est ens proprie neque unum*), e.g., that an earthquake should occur while a stone is falling, or that a treasure should be found while a man is digging a grave. For these events and others like them are not unities, but multiplicities, absolutely speaking. By contrast, a natural operation is always terminated in some unity, just as it proceeds from a unified principle, viz., the form of a natural thing.

(b) *Acts of free choice (actus liberi arbitrii)*, which is a power of the will and reason, are likewise excluded from the causality of the celestial bodies (*caelestia corpora*). For, as is clear from the Philosopher in *De Anima* 3, the intellect (*intellectus*) or reason (*ratio*) is not a body or the act of any corporeal organ and, as a result, neither is the will, which exists within reason. For a body cannot impress anything on an incorporeal entity. Hence, it is impossible for celestial bodies to directly impress anything on the will and intellect, since this would be to claim that the intellect does not differ from a sentient power, a view that in *De Anima* Aristotle imputed to those who claimed that “what men will is like what

is brought about during the day by the Father of men and of gods”—i.e., the sun or the heavens (*sol vel caelum*).

Hence, celestial bodies (*corpora caelestia*) cannot be a *per se* cause of the works of free choice. However, they can, as a disposing cause (*dispositive*), incline [power of free choice] insofar as they impress something on the human body and, as a result, on the sentient powers, which are acts of corporeal organs that incline one toward human acts. Still, because, as is clear from the Philosopher in *De Anima* 3 and *Ethics* 1, the sentient powers obey reason, no necessity is thereby imposed on free choice, but instead a man is able, through reason, to act contrary to the inclination imparted by the celestial bodies (*caelestia corpora*).

Therefore, if anyone wants to make use of his inspection of the celestial bodies (*astra*) in order to have precognition of future of future events that are chance events or fortuitous events, or likewise to foreknow with certainty future human acts, this will proceed from a false and vain opinion. And so the operation of a demon will be mixed in with it. Hence, it will be an instance of superstitious divination and will be illicit.

On the other hand, if someone makes use of an investigation of the celestial bodies (*astra*) in order to know future events that are caused by the those bodies, e.g., droughts and rains and other things of this sort, then this will not be either illicit divination or superstitious.

**Reply to objection 1:** This makes clear the reply to the first objection.

**Reply to objection 2:** There are two ways in which it happens that those who study the celestial bodies (*astrologi*) frequently foretell truths on the basis of their examination of the those bodies (*astra*).

In one way, because most men follow their corporeal passions, and so their acts are disposed, for the most part, in accord with the inclination imparted by the celestial bodies, whereas there are only a few, viz., the wise, who moderate inclinations of this sort with reason. And this is how those who study the celestial bodies (*astrologi*) foretell truths in many cases, and especially in common events that depend on the multitudes.

In a second way, because of the demons joining in. Hence, in *Super Genesis ad Litteram* 2 Augustine says, “When truths are spoken by the astrologers (*mathematici*), it must be admitted that those truths are spoken by means of a deeply hidden instinct which human minds are unknowingly subject to. And when this happens in order to deceive men, it is the action of unclean and seductive spirits who are permitted to know certain truths about temporal affairs.” Hence, he concludes, “For this reason, a good Christian should be wary of astrologers (*mathematici*) or of anyone who impiously offers divinations, and especially of the ones who speak truths, lest, in league with the demons, they entangle his deceived soul in a sort of pact of fellowship.”

**Reply to objection 3:** This makes clear the reply to the third objection.

## Article 6

### Is divination that makes use of dreams illicit?

It seems that divination that makes use of dreams is not illicit (*divinatio quae fit per somnia non illicita*):

**Objection 1:** To make use of God’s instruction is not illicit. But men are instructed by God in dreams; for instance, Job 33:15-16 says, “By a dream in a vision by night, when deep sleep falls upon men, and they lie sleeping in their beds, then He”—that is, God—“opens the ears of men and, instructing them, teaches them what they are to learn.” Therefore, to use divination that is done through dreams is not illicit.

