

**Objection 1.** It would seem that an aureole is not due on account of virginity. For where there is greater difficulty in the work, a greater reward is due. Now widows have greater difficulty than virgins in abstaining from the works of the flesh. For Jerome says (Ep. ad Ageruch.) that the greater difficulty certain persons experience in abstaining from the allurements of pleasure, the greater their reward, and he is speaking in praise of widows. Moreover, the Philosopher says (De Anim. Hist. vii) that “young women who have been deflowered desire sexual intercourse the more for the recollection of the pleasure.” Therefore the aureole which is the greatest reward is due to widows more than to virgins.

**Objection 2.** Further, if an aureole were due to virginity, it would be especially found where there is the most perfect virginity. Now the most perfect virginity is in the Blessed Virgin, wherefore she is called the Virgin of virgins: and yet no aureole is due to her because she experienced no conflict in being continent, for she was not infected with the corruption of the fomes<sup>\*</sup>. Therefore an aureole is not due to virginity.

**Objection 3.** Further, a special reward is not due to that which has not been at all times praiseworthy. Now it would not have been praiseworthy to observe virginity in the state of innocence, since then was it commanded: “Increase and multiply and fill the earth” (Gn. 1:28): nor again during the time of the Law, since the barren were accursed. Therefore an aureole is not due to virginity.

**Objection 4.** Further, the same reward is not due to virginity observed, and virginity lost. Yet an aureole is sometimes due to lost virginity; for instance if a maiden be violated unwillingly at the order of a tyrant for confessing Christ. Therefore an aureole is not due to virginity.

**Objection 5.** Further, a special reward is not due to that which is in us by nature. But virginity is inborn in every man both good and wicked. Therefore an aureole is not due to virginity.

**Objection 6.** Further, as widowhood is to the sixtyfold fruit, so is virginity to the hundredfold fruit, and to the aureole. Now the sixtyfold fruit is not due to every widow, but only, as some say, to one who vows to remain a widow. Therefore it would seem that neither is the aureole due to any kind of virginity, but only to that which is observed by vow.

**Objection 7.** Further, reward is not given to that which is done of necessity, since all merit depends on the will. But some are virgins of necessity, such as those who are naturally cold-blooded, and eunuchs. Therefore an aureole is not always due to virginity.

**On the contrary,** A gloss on Ex. 25:25: “Thou shalt also make a little golden crown [coronam aureolam]” says: “This crown denotes the new hymn which the virgins sing in the presence of the Lamb, those, to wit, who follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth.” Therefore the reward due to virginity is called an aureole.

Further, It is written (Is. 56:4): “Thus saith the Lord to

the eunuchs”: and the text continues (Is. 56: 5): “I will give to them...a name better than sons and daughters”: and a gloss<sup>†</sup> says: “This refers to their peculiar and transcendent glory.” Now the eunuchs “who have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven” (Mat. 19:12) denote virgins. Therefore it would seem that some special reward is due to virginity, and this is called the aureole.

**I answer that,** Where there is a notable kind of victory, a special crown is due. Wherefore since by virginity a person wins a signal victory over the flesh, against which a continuous battle is waged: “The flesh lusteth against the spirit,” etc. (Gal. 5:17), a special crown called the aureole is due to virginity. This indeed is the common opinion of all; but all are not agreed as to the kind of virginity to which it is due. For some say that the aureole is due to the act. So that she who actually remains a virgin will have the aureole provided she be of the number of the saved. But this would seem unreasonable, because in this case those who have the will to marry and nevertheless die before marrying would have the aureole. Hence others hold that the aureole is due to the state and not to the act: so that those virgins alone merit the aureole who by vow have placed themselves in the state of observing perpetual virginity. But this also seems unreasonable, because it is possible to have the same intention of observing virginity without a vow as with a vow. Hence it may be said otherwise that merit is due to every virtuous act commanded by charity. Now virginity comes under the genus of virtue in so far as perpetual incorruption of mind and body is an object of choice, as appears from what has been said above (Sent. iv, D, 33, q. 3, Aa. 1,2)<sup>‡</sup>. Consequently the aureole is due to those virgins alone, who had the purpose of observing perpetual virginity, whether or no they have confirmed this purpose by vow—and this I say with reference to the aureole in its proper signification of a reward due to merit—although this purpose may at some time have been interrupted, integrity of the flesh remaining withal, provided it be found at the end of life, because virginity of the mind may be restored, although virginity of the flesh cannot. If, however, we take the aureole in its broad sense for any joy added to the essential joy of heaven, the aureole will be applicable even to those who are incorrupt in flesh, although they had not the purpose of observing perpetual virginity. For without doubt they will rejoice in the incorruption of their body, even as the innocent will rejoice in having been free from sin, although they had no opportunity of sinning, as in the case of baptized children. But this is not the proper meaning of an aureole, although it is very commonly taken in this sense.

