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ST. BONAVENTURE:

DEFENSE OF THE MENDICANTS

APOLOGIA PAUPERUM

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Bonaventura, Saint, Cardinal, 1221-1274



THE WORKS OF BONAVENTURE

CARDINAL
SERAPHIC DOCTOR
AND SAINT

Translated from the Latin by José de Vinck
Docteur en Droit of Louvain University

IV

DEFENSE OF THE MENDICANTS

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The end-sheet decoration of the present series is symbolical of a revealing incident in the life of Bonaventure. On his way to Rome to receive the Red Hat of a Cardinal, he stopped at a small Franciscan monastery. That is where the papal delegation met him: he was busily washing the dishes. With utter simplicity, he asked them to leave the hat on a bush until he was through with his task.

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FOREWORD

St. Bonaventure's "Defense of the Mendicants" (Apologia pauperum) *has been acclaimed as the highest example of his literary talent and as a masterpiece of the art of polemics. It needs, however, to be seen in its own historical context if it is to be fully appreciated. It is so thoroughly medieval in both approach and expression that the translator is faced with the choice either of maintaining the original flavor at the risk of disconcerting the reader, or of modernizing the text at the risk of misquoting the author. A reasonable compromise has seemed to consist in maintaining the ancient structure with the quaint chapter headings, while rendering the thought in a language as modern as possible without forcing Bonaventure's meaning.*

We must try to comprehend, as a background for reading this work, how disturbing to the thirteenth-century religious society the appearance of the Mendicant Orders must have been. Their very existence was a living reproach to the well-appointed scholars; while, on the other hand, their dependence on alms encroached upon revenues that would have normally flowed into the coffers of established ecclesiastic institutions. It must be added that in certain areas the Mendicants did in fact abuse their true and proper privileges, draining away all available contributions for themselves.

The "Defense of the Mendicants" is an able and effective justification of religious poverty in both aspects, spiritual and material, against the attacks of wealthy clerics whose argumentation sometimes lacks even the appearance

of good faith. Every point propounded by Bonaventure was so thoroughly endorsed by successive Popes that the opposite views held by the Seculars of the University of Paris ended in being explicitly condemned.

The major conflict was not financial: it raged on the battlefield of academic rights, and originated in the double allegiance to which Franciscan and Dominican teachers at the University were subject. The Mendicants refused total submission to such University statutes as were in contradiction with those of their Orders, while the Masters of the University denied full accreditation to the Mendicants unless they complied unconditionally with University law. The problem seems not to have been solved until long after the establishment at the University of Franciscan and Dominican chairs of Theology. Final victory for the Mendicants came in 1257 with the simultaneous acceptance of Thomas Aquinas and Bonaventure as Regent Masters of the University. For Bonaventure, the honor was of little practical value since his election as Minister General of the Friars Minor five months before had put an end to his academic career.

The medieval mind—and Bonaventure is no exception—has a narrowly ascetical and clerical notion of the perfection of life. Time and again in the writings of theologians of the period the declaration is made that none but professed religious have a chance of becoming perfect, and that all laymen are necessarily imperfect because of the very state in which they live. This same concept, uncritically repeated or at least implied in most of the relevant textbooks of moral theology, has been done away with definitely and authoritatively by Pope Pius XII writing to Bishop Charue of Namur, Belgium, in response to a

question about the relative merit of members of the regular and secular clergy. A passage from this letter, written in French on July 13, 1952, reads in translation:

"Thus it [the state of perfection] is not related to the personal perfection of the individual: this is measured by the degree of love, of 'theological charity,' which has been brought about in him. The criterion of the intensity and purity of love, according to the Master's words, consists in the fulfillment of God's will. Hence, the individual is personally the more perfect before God as he accomplishes more perfectly the divine intention. In this regard, the state in which he lives is of little importance, be it lay or ecclesiastical, and, for the priest, be it secular or regular."

In several instances, Bonaventure shows greater insight than most of his contemporaries, for he makes the same distinction between the state of perfection considered in the abstract and the moral and spiritual perfection of individual men. At one point, however, he seems to forget his own thesis, for he quotes and endorses Bernard's teaching that those who do not practice virginity cannot claim to be disciples of Christ.

The "Defense of the Mendicants" is a classical example of the Proof by Authority. All of its theses are supported with quotations from the writings of Doctors and Saints, who are considered practically infallible in their every pronouncement, which may then be used as absolute proof. Biblical references are also numerous — the Soliloquium* *alone, in fact, among the works of Bonaventure, has a better claim to being called an anthology of the Fathers' works and the Scriptures. At times these citations are interpreted*

*Cf. vol. III of present series.

with greater freedom of imagination than force of logic. There are even some instances of quotation entirely out of context, and several cases of exaggerated emphasis on the letter, as occurs for instance in the discussion of biblical references to clothing and shoes. Such defects may be overlooked with a passing smile at the imperfections of a genius. In none but the most flagrant cases do they rate a comment—or even an exclamation point.

If every detail of medieval teaching that does not coincide with our modern ideas had had to be discussed in full, there would have been more footnotes than actual text—and our goal is not a commentary on Bonaventure, but a presentation of his major works. It seemed better, then—after giving a general warning as to points of possible disagreement—to let the author speak for himself. If some imperfections have been left unattended, this comes from a due sense of proportion. This work of Bonaventure stands as a monument of love and truth, well able to survive on its own and not meriting to be obscured under a shower of criticisms and comments.

J. de V.

Pentecost 1966

SCRIPTURAL QUOTATIONS

In quoting the Scriptures, the general procedure has been to cite the sacred texts in the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine version, for all books which have reached translation at the time of publication of this volume. They are: the New Testament, the Pentateuch, the books of Josue, Judges and Ruth, the Sapiential books (Job to Sirach-Ecclesiasticus), and the Prophetic books (Isaia to Malachia). All other books are cited in the Challoner-Douay translation.

Note also that the Challoner text is used, instead of the Confraternity text, in special cases where it serves Bonaventure's meaning more completely. These special instances show an asterisk after the Scriptural references.

Wherever Bonaventure is quoting the Septuagint Version, the scriptural references indicate it with the abbreviation (Sept.).

NON-SCRIPTURAL REFERENCES

The non-Scriptural references, indicated by small roman numerals, are given at the end of the book, pp. 293ff.

BASIC TEXT

The present translation is based on the Quaracchi Edition of the "Opera Omnia" of St. Bonaventure, by authorization of the Most Reverend Augustine Sépinski, Minister General of the Order of Friars Minor.

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DEFENSE OF THE MENDICANTS

Against a Calumniator

IT IS plainly established by the inviolable law of the supreme Legislator that worship must be rendered the supreme Majesty to the exclusion of any cult of idols: that the created intellect must serve the supreme Truth to the exclusion of any assent to falsehood; that man must strive mightily toward salvation, not yielding to the flesh in its pleasures; finally, that he must consent to the righteousness of God-conforming virtue, shunning the depravity of deforming vice. As we are made essentially to desire, seek, and love the truths of faith and morals, so we are strictly bound to turn away from the opposite errors, with a revulsion that should be the stronger as these errors prove to be the more pernicious. Catholic commentators of Holy Scripture have known this well and have striven to their utmost to eradicate the seedlings of perverse doctrine at once, lest they grow and choke the seed the Lord has sowed.

cf. Jb. 36:22
cf. Ex. 20:2-5
cf. 2 Cor. 10:5
cf. Rom. 12:1f.

2. But in recent times, though the splendor of evangelical truth has shone more brilliantly than ever, we have witnessed a thing we cannot speak of without deep sorrow. There has been diffused abroad, even through the written word, a doctrine that, like a loathsome and horrible exhalation from the bottomless pit, would block the resplendent rays of the very Sun of Justice and darken the sky of Christian minds. Such a pernicious blot must not

cf. Ap. 9:2

be allowed to spread, insulting God and endangering souls all the more as the serpent's cunning lends it a superficial air of piety.

Jb. 41:5 This teaching must be stripped of its *outer garment*, the pit must be clearly exposed. Thus foresight may prevent disaster. And we trust that the author of these great errors, being still alive, may yet by the goodness of God be set aright. Let us appeal in his behalf to Christ, that, remembering the mercy He once displayed to Saul, He may again by the power of His Word and the light of His Wisdom strike the haughty one with terror, cast the proud one down, pursue the erring one and correct him by leading him back to truth.

*Prv. 27:6** *Better are the wounds of a friend than the deceitful kisses of an enemy.* Therefore we should not

*Ps. 140:5** attempt, with *the oil of the sinner*, that is, with flattery, to salve the feeble head of such a man, or to heal the ulcer of his swollen heart. Rather, we should strike with severe reproach the proud skull of one so insolent—not in a spirit of bitterness, but out of the zeal of a balanced mind. As for the pestiferous teaching



itself, it must be refuted through orderly procedure, so that in vindicating the truth the reply shall match the objection, and the defense directly counter the attack.

3. This attack is aimed, first, at toppling the pinnacle of evangelical perfection; second, at demolishing its defenses; third, at subverting its very foundation; fourth, at defaming with false accusations the sincerity of those who are poor for Christ, in order to make them seem loathsome to the world. Against such a fourfold assault, a fourfold reply must be constructed as four lines of defense; and each line must have three sides, as the subject matter demands, so that the soldiers of the Gospel, surrounded by these triangular fortifications, may remain invulnerable and protected against the sharp points of flaming darts.

CHAPTER I

First Point of the First Answer: The Perverse Intention of the Calumniator Is Exposed, and the Lofty Perfection of Christ's True Condescension Explained



CAREFUL reading of the calumnious pamphlet beginning with the words "So great has been the presumption of some men . . . "† will produce clear evidence that it was composed with a zeal not according to knowledge, and that it is entirely devoid of sound doctrine. *cf. Rom. 10:2*

First, it was published in defense of a book full of errors which begins thus: *"Behold, they that see shall cry without . . . "*; a book recently condemned by the Apostolic See. This act of publishing in itself smacks of rebellion, since it spurns the Lawgiver's command sanctioned in Deuteronomy: *If in your community there is a case at issue which proves too complicated for you to decide, . . . you shall then go up . . . to the Levitical priest. . . . According to [his]* *Is. 33:7** *Dt. 17:8-12*

† In reference to the tracts mentioned here, the Quaracchi editors quote an annotation they found in the margin of Codex A, one of the early manuscripts of the "Apologia":

"From what is said here it appears that: 1) William of St. Amour composed the book beginning with the words: "Behold, they that see . . . '; 2) Thomas of York composed the tract beginning with the words: 'The hand that is lifted against the Almighty . . . '; 3) Gerard (of Abbeville) wrote the pamphlet beginning with the words: 'So great has been the presumption . . . '; 4) Bonaventure wrote the present "Apology."

decision . . . you shall act, . . . without turning aside to the right or to the left. . . . Any man who has the insolence to refuse to listen to the priest who officiates there in the ministry of the Lord your God, or to the judge, shall die. Thus, at the time of the figurative priesthood, to oppose the judgment of a pontiff was a crime punishable by death; how much more intolerable, then, at the time of fully revealed truth and grace, and in full knowledge of the plenary power conferred upon the Vicar of Christ,[1] to contradict his definitions in matters of faith and morals, approving what he reproves, restoring what he destroys, and defending what he condemns!

2. Secondly, as has been said, the eye of the attentive reader of this work is at once struck by the blatancy of a doctrine, not sane, but insane and impious. In the first book, the author lavishly praises flight from persecution and death as the characteristic action of the holy and the perfect; while abstinence and fast, under the pretext of their being remedies of spiritual diseases, he ascribes mainly to the imperfect. In the second book, he attempts to prove that the state of those who possess great wealth is admirable, while the state of those who possess nothing is dangerous and imperfect. In the third book, he attempts, with all the cunning and duplicity he can muster, to disparage the poverty and humility of the mendicant religious.

It is obvious that such pernicious teachings are in conflict, not only with the authority of the Apostolic See, but also with that of God and the Lamb. For the Holy Gospels read: Blessed are the poor, blessed are they that mourn, blessed are they that hunger, blessed are they that suffer persecution with joy and longing. In all of this, the Gospels lead to the narrow path which in turn leads to life.

cf. Mt. 5:3ff.

cf. ibid. 7:14

This man, on the contrary, proclaims those perfect and blessed who flee persecution, avoid fasting, accumulate goods, and attain the highest honors! No Christian can be ignorant of the fact that this is foreign to the doctrine of the Saviour. For He, the Teacher of all, always invites His followers, not to the consolations of the flesh, but to the torment of the cross.

cf. Mt. 10:38; 16:24; Mk. 8:34; Lk. 9:23; 14:27

3. Finally, the perverse and bitter fanaticism of the author of this book appears in its title, development, and conclusion. He is writing against a friar who refuted the condemned pamphlet in a tract beginning "The hand that is lifted against the Almighty . . . ," which, both in purpose and in content, defends, supports, and praises the ideal of extreme poverty. This man, by contrast, prefaces his work with a title indicating that it is directed "against the enemy of Christian perfection, of prelatures, and of Church benefits," thereby insinuating that any praise of perfect poverty is an insult to Christ and to the dignity of the Church. In this he shows himself either wicked or ignorant. For either he is deliberately imputing to the innocent an imaginary crime, or he fails to understand that each of the different states of the Church is worthy of its own proper and lofty praise, different in every case, although in no way contradictory of the others. The praise of virginity should not be seen as a disparagement of the married state, nor the praise of solitude a condemnation of cenobitic life. Certainly, Holy Mother Church, who piously sings in tribute to every confessor, *There was not found the like to him in glory, who kept the law of the Most High,* does not thereby decry the glorious choir of the apostles, nor the white-robed host of the martyrs: each state has its own prerogatives for which it may be especially praised without injustice to the others.

*Ecclus. 44:20**

In fact, if the praise of the sons does not decrease, but rather increases, the praise of the fathers, any commendation of the poor in spirit should be seen, not as a debasing of prelates, but rather as their exaltation and glorification.

4. It clearly follows that the work under discussion is based upon a wholly invented charge through which the enemy of the Mendicants attempts to oppose the fathers to the sons, the tutors to the orphans, the providers to their wards; in order that, having deprived them of their patrons' guidance, he may devour the destitute, rob the poor, and murder the innocent.

cf. Ps. 9B:8

In the very introduction of his book, he accuses the Mendicants, among whom his adversary was numbered, of being presumptuous, selfish, complacent, pretentious, and arrogant beyond example, implying that they placed themselves before Christ. His very first words are: "Such is the extent of the presumption of some men who are *lovers of self* and *self-willed,* and who preach their own justice instead of the justice of Christ, that while the Apostle says, *Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ,* they, on the contrary, are saying: Be imitators of us, as we are not of Christ." By starting out in this way, he unquestionably reveals that his whole book originates from *the father of lies, . . .* who *has not stood in truth. . . . He was a murderer from the beginning,* and *the accuser of our brethren.*

2 Tim. 3:2
2 Pt. 2:10
1 Cor. 4:16
Jn. 8:44
Ap. 12:10

5. If men such as he describes exist at all and are to be found among the members of the Church, then assuredly they must be deprived of life, both now and in eternity, since they are utterly puffed up with Luciferian pride. But if such men cannot be found for the reason that they do not exist, either what he is saying is meaningless, so much wind, or else he is intentionally calumniating the innocent,

cf. Jb. 6:26; 15:2

forgetting these words of the Wise Man: *He who oppresses the poor blasphemes his Maker, but he who is kind to the needy glorifies Him.* *Prv. 14:31*

It is truly by providential design that such a foreword introduces this doctrine: it warns the reader that the author speaks, not as a doctor, but as a detractor. The vice of calumny brings about blindness, as Gregory notes in the "Register": "What else do calumniators do but blow upon dust, getting their own eyes full of it? The more they breathe of calumny, the less they perceive of truth."[2]

That is why, as the propounder of this evil teaching continues, he goes from bad to worse, and blind as he is, falls into the pit. For his next words are these: "What else, indeed, do these men have in mind when they teach in their writings that some of the deeds of Christ the Lord were intended, not as a display of His supreme perfection, but as a sign of His condescension toward the weak and the imperfect;† that perfect men are sometimes free to do the opposite without incurring blame—rather, actually deserving praise; and that it is in fact better to do the opposite than to act as Christ did?" This means that he considers as a supreme error, that he abhors and rejects as a poison, the thought that Christ God, whose ways are perfect, ever did anything out of condescension toward the weak and imperfect; and that he believes such condescension to be absolutely foreign to the Exemplar of utter perfection because opposed to perfect righteousness. Even though this theory may appear on the surface to uphold the highest perfection of justice in Christ, and hence to redound to His praise, yet, because it refuses to grant Him

† For definitions of "perfection" and "imperfection," see paragraph 8, below.

the possibility of an act of supreme kindness, it amounts to wickedly denying the flow of the Fountain of Mercy, to cutting off the Way of Salvation: it is therefore a certain blasphemy against the condescending compassion of the eternal King.

6. Therefore, to defend the truth and dispel error, we *1 Kgs. 17:40** have determined, in imitation of David, to choose *five smooth stones out of the brook*—that is, out of the abundant wisdom of Catholic doctrine. If the author wishes to assent to truth with pious faith, he may use these, our weapons; but if he prefers to resist it shamelessly, he shall *ibid. 49** be *struck . . . in the forehead.*

Let him listen first to Augustine's commentary on Psalm *cf. Jn. 12:6; Mt. 27:55* 103: "The Lord had a purse, as is said in the passage on the holy women who ministered to Him out of their own resources. Paul would seek nothing of the sort, but gave everything to the provincial churches; yet, because many of the weak would be seeking such things, Christ had assumed rather the person of the weak. Is Paul, then, higher than Christ? Christ is higher, because more merciful. While knowing that Paul would not seek such things, Christ took care not to condemn one who would, and to provide an example for the weak. Likewise, while He knew that many would go eagerly and happily to the passion of their martyrdom, and would even rejoice in the midst of that passion—the strong, the very old, those who were ripe for the harvest—He also knew that some of the weak would be shaken once the trial was upon them. In order to forestall their failure, and to help conform their human will to that of God, it was their person that Christ chose *Mt. 26:38* to assume in His passion, saying: *'My soul is sad, even unto death.'* "[3]

Could anything more limpidly clear be uttered in reply to the enemy of truth? When Augustine writes that Christ "chose to assume" the person of the weak, this cannot be construed as an indication that He *was* weak, under the pretext of His use of the purse and His fear of the passion. For even Paul and those Augustine describes as going to their passion happily—which he clearly does not count among the weak—were not immune to the shrinking of the flesh, since they too were mortal men.

Again, blessed Ambrose, commenting on the Saviour's words *"Remove this cup from Me,"* has this to say: "Those are mistaken who, relying on this passage, would use the Lord's anguish to prove a weakness in germ from the very beginning rather than one accepted only for a while, and would prefer to distort the natural meaning of the sentence. I personally have never found a better reason to wonder at His love and majesty: He would have given less to me had He not borne my pain."[4] Clearly, then, we may gather that, besides the general fear of death which is common to all—to those who rejoice in their passion no less than to the others—Christ assumed a certain sensitivity, condescending to the weak, both in His flesh and spirit.

Lk. 22:42

Chrysostom also, in his Twenty-seventh Homily, commenting on Matthew, exclaims: "Behold how much tenderness there is in Christ's condescension, in His manner of eating and drinking, as He appears to eat and drink in a way that is different from that of John [the Baptist]! If He does it, it is for the sake of the salvation of the Jews, or rather, for the salvation of the whole world."[5] What could be more clearly said than this? Christ's manner of eating and drinking is explained to be a condescension to the Jews who were utterly weak, not so much in the flesh

cf. Mt. 11: 18-19

as in the spirit, while even John suffered from the weakness of the flesh.†

Gregory, in his twelfth book of "Ethics," has these com-
*Jb. 14:14** ments on the words *Shall man that is dead, thinkest thou, live again?:* "Just men often propose with seeming doubt a doctrine of which they themselves are quite certain; thus borrowing the words of the weak, to which they then oppose a strong affirmation. In this way, through the very doctrine which they seemingly proposed with doubt, by condescending in some measure to the weak, they strengthen them to embrace the truth. In so doing, they follow the example of our Head who, at the approach of His passion,
Lk. 22:42 assumed the voice of the weak when He said: *'Father, if Thou art willing, remove this cup from Me';* but continued in a display of the power of fortitude: *'Yet not My will but Thine be done.'* "[6] In this he clearly proves that condescension to the weakness and imperfections of mortals is characteristic, not only of the stronger members of Christ, but also of the Head Himself.

Finally, Master Hugh, in his exposition of the psalm
Ps. 91:2 *It is good to give thanks to the Lord,* speaks in this manner: "Jesus had a purse, and He accepted that which was given, conforming Himself to the imperfect. But Paul did not wish to accept any financial compensation from the Gospel, and so he attended without pay to the ministry of the word; thus Paul seems to have done something greater than Christ. But Christ wished to be numbered among the imperfect lest

† This may mean that Christ alone, because of His complete dominion over the flesh, could afford to eat as did the Jews, while John, subject to the weakness of the flesh, was bound to fasting if he wanted to be perfect. The reasoning seems dangerously close to that of the Cathari (The Pure Ones) who claimed they were free to perform any act once they had been formally cleansed.

those who took nothing fall into presumption, lest those who accepted gifts be confounded, and lest a man who did [in this matter] what Christ refused to do be suspected of not being a true Christian."[7]

The enemy of Christ's condescension is struck straight in the forehead by this fifth stone, the testimony of our final Catholic doctor. From it may be construed, indeed, that the Master of Perfection had a purse out of condescension; but even more: that it is praiseworthy not to have a purse, in fact more so than to have one.

7. This will appear in a clearer light if we consider the fact that, as "good" and "evil" may each have three possible meanings, so may "perfection" and "imperfection"[8]: that is, by nature, through circumstances, or in themselves. That is good by nature which consists in a transient act related to a proper matter, such as going to church, or giving alms. That is good through circumstances which consists in an act which receives its qualification from praiseworthy conditions, such as giving alms in accord with the circumstances of the gift, the giver, and the receiver, of the time, place, and persons concerned. In both cases, goodness may be destroyed by some defective particular, and especially by a disordering of the intention; as, for instance, if one gives alms, or fasts, or goes to church, in order to obtain from the act some human glory. Finally, a thing is good in itself when it can never be turned into evil, for instance, an act of virtue proceeding from the root of love.

In the same way, "evil" also is used in three senses. That is called evil by nature which consists in an act dealing with a forbidden matter, such as killing a man. It is called evil by circumstances when it consists in an act that receives its

qualification from disordered conditions, for instance, eating outside of the time appointed by the rule. Finally, it is called evil in itself when it cannot possibly become good: when it consists in one of those acts which, to quote Aristotle, "are connected with evil as soon as they are mentioned"[9] — for instance, lying, fornication, hatred of the truth, and approval of error.

8. Similarly, "perfection" also is used in three senses. That is perfect by nature which consists in an act both difficult and excellent, for instance, giving up everything, or entering the religious life. That is perfect through circumstances which consists in an act difficult and adorned with favorable conditions, for instance, abandoning wealth joyfully, and for the purpose of edifying the neighbor. That is perfect in itself which consists in an act both difficult and proceeding from the highest charity, for instance, a movement of fervent and ecstatic love for God, or of pure and complete love for the enemy.

Likewise, "imperfection" is used in three senses. That act is imperfect by nature which is easy and toward which human weakness is inclined, for instance, fearing death, or possessing wealth. That act is imperfect through circumstances which receives its qualification from a condition that inclines toward the lowest level of justice,† for instance, stripping oneself of clothes under duress in order to avoid a greater damage. Finally, that act is imperfect in itself which is absolutely inconsistent with evangelical perfection, for instance, divorcing a wife, or running away from poverty.

9. Since the terms "perfect act" and "imperfect act" are

† I. e., doing the right thing by physical necessity.

applied in widely different cases, several conclusions are clear. First, an act evil by nature may become good through circumstances — for instance, killing an evildoer when such execution is ordered by law and imposed by the state; and, in the opposite scale, an act good by nature may become evil through circumstances — for instance, abandoning the little wealth actually possessed in order to obtain greater ecclesiastical goods, or renouncing every act of the passion of the flesh in order to enjoy a longer physical life; and in the opposite scale, an act imperfect by nature may become perfect through circumstances — for instance, fleeing from martyrdom in order to suffer for God more gloriously, more fruitfully, and at a better time, as did Christ, and also the Apostle Paul. In similar cases, we are to judge similarly.

cf. Jn. 8:59; 12:36; 2 Cor. 11:33

10. From these examples there comes a clear notion of what we should truly think of the deeds of Christ. When we speak of these deeds, we may refer either to His interior or to His exterior works. (We call any work interior when considered as productive of an effect, and exterior when considered as the effect produced.) Every work of Christ considered as interior, that is, as productive of an effect, is most perfect, for it proceeds from the most excellent love, and is an act of the most perfect will and power. But His exterior work, considered in itself, sometimes was perfect in the very nature of the act — for instance, when He offered Himself to death and laid down His life for His sheep; sometimes it was imperfect by nature — for instance, when He fled from those who pursued Him, or concealed Himself, or prayed that the chalice be removed. Yet this act imperfect by nature is made perfect because of the love, reason, and purpose by and for which Christ did these things, and because of His very Person.

cf. Jn. 10:12

Bernard, in his sermon on blessed Andrew, comments on
Mt. 26:39 the passage *"Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass away from Me"*: "I perceive in the Warrior the alarm of the feeble and in the Physician the voice of the sick, I behold the hen become weak with her brood: I consider this love, I am astounded by this condescension, I am terrified by this humility. The merciful Lord did not assume the robust
ibid. 9:12 constitution of blessed Andrew, for *'it is not the healthy who need a physician, but they who are sick.'* If such condescension scandalizes anyone, this man plainly deserves
ibid. 20:15 to hear such words as these: *'Art thou envious because I am generous?'* For him indeed the odor of life leads to death. Wouldst Thou have been greater, O Lord Jesus, if, at the time of Thine Advent Thou hadst stood fearlessly as
cf. Jn. 10:18ff. one having the power to lay down his life in such a way that none could take it from him? Was it not much more glorious, since indeed all was being done for our sake, that not only the suffering of Thy body but also the feelings of Thy heart should obtain for us that those whom Thy death had returned to life would at the same time become strong through Thy fear, happy through Thy sorrow, joyful through Thy pain, peaceful through Thy struggle, and consoled through Thy desolation?'[10]

Such is the very thought expressed by Augustine in the quotation given above:† that Paul seemingly performed something more sublime than the work of Christ, while in truth Paul is not more sublime than Christ, but Christ is more sublime, because more merciful. This Augustine says because the condescension of Christ by which He bowed to the weak and the imperfect proceeded from the

† Cf. ¶ 6.

sublimity of the most perfect love.[11] By assuming human nature, He became humble in us while remaining in Himself the Most High; so also, through the condescension of His supreme love, He deigned to perform certain deeds that were fitted to our own imperfection and lack of intelligence, and this without compromising His own righteousness.

11. And so it is true that all the works of Christ are perfect in relation to Himself. It is also true that Christ performed some deeds that consisted in assuming the person of the weak and in condescending to our frailties and imperfections. Further, it is again true that the opposite of such things may be done praiseworthily, and in view of certain circumstances of time and place, it may even be better to do the opposite. Yet, finally, it is true that in such cases the disciple never becomes greater than his Master; for no one ever ascended to deeds of fortitude with so great a love as that with which Christ was filled when He condescended to these deeds of weakness. Hence the Master is always superior to His disciple: that is, Christ remains superior to any man, even the most perfect. *cf. Dt. 32:4* *cf. Mt. 10:24*

If the author we are answering had known how to consider all these things with diligence and piety, he would not have brought forth so many abominable teachings against the condescension of Christ. And if, overcome by God's mercy (which is our deepest hope and our most prayerful wish for him), he now humbly desires to consider these arguments in the right way, he will not attempt to worsen his crime through some further heretical depravity, but will endeavor to amend himself and deplore his error. Unless perhaps, which God forbid, he is one of those men who, because they overlook the high and condescending

justice of the sublime and humble Christ and attribute to the Master of Perfection a certain inflexible rigor, reveal themselves as enemies of His true and kindly justice instead of entrusting themselves to it.



CHAPTER II

Second Point of the First Answer: The Capital Error about the Way of Manifestation of Perfection and Imperfection Is Shattered, and the Exemplarity of True Perfection and Its Difference from Imperfection Are Revealed



HUS, the sound opinion of Doctors has overthrown the adversary of Christ's mercy. But even more: we shall see that the sharp edge of this man's very argument cuts off the head of his own perverse teaching. Not only does the opponent of evangelical perfection fall away from the truth, distorting the Scriptures into impious meanings, and *obscuring divine plans with words of ignorance;* in addition, he even contradicts himself. Since it would take long to explain one by one the many instances of warped interpretation and abuse of the Scriptures, the twisted opinions and insults to common sense, found in his text, we trust that it may suffice for the prudent reader if we deal briefly with some examples. *Jb. 38:2*

2. Thus, when this writer, in a preliminary statement, comes to define perfection, he says: "Perfection in this life consists, not in being without sin, but in preventing its *reign in your mortal body.*"[1] A truthful saying, in a Catholic sense, and one accepted by the saints. Yet, because he places here the terminal point of evangelical perfection, making its fulfillment consist in this, he stands convicted *Rom. 6:12*

of being far from the full notion of perfection. For every man is bound by divine precept to avoid the reign of sin within himself; every man, therefore, would be called to be perfect.

Again, if any small measure of love were enough to produce this effect, it would follow that the smallest love would attain the summit of perfection. This would render meaningless the saying of Augustine: "Love should be increased, so that being increased it may be perfected."[2] Furthermore, if perfection consists in nothing more than the avoidance of the reign of sin within us, imperfection consists in allowing this reign. But sin cannot reign within us unless we are in a state of mortal sin: and so imperfection is always equated with mortal sin. No sensible person could fail to see that this is absurd and far from the truth.

3. Next, let the careful reader note how this author then proceeds to clear self-contradiction in defining imperfection. "Imperfection," he continues, "consists in not conforming with Christ within the possibilities of the human condition." But "not conforming," thus qualified, is possible not only without mortal sin, for no one is bound to it, but even without venial sin,[3] specifically as regards matters which are of counsel only, depending upon freedom of choice, and hence may be omitted without any sin; such matters, that is, as the vows of poverty and virginal continence.

cf. Mt. 19:16ff.; 1 Cor. 7:25ff.; 1 Jn. 2:3

Our author adds to this by saying that "to depart from Christ's commands and from His works is an imperfection," and that "the Apostle cautioned the disciples against such a thing." Now, here he not only strikes a discordant note, he even puts together two contrary propositions: to depart from Christ's command is always a mortal sin,

whereas to depart from Christ's works may be a venial sin, or even no sin at all. It appears, then, that this man does not understand what he is saying since he includes in one sentence two intrinsically different ideas.

To continue: he goes on to comment thus on the meaning of imperfection: "Imperfection of life consists in a distortion that turns us away from the rule of justice and from the footsteps of Christ in matters in which Christ may be imitated as far as is possible by the corruptible flesh." Here he shows that he lacks understanding, not only of the truth, but even of the meaning of words. We are not greatly concerned, of course, with the words in themselves; but here it is important to discuss the meaning assigned to them, and to reject it because it is wrong. He says that "imperfection turns us away from the rule of justice." Now, it is a fact that, as Anselm says, "justice consists in rectitude of the will";[4] but if there exists a certain justice that is perfect and another that is imperfect, it necessarily follows that there exists a certain rectitude that is distorted!

Furthermore, if rectitude is justice, distortion is injustice, and so, if imperfection is a distortion, the imperfect will be unjust. It follows, therefore, if imperfection is a distortion, that some justice is unjust!

Finally, since in the words of Augustine, "every virtue is a right reason,"[5] it necessarily follows that distortion is a sin. If, therefore, imperfection is always a distortion, imperfection is always a sin. Now, since some forms of charity are imperfect, it follows that some forms of charity are sinful!

Hence, according to the explanations of perfection given above, it may be deduced from [our author's] premises

that justice is unjust, rectitude distorted, and charity vicious!

4. As a further proof of his ignorance, he adds a little later that "the wise man asserts that *it is great glory to follow the Lord,* and since this is said unqualifiedly, it is to be understood universally." Now, it is greatly presumptuous to desire to follow the Lord in every one of His actions—as, in His miracles, in His judgments, in the chastisement He inflicted, in His foresight of future events, and so forth. Hence, if this man were right and this saying, because unqualified, were to be taken universally, either it is great glory to follow the Lord in some things which it is impious and presumptuous to desire, or else the wise man is proved to have said something wrong.

*Ecclus. 23:38**



And, to this instance of madness, he adds another of no lesser degree; for he asserts that Christ said to the young man, "*Follow Me,*" without distinguishing in what things, and how much, and thus said it unqualifiedly. "And great," he concludes, "is the presumption of desiring to make distinctions where God makes none, for the legislator alone has the right to interpret the laws he has established."

Mt. 19:21

5. Now, in saying this, the author directly contradicts at one and the same time faith itself, the teachings of the holy Fathers, and his own expressed belief.

In the first place: If in every instance in which Christ makes no distinction, we also are to make none, the Catholic interpretation of His saying, *"The Father is greater than I,"* is erroneous, for it teaches that these words should not be applied to His divinity but to His humanity. Next: the saints are also in error whenever they explain the words of Christ by means of distinctions and interpret His intention in the light of such expositions. And finally: the man negates his own stated position by proceeding himself to make a qualification, in these words: "This is not understood of the acts concerned with the distinction between levels and dignities, but only of other acts."

Jn. 14:28

6. Nor is he content even with such folly, but piles it up higher. Concerning the statement that the Lord gave to the perfect some precepts that did not apply to the imperfect, he remarks that to believe this was the error of the Manicheans, and a very dangerous one. He forgets the words that Jerome wrote "Against Jovinian": "Has it ever been prescribed to all that they may not have two garments, or food in their bag, or money in their belt, or shoes on their feet; that they are to sell everything they have and follow Jesus? Has not this been prescribed only to those who wish to be perfect? Otherwise, how could something different have been prescribed by John the Baptist to the soldiers and to the publicans?"[6]

cf. Mt. 10:9ff.
cf. Mk. 6:8f.
cf. Lk. 9:3
cf. Mt. 19:21
cf. Lk. 3:12-14

Jerome thereby shows that such is not merely his personal view, but first of all the clear purport of Scripture. And it is this which this new doctor, following the teaching of Jovinian, now condemns as heretical and dangerous.