**Objection 2:** Those who interpret dreams are, properly speaking, making use of the divination of



dreams. But we read of holy men interpreting dreams, in the way that Joseph interprets the dreams of Pharaoh's butler and chief cook, as we read in Genesis 40:8ff., along with the dream of Pharaoh, as we read in Genesis 41:15ff. Again, Daniel interpreted the dream of the king of Babylon, as is reported in Daniel 2:26ff. and Daniel 4:5. Therefore, the divination that makes use of dreams is not illicit.

**Objection 3:** It is unreasonable to deny what men commonly experience. But everyone experiences that dreams signify something about future events. Therefore, it is vain to deny that dreams have the force of divination. Therefore, it is licit to pay attention to them.

**But contrary to this:** Deuteronomy 18:10 says, "Let there not be anyone among you who takes notice of dreams."

**I respond:** As has been explained (aa. 2, 5), divination that is based on false opinion is superstitious and illicit. Therefore, we must take into account what is true about the precognition of the future from dreams.

Now dreams about future events are, to be sure, sometimes a *cause*, e.g., when someone's mind, solicitous about what it sees in dreams, is induced to do something or to avoid something.

On the other hand, sometimes dreams are a *sign* of some future events, insofar as they are traced back to some cause that is common to both the dreams and the future events. This is in most cases the way in which precognitions of future events are effected by dreams.

Therefore, we have to investigate (a) what the cause of dreams is, and (b) whether a dream can be a cause of future events, or (c) whether it is possible to know these things.

Note, therefore, that the causes of dreams are sometimes *interior* and sometimes *exterior*.

Now there are two *interior* causes of dreams.

One belongs to the *soul* (*una animalis*), viz., to the extent that the things that occur to a man's imagination in sleep are those that his cogitation and affections were occupied with when he was awake. And this sort of cause of dreams is not a cause of future events. Hence, dreams of this sort are related incidentally to future events, and if they sometimes go together, this will be a matter of chance.

On the other hand, the interior cause of dreams is sometimes *corporeal*. For from the interior disposition of the body certain movements are formed in the imagination which are appropriate to that disposition; for instance, a man in whom cold humors abound might dream that he is in water or in snow. And for this reason physicians claim that one must pay attention to dreams in order to discover the interior dispositions.

Now the *exterior* causes of dreams are likewise twofold, viz., the *corporeal* and the *spiritual*:

The cause is *corporeal* insofar as the sleeper's imagination is affected by the ambient air or by an impression made by a celestial body in such a way that some images appear that conform to the arrangement of the celestial bodies.

On the other hand, the *spiritual* cause is, to be sure, sometimes from God, who by the ministry of the angels reveals certain things to men in dreams—this according to Numbers 12:6 ("If there is among you a prophet of the Lord, I will appear to him in a vision, or I will speak to him in a dream"). But it is sometimes by an operation of the demons that certain images appear to sleepers, and through these images the demons sometimes reveal certain future events to those who have made an illicit pact with them.

So, then, it should be said that if someone makes use of dreams in order to have precognition of future events insofar as the dreams proceed either from (a) God's revelation or from (b) a natural cause, whether interior or exterior, given that the power of this natural cause is sufficient [for the relevant future effect] (*quantum se potest virtus talis causae extendere*), then the divination will not be illicit. On the other hand, if a divination of this sort is caused by a revelation from demons with whom one has either an explicit pact because they were invoked for this purpose, or an implicit pact, then, since a divination of this sort extends to what it is incapable of extending to, it will be an illicit and superstitious divination.

**Reply to objection 1 and objection 2 and objection 3:** The replies to the objections are clear from what has been said.