**Reply to Objection 1.** In some respects virgins experience a greater conflict in remaining continent; and in other respects, widows, other things being equal. For virgins are inflamed by concupiscence, and by the desire of experience, which arises from a certain curiosity as it were, which makes man more willing to see what he has never seen. Sometimes, moreover, this concupiscence is increased by their esteem-

<sup>\*</sup> Cf. IIIa, q. 27, a. 3. <sup>†</sup> St. Augustine, De Virginit. xxv. <sup>‡</sup> Cf. IIIa, q. 152, Aa. 1,3.

ing the pleasure to be greater than it is in reality, and by their failing to consider the grievances attaching to this pleasure. In these respects widows experience the lesser conflict, yet theirs is the greater conflict by reason of their recollection of the pleasure. Moreover, in different subjects one motive is stronger than another, according to the various conditions and dispositions of the subject, because some are more susceptible to one, and others to another. However, whatever we may say of the degree of conflict, this is certain—that the virgin’s victory is more perfect than the widow’s, for the most perfect and most brilliant kind of victory is never to have yielded to the foe: and the crown is due, not to the battle but to the victory gained by the battle.

**Reply to Objection 2.** There are two opinions about this. For some say that the Blessed Virgin has not an aureole in reward of her virginity, if we take aureole in the proper sense as referring to a conflict, but that she has something more than an aureole, on account of her most perfect purpose of observing virginity. Others say that she has an aureole even in its proper signification, and that a most transcendent one: for though she experienced no conflict, she had a certain conflict of the flesh, but owing to the exceeding strength of her virtue, her flesh was so subdued that she did not feel this conflict. This, however, would seem to be said without reason, for since we believe the Blessed Virgin to have been altogether immune from the inclination of the fomes on account of the perfection of her sanctification, it is wicked to suppose that there was in her any conflict with the flesh, since such like conflict is only from the inclination of the fomes, nor can temptation from the flesh be without sin, as declared by a gloss\* on 2 Cor. 12:7, “There was given me a sting of my flesh.” Hence we must say that she has an aureole properly speaking, so as to be conformed in this to those other members of the Church in whom virginity is found: and although she had no conflict by reason of the temptation which is of the flesh, she had the temptation which is of the enemy, who feared not even Christ (Mat. 4).

**Reply to Objection 3.** The aureole is not due to virginity except as adding some excellence to the other degrees of continence. If Adam had not sinned, virginity would have had no perfection over conjugal continence, since in that case marriage would have been honorable, and the marriage-bed unsullied, for it would not have been dishonored by lust: hence virginity would not then have been observed, nor would an aureole have been due to it. But the condition of

human nature being changed, virginity has a special beauty of its own, and consequently a special reward is assigned to it.

During the time of the Mosaic law, when the worship of God was to be continued by means of the carnal act, it was not altogether praiseworthy to abstain from carnal intercourse: wherefore no special reward would be given for such a purpose unless it came from a Divine inspiration, as is believed to have been the case with Jeremias and Elias, of whose marriage we do not read.

**Reply to Objection 4.** If a virgin is violated, she does not forfeit the aureole, provided she retain unfailingly the purpose of observing perpetual virginity, and nowise consent to the act. Nor does she forfeit virginity thereby; and be this said, whether she be violated for the faith, or for any other cause whatever. But if she suffer this for the faith, this will count to her for merit, and will be a kind of martyrdom: wherefore Lucy said: “If thou causest me to be violated against my will, my chastity will receive a double crown”†; not that she has two aureoles of virginity, but that she will receive a double reward, one for observing virginity, the other for the outrage she has suffered. Even supposing that one thus violated should conceive, she would not for that reason forfeit her virginity: nor would she be equal to Christ’s mother, in whom there was integrity of the flesh together with integrity of the mind‡.

**Reply to Objection 5.** Virginity is inborn in us as to that which is material in virginity: but the purpose of observing perpetual incorruption, whence virginity derives its merit, is not inborn, but comes from the gift of grace.

**Reply to Objection 6.** The sixtyfold fruit is due, not to every widow, but only to those who retain the purpose of remaining widows, even though they do not make it the matter of a vow, even as we have said in regard to virginity.

**Reply to Objection 7.** If cold-blooded persons and eunuchs have the will to observe perpetual incorruption even though they were capable of sexual intercourse, they must be called virgins and merit the aureole: for they make a virtue of necessity. If, on the other hand, they have the will to marry if they could, they do not merit the aureole. Hence Augustine says (De Sancta Virgin. xxiv): “For those like eunuchs whose bodies are so formed that they are unable to beget, it suffices when they become Christians and keep the commandments of God, that they have a mind to have a wife if they could, in order to rank with the faithful who are married.”

\* St. Augustine, De Civ. Dei xix, 4.

† Office of S. Lucy; lect. vi of Dominican Breviary, December 13th.

‡ Cf. IIa IIae, q. 64, a. 3, ad 3; IIa IIae, q. 124, a. 4, ad 2; IIa IIae, q. 152, a. 1.