When he adds that man is not made imperfect by the
Rom. 7:12f. commandments, because a commandment, being *holy and just and good,* does not bring about death, "and imperfection is a certain kind of death," by attempting to prove a clear truth through an obvious falsehood, he is revealing both his imprudence and his fallacy. It is indeed certain that the commandments make no one perfect or imperfect, since both the perfect and the imperfect are bound to observe them. It is also certain that there is not so much distance between perfection and imperfection as there is between life and death. For if imperfection is death, it is either a punishment or the result of guilt. If it is a punishment, no one in this life is perfect, not even Christ; if it is the result of guilt, since the guilt deserving of death is mortal sin, no one would be imperfect without at the same time being deprived of life through mortal sin. And if this man says that death may in a certain sense be predicated of venial sin, he is speaking incorrectly, and even falls into formal error, for if venial sin is a death that makes man imperfect, since there is no more reason [for this] in any one venial sin than in any other, as often as a man falls into venial sin, he falls away from the state of perfection. Again, because no one, whatever his virtue, is entirely immune to venial sin, no one in this life will be
cf. Mt. 5:48 perfect with the perfection Christ counsels. Now, such a proposition is heretical and must be condemned.

7. He later makes a still further addition to the mass of errors by saying that imperfection is a mere limping which does not fall under the precepts, but is a matter of toleration; that, for instance, to reclaim one's own property is not commanded, but tolerated. But this is plainly false, since toleration, according to Augustine in his work "On

the Good of Matrimony," implies some sin,[7] and to claim one's own property is permitted to the imperfect, for the gloss on the sixth chapter of the First Epistle to the Corinthians says: "It is permissible to the weak to claim their own property, and even to bring their claim before a judge."[8]

In the same spirit, after some vain and frivolous considerations, the author continues that "in the New Testament, even when matrimony is contracted for the sake of the offspring, it is only tolerated." This is clearly contradicted by Augustine in the work just cited. "Certainly," he says, "no doubt is permitted concerning the sinlessness of matrimony as such. That is why indulgence is directed, not to marriage, but to that intercourse which derives from incontinence, not for the sake of procreation alone, but for a reason entirely independent of procreation, and which marriage does not require, but which it excuses. Intercourse for the sole purpose of generation is without any guilt, and this alone is proper to marriage."[9]

Here, there is such a difference in words and in meaning between the ancient Doctor and the new one that one of the two must necessarily be wrong. If the author will follow, not his own interpretation, but that of the more eminent Doctor, he will be less likely to fall into the pit of error. He should cease, therefore, to describe imperfection as a distortion or a limping, lest he himself be forced by this very distortion and limping to stray from the truth.†

† There is also a great difference between the teachings of "the more eminent Doctor" and that of contemporary theologians whose doctrine is that intercourse for the sake of fostering mutual love is not only sinless, but meritorious, even without being directed towards procreation.

The generally low esteem in which medieval theologians held marriage appears clearly in the last sentence of paragraph 9, below.

8. Next, he adds that Christ never did anything for imitation by the perfect alone, arguing that Christ does not begrudge perfection to anyone; as if there could be no gradations and distinctions in the examples and words of Christ corresponding to the different levels and states in the organization of the Church. Such an opinion does not conform at all with the Scriptural testimony. For Christ specifically said to the apostles: *"To you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God, but to the rest in parables."* And again, speaking to His Father: *"Thou didst hide these things from the wise and prudent, and didst reveal them to little ones."*

Lk. 8:10

Mt. 11:25

Is God partial because He does not reveal the secrets of His wisdom to all? It is clear that, just as Christ spoke words that were proportioned to those who received them, He used the example of Himself in the same way. It is not at all out of partiality, but out of the highest dispensation of the wisdom of God, *who allots to everyone according as He will,* that some things are proposed as examples to prelates, and not to their subjects; others to rational creatures, and not to animals; others to the perfect, and not to the imperfect; others again to the strong, and not to the weak, as expressly appears from the above quotation from Jerome's argument against Jovinian.† On the other hand, we do not mean that the works of the counsels and of supererogation are proposed only to those who are already perfect. Rather, they are for all who wish to ascend to the summit of perfection; but since this implies difficulties and painful effort, it will gain a response, not from the many, but from the few.

1 Cor. 12:11

† Cf. ¶ 6, above.

9. Our adversary, then, attempts to prove that the works and examples of Christ are equally proposed to all—under the pretext that, if He had done something for the imitation of the imperfect alone, it would then seem that He would also have been bound to take a wife and to get involved in legal disputes so as to let the imperfect see examples of these things. This reasoning has no weight whatsoever: it proceeds from a thought deeply disordered. No one indeed would reason in this way without at the same time committing the distasteful lapse of associating the practices of carnal passion and argumentative litigation with the condescension of divine sweetness that consisted in assuming our infirmities. It amounts to declaring that if Christ condescended to human weakness in the acts of eating and fleeing, he should have condescended also in the acts of physical love and processes of law; otherwise the reasoning is senseless. And indeed it is: for there is no similarity between what He did and the suggested course of action, since it was good that Christ should condescend to those infirmities which are commonly related to fallen nature and have no guilt annexed to them, but there was no reason whatsoever to make Him stoop to the others.[10]

10. Finally, if close attention is given to the conclusion our adversary attempts to draw, it will be clearly apparent that, through his own false reasoning, he involves himself in a manifold error. He says indeed: "There are two elements in perfection: to sell and distribute what one has, and to follow Christ the Lord; so also it is required as a foundation of perfection that a man give up everything he has, but also, as a complement, that once this has been done, he also imitate Christ to the limit of human possibility." In his view, it is "no small blasphemy" to assert,

cf. Mt. 19:21

as regards the things done by Christ in conformity with our nature, that those persons in particular who try to be perfect are to imitate Him in some of these things only, not in all of them. Now, while such words may claim a certain superficial justification, this man's reasoning is empty if judged by the canons of truth, and his conclusion full of errors. It is by no means the same thing to give up one's possessions and to imitate the actions of Christ. For the first is a single and simple act, consistent with perfection as long as it is whole, that is, as long as possessions are abandoned, not in part, but entirely.[11] On the other hand, the actions of Christ are manifold and various, and even though all are perfect as being His, when considered in their nature some are most excellent, others of lesser quality, and still others merely condescensive; which was partly demonstrated in the preceding discussion,† and will be more clearly proved in what is to follow.

11. If it is true that perfection indicates an unvarying conformity to the works of Christ, and imperfection some departure therefrom, many absurdities inevitably ensue. For example, since Christ was assisted by women who went about with Him and cared for Him, it follows that Paul was imperfect in not having such companions; since Christ dwelt among men, John the Baptist was imperfect because he abandoned the crowds and sought a solitary abode; since Christ drank wine, the Baptist again was imperfect in eschewing wine and strong drink; since Christ spoke to a woman when He was alone with her, anyone is imperfect who avoids the company of women; since Christ allowed His feet to be kissed by a sinner, anyone is imperfect

cf. Lk. 8:2ff.
cf. 1 Cor. 9:5ff.
cf. Mt. 3:1ff.
cf. ibid. 11:18ff.
cf. Lk. 1:15
cf. Jn. 4:7ff.
cf. Lk. 7:37ff.

† Cf. ch. I, ¶¶ 10, ff.

who shuns and shrinks from the contact of women; since Christ refused to divide the inheritance between two brothers, anyone is imperfect who leads back to peace and equity the relatives embroiled over the division of an inheritance; since Christ knowingly entrusted the purse to a thief, anyone is imperfect who passes over a thief and seeks out an honest man; since Christ was in a state of fear when His passion was approaching, anyone is imperfect who runs to his martyrdom in a state of joyful confidence; since Christ remained silent during the passion itself, anyone is imperfect who proclaims the truth while suffering for Christ. The same reasoning may be developed in many other instances, in addition to those that concern the avoidance of women and the use of food or money. All such conclusions are so absurd that anyone attempting to defend them would seem to be not so much mistaken as demented.

cf. Lk. 12:13ff.

cf. Jn. 12:6

cf. Mt. 26:37ff.

cf. ibid. 26:63

12. In order that the prudent reader may be free of such and similar lapses into which the one we are answering has fallen through frivolity of mind, let him note carefully that there is a double cause for such misrepresentations. First, while the author knows that Christ is the Exemplar of all perfection, he fails either to grasp or to consider the nature of this exemplarity; second, while he is clearly aware that imperfection falls short of perfection, he is unable to investigate the extent of this difference.

We should understand that since Christ is the Word both Uncreated and Incarnate, there is in Him a twofold principle of exemplarity, the one eternal and the other temporal. By the eternal, I mean the principle according to which He is the brightness of the Father's glory, and the image of His substance, and also *the refulgence of eternal light, the spotless mirror of the power of God.* In this

cf. Heb. 1:3
Wis. 7:26

mirror all things shine forth in their exemplarity, and they are produced, in their spirit and in their matter, from the beginning of the creation of the world until its end, for the perfecting of the entire universe. It is in this sense that Christ is the Uncreated Word, the intellectual Mirror and the eternal Exemplar of the whole fabric of creation.[12] But insofar as He is the Incarnate Word, in the actuality of His assumed humanity, He is also the mirror of all graces, virtues, and merits; and therefore the dwelling of the Church Militant should be set up at this example, the dwelling of which Moses mysteriously says: *See that you make . . .* [it] *according to the pattern shown you on the mountain.*

Ex. 25:40

From this single and undivided eternal Exemplar there flows such a variety of created natures, and such a variety of perfections in these natures, according to the degree of their participation in the supreme Good itself, that all cannot be possessed together by any given creature—for which reason God established diverse species of beings so that the universe should be complete. And likewise, the diverse states, levels, and orders are derived in their exemplarity from the Incarnate Word, as from the original principle of grace *of whose fullness we have all received,* and as from a mirror in which and from which shines forth all the fullness and beauty of holiness and wisdom. These states, levels, and orders are derived from Him according to the various distributions of the gifts, and the various manners in which the Exemplar is to be imitated. Within them, the manifold perfection of Christ is distributed according to a multiform participation, in such a way that it is found at the same time in all things. And yet it does not glow in any one of them in the fullness of its universal plenitude; but each state and level receives that kind of influence

Jn. 1:16

from the Exemplar, and approaches its likeness to that greater or lesser degree, which accords with the proportion of its own [determined] nature.

13. Thus, manifold actions shine forth from Christ as from the exemplar and origin of our whole salvation. Now, some of these actions pertain to LOFTINESS OF POWER, such as walking on the water, transmuting the elements, multiplying the loaves, transfiguring Himself, or performing miraculous cures. Other actions pertain to the LIGHT OF WISDOM, such as revealing the mysteries of heaven, penetrating the secrets of hearts, or predicting the future. Still others pertain to SEVERITY OF JUDGMENT, such as expelling the hucksters from the temple, overturning the tables of the sellers of doves, or severely reproaching the priests. Others again pertain to the DIGNITY OF OFFICE, such as conferring the Sacrament of His most holy Body, imposing His hands, or absolving from sin. Further actions pertain to CONDESCENSION toward our misery, such as hiding when persecuted, trembling with dread before death, or praying the Father for the removal of the chalice. Some, finally, pertain to the REVELATION OF THE PERFECT LIFE, such as observing poverty, maintaining virginity, subjecting Himself to God and to men, watching in prayer throughout the night, praying for those who crucified Him, or offering Himself to death out of supreme love for His enemies.

cf. Mt. 14:26ff.
cf. Jn. 2:7ff.
cf. Mt. 14:19ff.
cf. ibid. 17:2

cf. Mt. 21:12ff.
cf. ibid. 26:26ff.
cf. ibid. 9:2ff.

cf. Jn. 8:59
cf. Mk. 14:33ff.

cf. Lk. 2:51
cf. Mt. 14:23
cf. Lk. 23:34
cf. Jn. 18:4ff.

Now, while there are six different kinds of action, perfection consists in imitating Christ in the last category only. To aspire to imitate Him in those deeds that are of unique excellence would be impious and worthy of Lucifer, unless a special privilege were conferred on some man by way of a gift. The actions related to severity and dignity

belong to those who preside and to prelates. And those related to condescension pertain to the weak — to speak only of intrinsic actions. Thus, supreme Christian perfection consists, not as our adversary would teach, in the universal imitation of the actions of Christ, but in the imitation only of those proposed as examples of the perfect life.

14. It appears then that ignorance of this truth was the first cause of such error. Another cause, closely related to it, is the fact that our adversary did not make a rational distinction between perfection and imperfection; for he imprudently asserts that "perfection and imperfection differ as do rectitude and distortion, justice and sin, purity and pollution, glory and infamy, life and death, health and disease, or walking and limping." From such a statement must necessarily proceed falsities both numerous and great. Some of these have been indicated earlier.† Let the attentive reader note that perfection and imperfection do not differ as contraries,[13] but as a greater good is distinct from a lesser one, that which is close to the goal from that which is far from it, a more meritorious action from one of lesser merit, a deed better conformed to God from one less so, a greater glory and holiness from one not so great.

15. Now, even though this is clear upon reflection to intelligent men, it should be thoroughly established by referring to the saints, in order that the slightest doubt may be eliminated.

Ambrose, in the first book "On Offices," says: "Every service is either mediocre or perfect. And this we can well prove by invoking the authority of the Scriptures, for we read in the Gospel that the Lord said: *'If thou wilt enter*

Mt. 19:17, 18

† Cf. ¶¶ 3, 6 and 7.

into life, keep the commandments. . . . Thou shalt not kill, thou shalt not commit adultery' . . . etc. To abstain from crimes is but to perform a mediocre service, one in which there is something missing. Therefore, Christ continues: *'If thou wilt be perfect, go, sell what thou hast, and give to the poor, . . . and come, follow Me.'* This, indeed, is a perfect service, which the Greeks call κατόρθωμα, and through which all things are set aright that might otherwise have had some defect."[14] *Mt. 19:21*

From these words of Ambrose, we may gather that he does not call sinful a mediocre and imperfect service, since it is still consistent with the observance of the commandments. And writing on the First Epistle to the Corinthians, he speaks to the same effect: "Try to lead the faithful to moderation in the use of legitimate goods, so that they may appear not only innocent but glorious: for to refuse a permitted advantage is a deed of very great virtue."[15] And so, if there is innocence in the enjoyment of legitimate goods and perfection in the fact of refraining from them, it is clear that innocence may coexist with imperfection: and so imperfection is not sin.

Augustine likewise, in his work "On the Good of Matrimony," writes: "What could be said against the entirely clear words of the Apostle: *'Let him do what he will; he does not sin if she should marry';* also: *'If thou takest a wife, thou hast not sinned. And if a virgin marries, she has not sinned'*? Hence it is certainly not right to doubt whether marriage is truly without sin. The Apostle does not condone marriage as if he were forgiving it, for who would go to the extreme absurdity of saying that forgiveness is being granted to those who have not sinned?"[16] Yet it is a fact that marriage is not consistent with evangelical *1 Cor. 7:36* *ibid. 28*

perfection,† in which Christ teaches that virginity is to be
Mt. 19:12 maintained *for the sake of the kingdom of heaven.*

Imperfection, then, does not require forgiveness, nor is it in itself any sort of sin. The same author writes in the
cf. Lk. 10:40 same book: "The work of Martha was good when she took
cf. ibid. 39 care of the service of the saints, but what her sister Mary
cf. Dn. 13:22ff. did was better. We praise the goodness of Susanna in her
cf. Lk. 2:36f. conjugal chastity, but we place on a higher level the chastity of the widow Anna, and much higher still that of the
cf. ibid. 1:27 Virgin Mary. Those who provided out of their substance
cf. ibid. 8:2 for the needs of Christ and of His disciples were doing
cf. ibid. 5:11 what was good, but those who gave up all of their substance the more completely to follow Christ the Lord were doing what was better."[17] In such words Augustine excellently shows that the perfect does not differ from the imperfect as virtue from vice, but as a greater good from a lesser one.

Blessed Jerome expressed the same opinion even more clearly in his letter to Hedibia: "If you wish to be perfect and to stand on the highest level of honor, do as the apostles did."[18] And later: "If you do not wish to be perfect, but to hold the second place in the order of virtue, give up whatever you have, all your possessions, give everything to your children, to your relatives. No one shall reproach you if you follow the lesser degree, as long as you know that anyone who has followed the higher is superior to you by right."[19] Note how evidently he asserts that imperfection, which is a secondary and inferior state

† Cf. Foreword, pp. VIII, IX.

In the light of the next quotation, it appears that to "do as the apostles did" means to give up material possessions and to live in the state of perfect chastity. Augustine seems to forget that John and Paul alone stand out as the unmarried ones.

or grade, is not to be held reprehensible or sinful. The same author, writing to Demetriades, says: "Evil actions are forbidden, good actions are commanded, mediocre actions are tolerated, perfect actions are counseled. All of sin is encompassed within the first two categories, for the others are left to our free disposition, so that we may acquire a lesser glory through the use of things tolerated and permitted, or a greater glory through their rejection."[20]

Could arguments more cogent be given in favor of our position? It seems beyond question that they must cleanse even the slowest intelligence, unless it were blinded by malice, of the darkness of the errors explained above; particularly if it would also bring itself to consider the fact that a newly baptized soul, though not even close to the summit of perfection and merit, is not infected by any stain of sin.

CHAPTER III

THIRD POINT OF FIRST ANSWER: THE CONDITIONS OF EVANGELICAL PERFECTION ARE EXPLAINED, AND ITS SUBLIME STATE AND MANY LEVELS DISPLAYED



RELIGIOUS writer should be concerned with the restoration of truth rather than the reprobation of error, for once the darkness of error has been dispelled, the radiance of true light may then shine upon the inward eye of the reader. Now that false and erroneous teachings concerning perfection have been refuted, we should consider in what the summit of evangelical perfection consists; how the state of perfection is affected by an imperfect act; and, finally, as regards the state of perfection itself, how one state of perfection may be higher than another.

2. We should realize, first of all, that the root, form, purpose, fulfillment, and *bond of perfection* is love, to which Christ, the Master of all, reduces the Law and the Prophets, and, consequently, God's whole teaching. *Col. 3:14* *cf. Mt. 22:40*

Now, this love may exist in a threefold state. The first and lower consists in the observance of the commandments of the Law; the second and intermediate, in the fulfillment of the spiritual counsels; the third and supreme in the enjoyment of eternal delights [through mystical contemplation].

Thus there is a threefold gradation of perfection, as the Scriptures show. One is of necessity. It corresponds to

*Dt. 18:13** this passage of Deuteronomy. *Thou shalt be perfect and without spot before the Lord thy God;* and the gloss explains, "Without the spot of sin."[1] Prosper, writing "On the Contemplative Life," says of this: "Those men are perfect who, by willing what God wills, never give their assent to sin, because sin offends Him."[2] The second stage is a perfection of supererogation, and it is the object of this *Mt. 19:21* passage in Matthew: *"If thou wilt be perfect, go, sell what thou hast, and give to the poor."* Commenting on the same passage, Jerome writes to Heliodore: "The perfect servant of Christ possesses nothing except Christ Himself, for if he possesses anything else, he is not perfect."[3] The third perfection achieves final plenitude, and it is the object of these words of the wise man in the Book of Proverbs: *Prv. 4:19* *The path of the just is like shining light, that grows in brilliance till perfect day;* that is, till one beholds the radiant brightness of the vision of God. And of this Augustine writes in the first book of his "Soliloquy": "In truth, perfect virtue is reason attaining its final end, which is followed by beatific life."[4]

3. Thus, the first and second states of perfection differ from the third as merit differs from reward.[5] The intermediate state also differs from the first as counsel does from command. But these two, indeed, the counsels as well as the commands, tend toward the fulfillment and observance *1 Tm. 1:5** of that love which the Apostle describes to Timothy: *Now the end of the commandment is charity, from a pure heart, and a good conscience and an unfeigned faith.* This betokens in reality a threefold act of love: avoiding evil, pursuing good, and bearing with adversity. For as regards the avoidance of evil, charity is said to be from a pure heart; as regards the pursuit of good, from a good conscience; and

as regards the bearing of adversity, from a faith unfeigned.[6] And the gloss adds: "That is, not a pretended or fragile faith, but one that is strong against tribulation."[7]

4. This threefold act of charity comes forth from the habit of virtue in two ways, either through the law of a commandment universally and necessarily compelling, or through the proposal of a counsel implying a spontaneous and special bond; and the second way, embracing the first, also adds to it as much as the wayfarer is able to give. It follows, then, that the second way, comprising also the first, is called perfect, but that the first without the second—although perfect in a qualified sense—is called imperfect in relation to the second. So Augustine declares in his book "On Offices" in the quotation given in the preceding chapter.†

Since we are speaking of evangelical perfection in the commonly accepted sense, we understand it to mean the intermediate state of perfection [mentioned above]. And we may obtain a notion of this perfection from the words of the Apostle just cited: to wit, that it consists in conformity between the wayfarer and Christ through this habit of virtue by which evil is avoided, good pursued, and adversity borne, in a manner superior to that which is required by precept. Such are the things that make up the three parts of evangelical perfection.

5. All sin derives from a disorderly turning toward the threefold perishable good—outside of us, within us, and below us; that is, from the lust of the eyes, the pride of life, and the lust of the flesh.[8] These three passions should be avoided not only in deed and consent, through the

cf. 1 Jn. 2:16

† Cf. ¶ 8.

practice of the opposite virtues, but also in their occasions. Such careful avoidance is truly productive of merit and fruitful for salvation. Hence Christ, the Master of perfection, counsels for the sake of perfect rejection of the lust of the eyes that all these temporal goods be given up, according to this passage from Matthew: *"If thou wilt be perfect . . . "*; for the perfect rejection of the pride of life, He advises that self-will be denied, according to this passage from Matthew again: *"If anyone wishes to come after Me, let him deny himself . . . "*; and for the perfect rejection of the lust of the flesh, He suggests that man refrain from the act of the generative power, according to this passage from the same: *"There are eunuchs who have made themselves so for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. Let him accept it who can."*

Mt. 19:21

ibid. 16:24

ibid. 19:12

Thus, the fact that the FIRST PART OF EVANGELICAL PERFECTION consists in this threefold and supererogative refusal of the threefold origin of all evil is indicated by the Holy Scriptures, deduced by truthful teachers, and asserted by the holy Fathers who were the founders of religious life.

6. Now, the SECOND PART OF [EVANGELICAL] PERFECTION consists in pursuing good more eagerly than is required by precept. And since there are two aspects of life, the active and the contemplative, this more eager pursuit consists in two things, that is, in caring for our neighbor, and in lifting up our mind to God. The supererogative caring for our neighbor consists in this, that in obedience to the law of justice and mercy, the signs and effects of love shall be imparted with generous beneficence not only to friends but also to enemies, as is said in this passage from Matthew: *"Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you"*; and later: *"Be perfect, even as your heavenly*

ibid. 5:44

ibid. 48

Father is perfect." In this way also, the supererogative lifting up of the mind is effected in such a manner that, in obedience to the law of spiritual cleanliness and peace, the devout perceive what is sacred, and experience rapture by being carried away through the ecstasy of love into the splendors and ardors of God, as is said in these words of the Apostle to the Corinthians: *For if we were out of our mind, it was for God; if we are sane, it is for you;* and to the Hebrews: *Strong meat is for the perfect.*

2 Cor. 5:13

*Heb. 5:14**

7. Finally, the THIRD PART OF EVANGELICAL PERFECTION consists in bearing trials more perfectly than is required by precept. Now, this is not done through a mere patient supporting of trials as they occur, for by divine law they are unavoidable since all men are to suffer them. The perfect bearing of trials is achieved when one desires them with great intensity, out of love for God, and accepts them with great joy, as shown in these passages from James: *Esteem it all joy, my brethren, when you fall into various trials;* and again: *Let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and entire, lacking nothing.* Such is the consummation of perfection and love, as expressed in the First Epistle of John: *Perfect love casts out fear.*

Jas. 1:2

ibid. 4

1 Jn. 4:18

8. Accordingly, the spiritual ark of perfection, which is triple-vaulted on the lower level and double-vaulted in the middle, measures but a single cubit at its top.[9] It is clear that the Saviour revealed this secret of perfection through the example of His own person, by the symbol of a lofty mountain: for He is the splendor, mirror, and model of all perfection, as He Himself says in the Gospel of Luke: *"When perfected, everyone will be like his teacher."*[10] In token of this, when Christ sought to teach such perfection to His apostles, He went up onto a mountain, not speaking

cf. Gn. 6:16 (Sept.)

Lk. 6:40

cf. Mt. 5:1

to the imperfect crowd, but to those whom He had decided to exalt to the summit of this perfection, and there He exposed the six points indicated above,† in the order in which we have explained them. For when He said first,
ibid. 3 *"Blessed are the poor in spirit,"* He suggested perfect renouncement of temporal possessions; when He continued,
ibid. 4 *"Blessed are the meek,"* He counseled denial of self-will and of that desire for personal gratification by which a man
ibid. 5 is made harsh and violent. When He said, thirdly, *"Blessed are they who mourn,"* He proposed the perfect avoidance
ibid. 6 of the delights of the flesh.‡ When He continued, *"Blessed*
ibid. 7 *are they who hunger and thirst for justice,"* and *"Blessed are the merciful,"* He called for a just, kind, and loving atti-
ibid. 8 tude toward neighbors. When He added after this *"Blessed*
ibid. 9 *are the clean of heart,"* and *"Blessed are the peacemakers,"* He attracted men toward a limpid elevation of the intelligence, and a tranquil and peaceful lifting of the heart, by which the souls of the just are made to conform to Jerusalem, which is interpreted as "a vision of peace."[11] Finally,
ibid. 10 when He concluded, *"Blessed are they who suffer persecution for justice' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven,* He returned to the origin, as if completing a circle; for it is in this persecution for justice' sake that the sum of all things is accomplished. Thus, the sixfold perfection of the "small world"[12]†† in the order of restoration and grace corresponds to the sixfold creation of the whole fabric of the universe in the order of nature.

9. Even as the first three works of creation pertain to

† Cf. ¶¶ 5, 7.

‡ An inacceptable interpretation.

†† The "small world," or "microcosm," meaning man, is opposed here to the "large world," or "macrocosm," meaning the universe.

division, and the next three to adornment,[13]† so also, in the first three beatitudes, there is in a sense a division when the powers of the soul are separated from every evil in order that their existence may be pure and distinct; and, in the next three, there is a kind of adornment when these same powers are returned to God in order that their existence may become beautiful and perfect. Thus, if we may continue to compare the small with the great, there is so marked and singular a correspondence between the two worlds, and such a high degree of similitude between their symbols, that the words uttered after the labor of the Six Days, *Thus the heavens and the earth were finished and all their array,* may be considered accomplished in the soul of a perfect man. Therefore, parallel to the first three works that are the foundation of the world, and to the next three that are its adornment, the first three beatitudes are a matter of vow and the next three a matter of free choice.

Gn. 2:1

10. As a confirmation of this truth, blessed Francis, the Father of the Mendicants, proposed in the beginning of his Rule the first three points as requiring a vow because of their fundamental character. For he said: "The Rule and life of the Friars Minor is this, namely, to observe the holy Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ by living in obedience, without property, and in chastity."[14] Later, he recommended the other three as desirable complements when he said: "I also admonish . . . the Friars . . . to strive above all things to have the spirit of the Lord and His holy operation,

† The Latin word *ornatus* used at this point does not properly mean adornment, embellishment, but rather equipment, furnishing. It could be translated as "populating" or "peopling" if it did not apply, as in the present case, to objects both personal (men) and impersonal (animals and heavenly bodies). There seems to be no exact equivalent in English.

to pray always to Him with a pure heart, and to have humility, patience in persecution and in infirmity, and to love those who persecute, reprehend, and blame us."[15] Here he is touching upon the other three points. He first recommends elevation to God and he ends with love toward neighbor. Between these he places charity toward enemies.

cf. Gal. 6:14 In the first three instances, the perfect man is crucified to the world; in the next three, he is made to conform to

cf. Is. 6:2 God: like a six-winged seraph, he is elevated above the things of the world and carried aloft to the divine. How fittingly, then, in the seraphic apparition,[16] did Christ impress His stigmata in approbation upon the holy little poor man! For Francis perfectly served and perfectly taught the perfection of the Gospel, and [by the mark of His wounds] Christ gave us a clear sign of the way of perfection as opposed to the dangerous darkness of these later times; a sign through which we may return to Him, the Exemplar and End of perfect virtue; a sign of how to attain perfection if we learn *not to set our minds on high things, but condescend to the lowly.*



Rom. 12:16

11. We have demonstrated earlier† that evangelical perfection, which is the object of this discussion, consists in things supererogative. It follows that these things are related not only to the charismatic gifts, but truly also to

† Cf. ¶¶ 4, ff.

the practice of the virtues; for unless the habits of the virtues have been developed, no degree of perfection is possible. Now, this supererogative practice of virtue may either be satisfied through the simple will, without any obligation, and this is said in one sense to be perfection of action and merit; or it may be satisfied through the will backed by a certain obligation, whether derived from a professed vow or from the duty of some office, and this is said to be perfection of state and order. In the latter instance, a man is not only dedicated to the performance of acts of perfection; he is in fact obligated to perform them. Such obligation, far from decreasing perfection, on the contrary adds to it a further height. It makes eternal something that was temporal, since a vow may not be broken, and it gives to God something that was ours, since a man who dedicates to God not only his actions but even his will is making a total offering and submitting himself wholly to the divine law. Because he sacrifices his own will—a priceless good, the most beloved and personal—his offering is *full of marrow,* and therefore perfect, complete, and supremely acceptable to Him who is all excellence. *Ps. 65:15**

12. Augustine, therefore, writing on this passage from the Psalms, *How he swore to the Lord, vowed to the mighty one of Jacob,* says: "What do we vow to the Lord, except to be the temple of God? Indeed, we have nothing to offer Him that would be more acceptable than to say to Him what is suggested in Isaias: *'Possess us!'* "[17] And so if a man who has both the use and the ownership of a thing possesses it more perfectly than another who has only its use, a man dedicates himself to God more perfectly when he offers himself to God as regards not only the use of his labor but also the determination of his will. *ibid. 131:2** *Is. 26:13 (Sept.)*

In this same manner, Anselm, in his book "On Similitudes" uses a material example to compare two men. One of them offers to God the fruits of a tree while retaining its ownership, while the other gives both fruit and ownership; and Anselm says that the gift and offering of the latter is justly to be preferred as coming from a more generous giver. Pursuing the same comparison, he stresses the fact that the work of a man who has taken the vows is more acceptable to God than that of another who has not, because a bond introduced into the will by pure generosity does not decrease the gratuity of the service, but actually completes it.[18] The same Doctor, writing to the Bishop of Paris† concerning the removal of a certain cleric from the Monastery of St. Martin de Fécamp, has this to say: "If all things must be done according to counsel, by whose
*Is. 9:6** counsel better than of the one who is called *Wonderful, Counselor, God the Mighty?* He Himself, indeed, advises those who strain toward perfection to abandon everything and to follow Him. The holy Fathers understood that this counsel could be followed more easily in the circumstances of monastic life than in any other."[19]

13. Gregory, writing in the "Register" to Bishop Desiderius, says the same thing of a cleric who wished to enter the religious life: "Let your brotherly love be the least obstacle, to him; inflame him instead with your pastoral advice, lest the fervor of this desire become lukewarm within him, and lest this man, who is cutting himself away from the tumultuous upheavals of the worldly crowds and longs in his heart to reach the haven of monastic peace, be forced to become involved anew in the tumult of

† Goffridus.

ecclesiastical charges. Permit him, as he requests, to be free of all such things, safely to dwell in the praise of God."†[20]

Bernard also, in the book "On Dispensation and Precepts," gives his opinion that "of all the forms of penance, monastic discipline has deserved the prerogative of being called a second Baptism." This is because of "the perfect withdrawal from the world and the singular excellence of the spiritual life whereby this state, superior to any other mode of human existence, brings those who follow it and love it close to the angels and far from men, and even reforms in man the divine image, making him to conform to Christ as in Baptism; so that, by these means, through the mortification of our earthly members, we may again put on Christ and be planted together in the likeness of His death."[21]

cf. Col. 3:5
cf. Gal. 3:27
cf. Rom. 6:5

The same conclusion is deducible from the gloss on the thirtieth‡ chapter of Numbers: "Some promise to offer calves, others rams or buildings, but the Nazirite promises to offer himself; thus the vow of the Nazirite is superior to any other. A son, indeed, or a daughter, or an estate are external to us; the vow to offer ourselves to God to please Him, not through someone else's action, but through our own, is more eminent and perfect than any other."[22]

14. Clearly, then, the religious vow places a man in the state of perfection, for it is an assistance toward the practice,

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† This quotation from St. Gregory, and the following from St. Bernard, reveal angelism and scorn for the world. It is all well and good to excuse them by saying that "the world" means the kingdom of satan: the fact remains that in the mind of both authors everyone except cloistered religious is living in it. A true religious vocation is not one of flight and spiritual comfort, but one of engagement and spiritual dedication to the neighbor.

‡ Reference seems to be, not to Nm. 30, but to Nm. 6:1-21.

preservation, and increase of perfect virtue. Because they knew this well, the Fathers of the Fourth Council of Toledo decreed that a cleric would be free to enter the religious life: "It seems right that in the matter of entering monasteries, priests who desire the monastic state because they wish to lead a better life should be independent of their bishops."[23] This view of monastic life is supported, not only by the writings, but also by the example, of countless saints who passed from the clerical to the religious state. The doctrine is so absolutely certain, in fact, that to contradict it would be rather folly than mistake.†

15. But if anyone, deceived by error, attempts to oppose what has been said above by asserting that it is more perfect to remain in the world under the pretexts: that "virtue is concerned with the more difficult";[24] that it is more difficult to avoid sin among the many different occasions of sin; that it is more remarkable for a man not to burn when he is surrounded with flames; and that it is a great victory to triumph over enemies when faced by a more numerous host, more frequent assaults, and a greater variety of implements of war — we shall answer: that a state is not more virtuous because less safe; nor does one state enjoy a more perfect righteousness because it comes closer to ruin; nor again is a state more perfect because a man who lives within it finds the avoidance of sin to be more difficult.

But in fact the state of the professed religious imposes three major difficulties.