## Article 7

### Is divination that makes use of auguries and omens and other such observations of exterior things illicit?

It seems that divination that makes use of auguries and omens and other such observations of exterior things is not illicit (*divinatio quae est per auguria et omina et alias huiusmodi observationes exteriorum rerum non sit illicita*):

**Objection 1:** If this sort of divination were illicit, then saintly men would not make use of it. But we read that Joseph paid attention to auguries; for Genesis 44:5 relates that Joseph's steward said, "The cup which you have stolen is that from which my lord drinks and in which he is wont to make divinations (*augurari*).” And afterwards (Genesis 44:15) he himself said to his brothers, "Do you not know that there is no one like me in the science of divining through auguries (*in augurandi scientia*)?" Therefore, it is not illicit to make use of this sort of divination.

**Objection 2:** Certain birds have natural cognition of the future unfolding of the seasons (*circa futuros temporum eventus naturaliter cognoscunt*)—this according to Jeremiah 8:7 ("The kite (*milvus*) in the air has known their time; the turtle (*turtur*), the swallow (*hirundo*), and the stork (*ciconia*) have observed the time of their coming"). But natural cognition is infallible and comes from God. Therefore, to make use of the cognition of birds in order to foreknow the future, i.e., to divine through auguries (*quod est augurari*), does not seem to be illicit.

**Objection 3:** As is clear from Hebrews 11:32, Gideon is numbered among the saints. But as we read in Judges 7:13, Gideon made use of an omen by the fact that he listened to the report of, and interpretation of, a dream. And, as we read in Genesis 24:13-15, something similar occurred with Abraham's servant Eliezer. Therefore, it seems that divination of the sort in question is not illicit.

**But contrary to this:** Deuteronomy 18:10 says, "Let there not be found among you anyone that does observations of omens (*qui observet auguria*).”

**I respond:** It is obvious that (a) the movements or chirping of birds, or any sort of conditions that might be inspected in things, are not a cause of future events, and hence that (b) future events cannot be known from them as from their causes.

Therefore, it follows that if the future can indeed be known from them, this will be insofar as they are the effects of certain causes that also either cause or foreknow the future events. Now the cause of the operations of non-rational animals is a certain instinct by which they are moved in the manner of a nature, since they do not have dominion over their acts. But there are two causes from which this instinct can proceed.

In one way, it proceeds from a *corporeal cause*. For since non-rational animals have only a sentient soul, all of whose powers are acts of corporeal organs, their souls are subject to the arrangement of the surrounding bodies and, in the first place, of the celestial bodies. And so nothing prevents some of their operations from being signs of future things, insofar as those operations are conformed to the arrangements of the celestial bodies and of the surrounding air, from which certain future events proceed. But here it is necessary to consider two points. The first is that, as was explained above (aa. 5-6), operations of this sort extend only to foreknowing those future events that are caused by the movements of the celestial bodies. The second is that the operations in question extend only to those things which pertain to animals of the relevant sort. For these animals attain through the celestial bodies a certain natural cognition and instinct for those things that are necessary for their lives, such as the changes which are effected by rains and winds and other things of this sort.

In the second way, instincts of the sort in question are caused by a *spiritual cause*, viz. either (a) by God, as is clear in the case of the dove that descended upon Christ (Matthew 3:16), and in the case of a raven that fed Elijah (3 Kings 17:4-6), and in the case of the whale that swallowed and spewed forth Jonah (Jonah 3:1); or (b) even by the demons, who make use of the these sorts of operations on the part

of non-rational animals in order to entangle souls in vain opinions.

And the same line of reasoning seems to hold for all the other things of this sort, especially omens. For instance, human words that are taken as an omen are not subject to the arrangement of the celestial bodies (*stellae*). They are, however, arranged in accord with divine providence and sometimes in accord with the action of demons.

So, then, one should claim that all divination of the sort in question, if it goes beyond what it can attain to within the order of nature or of divine providence, is superstitious and illicit.

**Reply to objection 1:** According to Augustine, when Joseph said that there was no one like him in the science of divining through auguries, he was speaking in jest and not seriously, referring perhaps to the common opinion about him. And it was in this sense as well that his steward was speaking.

**Reply to objection 2:** The cited passage is talking about the cognition that birds have with respect to those things that pertain to them. And it is not illicit to examine their sounds and movements in order to foreknow these things—as, for instance, if someone predicts that it will soon rain from the fact that a crow is cawing repeatedly.

**Reply to objection 3:** Gideon observed the recitation and explanation of the dream by taking them as an omen that was, as it were, ordered toward instructing him by divine providence. Similarly, Eliezer paid attention to the girl's words after beginning with a prayer to God.

## Article 8

### Is divination that makes use of lots illicit?

It seems that divination that makes use of lots is not illicit (*divinatio sortium non sit illicita*):

**Objection 1:** Augustine's Gloss on Psalm 30:16 ("My lots are in your hands") says, "It is not bad to cast lots, but instead it is something that indicates God's will in the face of human doubt."

**Objection 2:** The observances of holy men that we read about in the Scriptures do not seem to be illicit. But in both the Old Testament and the New Testament, we find holy men making use of lots. For instance, we read in Joshua 7 that, by the command of the Lord, Joshua used a judgment by lot to punish Achar, who had taken something from what was forbidden (*de anathema surripuerat*). Likewise, as we read in 1 Kings 14:38, Saul discovered by the casting of lots that his son Jonathan had eaten the honey. Again, we read in Jonah 1:7 that Jonah, fleeing from the face of the Lord and having been discovered by the casting of lots, was thrown into the sea. Again, we read in Luke 1:9 that it was Zachariah's "lot to place the incense." As we read in Acts 1:26, it was likewise by lot that Matthias was chosen by the apostles to become an apostle. Therefore, it seems that divination the makes use of lots is not illicit.

**Objection 3:** The fist-fighting which is called *monomachia*, i.e., single combat, along with trials by fire and water, which are called 'popular trials', seem to belong to divination by lot, since something uncertain (*occulta*) is being sought by their means. But practices of this type do not seem illicit, since, as we read in 1 Kings 17:32ff., David likewise entered into single combat with the Philistine. Therefore, it seems that divination the makes use of lots is not illicit.

**But contrary to this:** *Decretals* 26, q. 5 says, "We decree that the casting of lots, by which you make decisions in all your undertakings and which the Fathers condemned, is nothing but divination and sorcery. For this reason our will is that this practice be altogether condemned, and henceforth we do not want it mentioned among Christians, and we forbid its practice under pain of anathema."

**I respond:** As was explained above (a. 3), 'by lot' is used properly when one thing is done in order that, when its outcome is inspected, something that was hidden or unknown (*occultum*) might come to light.

If what is sought through a judgment by lot is what should be proffered to someone—whether it be a possession, or an honor or office, or a punishment, or an action—it is called *distribution by lot* (*sors*

*divisoria*). On the other hand, if it is being asked what it is necessary to do, then it is called *consultation by lot* (*sors consultoria*). By contrast, if it is being asked what the future holds, then it is called *divination by lot*.

Now those acts on the part of men that are required for making use of lots are not subject to the arrangement of the celestial bodies, and neither are their outcomes. Hence, if one makes use of lots with the intention that the acts required for using lots should achieve their effect in accord with the disposition of the celestial bodies, then this is a false and vain opinion and, as a result, is not devoid of intrusion by demons. Consequently, divination of this sort will be superstitious and illicit.

However, once the arrangement of the celestial bodies is ruled out as a cause, the outcome of the acts required for using lots must be expected to arise either (a) from *fortune* or (b) from *some directing spiritual cause*.

If the outcome is expected to arise from *fortune*, which can have a place only in *distribution by lot*, then the use of lots seems to involve only the vice of vanity, in the sense that individuals, unable to divide something in an agreeable manner, wish to make use of distribution by lot, as if leaving to fortune the question of who gets which part.

On the other hand, if the judgment by lot is expected to arise from *some spiritual cause*, then sometimes it is expected to arise from *demons*, in the way that, as we read in Ezechiel 21:21, “the king of Babylon stood in the highway, at the junction of two roads ... [and] shuffling arrows, he inquired of his idols and inspected the entrails.” And this use of lots is illicit and forbidden by the canons.