The first comes from THE EXACTING AND LOFTY CHARACTER OF THE STATE ITSELF, involving as it does the

† Cf. Foreword, pp. VIII, IX.

renunciation of sexual commerce, the foregoing of any kind of possession, and submission for the sake of God to the will of another. Such difficulty necessarily increases merit, as indicated by the passage from Matthew, *"Enter by the narrow gate."* The gloss says here: "It is very hard [narrow] to love one single thing, to seek one single object, to knock every day at one single door, without seeking worldly success or fearing adversity."[25] Now, this difficulty founded on the nature of the state itself, in that it comes to the few by divine counsel, is enhanced beyond the measure of the difficulty of following the divine precepts, as all must do. This is why Jerome writes to the monk Rusticus: "If you wish to follow perfect ways, go out with Abraham, *leave your country* and *your kinsfolk*, and go whither you know not. If you have any property, sell it and give to the poor; if you have none, you are relieved of a great burden. In your nakedness, follow the naked Christ. It is painful, heavy, and difficult; but great are the rewards."[26]

Mt. 7:13

Gn. 12:1
cf. Mt. 19:21

16. The second difficulty comes from IMPERFECTION IN THE ACTING SUBJECT. For instance, it is harder for the avaricious man to give a little than for the generous to give much; it is harder for the proud man than for the humble to submit himself to another; for the greedy man than for the abstemious to fast; for a man of sensual habits to abstain from the pleasures of the flesh. In all such cases, what is increased is not the merit, but the misery, as Jerome writes to Eustochius [concerning the latter instance]: "Your sister Blesilla, greater in age than in wisdom, has become a widow seven months after taking a husband! Oh, unhappy condition! Unable to foresee the future, she has lost both the crown of virginity and the delight of marriage. Although she may be able to remain on the

second level of chastity, what crosses do you not think she will have to bear when she sees every day that her sister possesses what she herself has lost! How much less will she enjoy the reward of continency, since it will be harder for her to have lost a pleasure she had known!"[27]

17. The third difficulty is due to THE CONJUNCTION OF EXTERNAL CIRCUMSTANCES. For instance, it is harder to fast when delicate foods are offered; to renounce the advantages of the world when great and beautiful things are in question; to be continent when in frequent contact with women. This difficulty [due to external circumstances] somewhat increases the merit, by accident and indirectly, if in the course of temptation virtue triumphs without being offended; but, directly and in itself, it is a major road to ruin, and thus it must be avoided. Hence, in commenting on this passage from Matthew, *With difficulty will a rich man enter the kingdom of heaven,* Rabanus says: "It is not impossible, but difficult — that is, it implies a greater effort — for those who possess money, and rely on their wealth, to escape from the snares of the love of money and enter the court of the heavenly kingdom."[28] The inference is not that the rich [because they have greater temptations to overcome] are more perfect than the poor; for the Lord advised the rich young man to become poor if he wanted to be perfect. Hence, for virtue and merit to be complete, it is better to flee from this kind of difficulty [due to external circumstances] than to embrace it. Augustine, writing "On the Special State of the Clerics" utters this warning: "In the midst of temptations, faint is the hope of salvation; in the midst of armed enemies, uncertain the victory; in the midst of raging fires, remote the expectation of not being consumed."[29]

Mt. 19:23

Jerome strikes the same note when writing against Vigilantius, who attempted to place the secular state above the religious: " 'Why,' you may ask, 'do you go to the desert?' — 'Perhaps to avoid hearing you, or seeing you, or being disturbed by your anger, or having to suffer from your assaults. Perhaps so as not to be captivated by the eye of the prostitute, or enticed to some unlawful embrace by her entrancingly beautiful form.' — 'This is not fighting,' you may answer, 'but running away. Remain in the ranks, resist the enemies with your weapons so as to win the crown of victory.' — 'I confess my weakness; I refuse to fight when victory is but a hope, lest some day I be defeated. If I flee, I have avoided the sword; if I remain, I must either win or fall. Why should I give up certainty in exchange for such a risk? It is dangerous to sleep near a snake. Perhaps it will not bite me, but again, perhaps some day it will.' What we have said of lust we may apply also to covetousness and to all the vices avoided in the state of solitude. We shun city crowds lest we be brought to do some things that might be forced upon us, not so much by natural necessity as by the passion for pleasure."[30] Such is Jerome's refutation of the error of Vigilantius and his followers: those who attempt to place the perfection of the secular state on a level higher than the religious, or on the same level. Against such men, Jerome had also written a little earlier: "When Vigilantius teaches that there is greater virtue in those who use their wealth by distributing their possessions to the poor little by little than in those who, after selling all they have, give all away at once, he receives his answer, not from me, but from the Lord: *'If thou wilt be perfect, go, sell what thou hast, and give to the poor.'* Christ is appealing here to anyone who

Mt. 19:21
cf. ibid. 4:27

cf. Mk. 1:18,20 desires to be perfect and who, like the apostles, leaves his father, his boat, and his nets. The level [of perfection] you are praising is the second or third; we accept it, provided preference is granted to the first."[31]

18. Finally, upon comparing perfections from the viewpoint of pre-eminence, we clearly see that the manner and state of one are higher than those of another. Since, indeed, perfect continence consists in renouncing the marital *Mt. 19:12* act *for the sake of the kingdom of heaven,* and this by means of a vow, it is certainly better to possess this state through virginal purity, represented in the parable by a *cf. Mt. 13:8, 23* hundred, than through widowhood, which is designated by sixty.† It is assuredly not opposed to the nature of perfection that, of two things properly called perfect in this present life, one may be said to be higher than another. The apostle teaches that in heaven, where the blessed reach their ultimate perfection, one has a higher place than the *1 Cor. 15:41* other, as *star differs from star in glory.*

19. Perfections being compared may exist not only in the same order but in different orders; a certain perfection of supererogation pertains to the practice of virtue, another to the religious vow, and yet another to the function of prelacy. When a comparison is made between two perfections of the same order, that perfection is higher from the viewpoint of perfect virtue in which the root of love is stronger, the quality of the deed more elevated, and the fruit of fraternal edification more plentiful. While the origin of all such perfection is love, the nature of the deed adds much to it, as Gregory asserts: "In order to love the Creator, speech, thought, and life are needed. Love for

† A clear case of fanciful exegesis.

God is never idle, for if it exists at all, it gives rise to great things: in truth, if there is no deed, neither is there any love."[32] The nature and height of the deed have much to do [with perfection] since it is clear that the reward of the crown of glory is due, not to the habit of the virtue in itself, but to a privileged accomplishment, such as preaching, martyrdom, or virginity.[33] Proper edification of the neighbor also has a great part to play, for the Lord says to the perfect: *"You are the light of the world. . . . Even so, let your light shine before men, in order that they may see your good works."* *Mt. 5:14, 16*

20. In the same way, the vow of religion is all the greater in merit as there is in it a promise of greater poverty, of a more universal obedience, and of a more becoming manner of chastity. These three, as is manifest, have their degrees. They admit quantitative differences and establish a man in a relative state of perfection accordingly as they are promised in a more or less sublime way—higher when [the vow] is accompanied by the practice of regular observances by which the body is more severely chastised, the neighbor more fruitfully edified, and God more reverently honored.

CHASTISING OF THE BODY consists in austerity in matters of clothing, food, and words, together with arduous works, vigils, and other such bodily efforts; EDIFICATION OF THE NEIGHBOR consists in displaying examples of virtue, teaching the Scriptures, offering the remedies of the Sacraments, assisting in the government of souls, making judgments according to justice, and performing corporal works of mercy; and the WORSHIP OF GOD consists in a reverent and watchful attention to the psalms, hymns, spiritual canticles, adorations, Masses and other exercises of devotion. Now,

for one who carefully considers the question, to find all of these things more excellently fulfilled together in any one religious state than in any other may seem very difficult, perhaps even impossible. For, while one religious state may be higher than another as regards essential vows, it cannot be considered absolutely the first in all matters, since every religious state has some specific prerogative by which the Church, our holy Mother and the Bride of Christ, is adorned and made to conform to God as *in gilded clothing, surrounded with variety.*

*Ps. 44:10**

21. Thus, a perfection may be more excellent because of the function of prelacy, for here the loftiness of order is more eminently conferred, that is, for the purpose of cleansing, illuminating, and perfecting;[34] a heavier burden of labor is imposed through the necessity of proffering example, word, and temporal assistance to the flock for whom the prelate is responsible; and a more abundant fruitfulness of salvation is granted to the one who presides, to those who are under him, and to those to whom his leading example reaches out. There is need, therefore, in this type of perfection, of a more eminent sublimity, so that a prelate of the Church may lead a life proportionately holy, guard his flock more sedulously, and feed them more fruitfully because of his elevated office.

22. WHEN A COMPARISON IS MADE BETWEEN TWO PERFECTIONS OF DIFFERENT ORDERS, distinct in their qualifications and achievements, two ways of understanding are possible: apposing them, or analyzing them in detail. If perfections are compared by means of a general apposition, undoubtedly that which is sought through the practice of virtue, the religious vows, and the office of prelacy is greater than another which is pursued by one of these

means alone. But if an independent analysis is made of the perfections of religious life, of prelacy, and of virtue, no comparison within the true essence of perfection is possible. For without the practice of perfect virtue, the religious vows are not perfection, but perversion, so remote from the summit of perfection as to be but a simulation of sanctity. Again, without the highest virtue and merit, the function of the prelate is not true elevation, but degradation; not a glorious exaltation, but a damaging fall, because *the mighty shall be mightily put to test, . . . for the powerful a rigorous scrutiny impends.* *Wis. 6:6, 8*

Since perfection of state deriving from either a vow or an office is of little worth without the perfection of merit; since perfection of merit cannot be obtained without love, which is a gift of the Holy Spirit; since no one knows whether one man is more highly favored than another — for even the favored one is unaware of any particular gift — no one should esteem himself more perfect than another. *cf. Eccl. 9:1* Instead, according to the teaching of the Apostle, if a comparison is to be made between two persons as regards their perfection, every man, however perfect he may be, should deem the other superior to himself. *cf. Phil. 2:3* Thus, in his book "On the Good of Matrimony," Augustine writes: "It is unfair to compare men to one another on the basis of any single good. For one man may perhaps lack a certain good that another possesses, and yet have a different good of greater worth."[35] And a little later: "It is better to possess nothing but good things, even though they be of lesser value, than to be the owner of both a great good and a great evil. In terms of bodily welfare, it is better to have the stature of Zacchaeus together with good health than that of Goliath with a fever."[36] *cf. Lk. 19:3* *cf. 1 Kgs. 17:4f.*

23. Speaking, then, of the state of prelacy and of that of religion, we may say that, to the best of our judgment, they cannot be compared as regards either their essential elements or what is fitting for each.

If we consider them in their essential elements, they are in the same relationship as that between a state of becoming and a state of achievement, because renouncement of ownership is necessarily required for the perfection of the religious state, while prelates of the Church are hardly bound to it, as appears from the first question of the twelfth cause defined by the Council of Agde: "Bishops, if they wish to do so, may bequeath their possessions, or what they have acquired, or anything they own."[37] A prelate is held by the very function of his prelacy to care not only for his own salvation but also for the salvation of every member of his flock, for so are we to understand him to be instructed by these words of the Lord's prophet: "*Keep this man; and if he shall slip away, thy life shall be for his life.*" A religious vow as such never holds to this.

*3 Kgs. 20:39**

If, now, we consider these states as regards what is fitting for each, we must say unconditionally that the state of prelacy and its perfection are higher, as Dionysius says in his book "On the Hierarchy of the Church": "In the same manner as one saying 'hierarchy' eminently refers to the adornment of all holy honors, so also one saying 'hierarch' indicates a man who is godly and remains in God, in whom all hierarchy is achieved."[38] Jerome confirms the same to Fabiola: "Such must be the science and erudition of the prelate of God that his steps and his movements and all his actions must be proclamations. He must conceive the truth in his mind, and this same truth must appear fully in his way of life and in his array, so that

whatever he does and whatever he says may be a lesson to the people."[39]

24. We should not conclude that the state of the prelate must excel any other state in every possible way, otherwise no man could ever become a prelate unless he were a virgin. It is fitting, however, that a candidate to the prelacy excel in such things as are related to the function of leading the flock, as Jerome writes to Oceanus: "A man chosen to be a future shepherd of the Church should be such that the people under him may rightfully be called a flock."[40] And Gregory, in his "Pastoral Rule": "The action of the leader should be as high above the action of the people as the life of the shepherd is above that of his flock."[41] Therefore, it is not fitting that anyone have access to the state of prelacy unless he is perfect, as Gregory says in the same work: "Let a man who is great in virtue accept power if he is pressed to do so; but if a man is devoid of virtue, let him not accept it, even under pressure."[42]

25. Yet the religious state is open to sinners and to the imperfect, so that they may become just and be led to perfection. Thus, even though the state of prelacy is higher in perfection, the state of religion is safer and more practical for the healing of our ailments because it protects against many of the dangers to which the state of prelacy exposes a man—mostly as regards the honors that come with it, as Augustine points out in commenting on the Psalms: "The more we are honored, the greater is our danger."[43] Gregory, demonstrating an instance of such peril in reference to this passage of Job, [*he*] *saith to the king, "Thou art an apostate,"* has this to observe: "Every time a leader is elated by the fact that he rules over others, he is being damaged through the sin of pride for the supreme

*Jb. 34:18**

role of leadership."[44] And the same Doctor, writing in the "Register": "I myself, following my own judgment, had
Ps. 21:7 decided with firmest resolve to be *the scorn of men, despised by the people,* so that I might ascend interiorly all the more as I should be exteriorly humbled and abased."[45] And to this danger inherent in prelacy from the honor of the state is added another that comes from its burdens and activities. Gregory writes of this also, in the second book of "Ethics": "Everyone who presides over the administration of earthly goods suffers by that fact from the darts of a hidden foe: for while his mind is striving to organize external matters, he is distracted from the consideration of himself."[46]

Thus it seems that the state of prelacy is at the same time the highest and the most dangerous, and that the desire for it is both presumptuous and foolish. Hence Augustine says, in the nineteenth book of "The City of God": "The higher office, without which the people cannot be ruled, is never rightfully desired, even with the intention of fulfilling it well."[47] And Gregory writes to the same effect in the eighteenth book of "Ethics": "Holy men never seek external activities, but secretly deplore those imposed upon them. Yet, though desiring better things, they accept in a spirit of obedience those tasks from which they would flee if they could. In their reverence for the hidden plans of God, they bear with what they would abandon, and carry out what they would avoid."[48]

26. These conclusions are clear: Prelacy, because of the loftiness of its dignity and the number of its dangers, may be accepted only under compulsion, and with fear, by a man whose virtue has been proved. The sinful and the weak must abstain from it absolutely. None may desire it,

but all must respect it. As for the religious state, all may desire it—just and sinner, perfect and imperfect, learned and ignorant. None should despise it. And those divinely called must accept it steadfastly and keep it carefully.

These matters concerning perfection have been treated at length because they are the prime defense against the succession of errors into which the man we have begun to answer has allowed himself to fall. Plainly he has fallen either through ignorance, by failing to consider the premises, or through brashness, by disdaining to do so.

CHAPTER IV

First Point of the Second Answer: The Desire for Martyrdom Is Shown To Be Perfect as Such, and the Flight from Martyrdom To Be Imperfect as Such

 HOSE who enjoy a spiritual understanding of the divine law know full well that the summit of evangelical perfection, like the tower of David, is provided with battlements by means of which dangerous attacks are repelled and internal peace is preserved. Among these defenses, the desire to suffer and die in the name of Jesus Christ holds the foremost place, as is clearly revealed by the noblest leader of the Christian army, St. Paul himself: *Therefore let us also . . . run with patience to the fight set before us; looking towards the author and finisher of faith, Jesus, who for the joy set before Him, endured a cross, despising shame.* The gloss says here: "Being girt and ready, let us dauntlessly run to the fight of the martyr, keeping our eyes on the Author of faith, that is, on the One who despised all earthly goods to prove that they must be despised, and suffered all earthly evils to show that they must be suffered—lest happiness be sought in the former, and pain feared in the latter." And further on: "The very One who looses the bond of weakness is fettered; the very One who raises the dead has died. In our love, let us suffer as He did."[1]

cf. Ct. 4:4

Heb. 12:1ff.

The same Apostle also exhorts us by his example to do
2 Cor. 12:15 the same, when he writes to the Corinthians: *I will most gladly spend and be spent myself for your souls.* Here the
cf. 1 Jn. 3:16 gloss says: "Such is perfect love: that a man be ready to die for his brothers. But is this love perfect as soon as it is born? No; in truth, it is born to be perfected. As soon as it is born, it is fed; and as it is fed, it is strengthened; and as it is strengthened, it is perfected; and when it has
Phil. 1:23* attained perfection, it says: *I desire to be dissolved and to be with Christ.*"[2]

Hence, perfect love consists in desiring the dissolution and death of one's own body, in imitation of the Apostle, who wrote to the Philippians, *I desire to be dissolved and to be with Christ.* That is why the gloss says of the same passage: "Some imperfect men die with patience, and some perfect men live with patience. At the time of death, those who desire to live must fight against themselves in order to obey God's will. When it happens, as with the Apostle,
Phil. 1:23* that a man desires *to be dissolved and to be with Christ,* his patience applies, not to dying, but to living: death for him is a delight. Thus, as Paul's passion was at hand, he
2 Tm. 4:7 rejoiced and gloried, saying: *'I have fought the good fight, . . . '* "[3] Nothing more lucid could be adduced to prove our point, since there is here an express statement that perfect love consists in the desire to die.

2. Now, the same conclusion may be drawn from the very strength of reason alone. According to Dionysius, love is A UNITIVE POWER,[4] — a saying of intrinsic truth. It necessarily follows that perfect love of God perfectly inclines the lover to anything by which he will more readily, personally, and rapidly rejoin the Beloved; but nothing unites the spirit of mortal man more rapidly and personally

with the immortal and impassible Godhead than the suffering of death for His honor. Hence, the perfect lover must desire such death before enduring it, and perfectly rejoice as soon as it comes to him. Thus it is also said of the apostles that *they departed from the presence of the Sanhedrin, rejoicing that they had been counted worthy to suffer disgrace for the name of Jesus.* *Acts 5:41*

As Hugh explains, this same love is also A TRANSFORMATIVE POWER.[5] A man who perfectly loves Christ will desire more than anything else to be conformed to Him, particularly in all things which divine law commands. In the present state of misery, the means of conformation to Christ most fitting for those to be saved consists in imitating His passion and death, as Peter indicates when he writes: *Christ also has suffered for you, leaving you an example that you may follow in His steps.* This, then, is the goal which the ardor of perfect love seeks with particular intensity, as shown in these words of the Canticle: *Stern as death is love, relentless as the nether world is devotion; its flames are a blazing fire.* *1 Pt. 2:21* *Ct. 8:6*

Now, as Richard writes, this same love is, finally, A GENEROUSLY DIFFUSIVE POWER.[6] Wherever there is perfect love, there also is perfect diffusion, either actual if the opportunity is present, or fully desired if it is not. Since to deliver oneself to death for the love of someone else is an act of the very highest diffusion, it necessarily follows that a perfect love of charity aspires to it, in accordance with the words in John: *"Greater love than this no one has, that one lay down his life for his friends."* *Jn. 15:13*

3. To desire death for the sake of Christ, to expose oneself to death for the sake of Christ, and to rejoice in the agony of this death are acts of perfect love. Hence, to run

away from death is an imperfect act when considered in itself; yet as shown above,† it may be restored to perfection through a superadded circumstance, to wit, when a man runs to preserve himself for a more glorious triumph, as
cf. 2 Cor. 11:33 did the Apostle in his flight; or when he does so to give the weak the consolation of hope, lest, when death comes close, they feel themselves trembling and fall into despair. We must believe that it was for this reason that Christ fled: not out of the anguish of fear, but out of a kind condescension of perfect love, as Augustine explains when commenting on John in his Sixtieth Homily:

"Strong indeed are the Christians if any of them remain undisturbed at the approach of death! Is anyone stronger than Christ? Who would be mad enough to claim this? What does it mean that He was troubled, if not that He consoled the weak members in His own body, that is, in the Church, by voluntarily assuming their weakness? — so that if some are disturbed by the approach of death, they may look upon Him in spirit and not believe themselves to be reproved because of that fear, nor fall into the more terrible death of despair."[7] Here, in a demonstration as clear as light itself, we are shown that, although trembling in the face of death implies some imperfection, this imperfection does not affect Christ as condescending to it, but only those to whom He condescends.

4. Now, concerning the flight referred to in the seventh
Jn. 7:1 chapter of John, *He did not wish to go about in Judea,* Augustine teaches that we are to understand this in the same sense. "It was to happen later," he says, "that one of His followers would hide so as not to be found by his

† Cf. ch. I, ¶ 9.

persecutors; now, lest this hiding be imputed to the man as a crime, what was to come about in one of the members was first enacted by the Head."[8] The same Doctor, writing of the Psalm, *Judgment shall again be with justice,* also says: "It was by prefiguring the weak in His person, that is, by assuming the personality of the weak through compassion for them, that the Lord said: *'Let this cup pass away from Me.'* "[9] Indeed, it could not be that the Lord, who was to rise on the third day, would recoil from the passion, while Paul would burn with the desire *to be dissolved and to be with Christ.* Paul suffered weakness in the flesh; and so, Christ did not give an example of weakness in the flesh, but condescended to weakness in the spirit.

Ps. 93:15

Mt. 26:39

*Phil. 1:23**

5. And yet our opponent attempts in many ways to deny this limpidly clear fact. In his incomprehension of the truth, he calls the notion absurd† that Christ condescended to imperfection in any way; and he tries to show that flight from death is perfect in itself, arguing that it is commanded by Christ and practiced by perfect men. The invalidity of the first point may be construed from this fact alone: that a commandment does not bring about perfection any more than it removes imperfection.‡ For if a commandment excluded imperfection, any man bound to the observance of it would be bound to its perfect fulfillment. Now, since this is manifestly untrue, it is in vain that our adversary, by recourse to the Gospel, to Pope Pelagius, and to Athanasius, tries to demonstrate that flight is perfect. The summit of evangelical perfection depends upon the supererogation of divine counsel, and not upon the obligation of a command.

cf. Mt. 10:23

† Cf. ch. I, ¶ 5.
‡ Cf. ch. II, ¶ 6.

6. Furthermore, the command to flee in the face of persecution is to be understood in the light of the particular instance, as Rabanus says when commenting on Matthew, and as the gloss confirms: "This passage pertains to the particular period in which it had been uttered [to the disciples]: *Do not go in the direction of the Gentiles:* they were not to fear persecution, but to turn away from it in order that, when tribulation occurred, it might contribute to the sowing of the Gospel."[10] If, then, our adversary understands this passage in the light of these circumstances, it has no value as far as his purpose is concerned. If, however, he understands it unqualifiedly, as he does, his error is not a slight one; for then anyone willfully exposing himself to death while he had a chance to hide or flee would be committing a mortal sin, since he would be acting against the will of God. If this were true, the most blessed martyrs Peter, Paul, Andrew, Lawrence, Sebastian, Tiburtius, and others like them, who even went so far as to offer themselves to their persecutors, would deserve, not the glory of martyrs, but the shame of prevaricators. It is indeed a besotted perversity that impels the sweeping declaration that the holy martyrs took to flight and submitted to martyrdom only when they had been tracked down. For this is denigrating their perfection, since any man, however imperfect, must perforce submit to being killed if he cannot hide. This disputant, by attributing a certain false perfection to the act of fleeing, would destroy the true perfection of the actual martyrs of Christ.

Mt. 10:5

7. Doubly defective also is the second argument by which our opponent tries to prove that perfect men have fled. First, everything that perfect men have done is not

automatically perfect. Even though Jacob, David, Urias, and Mathathias fled — these being the examples he adduces in support of flight — they also had wives and owned property, two facts that are not compatible with evangelical perfection.

cf. Gn. 28:5
*cf. 1 Kgs. 19: 12**
cf. Jer. 26:21
*cf. 1 Mach. 2: 28**

Again, we have shown above† that an act imperfect by nature may become perfect by reason of some circumstance added to it through perfect love. The resulting perfection is thus praiseworthy, not by reason of the act itself, but by reason of the circumstance of holiness in the doer's character and intention. Thus, the fact that Phinees and Mathathias are praised for having killed sinners does not signify that to kill a man is a good and perfect deed. And in the same way, the parallel arguments which this man multiplies lead to no valid conclusion. It is proper to infer that if holy men have done anything worthy of praise, that same may be imitated without sin in the right circumstances of time and place, as St. Athanasius wished to prove.[11] Yet it does not follow that to do so is perfect, unless it is also implied that imperfection indicates sin, as this man perversely teaches. Since this has been disproved several times above,‡ we mention it here merely in passing.

cf. Nm. 25:7ff.
cf. Ps. 105:30ff.
*cf. 1 Mach. 2: 24-26**

8. Certainly, the distinction our author adds — concerning the different manners of flight which he attempts to prove perfect in themselves, and to support with many examples — brings very little light to the subject. Rather, the mind of readers is filled thereby with the darkness of error unless careful circumspection is used. He distinguishes six manners of flight, "the first deriving from perversity of mind, the second, from ignorance and servile

† Cf. ch. I, ¶ 9.
‡ Cf. ch. II, ¶¶ 3 and 6ff.

fear,† the third, from natural fear, the fourth, from a spirit of humility, the fifth, from proper prudence, and the sixth, from abundant mercy." And when he comes to explaining these modes, we find him uttering many absurdities.

Thus, speaking of the SECOND, he says that "to flee because of ignorance is to flee because of servile fear, as the sons of Israel fled in the days of Saul"; and he adds that "Christ did not fear death with this kind of fear: He even forbade that it be feared in this way"; and a little later: "For this kind of flight pertains to the imperfect."

*cf. 1 Kgs. 13:6**

9. By these words this man shows himself to be wholly ignorant of theological truth. First, as regards the signification of words: he says that the sons of Israel fled before the Philistines out of servile fear, whereas servile fear, being a gift of the Holy Spirit,[12] implies flight, not from material battle, but from spiritual danger. Second, he shows that he does not understand the implications of propositions when he says that this fear is forbidden, and later adds that it pertains to the imperfect. From this, it would follow that something may be generally prohibited, and yet permitted to certain men; and again, that a transgression of the commandments is granted to the imperfect. Because such an argument contains an implicit contradiction, it has no value whatsoever.

10. Speaking now of the THIRD MODE OF FLIGHT, our adversary says that it proceeds from "a certain natural fear," and that this manner of fear "pertains to the perfect, like Moses, Eliseus, Elias, and Urias." Such flight "does

cf. Ex. 2:15

† Servile fear is the fear of the slave or subject at the prospect of impending judgment and punishment. It corresponds to imperfect contrition by which sins are avoided, not out of love for God, but out of the fear of hell. Bonaventure makes no further reference to the first mode of flight.

not produce any imperfection, and this," he asserts, "is the one Christ assumed." In these words he implies two things, of which one is an error and the other a blasphemy.

*cf. 4 Kgs. 6: 13ff.**
*cf. 3 Kgs. 19:3**
cf. Jer. 26:21

Although it is natural to fear death, yet to flee from it is a voluntary act; and while perfect charity does not exclude all natural fear, it does negate that compelling power of fear through which the one who fears is made to flee. Thus Bede, commenting on the words of Mark, *Leaving the linen cloth behind, he fled,* has this to say: "The apostle who remained with the Lord even when the others had fled, proved that he loved the Lord more than did the others; but he was not yet perfect, since in his terror he still could flee."[13]† Here Bede clearly shows that flight caused by the fear of death is not consistent with the perfection of love.

cf. Jn. 8:59, and 12:26

Mk. 14:52



11. There is no difficulty in the words of the gloss on this passage of John: *Another will gird thee,* where it is said that a disposition to flee is so natural that even old age failed to cure

Jn. 21:18

† Instead of "in his terror," both Bede and the gloss have: "while he was held," which seems closer to the Scripture.

Peter of it, although he was perfect. It is one thing to be afraid, and quite another to flee out of fear, as this same gloss (which our adversary fraudulently abridges) immediately adds: "For however severe the menace of death may be, the power of love is stronger."[14] And so, when the power of love overcomes fear, we do not flee at all.

To flee because of the fear of death is, then, incompatible with the perfection of love. Augustine writes in the homily already cited:† "In a pastor of Christ's flock, love for Him must grow to such a degree and to such a quality of ardor as to overcome that natural fear of death which makes us unwilling to die even when we want to live with Christ."

From such arguments as these, we may draw the conclusion that to flee is not consistent with perfect charity, which overcomes natural fear and prevents it from turning into flight.

12. To say, then, that Christ fled because of such fear is to blaspheme against Him. It would follow that, in Him, love did not overcome natural fear, but on the contrary was overcome; that His love was not of the sort to make Him perfectly steadfast, but on the contrary left Him vacillating and imperfect. Any reader will also note that to consider perfect that flight which is caused by the natural fear of death, and to assert at the same time that Christ fled in this manner, amounts to declaring that Christ the Leader was overcome in advance by His enemies, and to provoking His followers to flight. No one, indeed, is made to flee by the fear of death unless this fear overpowers him. If, as this man says, such an overpowering fear is perfect,

† Quoted in the gloss.

since all men are naturally impelled by it, nothing remains, according to this profane doctrine, but that all men turn to flight. In this flight, there would be no difference between the shepherd and the hireling, since both have an equal fear of death. *cf. Jn. 10:11ff.*

13. Commenting on the FOURTH MODE OF FLIGHT, our adversary states that "to flee because of the humility of mind through which a man recognizes his own weakness, and humbly believes himself to be unable to bear the trial of death, pertains to perfect men." For "in this manner," says he, "Peter fled before the face of Nero;[15] the Jews, from the persecutions of Antioch; and the anchorites,[16] from the persecutions of Decius and Valerianus. Jesus taught this manner of flight," he continues, "and confirmed it by His example. Hence, it must be imitated by the perfect." *cf. 1 Mach. 1: 40*; 2:27f.*

Now anyone carefully considering these examples will be aware of the writer's ineptness. The first example, concerning Peter, is false. If, indeed, as he says, Peter accounted himself unworthy of martyrdom, so also should any Christian. But if it is a perfect act to flee for such a reason, then absolutely everyone should run away, and none should aspire to the passion, since this is something beyond our strength. And from such reasoning, it also follows that there was presumption in the fervor of the holy martyrs who went to their torment with courage in their hearts.

The second example is ambiguous in itself, and unrelated to the proposition, since nothing proves that the Jews were fleeing out of humility. In point of fact, it is impossible to construe as an example of perfection the flight of those who entrusted their salvation to their own material swords, and pursued their enemies to death whenever they had a chance to do so.

14. As for the third example, concerning the anchorites, in which he relies on the authority of Jerome to make an issue of the flight of Paul the first hermit, it does not fit his purpose, but opposes it instead. For, as Jerome tells us in the same text, Paul was then young, rich, and delicately reared; neither an anchorite nor a monk, but still living in the world. And Jerome says of him that "he changed a necessity into a deliberate intention," since he lived in the desert first under compulsion, and later, voluntarily. But as for other Christians who had attained perfection, the same Doctor had said, a little earlier in the text: "The wish of the Christians of that time was to be struck with the sword for the sake of God's name. But the cruel enemy, seeking tortures that would but slowly kill, attempted to throttle their souls rather than their bodies: so that Cyprian, who had suffered from this in his own person, could say that those who wished to die were not permitted to be killed."[17] We have already pointed out that this citation (misinterpreted by our author) refutes his proposition instead of confirming it, since Jerome declares [in another section of the text] that the martyrs of that time not only did not run away, but even passionately lamented because death was denied them, confirming this through the word and example of the glorious Doctor and Martyr Cyprian.

15. The fourth example proposed, referring to Christ, includes a blasphemy detestable to faithful ears: for if Christ, in His humility, thought Himself unworthy to suffer martyrdom, either He was, in fact, unworthy, or He was not. If He was unworthy, it follows that He was actually imperfect; if He was not, it follows that He was ignorant of His own perfection. Furthermore, if it is a blasphemy against God to say or believe that Jesus Christ,

the Son of God, is imperfect, the supposition that Christ believed Himself to be imperfect not only blasphemes against Christ, but also actually asserts that He Himself was a blasphemer, an unacceptable proposition. Anyone who insists on saying and thinking such things should be *delivered up to Satan that he may learn not to blaspheme.* *1 Tm. 1:20*

16. When our adversary speaks at greater length of the FIFTH MODE OF FLIGHT, which is flight caused by circumspect prudence, he clearly shows his own imprudence. No one denies that even a perfect man may sometimes flee, in the expectation of a better opportunity or an occasion to render a greater service, as the Apostle Paul fled from Damascus. But this flight should not be distinguished from the other legitimate manners, since every reasonable and legitimate flight proceeds from a circumspect prudence, which indeed determines the direction to be followed on any road of salvation. Such prudence, which directs flight according to the circumstances of place and time, proceeds not so much from the commanding power of perfect virtue as from the condition of human imperfection and spiritual weakness. Thus, commenting on this passage from Matthew, *All the disciples left Him and fled,* Bede says in the gloss: "Just as Peter, by washing out his denial with his tears and eradicating it completely with a triple confession of love for the Lord, shows such as fail under torture how to rehabilitate themselves, so also the other disciples, who had escaped actual arrest by running away, teach the precaution of such flight to those who feel unequal to torture, for whom it is safer to hide than to be exposed to danger."[18] *cf. 2 Cor. 11: 32f.; Acts 9:24f.* *Mt. 26:56*

From such words as these, it is clear that the circumspection which leads to precautionary flight pertains to the weak rather than to the perfect.

17. Now, our adversary says that prudence, which leads to perfection, could not in any way lead to imperfection. If he means by this that prudence never makes a perfect man become imperfect, he is speaking a truth, but one which has no bearing on the present matter. If he means that no work of imperfection is done under the pretext of prudence, he is certainly mistaken. For then every work of prudence would be perfect; and not only of prudence, but also of any of the other virtues to which prudence is necessarily joined. And, from this, it would also follow that every virtue is perfect; that anyone who possesses a virtue is perfect; that no imperfect man is just; and that every imperfection is a sin. In the preceding pages, all this has been proved repeatedly to be false and unbefitting.†

18. Finally, concerning the SIXTH MODE OF FLIGHT, our adversary argues that "it pertains to the perfect man to flee by reason of an abundant mercy, lest the persecutor offend God increasingly; and such was the flight of Jacob, Moses, David, Benedict,[19] and Sylvester. . . ."[20] And he continues, "It is this manner of flight that Christ taught and confirmed by His example."

cf. Nm. 25:7ff.
cf. Ps. 105:30f.
*cf. 1 Mach. 2: 24-26**
cf. Ex. 2:15

To those who view the matter superficially, this might seem to be a reasonable and pious opinion. But anyone who considers the argument with real attention will perceive at once that it lacks both rational foundation and piety. The examples proposed are in themselves ambiguous; and at the same time, it does not appear anywhere in the Scriptures [or elsewhere] that the men of whom this author speaks actually fled for the cause he assigns. From what reasoning or authority may the conclusion be drawn

† Cf. ch. II, ¶ 2.

that Jacob fled from Esau, Moses from Pharao, David from Saul, and Sylvester from Constantine, lest the persecutors commit a greater sin on account of the pursued? Hence the proposed argument must be considered worthless; as Jerome says, "That which lacks the authority of the Scriptures may be spurned or proved with equal facility."[21]

Furthermore, if everyone who persecutes the just has sinned all the more heavily as he has inflicted more severe injuries; and if it is a holy and perfect act to flee for this reason: a man should always flee from the face of any persecutor, lest this persecutor enlarge his sin. And it would necessarily follow from this that Christ did not confer upon the Jews an abundant mercy, but rather a great cruelty; for He submitted Himself to the passion precisely when a large crowd had the occasion to sin in His regard, that is, at the time of the Pasch when a great number of Jews were to assemble of whom He knew that many would consent to His death. Finally, according to this doctrine, all the martyrs who did not have recourse to flight could be accused of unmerciful cruelty.

19. In vain, then, does this author boast of having refuted his opponent by arguing that flight is not imperfect when it happens to derive from abundant mercy, which cannot be an occasion of imperfection.† So far from having disproved his opponent's position, he is in fact opening the way to the refutation of his own arguments. For if the reason why Christ incurred no stain of imperfection is that [on some occasions] He fled out of mercy for those who persecuted Him, should not our author with even greater truth abstain from attributing to imperfection

† Cf. ¶¶ 5ff., and ch. I, ¶¶ 6ff.

the fact that Christ fled out of mercy for His weak members? He should rather judge this to be perfect.

20. As for the conclusion he finally draws: that "Christ fled in these four manners and taught such flight"; that "perfect men have imitated Him in this and taught others to do the same"; and that "Christ in His flight gave an example to the weak, that is, to those who suffer from an infirmity of the flesh which pertains to the perfect, and not from an infirmity of the spirit which pertains to the imperfect" — since all this has now been sufficiently disproved, there is no need for further discussion. It may be remarked, however, that the four manners of flight, considered together, clearly reveal the absurdity of this man's teachings. For if Christ had fled in these four ways, and if the most perfect men had followed Him in so doing, since all four ways are common to all times, places and people, flight would be the proper course for everyone. Who, indeed, is free of natural fear? Who has no obligation to humiliate himself? Who can afford not to be cautious in the face of danger? Who is relieved of pity for the neighbors who oppress him? If, then, these ways of flight are the paths of perfection by which a man goes to Christ, instead of heeding the call of the apostolic bugle and running toward the battle of the Passion which is proposed to us,† we should seek the safety of one of these ways of flight, in order that we may come to Christ all the sooner for having followed the shortest path to perfection. If the leaders of the battle of this world believe that such an exhortation — or rather, such a discouraging speech — should not be made on the battlefield because it would trouble the

† Cf. ¶ 1.

warriors' hearts, how much more does this apply to the battle of Jesus Christ where the issue is no mere avoidance of material loss or freedom from bodily injury, but victory over the soul's eternal death? We do not mean that the perfect could not be justified in fleeing under certain circumstances, as indicated above:† we merely intend to show that excessive, vain and false praise of flight must be shunned as a pernicious attitude opposed to the virtue of the perfect. While error must be rejected always and everywhere, it is particularly dangerous wherever and whenever, under the guise of sanctity, it brings a man down from the summit of virtue and dashes him into the pit of wickedness.

† Cf. ¶¶ 4, 6 and 7.

CHAPTER V

Second Point of the Second Answer, in Which the Perfection and Praiseworthiness of Abstinence Are Declared, and Calumnies against It Are Disproved



N THE opinion of men well trained in the Christian combat, the rigor of holy abstinence is most necessary to those who seek and defend perfection. Yet, since the perverse teaching of a new doctrine has been introduced surreptitiously with the intention of proving the contrary, this same truth needs to be confirmed through examples and writings of the saints.

The first witness is the forerunner of evangelical perfection who, because of his outstanding abstinence, was called great by an angelic voice. Luke tells us that an angel said to Zachary: *"He shall be great before the Lord; he shall drink no wine or strong drink."* At this point the gloss says: "Strong drink is interpreted as inebriating drink, and this expression covers any drink, made of any components whatsoever, that has the property of making a man drunk. For it is fitting that the cup selected for heavenly grace be free of any worldly stimulant."[1] The Vessel of Election, the Apostle Paul, speaking of himself, recommends this same sobriety in his Epistle to the Corinthians: *I chastise my body and I bring it into subjection, lest perhaps after preaching to others I myself should be rejected.* And, in imitation of athletes, he calls all the soldiers of Christ to

Lk. 1:15

cf. Acts 9:15

1 Cor. 9:27

1 Cor. 9:25 the practice of this self-control by saying: *Everyone in a contest abstains from all things—and they indeed to receive a perishable crown, but we an imperishable.* Ambrose, in his third book on the "Hexaemeron," confirms this opinion when he writes: "In the beginning of time, God made simple and natural food before any other kind of food, for this is the food of sobriety and any other is that of pleasure. Thus, the example of frugality and the teaching of restraint are given to us in order that we may be content with herbs and with the nourishment of simple vegetables and fruits, the gifts of nature and the first to be provided by God's lavishness."[2]

2. In the second book of "The History of the Church," Eusebius reports that "none of the Egyptian saints established by Mark ever tasted wine or any kind of meat. Water is their only drink and bread flavored with salt and hyssop their only food."[3] Concerning the anchorites, whose life is recognized as an example of perfection, Jerome, in his praise of the cenobitic life, writes to Eustochius that among them "sustenance is based on bread, legumes and vegetables, spiced with nothing but salt."[4] And a few lines below, he continues: "I shall come to the third class, called anchorites, who left the monasteries and went to the wilderness with nothing but bread and salt. The originator of this manner of life was Paul; its glory was Anthony; and, to rise to the highest, its chief was John the Baptist."[5] This from Jerome, who writes in his biography of Paul, to whom he ascribes the origin of this custom: "He spent his whole time in prayer and solitude. The palm tree provided his food and clothing. Now, lest anyone believe this is impossible, I am a witness, before Jesus and His holy angels, that I knew a group of monks one of whom lived thirty years on wheat

bread and muddy water."[6] Blessed Basil also forbade the use of meat to the oriental monks striving toward the summit of perfection.[7] And Martin, as Sulpitius recalls, refused to concede the use of wine to the monks who lived with him in his monastery.[8] Finally, the holy man Benedict forbade the use of meat to monks in good health.[9] From such examples, and those of countless other saints, we may conclude with certainty that practicing the rigor of abstinence is a work of perfect virtue.

3. Now, in order to make such certainty complete, there is need of proof, of quotations from saints who assert that abstinence from wine and meat is perfect. Jerome writes to Demetriades: "Although meat and wine are conceded in a marriage feast, abstinence from them should be encouraged as a counsel of greater perfection."[10] The same Jerome also writes, in his work "Against Jovinian": "If you wish to be perfect, it is good to drink no wine and eat no meat: for, if you wish to be perfect, it is better to fatten the soul than the body."[11] Augustine, also, writing "On Faith, to Peter," has this to say: "The humble ministers of Christ who desire to serve the Lord without entanglement do not seek to be married, and abstain from wine and meat as much as the health of their bodies permits, and yet there is no sin either in having a wife or in partaking of wine and meat."[12] Gregory's words in his third book of "Ethics" also confirm this point: "No one receives the palm of the spiritual battle who has not first overcome within himself the cravings of the flesh by curbing his natural desires. Nor does he rise to the challenge of the spiritual combat before having tamed the enemy in our midst: the voracious passions."[13]

4. It may also be gathered that abstinence is a work that pertains supremely to the perfect man who is expected to

resist victoriously the assaults of Satan and to dwell peacefully upon the study of wisdom. Hence, Jerome writes in his work "Against Jovinian": "If anyone believes he is free to enjoy an abundance of drink and food while serving wisdom—in other words, that he is free to plunge into pleasure without falling a slave to its vices—he is deceiving himself."[14] And, later: "In the same manner as we prefer virginity to the married state, we prefer fasting and the spirit to satiety and the flesh."[15] And so, if the service of wisdom is proper to the perfect, and if virginity is superior to the married state as the perfect is superior to the imperfect,† it remains that, for anyone who considers abstinence in itself, to abstain from meat and other delicate food is consonant with perfection. On the contrary, their use implies a certain kind of imperfection which is of the very nature of this same act, unless it is restored to perfection by some additional circumstance: If, for instance, a man fully intended to abstain, and yet makes sober use of such food in regard to time and place, or because he needs it for his survival if he is sick or weak, or because he may in eating it edify a brother through charitable condescension.

5. An example of the first case appears in the lives of the perfect cenobites, of whom those in good health are described by Jerome to Eustochius in the following words: "Their sustenance is based on bread, legumes, and vegetables, spiced with nothing but salt."[16] Later, speaking of the weak, he continues: "Wine is given only to the elderly who often receive an additional meal, as do children, so that the weakness of the former may be overcome in like manner as the development of the latter is assured."[17] Finally, he

† Cf. Foreword, pp. VIII, IX.

says of the sick: "But if anyone falls ill, he is moved to a larger room, and so well attended by the elders that he has no need for the city's pleasures or a mother's attentions."[18]

An example of the second case appears clearly in Christ, of whom Chrysostom, writing in his Twenty-seventh Homily on Matthew, has this to say: "Behold how much tenderness there is in Christ's condescension, in His manner of eating and drinking: for He is seen to eat and drink in a way that appears quite different from that of John [the Baptist]. If He acts in this way, it is for the sake of the salvation of the Jews, and, even more, for the sake of the salvation of the whole world. At the same time, He is closing the mouths of heretics."[19] Indeed, the Master of every manner of perfection and the Bearer of our imperfection displayed in His life both abstinence and condescension, while John spent all of his time under the strictest law of abstinence.

6. Although the act of abstaining is the more perfect by nature, Christ acted with greater perfection than John, for He abstained interiorly in a manner more pure, and condescended to others out of a more perfect love.† Likewise, the Apostle, the foremost advocate of Christ's perfection, shows himself as an example, not only by the austerity of his life, but truly also by his loving condescension toward the neighbor, for he writes to the Corinthians: *To the weak I became weak, that I might gain the weak. I became all things to all men, that I might save all.* The Lord proposed this same form of edifying condescension to the disciples sent out to preach when He said: *"Remain in the same house, eating and drinking what they have."* And an explanation of this is given in Matthew: *The laborer deserves*

1 Cor. 9:22

Lk. 10:7

Mt. 10:10

† Cf. ch. I, ¶¶ 10f.

his living. Indeed, since the disciples were poor and exposed throughout their traveling to the hard work of preaching, there was danger that they might personally fail because of their state of need, because of the difficulty of their work, or because their request for unusual food would have made them a burden to those who took them in. This manner of sustenance, therefore, was kindly and providently imposed upon them, so that they might both condescend to others and have the strength to carry out their own task.

7. Hence, it seems that both to abstain from meat and wine and to make use of them may be done perfectly and imperfectly. The former, meaning to abstain, is done perfectly by reason of the very nature of abstention, whereas the latter is done perfectly by reason of an additional circumstance, while retaining its natural bent toward imperfection.

Now, we do not mean to say that food implies sin, for
1 Cor. 8:8 the Apostle writes to the Corinthians: *Food does not commend us to God;* and the gloss adds: "Whether eaten or not."[20] And Augustine writes in the third book of his work "On Christian Doctrine": "The requirements of the place, time and person must be considered carefully so that no deed may be judged evil inconsiderately. For it may occur that the rarest delicacies are consumed wisely without the slightest taint of avidity or voracity, while the cheapest food, eaten by the unwise, may make them burn with the
cf. Lk. 24:42f. most disgusting flame of gluttony. Any sane man shall
cf. Gn. 25:34 rather eat fish, as did the Lord, than lentils, as did Esau, or oats, as would a horse."[21] As a further contribution to the same thesis, Gregory says in his third book of "Ethics": "It is not the food but the appetite that may be vicious.

Hence, we may generally eat the most exquisite food without sin, but we cannot eat the lowest without a sense of guilt. Thus, Esau lost his birthright through a plate of lentils, while Elias preserved the strength of his body in the wilderness by eating meat. Thus, also, the ancient enemy reduced the first man to servitude, not with meat, but with an apple, and he tempted the Second Man, not with meat, but with bread."[22]†

8. It is clear, then, that we are free to use delicate food in the proper circumstances of time and place without incurring any sin. Yet, because they give occasion to sin by arousing concupiscence, it is salutary to abstain from them. Since by its very nature abstinence is difficult and hard and beyond what is absolutely required, we may gather that it is perfect because preparing for perfection, and promoting and preserving it. Wherefore Jerome writes in his work "Against Jovinian": "Granted that all nations eat meat and that what is practiced in many places is also permissible in many places: what is this to us whose *citizenship is in heaven,* who, surpassing Pythagoras and Empedocles and all the pillars of wisdom, are not bound to the one of whom we are born, but to the One of whom we are reborn, in that, through abstinence, we subjugate the revolt of the flesh which would have led us to the temptations of lust?"[23] By these words, he shows that

Phil. 3:20

† It is hard to see on what basis Gregory distinguishes exquisite food (meat, fish) from the lowly (lentils, oats, apple, bread). Furthermore, this neatly contradicts what Bonaventure had quoted above: "Thus, the example of frugality and the teaching of restraint are given to us in order that we may be content with herbs and with the nourishment of simple vegetables and fruits, the gifts of nature and the first to be provided by God's lavishness," where Ambrose sees such natural food as the best, not the lowest. See also ¶ 9, where lowly food is praised.

abstinence is well suited to perfect and heavenly men for the sake of perfect avoidance of lust and perfect submission of the flesh.

9. It is also true that abstinence promotes perfect virtue. It is valuable, first, as a preservative of the splendor of holy modesty. Thus, Jerome writes to Eustochius: "Great care should be taken that those whom satiety expels from paradise be led back to it by hunger; not that God, the Creator and Lord of the Universe, is delighted with groaning bowels and empty stomach or fire on the breath, but that if we eat too much, modesty could not possibly be safeguarded."[24]

Abstinence is valuable, secondly, as a preservative of the highest poverty, of which the same Jerome writes to Salvina: "Wherever lowly herbs and bread are used as food, and eating and drinking are done in moderation, wealth is completely superfluous."[25] And the same, writing "Against Jovinian,": "*If thou wilt be perfect,* it is good not to drink wine and not to eat meat."[26] And later: "It is a great joy to the soul to be content with little, to have at your feet the world and its power, banquets and delights for the obtaining of which great wealth is sought—and to exchange all this against lowly food."[27]

Mt. 19:21

Abstinence is valuable, in the third place, for the gaining of spiritual fortitude, according to this passage from Bernard: "In the same manner as our body is either growing or shrinking every day, so also our spirit must always go either backward or forward: and yet, there is, in between, a state of order. For in a vigorous and lusty body the soul is always softer and more lukewarm, while in a weak and failing body, the wakeful spirit remains stronger and more alert. The Apostle asserts that this corresponds

to his own experience when he writes: *When I am weak, then I am strong.*"[28]† As vigor wanes in the body through abstinence, so does virtue wax in the soul, as may be seen most clearly in the case of a perfect man. *2 Cor. 12:10*

Abstinence is valuable, finally, as a means of obtaining peace of mind, as demonstrated by this passage from one of Seneca's letters: "Such things as water or barley or a morsel of bread are no joy: but it is supreme delight to be able to take pleasure in them and to have attained a state which no ill fortune can impair."[29] If, indeed, such happy peace of mind, unperturbed by changes in the course of events, is properly said to pertain to perfection, clearly, then, abstinence pertains to the perfect.

10. As soon as such arguments as these have been adduced in defense of truth, it is an easy thing both to defend the lofty perfection of abstinence and to counter the plots that its adversary has devised against it. Since he begins by implying a fault that actually does not exist, he is building on a foundation of error from the very start. He claims, indeed, that his opponent had said that to eat fish was contrary to perfection—a statement the friar never made. Furthermore, he declares that his opponent must be counted among those of whom the Apostle says that

† This statement, which is characteristic of St. Bernard's negative view of nature, directly opposes the prevalent opinion: *mens sana in corpore sano*. A distinction must be made between physical weakness which may be corrected with proper food and medical care, and unavoidable weakness resulting either from incurable ill health or from persecution. The former should be remedied, for it procures no moral perfection, in spite of the fact that St. Bernard seems to believe it does. The latter should be borne with patience, for it procures merit. When accepted, such weakness may indeed be transformed into strength through reliance on God's power, as explained by St. Paul.

1 Tm. 4:1 *in after times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceitful spirits.* He attributes guilt to the friar for having preferred abstinence to satiety. The reader will readily perceive the depth of malice and fraud there is in accusing of Manichean error such a faithful man, under the pretext that he had recommended abstinence. This amounts to implying that no recommendation of abstinence is possible without prejudice to faith and sound doctrine. If this were true the most illustrious men adorned with the practice of great and wonderful abstinence would have been mistaken; and even now the Church would be in error when, at certain times she determines, she gives the order to abstain from meat or anything made of it. A man, then, would be in error both when following the custom of the Church, for then in the author's words he would be a Manichean, and when attacking this holy custom, for then he would be a disciple of Jovinian.

11. Let our opponent listen, then, not to us, but to Augustine in his work "Against the Manichean Adimantus," where he refers to the followers of this sect: "These men," he comments, "were seen by the Apostle as due to
1 Tm. 4:1, 3 come in *after times. . . . They will forbid marriage, and will enjoin abstinence from foods, which God has created.* Paul is pointing here to those whose abstinence from such things is not founded on the desire to control their natural appetites or to spare their neighbors' weakness."[30]

Let this man listen to Jerome speaking "Against Jovin-
cf. ibid. ian": "The Apostle," he says, "reproves those who forbade marriage and commanded abstinence from certain foods; but he is pointing to Marcion and other heretics who advocate perpetual abstinence with the intention of destroying, despising and debasing the Creator's works. As for us,

we praise every creature, but prefer leanness to fat, abstinence to extravagance, and fast to a full belly. And, *from the days of John the Baptist,* abstainer and virgin . . . *the kingdom of heaven has been enduring violent assault."*[31] With these words, Jerome properly closes the mouth of Jovinian, and of his present follower, lest, with the carnality of his discourses comparable to the fetid exhalations from a tomb, this man destroy some minds as yet sober and modest, and corrupt their manner of life. For, as the Apostle says, *evil companionships corrupt good morals.*

Mt. 11:12

cf. Ps. 13:3

1 Cor. 15:33

12. Those in error often attack a truth by means of perversely twisted arguments they draw from it. Thus, our adversary attempts to obtain the support of Scriptural authority by quoting this passage from the Apostle: *Every creature of God is good;* and this other: *For the clean, all things are clean;* and a few lines down, this saying from the Gospel: *What goes into the mouth does not defile a man.* In between, he had quoted "The City of God" where Augustine writes: "A habit related to the manner of eating is no impediment to the religious state."[32]

1 Tm. 4:4

Ti. 1:15

Mt. 15:11

From such texts as these, this man attempts to prove that abstinence from food has nothing to do with perfection, and the use of it, nothing to do with imperfection. He even goes so far as to write: "It is not God's creature that gives rise to imperfection, but the weak mind unable to make proper use of this same creature. Hence, abstinence pertains to the imperfect mind rather than to the perfect." Now, if this were true and if such an argument had had any weight, since temporal goods are God's creatures and woman was formed by God—and, which is more, since marriage is a sacrament of the Lord, and freedom of the will a divine gift—none of these things would lead to

cf. Eph. 5:32

imperfection: they would instead pertain to the perfect rather than to the imperfect, since the perfect would be able to use them better. Thus, according to this unwise teaching, it behooves the perfect rather to possess wealth than to despise it, to marry† than to preserve chastity, to act as they please rather than obey another's will.

13. The same reasoning would also lead to the conclusion that the teachings of Christ are opposed to perfection. This man would not have committed the indecency of proposing a theory so horrifying to pious ears had he only understood in a catholic sense the several passages he is quoting. The text of the Apostle which he brings forth reproves in fact the impiety of heretics; the Gospel saying denounces the superstitious teachings of the Pharisees; and the passage from Augustine is opposed to both heresy and superstition.

cf. Mt. 15:1-20

The truth of the statement that Christ accused the Pharisees of superstition is clearly proved by the text itself and developed in the gloss on this precise passage from Matthew: *What goes into the mouth does not defile a man,* which reads: "This one single pronouncement was enough to do away with any superstitious practice founded on the belief that religion consisted in the proper choice of food."[33] It concerns the distinctions applied by the Pharisees to determine which foods were unclean. In contrast, distinguishing between foods that are coarse or delicate, precious or vile, as done by those who practice abstinence,

Mt. 15:11

† Bonaventure's attitude is not always so severe, for he writes later in this same work: "Although virginity is truly superior to any degree of modesty, it does not necessarily follow that the state of holy virgins should be considered any higher than that of prelates, or of any men who are not held in the least to virginity." (Ch. XI, ¶ 3). See also ch. VI, ¶ 6.

is not opposed to the Christian religious life, but well conformed to it.

Again, when Augustine says that "a habit related to the manner of eating is no impediment to the religious state,"[34] it must be understood as referring to the religion of the Christian faith that is common to both perfect and imperfect, and of which Augustine says in the same passage: "It forces those philosophers who become Christian to change, not their habits and eating customs, but their false teachings."[35] It cannot, indeed, be understood of religion in the sense of a religious life under the discipline of a rule, in which case a new manner of living is assumed and the pattern is changed also as regards distinctions in the use of food. Wherefore Jerome writes "Against Jovinian": "Know that the swine and the boar and the deer and other such animals were created in order that athletes, soldiers, sailors, miners and others occupied in similar trades may have the right kind of food to sustain the bodily strength they need. But our manner of life in the religious discipline consists in training, not the athlete, the miner or the oarsman, but the pursuer of wisdom who dedicates himself to God's service."[36]

Finally the Apostle's saying with which our author begins,† is an attack against the impiety of the Manicheans and has nothing to do with the abstinence of the perfect. Indeed, Jerome writes to Salvina: "We know the Apostle said that every one of God's creatures is good and that nothing should be rejected which is received with thanksgivings; but it is also said that it is not good to eat meat or drink wine. Women who cater to the flesh partake of it:

cf. 1 Tm. 4:4
cf. Rom. 14:21

† Cf. ¶ 12.

their passion overflows in the sexual act. Bound to their husbands, they dedicate themselves to procreation and to their children. Those whose womb carries progeny, their belly also is filled with meat. But as for you who have buried all such delights in your husband's tomb, you have no other need than to persevere in your fast."[37]

14. It may be clearly gathered from this that every creature is good and clean, and that to abstain from some of them is holy, because, although they are not unclean in a causal or formal sense, yet, through the occasion of their use, it often occurs that some uncleanness is contracted because concupiscence is aroused. As the same Jerome writes to Eustochius: "If I am able to give any good advice, if my experience is worthy of trust, this is my first counsel, this is what I declare as a witness: the virgin of Christ should avoid wine as if it were poison. Why throw oil on a flame? Why excite glowing embers with the fuel of major conflagrations?"[38]

15. Were anyone to say that such downfall threatens the young and imperfect, but not the perfect, Jerome answers the objection in the same letter: "So long as we are
2 Cor. 4:7 attached to this weak body, so long as *we carry this treas-*
Gal. 5:17 *ure in vessels of clay,* and so long as *the flesh lusts against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh,* there is no such thing as an assured victory."[39] And, a little later: "The
Acts 9:15 *Rom. 1:1* Apostle, *a chosen vessel, set apart for the Gospel of God* chastised his body and brought it into subjection on
cf. 1 Cor. 9:27 account of the thorns of the flesh and of the provocations
cf. 2 Cor. 12:9 of vice, lest perhaps after preaching to others he himself would be rejected. After suffering exposure, fast, hunger, flagellation and torments, he still looked back on himself
Rom. 7:24 and exclaimed: *Unhappy man that I am! Who will deliver*

me from the body of this death! How could you believe yourself to be safe? Beware, therefore, lest some day God say to you: *The virgin of Israel is cast down upon her land: there is none to raise her up.*"[40] *Am. 5:2**

Now, if these words of Jerome are true, or rather, because they are true, it is a grievously dangerous thing to detract the perfection of abstinence, leading away from it the souls of those who strive toward perfect virtue.

16. Now, in order to induce men to do this very thing, our adversary arms himself with examples from the saints, Noah, Elias and John the Baptist, "the first of whom," he claims, "received permission to use any kind of meat, while the second was actually sustained by eating meat, and the third was not defiled when he ate locusts." From such examples as these he goes on to argue that "since every imperfection is a defilement of the soul, the eating of meat does not bring about imperfection, but rather perfection, since the Apostle says: *I know how . . . to have abundance and to suffer want.* Nor was he more perfect in his want than in his abundance, since it is through the power of God that he could live in both these states." *cf. Gn. 9:3; 3 Kgs. 17:6; Mt. 3:4* *Phil. 4:12*

If our adversary, by introducing the example of perfect men, were attempting to prove that eating meat was permitted, he would have been proceeding according to reason and following Augustine who, in his "Confessions," demonstrates by the example of the same saints that sin is brought about, not by food, but by uncontrolled appetite.[41] If this man were attempting so to prove that, in some circumstances of time and place, the use of rich food might not have been contrary to perfection, but compatible with it, he would still have been telling the truth, but uselessly, since no Catholic denies it.

17. But if he is attempting to prove that to feed on such things and to abstain from them is equally perfect, he is making no small mistake.

He is mistaken, first, because the absurdity and falsity of such a doctrine is proved by the example of the saints, as indicated above.†

Second, because his reasoning is sophistic and invalid when he asserts as a premise that whatever perfect men do is perfect as such. In fact, as we have seen in an earlier discussion,‡ similarly false conclusions could be drawn from Noah's marriage feast, from the possession of wealth, and from the planting of a vineyard—not to mention the drinking of wine.

Third, because after proposing such arguments, he continues by making a false assumption, declaring that "imperfection consists in a certain pollution of the soul," a statement disproved earlier for many good reasons, and shown to be the source of contradictions.†† If it were true, the newly baptized either would not be imperfect or would be defiled by the stain of sin, both of which propositions are absurd. Furthermore, if imperfection were a defilement, either it would be a mortal stain, and then every imperfect man would be completely lacking in charity; or it would be a venial one, and then any man committing a venial sin would lose the state of perfection; no one living in venial sin would ever attain it; and the perfect would be the same as the undefiled—which is true either of all the just in the state of wayfaring, or of none at all besides the God-Man and the glorious Virgin.

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† Cf. ¶¶ 1ff.
‡ Cf. ¶ 7.
†† Cf. ch. II, ¶¶ 14ff.

Fourth, the examples he gives militate rather against his thesis than in favor of it when they are considered in the sense intended by the holy Doctors. Jerome, for instance, writes to Eustochius: "Noah drank wine and became inebriated and his loins were uncovered while he was drunk. Elias, fleeing from Jezabel, lay beneath an oak-tree and arose when an angel came to him, *and behold, there was at his head a hearthcake and a vessel of water.* Now, why could not spiced wine have been sent to him, and choice food, and tender meat? Eliseus invited the sons of the prophets to a meal, and since he was offering them herbs from the field, he heard the clamor of his guests: *Death is in the pot!* Nor did this man of God become angry against the cook since he was not accustomed to eating anything better. Likewise, richer fare could have been brought to Daniel from the royal table, but as far as I know, Habacuc brought him the rustic food of harvesters, hence Daniel is called *the man of desires* for not having eaten the bread of his longing nor drunk the wine of concupiscence."[42]

cf. Gn. 9:21

*3 Kgs. 19:6**

*4 Kgs. 4:40**

cf. Dn. 14:32ff.

*ibid. 9:23**

18. Consider how often our adversary has recourse to examples taken from the Fathers of the Old Testament who were actually praising abstinence, and how, as a man endowed with the wisdom of the flesh, he attempts to turn them into arguments in the praise of meat! Yet, sensing that because of his earlier statements he himself might be pierced with the darts of the same Jerome as a disciple of Jovinian, he craftily throws up a shield in his own defense: "And call me not a follower of Jovinian, for I do not assert as he does that there is no difference whatsoever between complete abstinence and the gluttonous abuse of meat and wine: My opinion is that abstinence is most necessary for the weak who are unable of making proper use of such

things, while the perfect incur no stain from consuming them."

These are his very words by which he amplifies the error of another in order to excuse his own. For Jovinian, although thoroughly detestable a man, never fell into the folly our author attributes to him of putting gluttony on a par with abstinence. Nor did he equate lust and continence: he merely believed that conjugal chastity and virginity, the use of some foods and abstinence from them were of equal value in God's eyes. This the same Jerome condemns as perverse teaching.[43] Now this man goes even further in his ravings, exceeding even Jovinian, the teaching of the disciple progressing through an accumulation of errors. He claims indeed that sobriety in the use of food pertains to the perfect and abstinence to the imperfect under the pretext that "the perfect incur no stain from it, while the imperfect lack the remedy they need for the taming of concupiscence." To be sure, the perfect are better than the imperfect, and those acts that are proper to the former and to the latter have a relative value of the same order. And so in this man's opinion the moderate use of certain foods should be preferred to abstinence from them!

19. Lest we be accused of imputing upon him a nonexisting crime, we will let him speak for himself. Either he prefers abstinence to moderate eating, or he considers it equally good, or sees it as being less good. If he prefers abstinence, why bring forth so many empty words against his own opinion? If he grants that abstinence is the more perfect, no quarrel remains. Now if he considers abstinence equally good, he shamefully falls into the error of Jovinian. But if he believes that abstinence is less good, he is worsening an already condemned and reproved heresy.

What he is now about to write demonstrates clearly that the latter opinion is the one he held. Supposing someone disagreed with his opinion that abstinence pertained to the imperfect, he continues in the words of his alleged opponent: "But you say: 'What about the Lord forbidding the use of wine to the priests of the Old Testament while they were exercising their function? What about His forbidding it to the Nazirites? What about the sons of Rechab being praised on account of this very abstention? Finally, what about John the Baptist who *drank no wine or strong drink?*' " *cf. Lv. 10:9* *cf. Nm. 6:3* *cf. Jer. 35:6* *Lk. 1:15*

And he then asks: "How is it, therefore, that to abstain from wine and meat is not more perfect than to make use of them?" And he considers these arguments to be false, and answers them by saying that "the priests of the Old Testament were forbidden wine because they were not yet able to make proper use of it; the abstinence of the Nazirites was figurative and unrelated to ethics; the sons of Rechab were praised rather for their obedience than for their abstinence; and abstinence was fitting for John the Baptist because he was still young." And he goes on to say: "And as he ate meat without loss of perfection, he could also have drunk wine, since there was no law to hold him against it."

20. All this clearly reveals that this man adds to the errors of Jovinian. For since he has proved above that the consuming of wine and meat is fitting for the perfect by adducing the examples of Noah, Elias and John the Baptist,† and since he now considers it unfitting to attribute abstinence to the perfect, he is clearly convicted of believing that the use of such food and drink is not less

† Cf. ¶ 16.

good, but better than abstinence from them. And he proposes many absurd perfidies in defense of this error.

For when he asserts that wine was forbidden to the priests of the Old Testament because they were not yet able to make proper use of it, he is indeed opposing the truth, for in a commentary on this passage from Leviticus: *You shall not drink wine nor anything that may make drunk*, the gloss says: "This command is given to the sons of Aaron as to men dedicated to higher things."[44] Furthermore, he is convicted of detraction against pious men, many of whom shone with the privilege of priestly holiness and the spirit of prophecy. How amazing, or rather, how monstrous this teaching! After he had proved earlier that, under the Old Law, marriage had been fitting for perfect men and that Aaron had fled because he was perfect, on what authority can he now declare that when Aaron practiced abstinence, he did so as an imperfect man, as if the bond of matrimony and the safety of flight had given priests the glory of perfection, while the holiness of abstinence had taken it away?

*Lv. 10:9**

21. He is also absurd in his assertions that the Forerunner practiced abstinence because of his tender age, for the sake of chastising his youth, as if it were not also for the elderly and the perfect. What of the aged and perfect saints, Paul the Hermit,[45] Anthony, Hilarion,[46] and the most illustrious cenobitic fathers who practiced abstinence until the most advanced age? What of the worthy cenobites of whom Jerome says to Eustochius: "I will say nothing about food and drink, since even when they are sick these monks use nothing but cold water and consider it an extravagance to accept any cooked food."[47] What of the most holy matron Paula of whom the same Jerome writes: "Never

has a healthy and strong young girl addicted herself to such abstinence as this woman with her broken, aged, and weakened body."[48] What of the venerable Tharsilla, of whom Jerome writes in the fourth book of his "Dialogues":



"Tharsilla, my paternal aunt, in the company of two other sisters, rose to the summit of perfection through the virtue of continual prayer, the seriousness of her way of life, and the remarkable extent of her abstinence."[49] What, finally, of the Apostle, of whom Jerome writes in his work "Against Jovinian": "Paul the Apostle, after recounting his hunger, thirst and other hardships, and the perils brought about by bandits and solitude, goes on to recall his many fasts, and he then advises his disciple Timothy, who was suffering stomach pains and frequent spells of dizziness, that he should drink a little wine—which he would never have permitted had not the frequent weakness and pain made it necessary."[50]

cf. 2 Cor. 11: 26f.

cf. 1 Tm. 5:23

22. Countless examples may be taken also from the lives of illustrious men—not only believers in Christ, but

also pagan philosophers — as may be gathered from different historical sources, and principally from Jerome's work "Against Jovinian,"[51] and Ambrose's book "On the Life of the Brahmins."[52] Such examples should not be despised, for, as Jerome writes to Laeta, "what Jewish superstition realized in part through the rejection of certain animals and foods, what the Brahmins of India and the Gymnosophists of Egypt practiced by eating nothing but barley, rice and fruits, why could not the virginal Christ accomplish in full? If a mere glass bead has such value, should not the Pearl be worth much more?"[53]

23. Now, we say this, not in praise of excessive abstinence, nor to accuse the men of our time of being imperfect: for it may occur that some are excused on account of their bodily weakness, and in this sense it is said in the Thirty-fourth Distinction: "The weakness of men of our time, lacking both merits and bodily strength, is no sufficient reason to condemn austerity."[54]

Again, some men may be dedicating themselves to a pious work which may partly or completely make up for austerity. Yet, those who are unable — or unwilling — to practice a life of hardships should be most careful not to decry it presumptuously: on the contrary, they should respect it deeply so that if there be anything lacking in them on account of the weakness of their flesh, it may be supplemented through the humility of their mind.

24. Now, if the author we are answering had only wished to be so reverend, he would not have encouraged weakness of the flesh through his presumptuous temerity by speaking of meat and asserting that the Forerunner had eaten of it. For the Gospel text clearly contradicts him, and so does Augustine in his work "Against Faustus," where

cf. Mt. 3:4; 11:18

he speaks in these words: "Why is it said that John neither ate nor drank, if it does not mean that he abstained from the foods that were used by the Jews?"[55] Jerome, in his work "Against Jovinian," concurs entirely: "The Forerunner and Herald of the Lord fed on locusts and wild honey, not on meat."[56] And Rabanus, commenting on this passage from Matthew: *His food was locusts*, etc., has this to say: "It was fitting for a man who lived in solitude not to seek refined food, but only such things as are needed for the sustenance of human flesh."[57] And Bishop Arculfus of the Gauls explains: "The kind of locusts found in the desert of Judea and on which John the Baptist fed, are very small, and they may still be found there to this very day. They are slender in body, about the size of a finger. They are easily caught in the grass and, when cooked in oil, provide a meager food."[58] When statements such as these are properly examined, who could be so impudent as to defend his own carnality or that of another on the basis of the poor and austere life of John?

cf. Mt. 3:4

ibid.