By contrast, sometimes the judgment by lot is expected to arise from *God*—this according to Proverbs 16:33 (“Lots are cast into the bowl, but they are regulated by the Lord”). And, as Augustine points out, this use of lots is not bad in its own right. Still, there are four ways in which it can fall into sin.

First, if someone has recourse to lots in the absence of any necessity, this seems to involve [the sin of] tempting God. Hence, in *Super Lucam* Ambrose says, “One who is chosen by lot is not bound by human judgment.”

Second, if someone, even in a case of necessity, makes use of lots without reverence. Hence, in *Super Actus Apostolorum* Bede says, “Those who, compelled by some necessity and following the example of the apostles, think that they need to consult God by making use of lots, should notice that the apostles themselves did not do so except after calling together the assembly of the brethren and pouring out prayer to God.”

Third, if divine oracles are turned to worldly affairs. Hence, in *Ad Inquisitiones Januarii* Augustine says, “As for those who read oracular statements (*sortes*) from the pages of the Gospel, even if one hopes that they do so instead of coming together to consult demons, this custom nonetheless displeases me, viz., that anyone should wish to turn the divine oracles to worldly matters and to the vain things of this life.”

Fourth, if some make use of lots in ecclesiastical elections, which should arise from the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Hence, as Bede puts it in *Super Actus Apostolorum*, “Matthias, ordained before Pentecost, was chosen by lot”—viz., because the fullness of the Holy Spirit had not yet been poured forth into the Church—“whereas the seven deacons were afterwards ordained not by lot, but by the choice of the disciples.” However, it is different with secular positions, which are ordered toward managing worldly goods. In choosing individuals for these positions, men very often make use of lots, just as they do in dividing up temporal possessions.

Still, if there is an urgent necessity, it is licit to ask, with due reverence, for God’s judgment by lot. Hence, in his letter *Ad Honoratum* Augustine says, “If, in a time of persecution, the ministers of God do not agree as to who among them should remain, lest everyone flee, and who among them should flee, lest the Church be destroyed by everyone’s dying, and if the disagreement cannot be ended in any other way, then, as far as I can see, it should be decided by lot who should stay and who should flee.” Again, in *De Doctrina Christiana* 1 Augustine says, “If you have an overabundance of something which should be given away to someone who is in need but which cannot be given to two people, and if two people come

to you, neither of whom surpasses the other either in need or in having some claim upon you, then there is nothing more just for you to do than to choose by lot the one to whom you should give what cannot be given to both.”

**Reply to objection 1 and objection 2:** What has been said makes clear the replies to the first objection and the second objection.

**Reply to objection 3:** Trial by hot iron, or trial by boiling water, is ordered toward the inquiry into someone’s hidden sin, by means of something done by man, and in this it agrees with making use of lots; however, insofar as it anticipates some miraculous effect by God, it exceeds the common understanding of making use of lots. Hence, a judgment of this sort is rendered illicit, both because (a) it is ordered toward judging hidden things that are reserved to God’s judgment, and because (b) judgment of this sort is not sanctioned by God’s authority. Hence, in *Decretals 2*, q. 5, in the decree of Pope Stephen, it says, “The sacred canons do not approve of wringing a confession from anyone by means of trial by hot iron or trial by boiling water, and no one should undertake on his own, by a superstitious innovation, something that is not sanctioned by the writings of the holy Fathers. For it is permissible for *public* crimes to be judged by our authority, trembling with fear before the eyes of God, after a spontaneous confession or after proof provided by witnesses. But what is *hidden* and *unknown* must be left to Him who alone knows the hearts of the children of men.”

The same line of reasoning seems to apply to the law governing single combat (*de lege duellorum*), except that this comes closer to the common character of the use of lots insofar as no miraculous effect is anticipated—except perhaps when the combatants are very unequal in power or in skill.