25. Anyway, since it is no use dwelling at length upon this matter, we should come to our adversary's further development of the definition of the question. He claims that "perfect men allowed themselves the use of wine and meat because of the weakness of the flesh in order to follow the customs of common life and to avoid scandal." While this is true and accepted by the saints, this man intersperses his explanation of it with many fallacies, as he usually does. Developing the first point, he says that "imperfection is damageable to virtue," which has been shown to be completely wrong.† He continues: "Elias ate

† Cf. ¶ 17.

meat because of the weakness of the flesh, a weakness Christ assumed." Now if this refers to a specific weakness of the flesh, it cannot be said without great temerity, both because Scriptures teach no such thing but the opposite, and because it is wrong to say that Christ assumed any weakness besides those common to the human condition.[59] But if he is speaking of the weakness that is common to all, every perfect man should eat meat because of the example of Christ and Elias.

cf. 3 Kgs. 17:1

26. In his explanation of the second point, he quotes Augustine "On Evangelical Questions": "The nature or quantity of the food a man takes is of no import if he is taking it in order to conform with the customs of those with whom he is living."[60] If this statement is to be understood unqualifiedly, as this man assumes in his perverse state of mind, the nerve is taken out of every effort towards abstinence, and this from both viewpoints of quality and quantity. The true meaning is clearly this: such matters are of little import as regards morality or immorality—which contradicts the Manichean doctrine;† yet they are quite important as regards the taming of the flesh, the exercise of virtue and atonement for sins. Thus, Gregory writes in the "Register": "There are two ways in which holy men are in the habit of abstaining from permissible goods: at times, to increase their merit before God Almighty; at other times, to wipe out the sins of their earlier life."[61]

27. There is no lack of a similar perversity in the fact that our author continues in the same passage: "If anyone chooses to live a stricter life than that of his companions,

† Cf. ¶¶ 11, and 13.

he is either intemperate and thus imperfect, or superstitious and thus impious." Such are the words of this man who alleges that he is quoting Augustine "On Christian Doctrine,"[62] and also insists that this—meaning this stricter life—"is not proposed by Christ, who forbids it instead, nor was it ever practiced by any saint." By saying so, he casts not only a note of imperfection but a stain of prevarication upon almost every founder of a Religious Order and upon those leaders of the Church who lived more austerely than their companions. Hence, he is liable to being accused of detraction against the saints of Christ—although he may be excused, perhaps, on account of his ignorance for having neglected to read the lives of those whose example he abhors. Again, the inaccuracy of the manuscript from which he is quoting Augustine may have misled him, since the text does not read "either he is intemperant," but "either he is temperant or superstitious."[63] By these words, Augustine wishes to show that a departure from the common way of life may be occasioned either by the height of virtue, as is the case with men of great austerity, or by the error of superstition, as is the case with Manicheans. Again, it may be caused by presumptuous singularity in behavior, as is the case with hypocritical and vain men who despise the common way of life. Let our adversary, then, correct the inaccuracy of the manuscript, or let him rather make amends for the malignity of such a mistake.

28. In his treatment of the third point, he again distorts an argument, this time related to the Apostle Paul, while he also impiously blasphemes Christ. He claims, indeed, that Paul disapproved Peter because his abstinence scandalized the weak. In fact, as may be seen in the Apostle's text, the *cf. Gal. 2:11ff.*

contention against Peter was not that he imposed abstinence upon the flesh in the form of restrictions as regards the use of delicate food, but that, in the Jewish manner, he maintained a distinction between foods, and thus, by his example, led the gentiles to observe the customs of the Jews.[64] But our author's next proposition—that if Christ ate of the Paschal lamb, which He was not bound to do, this was only in order to avoid giving the Jews an occasion of scandal—clearly contains a blasphemy. Christ, indeed, being the Master of All, including the Law, was free to disregard the legal observances, even at the risk of scandalizing the Jews who lived under the Law. It is not under compulsion, but out of condescension that He obeyed the figurative law.

29. Finally, because truth always conquers and grows in strength, since its light radiates even through the dense obscurities of error, the adversary of abstinence, as if compelled by the power of this truth, turns to the praise of the very thing he had opposed when he goes on to write: "There are three reasons why holy men practice abstinence: first as a mortification of the flesh for the sake of taming concupiscence; second, as a precaution against the scandal of the weak; third, as a manner of avoiding the worship of idols." These are actually words of truth borrowed from Augustine's work "On the Customs of the Manicheans."[65] But an attempt is then made to obscure this triple ray of truth with the darkness of a triple error.

30. Our author begins by saying that "since the holy Fathers belonged to the Old Testament, they were not bound to abstain from the foods prohibited by law—except in the case of possible scandal." This is untrue. Indeed, Augustine, writing "Against Faustus," says in his

nineteenth book: "We place the Machabees very high in our esteem because they refused to touch some foods which in our days are licitly used by Christians. Because of the prohibition existing at the time, their use was not permitted."[66]

In the second place, this man goes on to say that "Christ practiced this threefold manner of abstinence." By speaking in this way, not only is he in error, but he is blaspheming as he usually does. Since in his own words the first manner of abstinence is based on the intention of controlling the concupiscence of the flesh, assigning it to Christ is sheer blasphemy—unless perhaps he is excused by arguing, as he did before, that Christ abstained, not to alleviate His own concupiscence since He had none, but in order to show others through His abstinence how to control their passions. Verily, if this is what he means, he should have said so and changed his deceitful words.[67] But then we may ask: "To whom did Christ show this example? To the perfect, of whom this man says that they have already tamed their concupiscence, or to the imperfect who are still troubled by it?" In fact, the example was applied to the imperfect. And so, if Christ as the Healer of the weak gave an example through His condescension, and if He Himself tasted this kind of medical potion without impairing His perfection, why does our author vainly propose and write so many words against this truth—while the very power of this same truth springs forth from his very mouth while he is opposing it?

31. In the third place, our adversary goes on to say: "Christ ordered the perfect to practice abstinence in these three ways. He did not command that the imperfect do the opposite, but mercifully permitted such abstinence to anyone who wished to practice it." These are his very

words—by which he contradicts both the truth and his own opinion. He contradicts the truth, because it is the imperfect who are the most strictly bound to avoid the worship of idols, for they are not permitted to give scandal to others nor to neglect the control of their concupiscence. He also contradicts his own opinion, for he had said earlier† that abstinence pertained rather to the imperfect than to the perfect—and he claimed this to be the reason why abstinence from wine had been imposed upon the priests of the Old Testament and not upon those of the New. Now, arguing against himself, he says that abstinence is commanded to the perfect and permitted to the imperfect! By these words by which he destroys in a short sentence all that he had attempted to establish before, he clearly proves that a man who harbors a desire of contention and who bends his harmful bow, is so absorbed in his intention of wounding another by shooting the arrow of his words that, through a just judgment of God, the first thing he does is pierce his own body.

cf. Os. 7:16

† Cf. ¶¶ 18f.

CHAPTER VI

Third Point of the Second Answer, in Which Severe Fast Is Defended as Conforming to Perfection, and a Manifold Recommendation Is Made of It.

THIS fact, then, seems clearly established: that the strictest fast, like the most severe abstinence, offers a support of no small importance to the development of spiritual perfection. Yet, because the lover of contention adduces further arguments against the excellence of fast, we are compelled to reply to his foolishness, lest he draw the unlearned away from perfection and believe himself wise.

While the friar he is contending with had nothing to say about fasting—a fact which he himself admits—another had spoken in his sermons of the perfection of it,† and he now attempts to refute this one in a new quarrel, as if it had not been enough to attack one adversary, but, in the manner of Ismael, the hand of this man were to be against everyone, and, by a just judgment of God, everyone's hand were to be against him. It is totally unbelievable that a wise man would have taught, as he claims, that Christ in His fasting gave an example to the perfect alone, and in His eating, to the imperfect. It is a fact accepted by all that both fasting and eating may be either perfect or

cf. Gn. 16:12

† According to Codex A, either Robert of Veglia or Peter of Tarantasia.

imperfect, good or evil, holy or impious, according to the different intentions and circumstances.

2. What is the difference between observance of fast and dispensation from it? The former is difficult and painful by its very nature and is in itself an effective means for the repression of the passions of the flesh and for the fostering of spiritual strength. Hence, it is naturally good and oriented toward perfection. By contrast, dispensation from fast is easy and sweet to the flesh and follows the natural bent of a weak mind. Hence, it is naturally imperfect, although it may become perfect through additional circumstances—as when a perfect man breaks his fast for reasons of weak health or out of brotherly condescension.

And so, we agree with the friar against whom our adversary is writing: speaking of these things in the abstract, it is better to fast than not to fast. Christ, the Model of all virtue, sometimes fasted and sometimes did not. In the first case, He gave an example of austerity, while in the second, He offered consolation to human weakness. The first is an act of fortitude, the second an act of condescension: yet in Christ both are perfect since they proceed from the most perfect love. For condescension, as is evident from what has been said,† implies imperfection, not in the one condescending, but in those toward whom he condescends—or in the act itself considered in the abstract.

3. Had this calumniator deigned to notice it, he would not have fallen into erroneous teachings. Since he bases his reasoning on an error, he is assailing the words of a catholic doctor with an unfounded accusation of guilt; he is concealing the craftiness of his own deceit beneath a

† Cf. ch. I, ¶¶ 10f., and ch. II, ¶ 3.

distinction that is valid in appearance only; finally, he is offering as healthy drink the poison of fleshly pleasure by fraudulently recommending that fasting be done away with. In short, he is attacking his opponent by accusing him of heresy, presumption, and opposition to true perfection.

The sole argument he is able to muster in support of his accusation of heresy may be reduced to this: "If Christ had performed certain deeds for the edification of the perfect alone, He would have been spiteful since He would have lacked regard for the edification of the imperfect." And again: "If He had performed other deeds for the edification of the imperfect alone, since such deeds could not have been perfect, either there are two Persons in Christ, the one performing the perfect acts and the other the imperfect—which is Nestorian teaching; or again, if the works of God the Father are perfect and those of Christ imperfect, the Person of the Son is lesser than that of the Father—which is the impious doctrine of Arius and Photinus." *cf. Dt. 32:4*

4. Such sophistic reasoning shows its author to be both ignorant and impious himself. Had he possessed any knowledge, even the least, he would have known that it was not out of spite, but as a manifold sign of His bounty, that the Creator of the Universe had distinguished creatures according to their genera, and organized their several levels of nobility according to the relative perfection of their natures, powers, and operations. He would have known also that neither had it been out of spite, but as a manifold sign of His bountiful love, that the Re-Creator of the human race had offered distinct charismatic gifts, revealed distinct secrets of the mysteries, conferred distinct honors of offices and prelacies, and finally, displayed examples of distinct virtues, proposing the imitation of one example to one

man and of another to another, as the Apostle says, speaking of continence: *Each one has his own gift from God.* *1 Cor. 7:7*

Furthermore, when our adversary says that Christ proposed some deeds as examples to the perfect, he should have known that this applies not only to those already perfect, but also to others who wish to be perfect, as Christ understood when He spoke to the young man: *"One thing is lacking to thee,"* and then continued: *"If thou wilt be perfect, go, sell what thou hast,* etc." Hence He excludes no one from the ways of perfection, nor is He being spiteful to anyone or rejecting anyone: He is merely proposing a state that is fitting for those entirely engaged in the ascent to perfection—but not for those who are content to remain on the level of imperfection. *Mk. 10:21* *Mt. 19:21*

5. When, from the diversity of Christ's deeds and their lesser quality in relation to those of the Father, this man infers that there were two Persons in Christ, or that in His divine Person He was inferior to the Father, he partakes of the deceitful impiety both of Nestorius and Arius. For only in the teachings of Nestorius is the plurality of persons said to be a consequence of the diversity of deeds—when the true consequences are actually the diversity of powers and natures. And the lesser quality found in Christ's deeds indicates inferiority, not in the divine Person, but in the assumed nature, unless we follow Arius, who, from the fact that Christ declared Himself lesser than the Father†—which the faithful understand as referring to the inferiority of human nature—draws the conclusion that He was inferior both in His divine Person and His divine nature.[1] And so, if our adversary believes *cf. Jn. 14:28*

† Cf. ch. II, ¶ 5.

all this to be valid reasoning, he stands clearly convicted of falling into the errors of Nestorius and Arius.

6. Not content with this, our man attacks his opponent, the servant of God, accusing him of presumption and arguing that he overlooks the Apostle's warning and bears judgment on another's servant when he says that those who eat [meat] are imperfect. Because our adversary claims that every imperfection implies guilt, it must also be a concession to the world which is displeasing to God. If, then, [he claims] anyone says that those who eat are imperfect, by the same token he is judging them and condemning them as intrinsically guilty, conformed to the world, and displeasing to God. "Such an assertion," he says, "is sheer madness." *cf. Rom. 14:4*

And this is the sum total of his arguments. We may then truly say to him: O *wicked presumption, whence camest thou, to cover the earth with thy malice?* Anyone who accuses of lying a man who speaks the truth is presumptuously and maliciously bearing judgment upon another's servant—as this man does when he says that his learned adversary holds an opinion which even the most uneducated man knows to be wrong. What, indeed, could be more senseless than what he says, that everyone who eats is imperfect, since eating is necessary and common to every pilgrim on the way, to the perfect and the imperfect, to the good and the wicked alike? Even if we admit that it may be an imperfection to excuse oneself from fasting, it does not follow automatically that anyone who does so or anyone who eats is then imperfect—and that because, as so often said,† a special circumstance affecting the person or the act may have removed any imperfection. *Ecclus. 37:3**

† Cf. ¶ 1, in fine, and ¶ 2.

It is quite a different thing to compare states and to compare persons. From the fact that virginity is superior to marriage, the consequence does not necessarily follow that a virgin is superior in all cases to a married person, for it may occur that the virgin is wicked and the married holy.† Likewise, if we say that fasting is superior to eating, the consequence does not necessarily follow that a man who fasts is superior to another who eats. There is then even less reason to infer that the man who eats is imperfect.

Countless absurdities may be derived from the statement this man makes, that imperfection implies guilt, conformity to the world and the displeasure of God: for virtue, love, and justice are imperfect at times, and would then imply guilt, conformity to the world and the displeasure of God!‡

Again, since the married state is imperfect by nature, it would then be guilty and displeasing to God. Conjugal chastity, imperfect compared to virginity, would also be displeasing to God. Marriage would not have been instituted by God—which is Manichean Doctrine.[2]

Furthermore, if "any imperfection in an artifact is displeasing to its maker," as this man has the temerity to say, since all the things created by God were imperfect before becoming perfect, they were all displeasing at first to their Maker. Since no one working with wisdom ever makes anything he dislikes, it follows that when God began His work of creation, He acted without wisdom. Since this conclusion is absurd, its premises must be rejected as false, proceeding as they do from a misunderstanding of the notion of imperfection, as clearly shown above.††

cf. Gn. 1:2ff.

cf. Ps. 103:24; Prv. 3:19

† Cf. Foreword, p. IX.
‡ Cf. ch. II, ¶ 3.
†† Cf. ch. II, ¶¶ 3, 6, 7, 14f.

7. Even this is not enough for the contentious disputer: he further pursues the prudent man as being an enemy of perfection. He argues as follows: "If excusing oneself from fasting is an imperfection, old people unable to fast are imperfect; those whose bodies are weak are less virtuous, since the Apostle says, *Strength is made perfect in weakness;* and those who take advantage of Canon Law[3] and excuse themselves from fasting on Sundays are imperfect. Such are the arguments this man uses to attack not so much his adversary's position as the perfection of holy fasting. Since such a theory has never been proposed by any well-informed man, and none has ever believed that to be relieved from fast for a reasonable cause is incompatible with perfection, either such arguments are worthless—or they may have an appearance of validity in the eyes of the uninformed under the pretext that no work of perfection may be omitted without impairment to perfection itself; and since fasting may in fact be omitted without impairing perfection, the conclusion may possibly be drawn that it is not essential to perfection.

2 Cor. 12:9

8. Many a time in the following pages does our adversary attack perfection by arming himself with such reasoning. In order to destroy these sophisms by means of a single answer, let the prudent reader note that in every one of these instances a distinction must be made between the acts related to perfection: some are intrinsic and essential because perfect and perfective in themselves, while others are extrinsic and merely helpful towards full perfection and its practice. Some of the latter acts may be omitted according to the circumstances of time and place without impairing perfection in the least, while others are in fact *incompatible* with perfection unless omitted in certain circumstances.

Bede, for instance, commenting on Luke, has this to say: "Does anyone ignore that a merciful heart, kindness, humility, patience, chastity and other such virtues must be observed by the faithful constantly? As for hunger, thirst, vigils, nakedness, reading, prayer, labor and the like, if anyone believes they are to be practiced at all times, he is depriving himself of their fruit."[4] Augustine, writing "On the Good of Matrimony" contributes to the same opinion: "Undoubtedly, Timothy was endowed with the virtue of abstinence from wine. Paul did not deprive him of it by advising him to *use a little wine for his stomach's sake and his frequent infirmities*—otherwise he would have been applying the pernicious notion that something had to be done for the salvation of the body that would damage the virtue of the soul. Paul's advice could be followed, in fact, without any loss of virtue. Hence the good effect brought about by drinking was permitted for the body's sake, while the habit of abstinence remained intact in the soul."[5]

1 Tm. 5:23

From such opinions as these it is clearly seen that some works of virtue may be omitted without impairment to the virtue itself—and some works of perfection omitted without impairment to perfection.

9. Now, in order to cover up the absurdity of his teaching by which he attempts to eliminate fasting from perfection, this man continues by enumerating six manners of fasting which he distinguishes because "fasting may be done in six different ways: one, in the hope of being praised by men; two, out of avarice; three, for the sake of controlling concupiscence; four, out of the abundance of mercy in order to give an example; five, as a means of representing a mystery; six, as a condescension to others for the sake of avoiding scandal."

Considered superficially, this division seems to attenuate our adversary's error. When submitted to careful analysis, however, it only makes it worse. Two of the ways of fasting he describes are properly attributed to hypocrites and to misers. A third—fasting for the sake of controlling concupiscence—he attributes both to the perfect and to the imperfect, "because," he says, "in every saint there remains some trace of concupiscence that must be driven out." Then he continues: "Christ did not fast in this way." *cf. Mt. 4:2ff.* And he concludes that "this way pertains to the imperfect monk rather than to the perfect." He is clearly contradicting here what he had established previously, for if there remains a trace of concupiscence in every perfect man, since complete victory and complete taming of concupiscence belong to the perfect rather than to the imperfect, it is the perfect who must fast in this way, as long as their bodily weakness does not counter-indicate it.

Thus, Jerome, describing the life of Hilarion, a most perfect monk, has this to say: "By an extraordinary fervor of the mind, he abstained from bread from his sixty-fourth year until his eightieth, and so ended his life without ever breaking his fast before sunset."[6]

10. Now, concerning this man's statement that "Christ did not fast in this way," he is clearly contradicting what he had written in the previous chapter,† to wit, that "Christ gave an example of fasting as a means of taming concupiscence." If the author of such words has any intelligence, or even any memory, it is amazing that he would forget what he had written and be able so soon to teach the opposite. Through a just judgment of the powers on high, he is falling

† Cf. ¶ 30.

into such mental darkness that, straying as he does from the truth, he cannot even remain consistent with himself!

Christ was never subject to any form of concupiscence. Yet, through His fasting, He did give us an example of how to overcome it, as Jerome explains to Demetriades: "The Saviour of the human race, who left us the example of His virtue and of His way of life, was taken up by the Spirit immediately after baptism in order to fight the devil. After forty days of fasting, the ancient enemy tempted Him with the allurement of food."[7] Again, the gloss on this passage from Matthew: *Jesus was led into the desert*, etc., reads as follows: "He fasts in order to be tempted; He is tempted because He fasts; and He is giving us the example of fasting."[8] And another gloss on the same passage reads: "This is the proper order of life, that after receiving the grace of the Holy Spirit, we are better armed against the devil."[9]

Mt. 4:1

11. From all this it may be gathered that Christ provided men with examples both of fasting and of fighting. Certainly, we cannot follow such example by fasting in the first or second way which have nothing of righteousness, nor in the fourth, fifth and sixth in which fasting is not intended as a weapon against the enemy. It remains, then, that Christ gave us an example of the third way. Wherefore Ambrose writes in his book "In Praise of Fasting": "Christ fought in order to win the victory—not that He needed to fight, but that He might show us how to fight and give us the grace of victory. Fast, then, is our manner of fighting. In short, the Lord fasted, and the tempter had access to Him through this fasting: he threw the first dart of craving for food, then offered this food as the bait of a trap. The Lord accepted the fast in order to destroy the snares and bonds of the tempter. With such

a bond was Adam strangled, and by such a deliverance were all men freed from the devil's torture."[10] Thus does holy Ambrose eliminate any possibility of doubt so clearly that no one could disagree with him without being stubborn.

Coming now to the fourth way of fasting—that is, out of the abundance of mercy—even the enemy of fasting admits that Christ was offering an example, not only to the perfect, but also to the imperfect. By this he means either that Christ gave us the example of fasting in order that we may fast as a means of displaying our mercy towards others—as did Moses, Elias, Daniel, and other prophets. He would then be saying something untrue since the abundance of mercy is proper, not to the imperfect, but to the perfect. Otherwise he means that we should fast in order to win our inner battles, then he is saying the truth but also contradicting himself.

cf. Ex. 34:28; 3 Kgs. 19:8; Dn. 1:8, 1:3

12. In his exposition of the sixth way of fasting, our adversary falls into a similar error when he claims that "the perfect who have tamed their concupiscence and are no longer obliged to fast yet continued to do so in order to conform with their companions' habits." He is contradicting here what he had said a little while before: "In every perfect man there remains some trace of concupiscence that must be driven out"; and he is also contradicting the truth. For the Apostle Paul, living as he did at the summit of perfection, asserts that he chastised his body and reduced it to servitude not so much for the sake of influencing others as for the sake of overcoming the enemy within his own soul, as Jerome expressly says to Eustochius in a passage quoted above.†[11] Could any man, saintly as he may be,

† Cf. ch. V, ¶ 15.

and on the strength of this personal holiness, ever be dispensed of the fasts imposed by his promise of obedience to the Rule, or from those prescribed universally by Holy Mother Church? Would any man with a sound mind hold such an opinion? And who would presume to teach it? No one, to be sure, except perhaps one who despises the commands of Holy Mother Church.

13. Next, and as a final declaration of his intention to lead, not to the observance of fasting, but to dispensation from it, our adversary designates six ways in which the requirements of fasting may be satisfied. The first he calls illicit, the second imperfect, and the following four he attributes to the perfect. In the course of the development, he scatters the seeds of many a perverse teaching which we will leave unchallenged at present so as not to burden the reader's mind. There is one point, however, that cannot be bypassed. After the distinction he had made earlier† between the six ways of fasting, four of which were supposed to be licit and to pertain indifferently to the perfect and the imperfect, he now makes another between the six ways in which the requirements of fast may be satisfied. One of these he attributes to the imperfect, and four of the remainder more particularly to the perfect. By so doing he manifestly declares his opinion, that perfect men would do better to dispense with fast than to observe it. In this he exceeds the wickedness of the heretic Jovinian who dared not go so far as to prefer the moderate use of food to the observance of fast, but considered them equal.

14. Let this man read, if he deigns to do so, the writings of truthful doctors where dispensation from fast is

† Cf. ch. V, ¶ 9.

not extolled by great preachers, even once, but on the contrary, its observance is commended with wonderful words of praise. Holy Ambrose, for instance, in his work "On Fast," explains that fasting results not so much from the misery of the present times as from the innocence of paradise: "Wherefore, lest anyone believe that fast is of earthly origin, or that it is something new, the world originated in a vacuum when clear light came to shine. When food began to exist, the world had been completed. As soon as man began to disregard its advantages [of fasting], the works of God went wild around him. By this sign it is shown that the world decreases through these very things by which it fails to grow. In order that we may know that fast is not of recent origin, the first law of paradise consisted in a law of fast: for it was known that sin was to enter it through food."[12]

cf. Gn. 1:3
cf. ibid. 29-30; 2:1

The same Ambrose, in the same book, compares fasting to the life of heaven: "It is rightly," he says, "that the divine judgment deemed Elias so deserving of heaven that he was lifted up with his body for having lived with it a celestial life and displayed on earth his familiarity with the ways of heaven. What, indeed, is fasting if not a heavenly substance and image? It is the restoration of the spirit, and the food of the mind; it is the life of angels, the death of sin, the end of misdeeds, the remedy that leads to salvation, the root of grace, the foundation of chastity. By having recourse to it, Elias reached God all the sooner: by so living, he went up even before [being lifted up] by the chariot. And John came *in the spirit and power of Elias.* Finally, it is by fasting that John spent himself in the wilderness. Because of his abstinence he exceeded the norms of human life: he was considered not a man but an angel."[13]

cf. 4 Kgs. 2:11

cf. Sir. 48:9
Lk. 1:17

15. By these words, Ambrose compares fasting to the life of angels, and he is certainly right. As Dionysius says, heavenly order demands a threefold act: purgation, illumination and perfection.[14] The road to all three is prepared by the observance of fast, for the holiness of life of those who fast is shown to be rather heavenly than earthly.

Fasting procures a perfect safeguard for sanctity. This it does first as a means of avoiding the vices of the flesh. Jerome writes to Demetriades: "After the weapon of meditation, you should take up fasting with the utmost care and sing with David: *I afflicted myself with fasting,* and *I eat ashes like bread.*"[15] And a little later: "The devil's spears that wound as they burn have been ignited and prepared for the Three Youths by the king of Babylon. But as, in that instance, *the form of the fourth was like the Son of God,* and he cooled the immense heat, so also in a virginal soul the heavenly dew and freshness of fasting extinguish the ardor of youth and human bodies are made to live like angels."[16]

Ps. 34:13; 101:10

cf. Dn. 3:15ff.

*ibid. 92**

Fasting is also a weapon against spiritual enemies, as Ambrose writes in the same work: "Judith, who fasted all the days of her widowhood, went forth with the support of this weapon, overcame the whole Assyrian army, beheaded Holophernes with the vigor obtained from her willful sobriety, preserved her modesty, and gained final victory. Esther, also, enhanced by fasting, delivered her whole nation from persecution and even induced the king to bow before her will, not by inflaming him with the fire of lust, but by converting him to a heaven-inspired mercy, so that the wicked were punished and the sacred altars honored. Hence, fasting is a sacrifice of reconciliation and an increase in power, bringing strength even to woman."[17]

cf. Jdt. 8:6

cf. Est. 4:16

16. Fasting procures also a perfect understanding of truth, first of moral truth, of which kind is the truth of the divine law, as noted by Ambrose in the work quoted above: "Moses," he writes, "handed down the law concerning fast; and his own fasting was not interrupted even by loud voices, lightning, thunder, or the sight of Mount Sinai covered with smoke. Had he not been protected with the armor of fast, he could not have entered the cloud safely, nor could he have listened unharmed to the voice of God that spoke from out of the fire. He had fasted forty days on the mountain before receiving the law of the Lord our God. This law was given on the summit to a fasting Moses, while in the lowlands an uprising of sacrilegious prevarication arose among those who ate. Moses, upset at this sight, broke the tablet of the law, since he deemed it unfitting to give it to a drunken people."[18] *cf. Ex. 24:12ff.*

17. Once more, fasting procures an understanding of contemplated truth, as may be seen in the words of Jerome against Jovinian: "It is through fasting that Daniel and the Three Youths deserved to reveal dreams, and because they ate nothing but vegetables that they were found more excellent and more prudent."[19] The same author continues in the same work: "Elias, prepared by a fast of forty days, beheld God on Mount Horeb and heard Him ask: *'What dost thou here, Elias?'* And this voice was much kinder than that in Genesis which had asked Adam: *'Where are you?'* For the latter had terrified the man who had eaten and was doomed, while the former soothed a fasting servant."[20] *cf. Dn. 1:8ff.* *3 Kgs. 19:13* *Gn. 3:9*

18. Finally, fasting procures constancy of perfect virtue, first as regards the accomplishment of painful tasks, as Ambrose writes in the same work: "Great is the power of fasting. It is such a beautiful service that fasting was a

joy even to Christ; it is such an effective service that it lifts men up to heaven. To give human examples only and excluding the divine: it is through fasting that Elias closed the heavens by his word, while fasting that he made the widow's son to rise from death, while fasting that he spoke and made the rains fall, while fasting that he brought down fire from heaven, while fasting that he was carried up to heaven in a chariot, after fasting forty days that he beheld the presence of the Lord. And so, his merit increased precisely in the measure of his fasting.[21] Who indeed, by human power alone, could rise aloft in a fiery chariot drawn by horses without first having changed the nature of his human body into incorruptibility through the power of fasting?"[22]

cf. 3 Kgs. 17:1
cf. ibid. 22
cf. ibid. 18:42ff.
cf. 4 Kgs. 1:10ff.
cf. ibid. 2:11
cf. 3 Kgs. 19:8ff.

19. Fasting also gives the strength to overcome adversities, as the same Ambrose writes in the same work: "There exists a substance called asbestos that no fire can consume: it glows in a furnace and appears splendidly clean as if washed in water as soon as it is taken out of the flame. Likewise, the bodies of the Israelite youths were changed into asbestos through fasting, so that the heat of fire, instead of destroying them, filled them with special grace. Daniel also, by fasting three weeks, taught the lions how to fast. When thrown in the lions' pit, he could not be wounded, for his limbs had been hardened to adamantine strength by the rigor of fast. His abstinence had so tightened him that there was no hold on his body for the bite of the beasts. The lions remained with their jaws closed because the holiness of the prophet's fasting was so powerful that they could not open them, as if they had been tied with some kind of bond."†[23]

cf. Dn. 3:23ff.

cf. ibid. 14:30ff.

† Jerome's arguments show little realism!

20. And so, from all this and from what has been said before, it appears that since fasting is a means toward perfect holiness, wisdom and virtue through which the mind is cleansed, enlightened and perfected in the likeness of the heavenly hierarchies, it must be observed and desired by all, and more particularly by those who wish to be perfect. The same threefold effect is shown in this preface by Gregory: "By means of bodily fasting, God reduces vices, lifts up the mind, and grants strength and rewards."[24] And Augustine declares in a sermon: "Fasting cleanses the mind, elevates the sensibility, subjects the flesh to the spirit, makes the heart contrite and humble so that God does not spurn it, *cf. Ps. 50:19* disperses the clouds of concupiscence, extinguishes the fire of passion, brightens the light of chastity, stops loquaciousness, renounces excessive wealth, tramples pride, and exalts humility."[25] Ambrose also writes in the work already quoted: "Fasting is the master of continency, the discipline of modesty, the humiliation of the mind, the curbing of the flesh, the form of sobriety, the rule of virtue, the purification of the soul, the expression of compassion, the foundation of meekness, the origin of chastity, the grace of old age, the safeguard of youth."[26]

We have now praised fasting at great length so that the man who is wise according to the flesh may also be informed in his intelligence and inflamed in his affection, and that, finally admitting his error, he may turn to the Lord, *cf. Jl. 2:12* fasting, weeping and mourning. We offer in his name to the Father of Mercies the sacrifice of a devout prayer in order that, as we have wept so far over his subversion, we may rejoice in the future over his conversion.

CHAPTER VII

First Point of the Third Answer, in Which Voluntary and Strict Poverty Are Shown To Be the Foundation of Evangelical Perfection, and Possible Objections Are Answered[1]

THE Apostle Paul, the *wise builder*, says that the foundation of the Christian religion is Jesus Christ, for he teaches in the Epistle to the Corinthians that *other foundation no one can lay, but that which has been laid, which is Jesus Christ.* Now, this foundation is laid in our intellect by faith which this same Apostle, writing to the Hebrews, describes as *the substance of things to be hoped for.* And it is laid in our affections by love, of which Paul writes to the Ephesians: *Being rooted and grounded in love.* Thus, he compares it to a foundation and a root. The binding element of the two—the foundation and the root of the Christian religion—is faith *which works through charity,* as shown in a gloss on the passage: *Other foundation,* etc., which says: "Faith, working through love, and laid as a foundation, prevents anyone from perishing."[2]

1 Cor. 3:10

ibid. 11

Heb. 11:1

Eph. 3:17

Gal. 5:6

1 Cor. 3:11

In direct contrast with this foundation or root, there is covetousness, of which it is said in the Epistle to Timothy: *Covetousness is the root of all evils, and some in their eagerness to get rich have strayed from the faith.* All evils certainly have their origin, support and increase in this root and in the pride that goes with it. Augustine shows covetousness to be the foundation of the city of Babylon.[3]

1 Tm. 6:10

2. Jesus Christ, the Origin of all good, the Foundation
1 Jn. 3:8 and Founder of the New Jerusalem who *appeared to this end, that He might destroy the works of the devil,* embraced with great eagerness the very opposite of such covetousness, advocating poverty by His example and preaching it by His word. Because the vice of covetousness and its disorder find their root in a disposition of the mind and their occasion and fuel in things possessed externally, extirpation of it must apply to both in order that the damaging passion of greed and the alluring possession of earthly wealth may be given up both spiritually and materially. Commenting
Mt. 19:27 on this passage from Matthew: *Peter addressed Him, saying, "Behold, we have left all,"* Bernard says: "This is excellent and should not be imputed to you as being unwise.
1 Jn. 2:17 For *the world with its lusts is passing away,* and it is better to abandon such things than to be abandoned by them. And the best reason to avoid wealth is that it is impossible, or almost impossible, to have it without being attached to it."[4]

3. If this twofold abdication, of the world and of its lusts, also called poverty of the spirit,[5] is the means by which the root of all evil is perfectly cut off and the foundation of Babylon destroyed, we may conclude reasonably and certainly that this same poverty of the spirit, because of the analogy and closeness it has to what was said, is the root and foundation of that evangelical perfection by which we are conformed to Christ and planted with Him, and through which we become His dwelling place. For this reason, Christ Himself, when He explained perfection to His
Ps. 86:1 disciples on the Mount, placing *upon the holy mountain,* that is, in the mind of the apostles, the foundations of the
Ap. 21:2 *New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven,* that is, the luminaries of evangelical perfection, and exalting the other

virtues, began with the excellence of holy poverty when He said: *"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."* Later, when advising on how to be perfect, He insisted first on the practice of poverty as He lived it, for He said: *"If thou wilt be perfect, go, sell what thou hast, and give to the poor . . . ; and come, follow Me."* Jerome, commenting on this same passage, writes to Demetriades: "It is an act of apostolic perfection and of perfect virtue to sell all one has and to give to the poor—thus becoming weightless and unimpeded and flying up with Christ toward heavenly delights."[6]

Mt. 5:3

ibid. 19:21

There are two aspects to the possession of temporal goods: ownership and use. Since the use of temporal goods is a necessary condition of the present life, evangelical poverty consists in renouncing the ownership and property of earthly things, but not their use, which must be limited, however, in the spirit of the Apostle's advice to Timothy: *Having food and sufficient clothing, with these let us be content.*

1 Tm. 6:8

4. Hence, the nature of evangelical perfection may be seen: it is the virtue which renounces temporal goods and by which a man lacking private property is sustained with things he does not own. Since the dominion over temporal goods may be given up in two ways, there are two ways of being sustained with what is not one's own. Correspondingly, there is a double mode and perfection in evangelical poverty. Since the dominion over things is twofold, that is, it may consist either in private or in common ownership, the one relating things to a person and the other to a group, and since it is possible to disclaim the former while retaining the latter, it is also possible to disclaim the latter together with the former. Hence, in parallel with this twofold mode of poverty, there will be two kinds of perfect profession of

poverty. In the one, a man renounces all private and personal dominion over temporal goods and is sustained by things he does not own, things that are not his but are shared with a community. In the other, a man renounces all dominion over temporal goods, both private and common, and is sustained by things that are not his but someone else's: his sustenance is kindly and justly provided by an outsider.

The first form of poverty prevailed among the company
Acts 4:32 of the faithful of which it is said in the Acts: *The multitude of the believers were of one heart and one soul, and not one of them said that anything he possessed was his own, but they had all things in common.* Commenting on this passage from the Scriptures, Jerome writes to Demetriades: "In the Acts of the Apostles, at the time when the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ was still warm and a faith still new was burning in the faithful, they used to sell what-
ibid. 34-35 ever they owned, *and bring the price of what they sold, and lay it at the feet of the apostles,* in order to show that money was to be trodden underfoot, *and distribution was made to each, according as anyone had need.*"[7] Bede has a gloss on the same passage, concerning how the form of monastic or cenobitic life was handed down: "Those who lived in such a way that all things were common to them in the Lord were called cenobites. And this manner of life is all the happier since it is an imitation of the life of the future, when all things will belong to all."[8]

5. But the exemplar and form of the second mode of poverty appeared even before the apostles, for it is Christ the Master of Perfection who instituted it for them when
Mt. 10:9f. He sent them out to preach, as said in Matthew: "*Do not keep gold, or silver, or money in your girdles, nor wallet*

for your journey, nor two tunics, nor sandals, nor staff; for the laborer deserves his living." And the gloss says here: "He almost takes away the things indispensable for life lest those who teach that all things are in God's power be overconcerned with the morrow. Hence, they take with them not even what they need nor any supply of food nor the slightest thing besides their clothes."[9]

Thus does the Lord impose upon the apostles and preachers of truth a form of extreme and rigorous poverty to be observed by renouncing not only material possessions, but even money and other things by which a community's life is generally sustained and held together. Being poor men established in a state of supreme renouncement to ownership, they could take with them no money or food, they had to wear simple clothing and walk without shoes. Hence, in their deeds and their manner of life they would lift before them holy poverty as a standard of perfection. Christ observed in Himself this same perfect norm of poverty as a special prerogative which He established for the apostles to observe, and which He counseled to those who wished to follow in their footsteps.

6. John Chrysostom, in his Twenty-second Homily on Matthew, demonstrates this poverty of Christ: "*Do not keep gold, or silver, . . . nor wallet for your journey.* He gave an example of this by His deeds and then only enforced the corresponding precept by His words. He made His speech acceptable by proving it first by His way of life. When did He do so? Listen to Him: '*The Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head.*' This saying applies, not to Himself alone, but also to His disciples."[10] *Mt. 8:20*

There is also the gloss on this passage from Matthew: *The foxes have dens,* etc. "Why do you seek to follow Me *ibid.*

in the hope of worldly profit when you know that I do not even have the least shelter of My own?"[11]

Were someone to say that Christ had no shelter of His own but shared one with the community, the same Chrysostom answers in his sermon on Judas: "Those," he says, "who find their delight in the pomp of precious marble know Christ, the Lord of all, and are aware that He did not have a place to lay His head. Wherefore the disciples ques-

ibid. 26:17 tioned Him and said: *'Where dost Thou want us to prepare for Thee to eat the passover?'* Now, if Christ had shared a house with others, the disciples would have known it, and Christ Himself would not have been in need of a place where He could lay His head and eat the Pasch. It is clear, then, from the disciples' question and their uncertainty concerning the house, that Christ had no shelter, either private or common."[12]

Jerome, also, proclaiming the Lord's dire poverty, writes to Nepotianus: "It is shameful that consular lictors and soldiers keep watch before the door of a priest of the crucified and poor Lord who had to depend on others even for His food."[13] Christ, like the poorest of the poor, lived on food that was not His own.

Lk. 2:42 Bernard, in a sermon on this passage from Luke: *When He was twelve years old . . .* says with even greater clarity: "In order, O Lord, to conform Thyself to our poverty in all things, Thou didst liken Thyself to one of the many poor and didst beg Thy sustenance from door to door. Who will grant me the favor of eating morsels obtained by begging, and of being satisfied with the remnants of this divine meal?"[14]

Anselm, also, in his book "On the Sacraments" has this to say: "Christ was poor to the point that, when He came

into the world, He was not born in His own house but on another's land. Because of the inadequacy of the place, He was laid in a manger for brute animals. When He lived in the world, He had no place to lay His head. When He died, He had not wherewith to cover His nakedness. And when He was dead, He had no shroud of His own, nor tomb, nor decent place where His lifeless body could be laid."[15]

cf. ibid. 2:7
cf. ibid. 9:58
cf. ibid. 23:53

7. Hence, Christ was poor at His birth, poor during all the time of His life, and poor at the end.[16] In order to make poverty lovable to the world, He chose a Mother most poor, He willfully suffered the pains of poverty, and went about unshod as a man destitute and without resources. Bede, speaking of the poverty of His Mother in his commentary on Mark, says of this passage from the Gospel: *"If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me"*: "Let us consider the road along which He walked so that we may deserve to follow Him. Behold, when the time had come for Him to receive our nature, which He Himself had established, He, the Lord, the Creator of angels, came forth from a virgin's womb. Unwilling to be born to this world in the midst of wealth, He chose parents who were poor. The lamb that was to be offered for Him was not available: His Mother gave two pigeons and a pair of turtledoves to be sacrificed instead."[17]

Jn. 12:26
cf. Mk. 2:24

In his Eighth Homily on Matthew, Chrysostom confirms this point: "As soon as the Virgin had given birth to a Child, *she laid Him in a manger* because there was no house to be found on account of the crowd that had gathered for the census. But what induced the Magi to adore? There was no visible greatness but a mere manger, a shepherd's shelter, and a mother in need—which demonstrates the Magi's simple wisdom."[18] In his Homily on the Epiphany, the same Chrysostom says of them: "They saw a dark and

Lk. 2:7
cf. Mt. 2:11

wretched hovel, better suited to animals than to men, where no one would have consented to live, unless he were forced by the hazards of a journey. They saw His Mother clothed in a single robe, suited rather to cover her nakedness than to adorn her body."[19]†

8. The fact that Christ lived in extreme poverty is em-
Mk. 11:11 phasized by a gloss on this passage from Mark, *When He had looked around upon all things: "When He had looked around upon all things,* to see if anyone would take Him in as a guest. So deep was His poverty and so little did anyone attend to His needs that He could find no shelter even in so great a city."[20] And Bede writes of the same passage: "We should realize that Christ was so poor that even in this great city He could find neither host nor home: He had to go out to a small villiage with Lazarus and his sisters."[21]

It is a fact, then, that Christ lacked not only a shelter, but also the money that would have provided it, since He

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† This gloss and the following are utterly unconvincing and reflect a medieval and western tendency to insist by every possible means on the wretchedness of Christ. They also demonstrate a complete lack of understanding of life-conditions in the Near-East in a rural and pastoral world where a good and strong craftsman, as Joseph is traditionally represented, would have led a life of simple ease. It seems greatly insulting to accuse him of having brought the Virgin Mary to a filthy cave when the simplest portable tent would have provided a perfectly adequate lodging. The "cave," then, must have been a place safer and more comfortable than a tent.

There is here excessive attention to the externals of poverty, as there was above to the externals of abstinence, and as there is throughout the work to the externals of everything else.

The explanation of *When He had looked around* is so far-fetched that one wonders at the state of mind of the commentator. Why could not Christ have stayed with beloved friends in the suburbs simply because He preferred it to spending the night in a crowded city?

The blame for all this rests, not on Bonaventure, but on the spiritual climate of his time.

had to go out of town under the pressure of necessity, and this on the very day He had entered it as a king riding an ass. The gloss on this passage from John: *The Prince of the World is coming, and in Me he has nothing,* says even more clearly: "The Lord refused to have anything He could lose; He was poor so that the devil would have nothing to take away."[22] For any material object, owned either in common or privately, may be taken away or may perish.

cf. Mk. 11:1-10

Jn. 14:30

Finally, Christ went unshod like a poor man, as Jerome writes in his letter to Eustochius: "The disciples were sent out to preach the new gospel unencumbered with shoes or tight garments made of skin. And the soldiers, when casting lots for the clothing of Jesus, found no leather shoes they could take. For the Lord could not have had what He had forbidden His followers to wear."[23] And so Christ, resembling the poorest man, had no shoes, yet he could not be without the necessary clothing. Since, however, He desired to end His life in the nakedness of absolute poverty, He chose to hang unclothed upon the cross.

cf. Mt. 10:10

9. And since it is for our sake, and not His own, that Christ the Master and Lord chose to assume poverty, showing us perfection through what He did, it follows that He set up absolute poverty as an example to be imitated by the holy apostles, the perfect followers of His holiness, as shown in Matthew, Mark and Luke. While such is evident from the text itself, it is so thoroughly confirmed by the opinions of the saints that there remains not the slightest doubt. Commenting on this passage from Matthew: *"Do not keep gold,* etc.," Chrysostom says: "With this single advice, He accomplished many things: one, He placed the apostles above suspicion; two, He relieved them of all care; three, He displayed His power, saying to them later: *'When*

cf. Mt. 10:9f.; Mk. 6:8f.; Lk. 9:3, 10:4

Mt. 10:9

Lk. 22:35

I sent you forth without purse or wallet or sandals, did you lack anything?' "[24] And Chrysostom continues: "He was to send teachers throughout the world; and, for this reason, He changed them, so to speak, from men into angels, relieving them of all solicitude for this life."[25] And again: "Behold how, by despoiling them of all things, He gave them all things: that is, by permitting them to enter with empty hands into the houses of those they were teaching, and to remain there. If, indeed, travelers in a foreign land and those who go to unknown regions are not to ask anything more than food for the day, it is even more imperative for those who are permitted to live in a house not to ask for anything more."[26] The same writes also in his last Homily on Matthew: "If it had been good to possess gold, Christ would certainly have given some to His apostles, for He provided them with advantages beyond words. Yet, not only did He not give them gold; He even forbade them to have any. That is why no shame comes upon Peter in his poverty, but he is glorified when he says: *'Silver and gold I have none.'* "[27]

Acts 3:6

10. Concerning the passage of Matthew quoted above, Rabanus says: "This, therefore, is the command He gives to those who preach the gospel of truth, to whom He had first said: *'Freely you have received, freely give.'* If, indeed, they preach without expecting a payment, they have no need of gold, silver, or money. For if they had been in possession of silver, they would have seemed to be preaching, not for the sake of the salvation of men, but for their own profit."[28] And the same author continues: "Christ, after eliminating wealth, almost takes away the necessities of life in order that the apostles, while they teach the true religion and demonstrate that all things are ruled by divine

Mt. 10:8

providence, might show that they themselves had no concern for the morrow. With this command, He is opposing the philosophers known in common language as Bactroperites, for even though they live in contempt of the world and consider everything to be worthless, yet they take a pouch with them."[29]

Bede agrees when he says of this passage from Mark: *He instructed them to take nothing for their journey, but a staff only:* "So great should be a preacher's confidence in God that even lacking provisions for the present life, he should know with utmost certitude that such things will be given to him, otherwise his mind will be concerned with temporal needs and he may be unable to provide others with the goods of eternity."[30] The same continues: "He said this to the apostles in order that they might be secure even without owning or taking with them the necessities of life, be they of major or minor import. That is why He said: '*A staff only,*' showing that the faithful owed everything to His ministers who were not to seek anything superfluous."[31] *Mk. 6:8*

11. Ambrose, in turn, confirms this point in his commentary of these words from Luke: *"Take nothing for your journey, neither staff, nor wallet, nor bread, nor money."* "The perfection required of one who announces God's kingdom is shown in the gospel command. Being without staff, wallet, or shoes, that is, having no need of assistance from worldly goods, he may feel all the more able to accomplish his task as he has less concern for such things."[32] *Lk. 9:3*

As a further contribution to the same thesis, Ambrose again comments on this passage from Luke: *"Carry neither purse nor wallet":* "Being forbidden to possess gold, why should we want it? When a poor man asked him for money, the Apostle Peter, first executor of the Lord's will, showed *ibid. 10:4*

that His commands had not been given in vain and answered: *'Silver and gold I have none.'* Yet, it is not so much in having neither gold nor silver that Peter glories, but in observing the command of the Lord who had ordered: *'Do not keep gold, or silver.'* That is to say: Behold, I am a disciple of Christ, and you expect to obtain gold from me? Christ gave us something much more precious than gold."[33]

Acts 3:6

Mt. 10:9

12. Augustine also, in his book "On the Marvels of Sacred Scriptures" agrees with these words of Ambrose when he says: "As a compensation for the alms [he could not give] and as a profession of his poverty, Peter said to the paralytic: *'Arise and walk,'* thus observing the command of the Master: *'Do not keep gold or silver.'* For Peter, indeed, had been released from the wicked Mammon: by the power of his word, he could deliver instantly the man held in bondage by disease."[34]

Acts 3:6

Mt. 10:9

Bernard, in the second book "To Pope Eugene" confirms this opinion: "There is no place," he says, "for idleness when care of all the churches is pressing. For what else did the holy Apostle give you? *'But what I have,'* he says, *'that I give thee.'* And what is that? I know only one thing, that it was neither gold nor silver, for he himself says: *'Silver and gold I have none.'* "[35] And later: "Perhaps you may claim these things for yourself on the strength of some other argument, but not by apostolic right, for the Apostle could not have given you what he did not possess."[36]

cf. 2 Cir. 11:28

Acts 3:6

ibid.

Jerome says the same thing even more clearly to Ageruchias: "The apostles, who traveled around the whole world,† had no coins in their belt, no staff in their hands, no shoes on their feet."[37]

† As then known, consisting in the Mediterranean area, with the possible addition of India.

Chrysostom, finally, in his "Praises of Paul," says: "Paul possessed no money. For he himself is a witness: *'To this very hour,'* he says, *'we hunger and thirst, and we are naked and buffeted.'* And why should I talk about money when he often did not even have enough food to eat, or sufficient clothing to cover himself?"[38] *1 Cor. 4:11*

Clearly, then, this form of poverty, which consists in living without any possessions but in the greatest need, is precisely the one which was imposed upon the apostles and practiced by them.

13. The advice given by Christ to those who desired to walk in the apostles' traces, or rather, in His own, appears in the counsel He gave to the young man, as recounted in Matthew: *"If thou wilt be perfect, go, sell what thou hast, and give to the poor, . . . and come, follow Me."* Commenting on this text, Rabanus writes: "We are free to decide whether we want to be perfect or not. If we do, we must sell what we have—not a part of it as did Ananias and Saphira, but all of it, thus preparing for ourselves a treasure in the kingdom of heaven. And even this is not enough for perfection: we must follow the Saviour,"[39] since it is a fact that Christ lived in the greatest need. The same Rabanus writes a little later: "There is a great difference between the possession of wealth and the love of it. Many who possess it do not love it and many who do not possess it desire it, while many both love and possess it, and yet others rejoice because they neither love nor possess earthly goods. The safest position is that of men who say with the Apostle: *'The world is crucified to me and I to the world.'* "[40] Rabanus indicates here that a life of extreme poverty, lacking in goods and riches, is a work of perfection and the safest way and the one best conformed to the crucified Christ. *Mt. 19:21* *cf. Acts 5:2* *Gal. 6:14*

14. The Apostle also, in one of his epistles to the Corin-
2 Cor. 8:9-10 thians, gives the same advice: "*You know,*" he writes, "*the graciousness of our Lord Jesus Christ—how, being rich, He became poor for your sakes, that by His poverty, you might become rich. In this matter I am giving advice.*" And Augustine comments: "*He became poor* in the sense
cf. Mt. 8:20 that He did not have what the foxes have. *In this matter I am giving advice:* this indicates that you should imitate His poverty."[41] Augustine again writes in his book "On the Good of Matrimony": "Thus, it is not wrong to receive a just man or a prophet in one's house, for he is not expected to have a house of his own in order that he who wishes to follow the perfect Christ may be free to do what is best."[42] By these words Augustine clearly indicates that receiving shelter from another is the best for a man who wishes to follow Christ perfectly. Chrysostom is of the same mind in his Nineteenth Homily on John: "Let us do all those things by which we will imitate Christ. Now,
ibid. Christ says: '*The foxes have dens and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head.*' "[43] In his Ninth Homily on Matthew, he also says: "Truly, if wealth kept us away from the honor of earthly palaces, it should be despised. When the King of Heaven is proclaiming and saying every day that it is hard to enter the kingdom of heaven with this wealth, should we not throw it all away and abstain from all goods in order to enter this kingdom free?"[44]

15. Jerome, writing to Heliodorus, also concurs: "I do not want you to be afraid of the difficulty of this pilgrimage: you who believe in Christ should also believe in what
Mt. 6:33 He said: '*Seek first the kingdom of God . . ., and all these*
cf. ibid. 10:10 *things shall be given you besides.*' You should not take a

wallet nor a staff: a man who is poor with Christ is rich enough."[45] The same writes to the monk Rusticus: "If you have any property, sell it and give to the poor; if you have none, you are relieved of a great burden, for in your nakedness you are then able to follow the naked Christ. It is a hard, lofty and troublesome task, but great are the rewards."[46] In fact, it is neither hard nor lofty to despise the ownership of material goods—except when this results in destitution.

cf. Mt. 19:21

Gregory Nazianzen covers the same point in the second book of his "Apology": "They will make of poverty and need a matter of reproach: yet these things are my riches, for not only do they make me proud, but even boastful. It seems that my enemies are speaking of me in this way because I am following in the steps of Him who, *being rich . . . became poor for our sakes.* Would that I throw off even these rags in which I am seen to be wrapped, so that in my nakedness I may escape from the thorns of the world that hamper and hold those who strive for God."[47]

2 Cor. 8:9

These words of Bernard ring the same note: "In the Gospels are found a counsel of perfection and a remedy against weakness. *'Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth':* this is perfection, since *the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head.* Peter and John had neither silver nor gold; Paul was satisfied with simple food and clothing, and even this he obtained by the work of his hands. But *not all can accept this teaching,* nor can all accept the counsel of chastity."[48]

Mt. 6:19
ibid. 8:20
cf. Acts 3:6
cf. 1 Tm. 6:8
cf. Acts 20:34
Mt. 19:11

Gennadius also, writing "On the Dogmas of the Church," has this to say: "It is good to distribute one's estate and give to the poor, but it is better to make of it a single offering with the intention of following the Lord, and, freed of all care, to be needy with Christ."[49] But a man who is able

to sustain himself with his hands is not said to be in want,
Acts 4:32, 34 for it is said in the Acts concerning those who *had all things in common. . . . Nor was there any one among them in want.*

Finally, in order to discern the best form of renouncement, let us consider the words of Bede on the following
Lk. 5:28 passage from Mark:† *And leaving all things, he . . . followed Him.* "Levi shows us the form of perfect renouncement to the world when he not only forsakes the profit of tax-gathering, but also flees its dangers. He is spurred by so intense a desire to follow the Lord that from this day he will make no reservation whatsoever in his heart concerning any worldly matter or thought."[50]

16. From such clear and evident testimonies of holy doctors and many others we are omitting in order to avoid prolixity, an irrefutable conclusion may be drawn: not only is it permissible, but praiseworthy and perfect, to imitate Christ and the apostles—not only in their renouncing private ownership, but even in their extreme want of temporal goods consisting in the absence of any possession or money whatsoever. We should not conclude, however, that when private ownership has been given up, possession in common would be an imperfection. As in the perfection of chastity, there are different degrees surrounding the Church
*cf. Ps. 44:10** as with a variety of adornments. The perfection of poverty is not always the same as is evident to anyone who considers the question carefully.

17. Nor is there anything to the contrary in the lives of the saints mentioned earlier who happened to have some possessions in common—as if it were impossible for them to teach something different from what they did: in fact,

† This is Lk. 5:28. Mk. 2:14 reads: *And he arose and followed Him.*

pious doctors often admire in others and highly praise those very virtues they know they do not have, as Jerome shows in his letter to Pammachius: "I exalt virginity to heaven, not because it is mine, but because I more greatly admire what I do not have. Preaching to others a quality lacking in oneself, this indeed amounts to a frank and embarrassing confession. But if I am held down to earth by the weight of my body, is this reason enough not to admire the flight of birds?"[51]

Chrysostom strikes the same note in his Eighth Homily on Matthew: "Were you to come now into the desert of Egypt, you would see that it has been made better than paradise. Everywhere may be seen the army of Christ, the royal flock, and the sweetness of the higher virtues. . . . These men, lacking all external goods and entirely crucified to the world, taking nothing but the food of poverty, repeatedly exceed even the norms of bodily work.† Nor do they believe that, because of their fasting and watches, they should be idle all the day: on the contrary, imitating the apostles' zeal, they spend their nights in sacred chants and vigils, and their days in prayer and manual work. All of us, both rich and poor, should be ashamed, for while these men who hardly have a thing besides their hands and bodies are attempting with such pain to feed the needy, we, with coins stored by the tens of thousands, hardly ever give of our surplus to the poor."[52] This from Chrysostom who, as a holy and truthful doctor, praises the Egyptian monks' outstanding poverty seemingly to his own shame and to that of others who resemble him.

† The quotation from Chrysostom is incomplete and somewhat inaccurate. A translation of the critical text of this particular sentence would read: "They even go further: by their bodily work, they provide food for the needy." This is consonant with the reference to the needy a few lines down.

18. Similar in all respects are the words of holy Ambrose: "Let us listen," he says, "to what Christ our Lord
Lk. 14:33 commands to His priests: *'Every one of you who does not renounce all that he possesses, cannot be My disciple.'* I tremble while saying this. For I stand out, accusing myself, before accusing any others: I mean my own self, for I pronounce my own condemnation. Christ denies that a man could be His disciple when He sees this man possessing anything, or not abandoning everything he has. And what do we do? How is it that we ourselves read these things or explain them to the people, while not only failing to abandon what we own, but even desiring to acquire those goods we did not have before we came to Christ? Should we not, because of the reproach of our conscience, rather conceal than proclaim what is written? I do not wish to be guilty of a double crime. I confess openly: before the listening people, I confess that these words are written, even though I know I never fulfilled them. But as soon as we have been warned in this manner, let us hasten to fulfill them; let us pass from the state of the priests of Pharaoh with their earthly possessions, to that of the priests of the
cf. Nm. 18:20 Lord, who have no share of the earth, whose portion is
2 Cor. 6:10 the Lord. Such indeed was the one who said: *As poor yet enriching many, as having nothing, yet possessing all things;* this is Paul, who glories in these things."[53] Nothing more luminous could be said in support of our thesis than these truthful and humble words of the holy doctor.

19. And the blessed pope Gregory, in the third book of his "Dialogues," describing the life of the wonderful Isaac, has this to say: "The servant of the almighty Lord went a little way out of town, and found a desert place, and there he built himself a humble dwelling. And when many came

to it, at his example they began to be inflamed with the desire of eternal life, and under his leadership they dedicated themselves to the service of the almighty Lord. And when his disciples repeatedly pressed him to accept the goods that were being offered, and to use them as would a monastery, he remained the careful guardian of his poverty, and, holding on to his strong conviction, said to them: 'A monk who seeks any earthly possession is not a true monk.' Thus, he was afraid to lose the security of his destitution as rich misers are usually afraid to lose their perishable wealth."[54] This from Gregory who, while he himself had once lived in a monastery endowed with his own estate, admires and praises those who refuse even to possess things in common. Hence, a man who despises a virtue that is not his stands convicted of impious presumption — as if the life of a teacher not entirely conformed to extreme poverty could give any weight to his teaching against the perfection of the poor!

20. Now, when Augustine, opposing the Manichean Adimantus, comments on the aforementioned precept given to the apostles concerning the form of poverty, and says that it is to be spiritually investigated, or, as he proposes elsewhere, that it is to be understood in a permissive sense, he is not differing in the least from what has been established earlier. For while Mark expressly says that *He instructed them to take nothing for their journey,* Augustine, agreeing with other commentators, as it appears from what has been said above, teaches that this precept is to be understood literally.[55] If he denied this in some other place, he would be going at the same time against the truth of the Gospel, against the teachings of the saints, and against his own words. And to say this of such a great doctor is loathsome to the pious ears of Catholic men.

Mk. 6:8

And so, we should note that, since the apostles were the original founders of the Christian religion and the highest teachers of perfection, — teachers, I mean, both as individuals and as examples of a certain way of life, — we may understand the words of the Lord quoted above to have been said to them as the founders of the Christian religion; and thus, they are understood to be extended to all. But all Christians are not bound to follow this manner of life, as the Manicheans falsely teach; therefore, Augustine, the axe of the heretics, speaking against them, shows that these words are to be understood in a spiritual sense if they are received as a command to all.

We may also understand that the said words were spoken to the apostles as to the examples of perfection; and thus they are understood in the manner of counsels, which do not oblige as such, but only bind those who voluntarily make profession and vow to observe this form of life.

Furthermore, we may understand that they were spoken to the apostles as to determined persons and to the first preachers of the Evangelical Law. Hence, since two different things are suggested in these words, that is, the abandoning of material goods and the receiving of contributions, the first is understood as having been a command, as the text says, and also the gloss, for Bede writes: "When the disciples were sent out to preach *He instructed them to take nothing for their journey.*"[56]†

Mk. 6:8

But the second was not commanded: it was only permitted. Therefore, the gloss on this passage from Luke: *Remain in the same house* etc. reads: "He who had forbidden a bag or a wallet permitted food taken for the sake of preaching."[57] And Rabanus says, in

Lk. 10:7

† Cf. ¶¶ 5f., 9ff., and 39.

his "Commentary on Matthew": "Thus, it is clear that the Lord did not give this command in such a way that the evangelists would be forbidden to obtain their livelihood from other means than through those who provided for them and to whom they announced the Gospel, otherwise the Apostle who obtained his sustenance through the labor of his hands would have broken this precept; but He gave them the power through which they would know that such things were due to them. However, once a power is given, anyone remains free not to use it and, in a certain sense, to give up some of his right."[58]

cf. Acts 18:3

From such quotations as these it is clearly gathered that the said words of the Lord, in the light of the above considerations, should be taken in a spiritual and in a literal sense, as a counsel, as a command, and as a permission. For this reason, every false accusation of contradiction should be done away with, if the sense of this multiform acception is clearly perceived.

21. Neither is there any opposition to such a stand in the passage of Jerome's letter to Nepotianus where he says that "a man who lives on tithes and is sustained by altar-offerings is a naked follower of the naked cross,"[59] as if he considered that the summit of perfect poverty consisted in living on tithes and offerings, in the manner of priests and clerics. There are many levels and differences in nakedness, for there is a distinction between nakedness of the heart, and nakedness of the heart and body. Nakedness of the heart comes from a spiritual stripping of every perverse attachment of avarice and cupidity. And of this Gregory says in his homily: "It is naked that we must wrestle with a naked adversary, for if a clothed man wrestles with one who is naked, he is more rapidly thrown, for he has something

cf. Col. 3:9

by which he can be held."[60] Now this is understood as applying to all Christians.

22. But nakedness of the heart and body has three levels. One of them is great, consisting in the rejection of every superfluity and private possession. And this level, even though it is not compulsory, pertains however to the clerical state and order. It is of this nakedness that Jerome writes to Nepotianus: "If indeed I am *the Lord's own portion, . . . His hereditary share,* and if I shall receive no portion among the other tribes, but live on tithes as a levite or a priest, and, while serving the altar, if I am sustained with altar offerings, receiving food and clothing, I shall be content with this and naked I shall follow the naked cross."[61]

Dt. 32:9
cf. Nm. 18:20

There is another and greater nakedness which consists not only in these things, but also in abandoning the right to possess anything privately and in giving up one's own will; and this level pertains to the regulars and the cenobites, and Jerome says of it to Heliodorus: "I do not want you to bear in mind your earlier privations: the desert loves those who are naked."[62] By naked he understands not only privation of the ownership of wealth, but also of one's own will, in the same sense as this passage from Bernard's "Colloquy of Simon and Jesus": "Act, therefore, and you, who dispose yourself to abandon all things, remember to count yourself among the things to be abandoned; and even more, most of all and principally abandon yourself, if you plan to follow the One who *emptied Himself* because of you."[63]

Phil. 2:7

Now, there is also a third nakedness, which consists in what has been said above, and furthermore, in the abandonment of all passing wealth, in penury, and in the lack of the needed sustainment, and this level pertains to the apostles and to apostolic men, and concerning it, and commenting

on this passage of Matthew: *Whoever gives to one of these little ones but a cup of cold water to drink because he is a disciple, . . . he shall not lose his reward,* the gloss says: "The little ones are those who have absolutely nothing in this world."[64] Such were the apostles. Thus, Jerome, writing to Exsuperantius, says: "Nobody was poorer than the apostles, and nobody gave up so much for the Lord. And the poor widow in the Gospel, who put two mites into the treasury, is preferred to all the wealthy because she gave everything she had."[65] If, indeed, as the Lord says, this widow by giving everything kept nothing for herself, she put herself in a state of extreme destitution.

Mt. 10:42

cf. Mt. 4:18ff.

cf. Mk. 12:41ff.

23. It is to this same destitution that the noble widow Paula aspired, of whom Jerome says in praise of her: "This she had promised by vow: to remain a beggar, to hand down to her daughter not a single coin, and to be buried in a shroud that would belong to someone else."[66] Describing the happy death of this same woman, he says: "Jesus is a witness that not a single piece of money was left by her. What is more admirable than this virtue in a woman of the highest birth, and once so rich, who gave everything away with such faith that she suffered the deepest state of want? Let others throw wealth into the treasury, and gifts hanging from golden chains; nobody gave more to the poor than the woman who kept nothing for herself."[67] This from Jerome, who also calls Hedibia to this destitution as to something most perfect, in a letter to her in which he says: "Do you wish to be perfect and to stand in the first rank of dignity? Do as the apostles did. Sell all you have, give to the poor, and follow the Saviour, and in your destitution and solitude, you will be following the naked and lonely cross."[68] By these words he clearly asserts that this

cf. Mt. 19:21

poverty reaches the summit of perfection, and that, through it, a man more expressly and closely embraces the nakedness of the cross, and imitates the stripped Crucified.

24. Now, when properly understood, the passage from Gregory, in which he says that there is no sin in possessions as such but in the affection for them,[69] is not at all in contradiction with what has been established. For if anyone believes that sin exists, either causally or formally, in the fact of being rich, he is erring with the Manicheans, and this error Gregory reproves. But if he perceives that wealth is an occasion of sin, he does not deviate from the true interpretation, since Truth Himself says in Mark: *"With what difficulty will they who have riches enter the kingdom of God!"* Wealth, in fact, offers no difficult obstacle to those who desire to enter the kingdom of God, except by being an occasion of propensity toward evil or of distraction from good. This is clearly shown by the opinions of the saints.

Mk. 10:23

That wealth is an occasion of covetousness to the wealthy, Ambrose demonstrates in his book "On Offices": "Unrelenting avarice," he says, "or alluring wealth, while they contaminate those who have riches, are of no assistance to those who have them not. Admitting even that wealth is sometimes useful to a lowly man, to one who craves for it, why should the others be concerned if this one rich man enjoys a greater abundance? Is he more honorable for owning that through which honor is most often lost?"[70]

And Bernard, in his "Colloquy of Simon and Jesus," agrees with him: "This is the foremost reason to flee from riches: that hardly or ever can they be owned without attachment. For not only our external wealth, but even our inner riches seem too earthly and clinging, since the heart of man is so easily attached to what he touches frequently."[71]

And Augustine strikes the same note when he says of Psalm One Hundred and Twenty-two: "Such things as these do not procure true wealth, but mendicity, for the more abundant they are, the more do they increase the cravings of covetousness.† Things that foster the avidity of their owner are not true riches."[72]

25. Augustine, in his book "On the Fall of the World," shows how often wealth is the occasion of vanity and pride: "In riches, there is nothing so much to be dreaded as the disease of pride. A man without riches has no extensive power, nor anything over which to glory."[73] The same, writing "On the Words of the Lord," has this to say: "Pride is what riches beget most easily. Every grain, every seed has its worm. The worm of wealth is pride."[74]

That the cravings of covetousness may lead to dispersion is clearly indicated by Gregory in his first book of "Ethics": "It usually happens," he says, "that an abundance of goods releases the mind from the fear of God, since abundance requires this mind to be concerned with more varied occupations. A mind externally dispersed by a manifold activity cannot remain fixed upon interior research."[75] The same, in his homily on this passage from Luke: *The sower went out* . . . etc., says: "If it had been from us that you had heard that the seed stands as a sign for the word, the field for the earth, the birds for the devil, and the thorns for riches, you may well have been induced to doubt: but it is the Lord Himself who deigned to explain what He had said. Indeed, who would have believed me if I were to have chosen to explain the thorns as meaning riches, particularly since thorns do nothing but pierce, and riches fill with

Lk. 8:5ff.

† Augustine's text actually reads: "craving and covetousness."

delight? And yet they are truly thorns, for they tear the mind apart by piercing it with thoughts of wealth, and as soon as they have led a man all the way to sin, they draw his blood as if he had been wounded."[76]

26. Thus, if any man carefully considers what has been said, he will see that although wealth is not formally or causally sinful, yet it is a frequent occasion of sin by distracting from good and inclining toward evil. For this reason, riches are compared to thorns by the Saviour, and are called alluring by Ambrose. For since, as it appears from what has been said,† they distract in us the rational power, extol the irascible, and entice the concupiscible, they are filled not only with allurement, but also with danger. Therefore, Augustine writes "On the Fall of the World": "Riches themselves, which you believe to be filled with delights, are more abundantly filled with dangers."[77] Since perfection consists not only in the avoidance of sin, but also in the complete elimination of both occasions of sin and obstacles to good—for, as Gregory says in his *Ethics*, "he alone does not fall into the illegitimate who carefully restrains himself in the use of the legitimate"[78]—it is transparently clear that although the possession of properties and riches is not sinful as such but legitimate, to give them up and to be voluntarily in want of them for the sake of Christ is an act of perfection.

27. Now, if anyone happens to say that such occasions are given by temporal goods to imperfect minds, and not to the perfect, as if it pertained rather to the state of imperfection to avoid riches and to be in want of them,‡ this is clearly opposed to the life of Jesus Christ and to His

† Cf. ¶¶ 24f.
‡ Cf. ch. V, ¶ 5.

teaching. And, according to this thesis, neither would Christ have had to be perfectly lacking in riches, nor would He have taught this to the perfect, and yet it is a fact that He said: *"If thou wilt be perfect, go, sell what thou hast,* etc." And were not the apostles perfect, to whom it had been said: *"Do not keep gold"*? Commenting on this passage, Ambrose says in his book "On Offices": " *'Do not keep gold, or silver, or money.'* With these words, as with a sickle, Christ cuts down the covetousness that sprouts in human hearts."[79] On this same saying, there is also the Thirty-second Homily of St. John Chrysostom: "He did not say: Do not wish to receive gold, but, if there is a possibility of receiving it from elsewhere, flee from this pernicious disease. Indeed, by these words He cuts off many things."[80] From all this we are given to understand that in order to avoid the occasion of covetousness, money was forbidden to the apostles, even though they were perfect.

Mt. 19:21

ibid. 10:9

ibid.

28. Yet it is true that wealth does not have such a strong impact upon the perfect, and that it is not for them such a great occasion of sin; but since the smallest distraction of the intellect, the slightest vicious tendency of the heart, are more disharmonious in the souls of the perfect directed to eternal goods than in the much less perfect souls of those concerned merely with the education of their sons, and the care of their families,† it follows that the perfect renouncement of temporal goods is counseled to the perfect, and not to the imperfect, except if they wish to be perfect. Now, while it is enough for the imperfect to avoid major sins through the observance of the commandments, it is necessary for the perfect to cut out from their mind any

† !

superfluous consideration, as Gregory teaches in the second book of his "Ethics," using in a spiritual sense the example
cf. Nm. 6:18 of the rite and sign of perfection of the Nazirites: "As soon as his consecration is accomplished, a Nazirite is ordered to shave his head and to throw his hair into the fire of sacrifice. For we attain the summit of perfection only when we have so overcome external vices that we even cut away from our mind superfluous thoughts; and to burn these in the fire of sacrifice is certainly to enkindle oneself with the flame of divine love, so that the whole heart may glow in the love of God and that, burning its superfluous thoughts as the hair of the Nazirites, it may consume them through the perfection of devotion."[81]

cf. Mt. 19:29 29. Neither is the promise of a hundredfold in contradiction with what has been established above, because it refers to spiritual goods, as Jerome says in his commentary on Matthew, and also Rabanus who uses almost the same words: "On the strength of this sentence," they say, "some authors refer to the lapse of a thousand years since the resurrection, and claim that now is the time when we should be given a hundredfold of all that we have abandoned, and also eternal life, not understanding that a thing which in other cases may be a deserved reward, appears as a disgrace in the case of spouses: that is, that anyone should give up anything for the Lord in the hope of receiving later a hundredfold. The meaning, indeed, is this: he who shall give up the things of the flesh for the sake of the Saviour shall receive the things of the spirit, and these, in comparison with what he actually deserves, will almost be as the number one hundred compared to a small number."[82]

Gregory, in his Sixth Homily on Ezechiel, is of the same opinion: "The holy man does not abandon the things of

the earth in the hope of possessing them more abundantly in this world. Perfection is represented by the number one hundred because the man who despises temporal goods in the name of the Lord receives perfection of the spirit, so that he ceases to be attracted by what he now despises. Therefore, he receives a hundred times what he had given when, through his acceptance of the spirit of perfection, he no longer needs the things of the earth even when he is deprived of their possession."[83]

Bernard is in agreement with this in his sermon on blessed Peter beginning: "Simon Peter said to Jesus . . ." where he says: "Brethren, what indeed is this hundredfold if not consolations, visitations, and the first-fruits of the spirit that are sweeter than honey?"[84] And a little later: *cf. Eccl. 24:27*
"This hundredfold does not consist in a father or a mother, a house or a field, food or clothing, nor indeed in any temporal good whatsoever, but it is certainly more delightful than all such things, it surpasses all of them in sweetness, it holds greater joy than any other, and none of the things desired in this wretched world are worthy of comparison with it."†

30. Now, if perchance anyone persistently raises objections, referring to the text of Mark and to that of Augustine *cf. Mk. 10:29ff.*
against Adimantus,[85] and if he insists that temporal goods were promised by Christ, we will answer that a promise of this kind of giving and receiving must be seen as coming about through a communion of love, and not through possession. Hence, Bede writes in his commentary on this same passage from Mark: *There is no one who has left house . . . :* *ibid.*
"For, certainly, even in this life a man will receive a more

† This seems to be a development of original text.

gracious love from brothers and co-workers attached to him by a spiritual bond."[86] The gloss on the same passage agrees with him: "All the saints, and all their possessions, are given to him."[87] And Augustine writes against Adimantus: "The whole world of riches belongs to the faithful."[88]

We should understand at least that this occurs by means of a certain heavenly disposition, as against the teachings of the Manicheans who claimed that temporal goods had been created by the prince of darkness, and that they were promised and given by him alone, but forbidden by Christ. Therefore, this hundredfold is promised by the Lord in order to confound the perfidy of the heretics, and to remove any distrust from the hearts of the faithful. Thus, the gloss
Mt. 6:33 on this passage from Matthew: *"All these things shall be given you besides,"* reads: "All things belong to the sons, and thus *all these things shall be given besides,* even to those who do not seek them, and from whom they may have been taken away as a test or to whom they may have been given as an opportunity for thanksgiving."[89] And
Jn. 21:3 Augustine, commenting on this passage from John: *"I am going fishing,"* writes: "How is it that he did not find any other means of support when the Lord had made a promise
Mt. 6:33 in these words: *'Seek first the kingdom of God . . . , and all these things shall be given you besides?'* But precisely this is how the Lord fulfilled what He had promised: For who else placed here the fishes that were to be caught?"[90]

31. Thus it is a fact that, in order to avoid distrust, a promise of this kind is to be understood as working through providence, and not by means of an increase of temporal goods, for this would not eliminate covetousness, but only make it grow. And so Chrysostom, in his Sixty-third Homily on Matthew, has this to say: "Nothing quenches so

well the thirst of covetousness as abstaining from the passion of material profit, in the same manner as bitter anger is appeased by abstinence and loss of strength. . . . For it is easier to make living men fly than to appease desire by adding to it."[91]

And Augustine writes in the Eighty-third Book of "Questions": "The hope of acquiring temporal goods . . . is poison to charity."[92] And so, if Christ had promised His disciples a quantitative increase of temporal goods, He would have destroyed charity in them rather than increasing it, for through the promise of a hundredfold of terrestrial possessions, He would have taught that an affluence of temporal goods was to be hoped for, rather than despised. And to say this is to have a wicked opinion of the teaching of Christ.

32. Neither is the manner of life of the apostles opposed to what has been said, but it agrees with it. Although we read in the acts that *the multitude of the believers . . . had all things in common,* and that they would lay at the feet of the apostles the price of what they had sold, it should never be understood that the apostles ever owned anything, either privately or in common, for this community does not refer to them but to the multitude, as the gloss on the same passage proposes: "There is a distinction," it says, "between the order of teachers and the order of listeners. For the multitude of the faithful, in their despising of material possessions, were mutually united by the bond of love; but the apostles, resplendent in their power, proclaimed the mysteries of Christ."[93] Thus, the gloss, which declares in this text that in like manner as this community of riches was proper to the multitude, so also the power of miracles belonged to the apostles.

Acts 4:32
ibid. 34ff.
cf. ibid. 5:12

Nor is there any contradiction to this in what follows:
cf. ibid. 4:34 to wit, that money would be laid at the feet of the same apostles, for, as Jerome says to Demetriades, it was done "so that they would teach that wealth was to be trodden upon,"[94] or, certainly, in order that the multitude would put their wealth and themselves at the disposition of the apostles, as Ambrose teaches in his commentary on the Second Epistle to the Corinthians, where he says, speaking of them: "As far as the present life is concerned, they appeared poor, but they lavished spiritual riches upon the faithful:
2 Cor. 6:10 they were destitute on earth, but wealthy in heaven, *as having nothing, yet possessing all things.* This was one of the apostles' glorious attributes: that without having the cares or reputation of proprietors, they owned not only the things possessed, but even the masters of these things."[95] It is suggested here that while the apostles remained poor, the primitive Church was at their disposal, both as regards persons and things. They preferred, however, to commit to others the disposition of things, as we read later in the Acts:
Acts 6:2 *It is not desirable that we should forsake the word of God and serve at tables.* This they said in order to avoid being distracted from their ministering, and not for the sake of possessing anything through this service. Peter also, in the same town where these things were occurring, answered a
ibid. 3:6 beggar: *"Silver and gold I have none."* And the gloss com-
Mt. 10:9 ments: "Remembering this command, *'Do not keep gold or silver,'* he did not keep for himself the money that had been laid at the apostles' feet, but made use of it for the needy, because the apostles had renounced ownership."[96]

33. This same form of poverty John the Evangelist also observed together with his disciples. As written in his "Legend" concerning two of these who had given up great

wealth and were suffering temptations in their excessive need, he said: "Is the hand of God ever unable to make his servants abound in wealth? In such matters He has ordained a striving of souls, so that those who refused in His name to possess temporal goods would know that they were to possess eternal riches."[97]

The Apostle Thaddeus observed strict poverty, as it is recounted in the first book of "Church History." After Christ's ascension, when King Abgarus, healed by him, commanded that gold and silver be given to him, he refused it, saying: "If we give up our own goods, how could we accept those of another?"[98] And the Apostle Paul writes to the Corinthians, speaking both of himself and of the other apostles: *To this very hour we hunger and thirst, and we are . . . buffeted, and have no fixed abode.* And the gloss says at this point: *"To this very hour,* that is, without cease."[99] And elsewhere Paul writes to the Corinthians: *In hunger and thirst, . . . in cold and nakedness.* The gloss quoted above shows this state of need to be, not temporary, but permanent, and so does the excerpt from Chrysostom's "On the Praises of Paul."† Hence, if Paul did say at one time that he had all things, and in abundance, it cannot be construed as referring to opulence or affluence of material goods, but to spiritual wealth. In this same vein, Augustine writes in his work "On Beatific Life": "No perfect man is in need of anything. What his body requires, he takes if it is available. If it is not, he is not crushed by its absence."[100]

1 Cor. 4:11

2 Cor. 11:27

cf. 2 Cor. 6:10; Phil. 4:12

34. Now, if from the fact that Paul said of himself that he was exposed to the peril of robbers, anyone were to draw the conclusion that he had money, such a contender would

cf. 2 Cor. 11:26

† Cf. ¶ 12.

be clearly contradicting Ambrose's commentary on the same passage: "Since the devil could not kill him in the city, he prompted robbers to attack him along the road, although he had with him nothing a robber could covet."[101] Likewise, Chrysostom writes in his "Praises of Paul": "When Job owned countless sheep and oxen, he was generous to the poor. Paul, who owned nothing but his body, took good care of the needy by [the work of] this body alone."[102]

Hence, we may imagine both Paul's wonderful poverty in that he owned but his body and possessed not a thing a robber could desire, and his wonderful wealth by which he cared, not only for himself, but for others, abundantly.

35. Finally, there is nothing contrary to perfection in the fact that Christ had a purse: all we have to do is consider with a pious mind how and why He deigned to have one. The only-begotten Son of God, being *rich towards all,* *became poor for our sakes,* so much so that He had to depend on others for food; and it is not without a great amount of heavenly counsel that He gave and entrusted the purse to one of the disciples whom He knew in advance to be a thief and betrayer. If Christ had a purse, it was for the consolation of the weak, the confusion of the wicked, and the enlightenment of the perfect.

Rom. 10:12
2 Cor. 8:9;
cf. Jn. 12:6

Such an act—that is, having a purse—was in Christ's case a sign of condescension towards THE WEAK, for it was intended as a consolation for those who were reluctant to be without one of their own, as Augustine writes in "The Labor of Monks": "The Lord, in His accustomed mercy, had pity on the weak: while angels could have attended to His needs, He yet had a purse wherein to keep the money received from the faithful and required for their support. This purse He entrusted to Judas."[103]

cf. Mt. 4:11
cf. Jn. 12:6

36. As regards THE WICKED, having a purse was a warning, which served first as a refutation of those heretics who reprove and detest purses as a matter of principle. In his Fiftieth Homily on John, Augustine says: "Why did He have a purse, He whom angels served, had it not been that His Church was to have a purse?"[104] He had one in order to show that it is not a sin. Thus does Augustine refute the Manicheans who were condemning the Church because of its ownership of temporal wealth. *cf. Mt. 4:11*

This was also a warning to misers who crave for a purse, since none of Christ's disciples were lost, except the one who carried it. Although the Lord had given it to Judas in the hope of allaying his covetousness, the disciple burned with such a fire of cupidity that he was to sell the Lord Himself for a small sum of money. Chrysostom says in his Sixty-fifth Homily on John: "If we try to understand why Christ entrusted the purse of the poor to a thief and its administration to a miser, [we will see that] it was in order to remove an occasion of sin: for with the purse Judas had enough to satisfy his greed. Yet, because of his manifold wickedness, which Christ in His great condescension toward him desired to repress, He did not accuse him of pilfering, but blocked his pernicious concupiscence and removed every occasion of sin."[105] Thus does Chrysostom openly declare that the cause of the great crime was not need brought about by poverty, but malice in a covetous mind.

37. Finally, as regards THE PERFECT, having a purse was an act of enlightenment. In terms of possession, perfection for those in the ecclesiastical state, particularly for cenobites, consists in following the example of Christ and His disciples: no one has anything in proper, but all have everything in common. In his Sixty-second Homily on John,

Augustine says: "The Lord had a purse. Keeping what had been offered by the faithful, He attended to His own needs and to those of the other poor. Such was the first instance of Church finances. When Christ gives the command not to be concerned about the morrow, we should understand it, not as a precept forbidding the saints to keep money, but as a warning not to serve God for the sake of profit."[106] Augustine again, describing the regulars' way of life as treated in the First Question of the Twelfth Cause,† writes as follows: "Since by the very receiving of Orders the brothers of this congregation of ours have renounced not only their possessions but even their own will, they should certainly not hold, possess, give or receive anything without their superior's permission."[107]

38. As regards the manner of spending, the form of perfection existed in the heads of the Church. Following the example of Christ, they were free to spend the Church's wealth to support its ministers and to alleviate the misery of the poor. Referring to the purse of Christ, Chrysostom, in his Seventy-first Homily on John, asks the following question: "How is it that He prohibited the use of wallet, staff and money while He Himself had a purse?" And he answers: "For the service of the poor, in order to teach you that extensive support must be given to the deeply destitute and the sorely tried. For in His dispensation, Christ acted in many ways for the sake of our enlightenment."[108] By these words Chrysostom shows that it befits perfect men to care for the destitute, this being particularly true of the heads of the Church who in no way impair their perfection by so caring for their flock.

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† In Canon *Non Dicatis* of Gratian's "Decretals."

Prosper concurs in his work "On Contemplative Life": "Since holy men knew that the Church's wealth consisted in the prayers of the faithful, the ransom of sin, and the dowry of the poor, they claimed none of these goods for their exclusive use, but spent them as a trust belonging to the poor. This they accomplished by despising riches while possessing them; by keeping them not for themselves but for others; by seeking them not out of covetousness but in order to provide pious assistance; by possessing the Church's goods jointly with those who had nothing; by not giving any of this wealth to a man who had enough for his own needs—since it is mere waste to give to those who have."[109]

39. As regards the manner of using ecclesiastical goods, the form of perfection existed in the apostles and others who promised to live in the same poverty. Out of love for poverty, they always desired to be without a purse. Yet, they consented to have one in cases of obvious necessity. Christ Himself was supported by His followers and by the women who accompanied Him, as it is written in Luke: *With Him were . . . certain women . . . who used to provide for them† out of their means.* And, as the Evangelist indicates, when he traveled through Samaria and came to a city where He could find no shelter, He lived by His purse, for it is written in John: *His disciples had gone away into the town to buy food.* Commenting on this passage from Luke: *"When I sent you forth without purse or wallet,"* the gloss says: "When traveling through inhospitable country, it is permissible to carry more supplies than we would in our own land."[110] A traveler carrying more than he would in his own land may still be quite poor.

Lk. 8:2f.
cf. ibid. 9:53
Jn. 4:8
Lk. 22:35

† Bonaventure has *"for Him."*

If anyone objects that the form of perfection may never be abandoned, let Bede answer with his comment on this
ibid. 22:36 passage from Luke: *"But now, let him who has a purse take it, and likewise a wallet."*: "The same rule of life does not apply in times of persecution as in times of peace. Some virtues must be kept always and steadfastly, while others must be adapted with discretion to the circumstances.
cf. Col. 3:12 Who would ignore that mercy, kindness, humility, patience, modesty, chastity, faith, hope, love and other such virtues must be preserved without respite? As for hunger, thirst, vigils, destitution, reading, the singing of psalms, labor, teaching, silence and other such practices, if anyone believes they must be constant, he is not only depriving himself of their fruit, but also deserving the blame of unsound obstination. Hence the Master and Lord of Virtues, intending to suggest proper discretion when He sent His disciples
Mk. 6:8 out to preach, *instructed them to take nothing for their*
1 Cor. 9:14 *journey*, that is, He *directed that those who preach the Gospel should have their living from the Gospel.* But in case of immediate danger of death to either flock or shepherd, He decreed a rule that was suited to the circumstances, that is, He permitted the carrying of enough money for food, until the insanity of persecutors had abated and the time to spread the Gospel had returned."[111]

40. Clearly, then, for the six reasons given above and because of a threefold usefulness — conforming in some way with the perfection of the number six[112] — Jesus Christ, the Splendor and Mirror of all perfection, possessed a purse: once He consoles the weak wonderfully, twice He confounds the wicked, and three times, He enlightens the perfect. Now this is most worthy of admiration, praise, and imitation: Christ remained in the state of poverty and yet did not

condemn the state of wealth, conforming Himself to those who possessed money while perfectly preserving the form of perfect poverty. Wherefore the gloss on this passage from Matthew: *"Go to the sea,"* explains: "The Lord was so poor that He lacked money to pay the tribute. It is true that Judas kept the common funds in his purse, but Christ acted in this way because He would not turn to His own use that which belonged to the poor, and so He gave us an example."[113] *Mt. 17:26*

The purse of Christ may not be used as an incentive to cupidity, but as an example of piety and poverty. As there was nothing of temporal glory or pleasure in our crucified Saviour, so also in His deeds and teachings there was nothing to indicate that the riches of the world were to be an object of desire. On the contrary, in order to inflame us with love for perfect poverty, when Christ entered the world to assault the enemy's stronghold, He came as the poorest, from the poorest mother; when offering a victim to God the Father in priestly sacrifice, He was suspended naked on the cross; and all of His life was a road of poverty, so much so that, as in the case of perfect straightness,† the intermediate state of His truth never deviated from its extremities. As for us, wrapped as with an armor in the nakedness of this unconquered Leader, and hoping in none but the One who said: *"Take courage, I have overcome the world,"* let us bear insults from our enemies in the name of the poor and crucified Christ. *cf. Is. 48:10* *Jn. 16:33*

† This refers to Plato's definition of straightness (found in the works of Parmenides): "The straight is that whose middle does not deviate from the extremities" — meaning here that Christ was poor during His life as He was poor at His birth and at His death.

CHAPTER VIII

Second Point of the Third Answer, in Which Levitical and Ecclesiastical Ownership of Wealth Are Shown Not To Be Contrary to the Perfection of Poverty, While Commendation of Wealth as Such Is Proved Unsafe



N TIMES past, so distasteful was the "hateful good"[1] of poverty to the sensibility of mortals that, before the coming of Christ, there is hardly found a perfect man to recognize its perfection. After Christ, however, it was admired so greatly by men both spiritual and wise that there is hardly found a heretic so perverse as to dare attack its worth—except, perhaps, a certain Vigilantius, who must have been sleeping, as the holy doctor Jerome said of him in jest long ago,[2]† but who seems to have remained awake in this no less wicked man, in this new enemy of poverty.‡ He has been spewing venom from his heart against the state of poverty and against the support of the Mendicants. Placing as he does abundant temporal goods at the summit of perfection, and accusing of imperfection and superstition the state of voluntary poverty, he proves himself a disciple of the man who calumniated the Orders of preaching and mendicant poor in a defamation which was condemned later by the Apostolic

† "Vigilantius" means "The Watchful One." Jerome writes that he should have been called "Dormitantius," "The Sleepy One."

‡ Gerard of Abbeville.

See.† With no small temerity, he supports the innocence of this man, recommending and approving his doctrine, thus gravely insulting the same Apostolic See — since asserting that the author of a condemned defamation is innocent amounts to reproving the judgment of the condemning authority.

2. In the very beginning of his Second Book, he rises against the Pastor of the Church. In order to attack more cruelly this Pastor's flock of poor men, he arms himself first with the weapon of Levitical ownership. The crux of his argument consists in this, that since the form of perfection existed originally in the Levites — to whom the Lord attributed tithes, and first-fruits, and offerings, and cities wherein to live, and the fields around them to feed their livestock — and since the New Testament does not contradict the Old but confirms it, *as it were a wheel in the midst of a wheel,* in no way could the second manner of perfection consist in the lack of such things. On the contrary, they were to be possessed as the Lord's gift.

*Ez. 1:16**

Such an opinion, which this man follows along the byways of loquacity, not only is clearly untrue: it even contradicts his own statements. Attacking the perfection of abstinence in the first book, he had said that wine was forbidden to the priests, sons of Aaron, because of their imperfection.‡ Now he says that these same priests are perfect in the affluence of their possessions, as if he had forgotten what he had said before. On the other hand, he may have remembered, but fallen into the darkness of believing there is imperfection in the flight from pleasure and perfection in the possession of wealth. Furthermore,

† William of St. Amour.
‡ Cf. ch. V, ¶ 20.

since he had recently taught that the beginning of evangelical perfection consisted in contempt for all ownership, and that the priests of the Levitical Order had daughters and sons to whom they handed down their possessions by true hereditary succession of private property,† it necessarily follows that the Levites did not practice evangelical perfection — or else, that renouncing ownership is not the beginning of it. He is clearly contradicting himself.

3. He is also contradicting the truth. If the Levitical way of life had truly contained the perfection of the Evangelical Law, since the perfect way of life holds a place of supreme importance both in the Old and in the New Testaments, if the perfection of the Law were equal in this matter to the perfection of the Gospel, it would necessarily follow that the summit of the Law and the summit of the Gospel are equal as regards both merit and reward; that Testament is equal to Testament, promise to promise, and priesthood to priesthood. Hence, if *the Law brought nothing to perfection,* neither did the Gospel; if there had been no justice through the Law, neither would there be any through the Gospel; and if those living under the Law had been accursed, so also were those living under the Gospel. It is in vain, then, that the Son of God became incarnate and suffered, in vain that the priesthood was passed down, in vain that most of the Law's observances were abolished and evangelical truths brought in. All such conclusions being false, impious, and worthy of absolute rejection as heretical, we must necessarily admit the falsity of their premise: that the summit of evangelical perfection consists in the way of life of the priests under the Law.

Heb. 7:19
cf. Gal. 2:21

cf. ibid. 3: 10-13

† Cf. ch. II, ¶ 10.

Heb. 7:11-12 That is why the Apostle writes to the Hebrews: *If then consummation*—according to the gloss, this means perfection—*was by the Levitical priesthood, . . . what further need was there that another priest should rise, according to the order of Melchisedech, and said not to be according to the order of Aaron? For when the priesthood is changed, it is necessary that a change of law be made also.* And the gloss comments at this point:[3] "Here he [Paul] begins to show the difference between the New and the Old Testaments, indicating that the latter is imperfect and the former perfect."[4] And the same Apostle continues *ibid. 10:1* along the same lines: *For the Law,* he says, *having but a shadow of the good things to come, and not the exact image of the objects, is never able . . . to perfect those who draw near.* And the gloss explains: "The Law alone, having but a shadow, cannot make priests perfect in virtue and completely good."[5] For in the literal observance of the Law's commands and in the manner of life required of its priests, the perfection of evangelical virtues and counsels is not found, but merely their figure and shadow. This manner *Ez. 1:16** of life is said to be *a wheel in the midst of a wheel,* not that literal observance of both Testaments is of equal worth, but that one is a mysterious prefiguration of the other in a spiritual sense.

4. If anyone objects, as does our adversary, that the said manner of life was imposed upon priests by Ezechiel who *cf. ibid. 45:4f.* was describing, not the shadow of the temple, but the holy *cf. ibid. 44:22; Lv. 21:13f.* and true temple of the Church, let him note that in this same passage it is written that a priest should take a virgin for wife and that he should offer lambs and calves in *cf. Ez. 43:19* sacrifice. The very same arguments called upon to prove that evangelical perfection had existed originally in the

ownership of property by the Levites may be used to demonstrate the same perfection in their wives, their sacrifices, and their other practices. If this were true, the priests of the New Law would have to have wives, to offer goats and calves, and to be the first to proceed with trumpets on the battlefield in order to be perfect. All this is absurd. And so, the description of true perfection should not be sought in this temple literally, but figuratively. *cf. Jos. 6:4*

Jerome writes to Nepotianus: "Let no one argue against me by mentioning the riches in the temples of Judea, the altars, the luminaries, the chalices, the mortars and other implements of gold. In those days when priests immolated victims, and the blood of beasts was the price of sin, the Lord approved all these furnishings—but originally all these things were done as prefigurations only. Now that the destitute Lord has established the poverty of His house, let us meditate on His cross and consider riches as mere dirt. Is there any wonder that Christ called Mammon wicked? Why should we desire and love that which Peter asserted he did not have? If we follow the letter strictly and rejoice in the accumulation of gold and riches, let us also take up the other observances. Let the priests take virgins for wives, let the leprosy of the body be considered before the vices of the soul, let us *be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth,* let us raise the tabernacle on the seventh month, and announce with trumpets the solemn times of fasting. But if, *combining spiritual with spiritual,* we understand these things in the way our Lord understood and interpreted them, let us repudiate the Sabbath and the gold together with other Jewish superstitions—otherwise, if we are pleased with the gold, let us be pleased with the Jews, for we must either approve or condemn them together with the gold."[6] In the light of

*cf. 3 Kgs. 5:6**

cf. 1 Cor. 10:11

cf. Lk. 16:9

cf. Acts 3:6

cf. Lv. 21:13

cf. ibid. 13

Gn. 1:28

cf. ibid. 9:1

1 Cor. 2:13

these words from Jerome, the aforementioned argument is clearly reduced to naught, while the perfection of evangelical poverty clearly appears as fitting for the New Law.

5. Hence, we should never believe that the possessions of the Levites were dedicated to the Lord on account of some intrinsic holiness, as if they could not have been occasions of sin: on the contrary, they were offered merely for the sustenance of those who served the Lord. And of these servants of the Lord, it is said that the Lord is their possession: as others lived on the fruit of their fields, these survived on the proceeds of divine service, but in such a way that, by right of property, they could hand down to their heirs the goods they had received from such service. We have already seen† that, as the fullness of chastity had not yet been imposed upon them, neither had poverty been counseled.

Jerome writes to Eustochius: "Different was the beatitude
Is. 31:9 (Sept.) of the Old Law in which it was said: *Happy the man who hath seed in Sion.* As soon as the Son of God appeared on earth, He established a New Law related to Himself, so that He who was adored by angels might have angels both in
cf. Jdt. 13:10 heaven and on earth. In olden times, the chaste Judith cut
cf. Mt. 4:21 off Holophernes' head; now, James and John leave their father, their nets, and their boat to follow the Saviour, abandoning at the same time the affections of kinship, the bonds of the world, and the care of their house. Now these
Mt. 16:24 words are heard for the first time: *"If anyone wishes to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me."* No soldier ever takes his wife with him on the
cf. Lk. 9:60 battlefield; and the disciple who desired to go to his father's

† Cf. ¶ 2.

funeral was not permitted to do so. *The foxes have dens, and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head*—lest perhaps you may be saddened if you happen to live in a state of need."[7] *Lk. 9:58*

6. By these words Jerome clearly teaches that, as wealth and marriage were suited to the conditions of the Old Testament, so poverty and chastity conform with the perfection of the New. Virginity, introduced by Christ, did not destroy the Law, but fulfilled it. Neither did the counsel of poverty destroy the Law, but consummated it. In the Law of the Gospel, the counsels do not contradict the precepts: they add to the perfection of righteousness. *cf. Mt. 5:17*

And so, as it is unreasonable to see the model of perfect chastity in the wives of Levitical priests, so is it contrary to sound doctrine to see perfect poverty in Levitical possessions.

Bernard concurs in his "Colloquy of Simon and Jesus": "It is vastly different," he says, "to pick one's way in the mud of many waters at the bottom of a divided sea through the lawful possession of earthly goods, or to walk with renewed steps on the very surface of the water by abandoning all such things. This prerogative had to come in a time of grace, when Peter received the privilege of following a new road, and of giving an example of it. Undoubtedly, the form of evangelical poverty did not exist in the old days of the Patriarchs, at the time when the Lord of Majesty was seen on earth and had His conversation among men; in those days, men seldom followed in spirit the Spirit of the Lord. But as soon as *the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us*, in Him we received the image of life and the example of conversation which we could imitate even bodily, so that we may walk with both feet, and not limp with one thigh, as did the Patriarch Jacob. We do not mean to say that a *cf. Mt. 19:27* *cf. Bar. 3:38* *Jn. 1:14* *cf. Gn. 32:32*

man who lived differently could not be saved, but that such a man must be aware of his level and of the place where perfection belongs, and that he presume not to claim the function of a disciple (of Christ)."† Such words eliminate the perverse error of covetous and carnal men who, under the guise of piety, attack poverty by referring to the riches of the Patriarchs. They also prove that when our adversary bases his argumentation on these same riches—acting, not as a friend of poverty, but as an enemy of the poor—he is not building the foundations of perfection, but destroying them.

7. The practices of the Old Law do not argue against the perfection of extreme poverty, neither do the apostles' way of life, the purse of Christ, nor the promise of a hundredfold, as it clearly appears from what has been said;‡ nor again does the abundance of ecclesiastical wealth with which the enemy of the Mendicants covers himself later as with an armor, intending not so much to defend the loftiness of the clerical state as to destroy the summit of evangelical poverty. Had he praised ecclesiastical goods as being permitted, fitting and compatible with perfection in the person of those who possess them in common and dispense them according to holiness, he would have been following the lead of sacred doctors and agreeing with their rulings against heretics who asserted that the Church had fallen from the state of righteousness and perfection because of the riches it had accepted to own. By teaching this, he would not have damaged holy poverty, since there

† This is a clear example of Bernard's excessive rigidity, characteristic, perhaps, of the clerical notion of perfection which he developed from the Fathers' earlier teachings and which Bonaventure unfortunately endorses here. (Cf. Foreword, p. IX.)

‡ Cf. ch. VII, ¶¶ 20, 29-32, 35ff.

are different modes of perfection within it, as we have shown in the beginning of the present answer.† Now, however, because he tries to convince us that ecclesiastical wealth is an element of the highest perfection, as if it were more perfect to possess riches in Christ than to lack them for the sake of Christ, not only does he deprive poverty of any glory: he even undermines the very foundations of the Church by his attempt to prove that Christ and the apostles owned temporal goods so as to give an example of perfection.

8. Christ had said of Himself that He had *nowhere to lay His head.* But this man teaches that "He had a house, for we read that He said: *'My house shall be called a house of prayer.'* " And he continues later: "When Christ became man, He had no place to lay His head by any true right of property, yet as true God He owned all the possessions of the Levites." By saying such things, he shows himself amazingly devoid of any understanding of the truth, being unable to distinguish between the attributes of Christ's divinity and those of His humanity. When we say that Christ was poor, we refer to the humanity He assumed and by which He gave us an example of perfect life—and not to the might of His divinity by which He had dominion not only over the temple and Levitical possessions, but also over *heaven and earth, and all things that are under the cope of heaven,* for as the Prophet says, *the Lord's are the earth and its fullness.*

Lk. 9:58; Mt. 8:20
ibid. 21:13
*Est. 13:10**
Ps. 23:1

When our adversary writes that "to Christ, as to a true priest, *the Father . . . has given all things into His hand,* and that through the right of priesthood He owns all the

Jn. 3:35

† Cf. ch. VII, ¶¶ 4ff.

possessions of the Levites," he is contradicting himself openly, for he continues a little later: "The priesthood having not yet been transferred, there was no need for any transferring of tithes or possessions." If the Levitical priesthood had not been transferred before the passion and resurrection of Christ, it may be deduced clearly that Christ owned absolutely nothing of the possessions of the Levites on the strength of any priesthood law.

cf. Heb. 7:1ff.

9. After contradicting both the truth and his own words, and failing to find any temporal possession in Christ, the utterly poor Head, he now turns his arguments against the Body, that is, Holy Mother Church. After a few worthless introductory words, he reasons, on the authority of Canon Law,[8] that "for practical purposes, the Church began to retain ownership of the land and buildings which she had a customary right to sell." Whence he argues as follows: "Because, to quote Ambrose, the useful and the honorable are the same,[9] and a thing loses honorability in the measure in which it is imperfect, and that which pertains to honorability also pertains to perfection: the ownership of Church estates increases the perfection of perfect men instead of compromising it." Thus does he reason, and these are his very words!

cf. Jn. 14:30

From such premises, true and false conclusions may be drawn. It is true that the buildings of the Church may be owned without impairment to perfection. However, to believe or declare that such ownership is a principle of higher perfection is so absurd that if this were true, the state and way of life of our present time would be better than those of Christ and His apostles—which is most evidently untrue. For, as Jerome writes in his description of the life of the monk Malchus: "I have planned to write about the time

extending from the Saviour's advent to our present age—that is, from the days of the apostles until these corrupt times—and to describe how and through whom the Church of Christ was born, grew to adulthood under the persecutions, and was crowned by the martyrs; and how, after reaching the age of the Christian princes, it increased in power and wealth while decreasing in virtue."[10]

10. Furthermore, if the ownership of buildings is a principle of the highest perfection, the more buildings the Church possesses, the more perfect will be those who live in them. By the same token, no one who possesses an abundance of riches given to him by the Church, may, without damage to perfection, transfer his allegiance to one of the Mendicant Orders. On the contrary, holiness and perfection will be found in the rejection of hardships and poverty and in greed for ecclesiastical possessions.

Jerome, writing to Nepotianus, brings out the falsity of such teaching when he says ironically: "Let monks become wealthier than they had been in the world; let them possess, under the poor Christ, wealth they had not owned under the rich Satan; and let the Church aspire to make rich those whom the world had known to be beggars."[11]

Again, if the ownership of Church estates is a principle of the highest perfection, nothing may be sold and given to the poor—even though Christ had recommended this very thing. On the contrary, all of the Church's properties and buildings must be preserved if it is true that an accumulation of wealth in the Church of Christ contributes to the height of perfect holiness. Jerome, however, writes the opposite to Demetriades: "Some men build churches, cover their walls with marble veneer, hoist massive columns and gild their capitals, adorn golden altars with precious gems.

cf. Mt. 25:35ff.; Gal. 6:10 A different course of action is proposed to you: to clothe Christ in the poor, to visit Him in the sick, to feed Him in the needy, to be His host in those who have no roof—and most of all in those who are of the household of faith."[12] From such words as these it may be seen that the conclusions given above are absurd in many ways.

11. The reasoning itself is worthless, for as much as some possessions may be useful, there are many others, such as wives, slaves, weapons, and temporal powers whose possession does not necessarily lead to the height of perfection.

Nor may Ambrose be quoted in support of our adversary when he says that the useful is the same as the honorable,† for he is speaking of the usefulness of spiritual goods, and not of earthly goods. In the same work, he says, indeed: "We have declared that nothing is useful except that which contributes to the grace of eternal life—and this is not that which contributes to the enjoyment of the present life. We never claimed there was anything helpful in ownership or in great wealth. On the contrary, we believe such things to be harmful, and consider that their weight when they are carried is worse than their loss when they are handed out."[13] The same Ambrose writes elsewhere in the same book: "Riches are no help toward the beatific life. The Lord *Lk. 6:20-21* clearly showed it in the Gospels when He said: *'Blessed are you poor, for yours is the kingdom of God. Blessed are you who hunger now,* etc. . . . ' "

"And so, it has been most evidently declared that poverty, hunger, pain, which had been considered evil, not only are no hindrance to the beatific life, but are actually helpful. The Lord's teaching confirms the fact that some things

† Cf. ¶ 9.

that seem good—wealth, abundance, painless pleasure—are actually harmful to the maturing of the beatitudes. Not only, then, are external bodily goods of no avail for the blessed life: they are even damaging."[14] Here as in the preceding passage, Ambrose must be understood as speaking, not of extrinsic usefulness which is the object of the Canon,† but of intrinsic and spiritual usefulness of which the Wise Man says: *Wisdom with riches is more profitable.* *Eccl. 7:12**

12. Some earthly possessions are useful for the sustaining of nature, the works of human industry, and the exercise of perfect virtue. This usefulness they do not have by their intrinsic virtue, but through their user. Thus, Augustine writes toward the end of his book "Whence Evil?": "Anyone who wishes to make proper use of temporal goods should not be glued to them by his affection, nor should he make of them something like the limbs of his soul by loving them excessively: for as soon as they begin to fall away, they disfigure him through torture and decay. He should instead dominate them entirely, being ready to own and master them, but even more to lose them and be entirely deprived of them."[15] Augustine would never have written such a thing had temporal goods been of any use—in the sense in which usefulness and honorability are identified—for no man of true wisdom would rather lose honorability than keep it.

This man, then, speaking of ecclesiastical possessions, was very far from true wisdom when he failed to make a distinction between the honorable and the useful.

13. Worsening his error, he sees a sevenfold relationship between the perfection of virtue and the possession of riches, for he goes on to say: "The Lord willed that the

† Cf. ¶ 9.

ministers of the Church who desired to follow Him perfectly possess as common property both furnishings and real estate: first as a safeguard against the future, which is a matter of prudence; second, as a means of sustaining the ministers, which is a matter of justice; third, as a means of sustaining the needy, which is an act of mercy; fourth, for the sake of fostering mutual love; fifth, for the peace of mind of the ministers; sixth, as an example to others and to make possible the distributing of alms; seventh, as a manner of conforming with the heavenly court where all is owned in common." With such reasons as these, he argues that owning ecclesiastical goods does not decrease perfection but consummates it.

cf. Ps. 121:3

14. Although such an array may seem effective and pious when considered superficially, it is seen to be both ineffective and impious when analyzed from within. These arguments are impious, for if the common ownership of furnishings and real estate consummates perfection instead of impairing it, those unwilling or unable to have them cannot be perfect. Since this was the case with Christ and the apostles, it would follow that the example of utter perfection was not seen in them. These same arguments are also ineffective, for they apply as well to a married layman who would be justified in keeping his possessions so that he may, with prudence, justice, mercy and charity, take care of those who serve Christ; that he may preserve his peace of mind and give examples to others while conforming with the heavenly court, in which there is a lavish sharing of goods. Either such a man will be perfect, or the said arguments are worthless.

For those who make proper use of them, ecclesiastical goods may be the occasion of many virtuous acts, but for

those who abuse them, they are incentives to many forms of wickedness: unjust, impious and carnal acts; contention, simony, ambition, and schism. It does not follow, however, from such potential abuse that the ownership of these goods is evil. Yet, by the same token, from their potential good use it does not follow that their ownership is perfect as such, or any more perfect than the lack of it.

15. After developing these arguments—and scattering many absurdities in so doing—this man draws a conclusion which reveals his final goal. It is necessarily of little value but great in perfidy. These are his very words: "For these reasons, and for others perhaps a wise man may find, God commanded and willed that perfect men possess the temporal goods of the Church as a condition to their living on the summit of perfection, since anything less would have been imperfect."

When he says this, he is clearly seen to be trying with all his might to destroy the perfection of evangelical poverty. If the possession of the temporal goods of the Church is as perfect as he claims it to be, so that anything less is imperfect, then the poor of Christ who choose to possess nothing at all but to give all they have—as did the poor widow—either stand below the summit of perfection and are then imperfect, or go beyond it and are then superstitious and impious. If Christ really was as described in the Gospel narratives and as shown by the testimonies of the saints we quoted earlier, so also were the apostles. It would then necessarily follow from this man's anti-Christian teaching that Christ and His disciples were either superstitious or imperfect.

cf. Mk. 12:42ff.; Lk. 21:2ff.

Again, if, as he says, Christ willed that these temporal goods be possessed by the perfect, those who profess the

state of perfection and do not have them, stand convicted of having transgressed a divine command. If this were true, no one could have said: *"Blessed are you poor, for yours is the kingdom of God,"* nor *"Woe to you rich!"* But instead, Woe to you poor, for you are wretched, imperfect, unjust and impious. And, Blessed are the rich! Happy the men who possess such things without which they will reach neither the summit of perfection nor the virtue of righteousness.

Lk. 6:20
ibid. 24
cf. Ps. 143:15

If it is true that perfection holds the topmost place among the gifts of God, let any man who believes in such teaching beware lest the malediction of the Prince of the Apostles justly descend upon him in these words: *"Thy money go to destruction with thee, because thou hast thought that the gift of God could be purchased with money."*

Acts 8:20

16. When Christ advises the perfect to sell all they have and give to the poor, when He orders the apostles to travel without purse or money and to possess no silver or gold, it is certainly amazing that anyone could reach such a degree of impiety, attain such insanity, rush headlong into such fatuity, as to say the exact opposite: that the Lord ordered the perfect to possess temporal goods.

cf. Mt. 19:21
cf. ibid. 10:9

The absurdity of the principle on which this man's conclusion rests is apparent from his own words when he says that all things that fail to reach the summit of perfection are imperfect. If "summit" means the extreme and highest point of anything, and if perfection does have a summit, something could still pertain to perfection while remaining below its summit.† When this man asserts that perfection has a summit and that nothing below it is perfect, he is making contradictory statements. The universal negative

† Cf. ch. II, ¶¶ 2ff.

proposition [nothing below the summit is perfect] is almost entirely false, since there are levels of perfection, not only in the perfection of our pilgrimage on earth, but also in the perfection of the Fatherland. Again, as the perfection of chastity may be of greater or lesser degree, so also may the perfection of poverty as it clearly appears from the Third Part of the First Answer.

17. Finally, the danger of making an affluence of goods desirable through the lavish praise of them appears clearly in this: that the cravings and emotions of almost every man may easily lead to the concupiscence of the eyes and to the admiration of wealth. As the Apostle writes to Timothy, *those who seek to become rich fall into temptation and a snare* of the devil. *cf. Gn. 8:21* *1 Tm. 6:9*

Now, if this man claims he is not praising every kind of ownership, but only the common ownership of ecclesiastical goods dedicated to the Lord, let him be aware that there is considerable danger concealed in the accumulation of even these. As Bernard writes in the "Colloquy of Simon and Jesus": "We see churches endowed and enriched by the powerful and the wealthy of this world, by those rich in good deeds who, following the Lord's advice, attempt to *make friends for themselves with the mammon of wickedness, so that . . . they may be received into the everlasting dwellings.* Why should they not hope to be received by those who seem to have the keys? Alas, their very foresight provides clerics with an occasion for material greed, and they who should have been preparing for themselves and for others a dwelling in heaven *join* on earth *house to house, and lay field to field.* Does anyone ever succeed in drawing from the mouths of these apostles of our times these words of trust, these words of grace: *'Behold, we have left all and* *Lk. 16:9* *Is. 5:8** *Mt. 19:27*

cf. Is. 24:2 *followed Thee'?* It is the same with the priests and with the
1 Tm. 6:9 people: they *seek to become rich.* Priests alike receive their reward right here, and even more abundantly; they too are in need of friends if they are to be received in the dwellings
Mt. 5:3 of others since they have none of their own. *Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."*[16]

And Bernard goes on a little later: "Would that among
cf. Jn. 6:71 every twelve there could be found today a single Peter, one
cf. Mt. 19:27 man who would have left everything, one man without a
*Dt. 32:29** purse! Would *that you would be wise* in your misery *and understand* that a treasure of wrath is building up together with the treasure of wealth! Would that you were providing for your last end, realizing that an accumulation of guilt
cf. Mt. 19:24 passes much more readily through the eye of a needle than an accumulation of riches! *For we brought nothing into the world, and certainly we can take nothing out."*[17]

Gregory Nazianzen, speaking against the persecutors of the Church, concurs in one of his sermons: "They will cheat by using privileges. What privileges? My own? It would be easier for them to cut away the wings I do not have. If ecclesiastical privileges, this is precisely the object of all the conflict and fighting. Know we not that craving for money and cheating the purse are a betrayal of Christ?"[18]

Ambrose, in his work "On Offices" contributes to the
cf. Mt. 10:9 same thesis: "He who sent out the apostles without gold also assembled the churches without gold."[19] And again: "He who owns much gold lacks abundance, for what is of the world amounts to nothing; but he who owns little gold
cf. 2 Cor. 8:15 is not diminished, for what he lacks is nothing. There is
cf. Ex. 16:18 nothing to lose in the absence of a thing that is all loss."[20]

18. From such quotations as these it appears clearly that the foremost concern of holy doctors was not to increase

love for any kind of ownership, but rather to breed contempt for them in imitation of Christ and the apostles. Yet the conclusion should not be drawn that the proper way to despise ecclesiastical goods is to dilapidate them. The sacred Canons forbid it.[21] But those clerics who are not assigned to the care of a flock should renounce wealth for the love of Christ and as a means of greater safety and perfection, while those in charge of dispensing such goods should avoid any bond of affection that may attach them to the things they are dispensing.

This man, on the contrary, seeking to make affluence lovable, places it as a thing of the greatest holiness in the Church's breastplate—an object from which judgment was wont to shine with truth, while his teaching in fact is devoid of any reason or truth. He also fashions a manner of ephod which he then adds to his irrational fantasy by bringing forth twelve holy and proved men who were taken out of the state of poverty in order to assure the distribution of riches. These are the blessed Clement, Sylvester, Gregory, Cyprian, Hilarion, Basil, Chrysostom, Martin, Nicholas, Paul, Augustine, and Anselm. Twisting their example to fit his error, he writes in the following passage: "These are the names of the twelve sons of Israel; these are the purple ribbons and the golden chains." Then he goes on to say: "This is the teaching of the Lord, confirmed by the state of the apostles in Jerusalem, exposed by holy doctors, observed by perfect imitators of Christ: not the lack of any common or private property, but the preserving of all Church goods as soon as ownership has come to be despised. If you teach otherwise, beware lest, in the words of the Apostle, you become anathema. May this never happen to a Catholic man who wishes not to be punished with the apostate Julian."

cf. Ex. 28:4, 15, 30

cf. Ex. 28:21ff.

cf. Acts 4:32

cf. Gal. 1:8

Such are the words of this man, and by speaking in this way he demonstrates that he is both ignorant and unkind.

19. Indeed, if he were not unkind, he would not have considered those who practice poverty so uncharitably as to judge them to be *anathema from Christ,*† as if they were heretics. For through this blasphemy he attacks not only these poor men of Christ, but also the Roman Church who approved their manner of life,‡ holy men inscribed on the roster of saints, and, worse still, the apostles themselves who lived in extreme poverty, as shown earlier.†† Through them, as through the twelve sons of Israel, each designated by name, gathered in the ephod of Christ the supreme Pontiff, it is supreme poverty that he is indicting. Indeed, it is written in Matthew: *Now these are the names of the twelve apostles: first Simon, who is called Peter,* and the others are listed by name. The evangelist continues: *These twelve Jesus sent forth, having instructed them thus: " . . . Do not keep gold, or silver, or money in your girdles,* etc. . . . " Thus he binds the ephod of apostolic life to the breastplate of perfection and of highest poverty by means of the love of the heavenly kingdom, as with the indissoluble bond of the purple ribbons, when he says: *"Freely you have received, freely give."*

Rom. 9:3

Mt. 10:2, 5, 9
cf. Ap. 21:14ff.

Mt. 10:8

20. Christ, the true High Priest, wore this ephod and this breastplate when at the same time He taught by word and

† This text of St. Paul is misquoted, not in word but in meaning. Cf. Valentin Breton, O. F. M., *Saint Bonaventure: Les Six Ailes du Séraphin,* Editions Franciscaines, Paris, 1951, p. 17: "L'auteur emploie parfois les mots d'un texte sans tenir compte de leur sens dans le contexte. Au temps de Saint Bonaventure, ces accomodations étaient courantes, permises, et goûtées. Les controverses avec les biblistes réformés nous ont obligés et habitués à plus de rigueur."

‡ Pope Honorius III.

†† Cf. ch. VII, ¶¶ 9ff.

displayed by His example the perfection of holy poverty, particularly when, as true High Priest, before entering into the Holies . . . *by virtue of His own blood,* He was suspended destitute and naked on the cross. Now, it is of this noble and spiritual adornment, of which Christ could not be robbed by those who crucified His body, that this atrocious plunderer attempts to despoil Him, while endeavoring to adorn Him with other trappings not held with purple ribbons or golden chains but with an abundance of earthly possessions as with a viscous and muddy bond—as if Christ and the apostles had ever possessed anything of the earth, and as if such common possession had had a greater elevating power and were a better way to heaven than the most lofty and supreme poverty. None would doubt that this is false, save a man who completely ignores the ways of mental elevation in God.

Heb. 9:12

Thus, Jerome writes to Lucinus: "Joseph was unable to retain his garment when he fled from the Egyptian woman. The young man covered with a linen sheet who followed Jesus, as soon as he was seized by the attendants, threw off his clothing and ran away naked. Elias, taken up to heaven in a fiery chariot, left his mantle on the earth. Eliseus changed into an offering the oxen and yoke of his earlier labors. The wisest of men says: *He who touches pitch blackens his hands.* As often as we have to do with the things of the world, and our soul is tied to the procuring of possessions and revenues, we are unable to think about God freely."[22]

cf. Gn. 39:12

cf. Mk. 14:51f.

cf. 4 Kgs. 2:11ff. cf. 3 Kgs. 19: 20ff.

Sir. 13:1

Striking the same note is the gloss on this passage from the Canticle: *"I have taken off my robe . . . ":* "As soon as concern for temporal matters is permitted, even the most distinguished doctor is hardly able to avoid sin."[23]

Ct. 5:3

21. Now, we are not saying this in the sense that the management of temporal goods cannot be handled by holy men without damage to their perfection: we mean to
*Jer. 15:19** *separate the precious from the vile,* for it is not the management of temporal goods that gave perfection to these holy men, but their contempt for them; not an affluence of passing goods, but the spirit of poverty by which they lived,
2 Cor. 6:10 in the midst of an abundance of wealth, *as poor yet enriching many, as having nothing yet possessing all things.*

The same spirit is found in the noble prelate of whom Jerome speaks in his letter to Rusticus: "Saint Exsuperius,
cf. 3 Kgs. 17:9ff. Bishop of Tolosa, a follower of the widow of Sarepta, tormented by the hunger of his brethren, fed them while he himself was in need and growing pale with fasting. Thus, he spent all of his substance for the love of Christ. No one is richer than the man who carries the body of Christ in a bread-basket, and the blood of Christ in a glass jar; who
cf. Mt. 21:12ff. throws covetousness out of the Temple, overturns the chairs and tables of the sellers of doves, scatters the coins of mammon and of the money-changers, in order that the house of God may be called a house of prayer, and not a den of thieves. Follow thou also in the traces of such a man, and of others who are like him in virtue, whom the priesthood makes more humble and more poor. Or, if thou seekest to
Gn. 12:1 be perfect, *leave* with Abraham *your country, your kinsfolk;*
cf. Acts 7:3 if thou hast any fortune, *sell what thou hast, and give to the*
Mt. 19:21 *poor;* if thou hast none, thou art delivered of a great burden. In thy nakedness, follow the naked Christ. It is a hard, sublime, and difficult thing, but great are the rewards."[24]

*Jer. 15:19** 22. In this passage, Jerome *separates the precious from the vile,* and at the same time he shows that what is good for the perfection of a prelate, who is a public person, does

not always agree with the perfection of a private individual. Thus, even though, for the sake of prelacy, any religious may be moved from the state of poverty to that of dispensator of temporal goods, some conclusions drawn from this may be illegitimate. Indeed, from the fact that prelates, in the exercise of their pastoral functions, are sometimes involved in business transactions without any damage to their perfection, we may not conclude that a private individual would attain an identical level of perfection if he were *to be troubled* with Martha *about many things*, instead of reposing with Mary *at the Lord's feet* through a fervent and joyful elevation of the heart. The present proposition should also be understood in the same sense. And so, even though high priests or pontiffs — because they are in charge not only of the perfect and strong, but also of the imperfect and weak whom they must feed by their words, by examples, and also by material support according to place and time — may, without any damage to their own perfection, have received possessions for the sustaining of the poor and of the ministers of the Church, it does not follow that these possessions should or even could be entrusted to any private individual, with any position in the Church, as if he were to attain the summit of perfection as readily through the multiplication of his possessions as through the loftiness of his poverty.

Lk. 10:41
ibid. 39

23. Now, concerning the opinion of our adversary that those who praise extreme poverty are the imitators of Julian the apostate, he shows himself here to be not only full of malice, but also devoid of any understanding of the truth, for he wickedly accuses of error those who profess the truth, and, ignoring the true perfidy of Julian, suggests that it originated in the praise of poverty. In fact, Julian's

error did not consist in the assertion that all temporal goods are to be given up in conformity with a divine counsel—to which no one is bound, unless he wills—but in this: that, distorting and trampling the Church in conformity with the rapacity of his greed, he said that such giving up was of necessity, by divine command,[25] referring to these words of Christ, in Luke: *"Every one of you who does not renounce all that he possesses, cannot be My disciple."* When he says this, he calumniates the whole Church, implying as he does that there is no difference between renouncing all things, and giving up all things. In fact, as the gloss on this same passage says, "there is this difference between renouncing all things, and giving up all things, that renouncing is suited to all those who lawfully make use of the worldly goods they possess, yet in such a way as to strive in spirit toward the heavenly; but to give up pertains only to the perfect who set all terrestrial things in the background and actually seek nothing but the heavenly."[26]

Lk. 14:33

Hence, if a man believes that the perfect give up all temporal goods and aspire to the eternal only, he is following the doctrine of Jesus Christ, and not the perfidy of Julian. Although Christ says that all things are to be given up for the sake of perfect love, he does not mean that the goods of the Church are to be dilapidated, for it is permissible to give away one's own possessions, but unlawful to waste those of another.

CHAPTER IX

Third Point of the Third Answer, in Which a False Reason for Renouncement Is Eliminated, and the Twelve Prerogatives of Strict Poverty Are Exposed

 EN of perverse mind faced with arguments opposed to their own opinion and so evident as to be unassailable often distort them with fraudulent malice and force upon them a meaning they do not have, as Bernard suggests in a passage from his work entitled "To the Brothers of the Mountain of God": "If a reader is seeking God while he reads, all things work together with him in this activity; but if his attention is brought down to some other matter, he drags all things down with him, and he finds in the Scriptures nothing so holy and pious that it cannot be used to foster his malice or vanity through vainglory, a distorted perception, or a depraved intellect."[1] As is clearly evident, this is what occurred in the case of the enemy of the poor. Poverty, consisting as it does in renouncement of temporal goods, is most certainly a praiseworthy state. Christ, the Master of Perfection, lived in it until His death.† And yet this man weakens it by comparing it perversely with possessions and wealth, admitting no relationship whatsoever between holy poverty and the summit of perfection.

cf. Rom. 8:28

† Cf. ch. VII, ¶¶ 6ff.

2. In the beginning of his investigation of the reasons why temporal goods should be given up, he says that it is because they are appropriated or privately owned, and that, to use his own words, appropriation and private ownership, "because they derive from the root of covetousness, are not
1 Cor. 13:5 compatible with perfect charity, which *is not self-seeking.*" He means that renouncement of riches is counseled for the sake of rooting out covetousness. "To those out of whom it has been already rooted, the dispensing of temporal goods is rightly entrusted as to men who know how to use them
cf. Phil. 2:21 properly and who seek not their own interest but that of Jesus Christ." He supports this theory by offering as examples Abraham, Jacob, Joseph, David and Daniel, that is, the Fathers of the Old Testament. Considered superficially, these words and examples do not seem to be wrong, but when analyzed carefully, they reveal a strong poison within.

3. If, indeed, private ownership is the only reason for renouncing temporal goods—with the intent of rooting out covetousness and perfecting charity for the sake of the dispensation of these same goods—then poverty is nothing but a road to abundance, a kind of preparation for wealth, and there is no perfection in poverty itself. But then the life of Christ would have been imperfect, and His teaching
Mt. 19:21 false when He said: *"If thou wilt be perfect, go, sell what thou hast, and give to the poor."*

Furthermore, if any group of men were to possess in common all the wealth, not only of a kingdom, but even of the whole world, it would then be observing most perfectly the highest counsel of poverty—or rather, and this is absurd, it would be acting much more perfectly than those
2 Cor. 11:27 who serve the Lord in a state of dire need, that is, *in hunger and thirst, . . . in cold and nakedness,* as did the apostles,

and as do those who follow their example. Since this is evidently untrue, it remains that the precise and principal reason for renouncing riches is not that they are privately owned, but that they are alluring, as demonstrated above.† It is true, however, that riches owned privately are generally more attractive than those owned in common, and to despise them is closer to the essence of perfection—not because appropriation is a sin or is always related to sin, but because it is often an occasion of sin.‡ Hence, in his later examples, this man is contradicting himself when he says that the holy Fathers possessed such goods, not only without sin, but with full perfection. The Levites who had wives and sons did own some things privately, and yet he had praised them earlier for their perfection. The very people of Israel, as soon as they had reached the land promised to their fathers, received distinct and proper grants without any sin. Furthermore, at the present time when grace has been revealed, an inheritance may be justly and holily received and possessed in full accord with the decrees of laws and canons, not only as regard individual fortunes, but also principalities and kingdoms, as he himself admits later concerning Constantine, Raymond and the like.

Hence, the reason for giving up, is not private ownership, as he falsely suggests—as if it were always related to sin. Certainly, Clement's saying, "Because of iniquity, one man says he owns this object, and another says it is his,"[2] should not be taken for a universal statement, but merely as one applying in many cases. Again, we should understand that private ownership resulted from our first parents' wickedness: had they not sinned, there would have been no

† Cf. ch. VII, ¶¶ 2ff.
‡ Cf. ibid.

appropriation.[3] It does not follow, however, that every appropriation is sinful, for our first parents' prevarication brought about not only sins but also penalties of sin.

4. And so, although riches, both private and common, may be had without sin, giving them up is a matter of perfection. As imperfection is not necessarily sinful—which appears from what has been said†—so perfection is not merely the rectitude of justice, but also a liberation. Riches, being alluring and dangerous, prevent this liberation.

As Gregory writes in the fourth book of his "Ethics": "It is extremely rare that those who possess gold tend toward
Lk. 18:24 rest, for Truth in Person says: *'With what difficulty will they who have riches enter the kingdom of God!'* "[4] And in the fourth book of the "Dialogue," he says: "It is difficult to manage a household without sinning, even for those who know how not to sin."[5] And Rabanus comments as follows on Matthew's text: "It is difficult, that is, it takes hard work, for those who have money or who place their trust in it to escape from the snares of money-loving and enter the court of the heavenly kingdom."[6] Hence it is safe to flee from riches, and perfect to renounce them entirely. As Jerome writes to Demetriades: "It is a deed of apostolic splendor and perfect virtue to sell all, give to the poor, and fly light and free into heaven with Christ."[7]

5. When this man calls upon the example of the Fathers, it is to no avail. First, because THEY DID NOT ABANDON THEIR PROPERTY, as he falsely imagines when he says: "The Lord commanded that Abraham, after rejecting his own inheritance, be naked when he left his country." The text of
Gn. 12:4f. Genesis clearly contradicts him, for it says: *Abram went*

† Cf. ch. II, ¶¶ 3ff.; ch. III, ¶ 4; ch. IV, ¶ 7, in fine; ch. V, ¶¶ 16ff.; ch. VI, ¶¶ 2ff.; ch. VII, ¶¶ 4 ff.

away as the Lord commanded him, and . . . took Sarai his wife, Lot his brother's son, all the property they had acquired, . . . and departed for the land of Chanaan. As for Jacob, Joseph and David, if at one time in their lives they were in a state of poverty, this was an effect of unavoidable necessity rather than of willful despoiling. When our author adduces the example of Daniel selling all his belongings, since he did not obtain the information from the authority of the Scriptures, he would have not dared to bring it up had he been endowed with the wisdom of the same Daniel. It is far better to cover with silence anything unproven by scriptural witness.[8]

6. The second reason why the examples of the Fathers are of no avail is that, while they were perfect in virtue, they indulged in some external practices that CONFORMED TO THE WAYS OF THEIR TIME, but cannot be taken as models of perfection. For instance, the Patriarchs had many wives, David was eager for war, Elias slaughtered the prophets of Baal. If they did preserve their perfection [in spite of all this], yet they should be seen by perfect men as objects of admiration rather than of imitation.

cf. 3 Kgs. 18: 40, etc.

Augustine concurs in his work "On the Habits of the Church": "Job lost all his wealth and became instantly the poorest of men, but his spirit remained unshaken. If men of our time had had such courage, there would have been no need in the New Testament for so forceful a prohibition of the ownership of these goods as a condition of our perfection."[9] Gregory agrees in his first book of "Ethics": "Even before the precept concerning renouncement of all riches had been uttered, blessed Job kept the strength of it in his heart, for certainly he had already given up in spirit this wealth which he possessed without attachment."[10]

It appears clearly that Job, while actually owning earthly goods, could be perfect since he despised them in his mind even before the counsel of poverty had been given. Hence, as in the case of Abraham, to which the celibacy of John was not preferred,†[11] this is not to be taken as an example of perfection fitting for the time of grace—and neither are the temporal possessions of the holy Fathers.

7. The third reason why these examples are worthless is
cf. 1 Cor. 10:11 that many things happened to the Fathers that were TYPES AND SHADOWS and are not consonant with perfection at the time of revealed truth. That is why there is no small absurdity in taking them as examples for the present.

It is in that sense that Bernard writes in his work "On the Colloquy of Simon and Jesus": "Some men may perhaps excuse themselves by saying: 'Do we not read that Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and other saints, possessed earthly
cf. 3 Kgs. 19:4 riches? It is enough for us that they did, for we are not any better than the Fathers. If it had been sinful to possess riches, never would these rich men have found so great a grace with the Lord.' What shall we answer the modern
cf. Gn. 15:9f.; 22:13 imitators of ancient saints? Put calves on the Lord's altar, slaughter rams in sacrifice, immolate goats, because so also did Abraham. . . .—'But such things,' they will say, 'are not done any more: wherever truth has been revealed, they have passed away.' What if we answer that the temporal
Heb. 10:1; cf. Col. 2:17 riches of the saints are but *shadows of the . . . things to come*? For we read that all these things happened, in a way,
1 Cor. 10:11 *as a type*. Finally, why should not holy and perfect men openly possess the riches of the earth at a time when earthly goods were the only ones to have been promised clearly by

† Because this was the time of the Law and the Gospel had not yet been promulgated.

the Lord? . . . As soon, however, as a promise of heavenly delights had been made, the necessity had arisen of *combining spiritual with spiritual*, and of changing the sacrifice as soon as the expectation had been changed."[12] *1 Cor. 2:13*

8. And so, neither should examples of this kind, nor the one of prelates which our author brings up later in the section on the perfection of poverty, be brought into the argument, lest, under the pretext of the holiness of the papal office which is surrounded with wealth and honor, poverty be despised, humility vilified, cupidity excited, and ambition fostered: all results which the man we are answering, the enemy of the poor, is striving with all his might to bring about. Indeed, it is the *Sun of Justice*—who sent forth His rays of light throughout the world by the example of His poverty and humility—that this man attempts to obscure by interposing imaginary clouds. For he asks: "Why did Christ choose to be poor? Why did He refuse to be made a king?" And he answers: "Christ had to be poor for the reason that He had to live in a state that could be imitated by all. Indeed, all cannot become rich, but if they want to, all may become poor." Then, he continues: "For when Christ fled in order not to be made a king, He was teaching us to flee from worldly dignities; far different is the honor of a king, or that of a prelate or a priest." *Mal. 3:20* *cf. Jn. 6:15*

9. These are the very words in which he expresses his opinion and speaks of such lofty things in a manner so vile and unlearned that we are almost ashamed to reply to his ineptitudes. Who, indeed, with any amount of knowledge of Holy Scriptures, or with any small measure of reverence for Christ, would dare to belittle the most kind condescension of the highest God who stooped to the misery of extreme poverty, and to believe that He did not do so for

supremely high reason and purpose? The enemy of poverty judges this reason to be so frivolous that he is not ashamed to say that Christ was poor merely because all cannot be rich! Thus, if all men had been able to obtain riches as easily as to become poor, it would have been just as good, or even better according to this unholy doctrine, if Christ, instead of being poor, had been endowed with a wealth of temporal goods. And if this is true, poverty is in no way to be preferred to riches, nor is it more meritorious to be poor for the sake of Christ than to be rich. While Christ had said to the youth who was rich: "*Go, sell what thou hast,*" according to this anti-Christian doctrine He might also have said to the poor: "*If thou wilt be perfect, go* and possess wealth."

Mt. 19:21

Furthermore, when this author says that all men have the opportunity to be poor, he understands it either of the poverty in which some things are owned in common, as, for instance, in collegial churches, and in this case the statement is untrue, since all applicants are not accepted in these congregations; or he understands it of that poverty in which nothing is owned, and then it is also untrue, for such poverty is not accessible to all without impairing those states that exist in the Universal Church by the command of God, as it appears in the case of kings and princes, of soldiers and other people who have wives and sons.

10. And, since a man who strays from the straight path of truth is led to wander through the byways of error, when this man speaks later of the flight of Christ, he falls into many fallacies. For when he says that "Christ taught that honors are to be avoided—not the ecclesiastical honors, but the earthly, since in Jerusalem He accepted the honor that was rendered to Him as a prophet, while earlier He

had fled from the honor rendered to Him as a king," he expressly contradicts the Gospel text. For it is written in John: *"Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord, the King of Israel!"* And according to Mark, the crowd shouted: *"Blessed is the kingdom of our father David that comes!"*

Jn. 12:13

Mk. 11:10

Commenting on this, Bede writes: "He does not still the voice of those who sing the reign of David the Patriarch that He is to restore, and the gift of earlier blessings that He is to renew. Why did He accept willingly at that time what He had avoided earlier by His flight? Is it not in order to teach clearly that He would not be king of a temporal and earthly kingdom, but of the eternal kingdom in heaven which He was soon to reach through contempt of death and the glorification of the resurrection?"[13]

It is clear, then, that Christ was offered royal honors—and not the honors due to a prophet or a priest as this man claims. This honor, however, Christ accepted for the sake of the mystery of our salvation and as an example of humility: for He accepted tribute even from those He knew would soon be crucifying Him. Humble and kind as He was, He was not ashamed to ride an ass, and He shed an abundant flow of tears. Likewise, when He humbly washed His disciples' feet, He showed that He was Master and Lord and had to be recognized as such, so that by manifesting the height of His kingship, he could induce the disciples to practice the humility He had shown.

cf. Mk. 11:7
cf. Lk. 19: 35, 41

11. And so, it takes amazing perversity to twist the Scripture's examples of humiliation into reasons for ambition, as if it were not part of the virtue of humility to avoid ecclesiastic honors, and part of the sin of pride to seek them.

Gregory holds the opposite view in the "Register": "Following the way of the Head, I had decided before all else

Ps. 21:7 to be *the scorn of men, despised by the people.*"[14] Thus does he show clearly that the imitation of Christ consists in avoiding ecclesiastic honors. In his "Pastoral" he also says:

Jas. 3:1 1 Tm. 2:5 cf. Jn. 6:15* "*Be ye not many masters.* Hence even *the Mediator between God and men,* who surpasses the heavenly spirits in knowledge and understanding and who reigns over heaven before all ages, refused to take possession of the earthly kingdom; . . . becoming incarnate, not only to redeem us through His passion but also to teach us through His action, and showing Himself as an example to His followers not only by refusing kingly honors but by going of His own will to the gibbet of the cross. He refused the glory of the lofty position offered to Him and chose instead the penalty of a shameful death. Thus did He teach His members to avoid favors, remain unshaken by fear, lovingly accept trials for the sake of truth, and refuse prosperity with trembling."[15]

And so Christ, by avoiding kingship, gave His followers an example of how to shun glory, favors, and prosperity. Since they are found not only in worldly dignity but in the ecclesiastic as well, true humility consists in avoiding all such honors in perfect imitation of Christ—as much as it may be done without compromising zeal for the salvation of souls and obedience to superiors. When the disciples were arguing among themselves about which would be the

Mt. 18:4 greatest, Christ had answered: "*Whoever . . . humbles himself as this little child, he is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.*"

12. Were anyone to claim—as this man dares to do in a later passage—that this refers to a spiritual and inner humiliation, and not to the external or bodily, he is greatly unwise, for the Lord and Master of the Universe showed

Himself as an example of humility not only of the spirit but also of the body by washing and wiping His disciples' feet and then saying: *"I have given you an example, that as I have done to you, so you also should do."* *Jn. 13:15*

Augustine writes in his Fifty-fifth Homily: "Christ, who was to suffer death, anticipated His own burial, not only for the sake of those for whom He was to die, but even for the one who was to deliver Him up to death. Such is the import of man's humility that Sublimity Itself endorsed it through Its own example. Man, exalting himself, would have been lost forever, had not God come down to him by being humble in His divine Self. . . . Man had become lost, matching the deceiver's pride. When found, He was called to follow the Redeemer's humble steps."[16]



"Brethren, let us learn humility from the Most High, let us be humble enough to do among ourselves what the Most High so humbly did. This is high praise of humility. Brothers act toward each other also in this visible way when they entertain each other as honored guests. Praising the pious widow, the Apostle writes that she was *practicing hospitality, . . . washing the saints' feet.* Wherever such hospitality is impossible, let the saints at least have in their *1 Tm. 5:10*

hearts what they cannot express with their hands. . . . Undoubtedly, however, it is much better to act with both heart and hands, so that no Christian despise what Christ had deigned to do. When we stoop over our brother's feet, a humble disposition arises in our heart, or becomes stronger if it had been there before."[17] Thus does Augustine assert that a gesture of humiliation procures those graces that lead to true humbleness of heart.

13. Again, when external goods are scarce, and although scarcity as such may seem worthless, when a true spirit of renouncement goes with it, not only does poverty increase merit: it is precious also in many other ways. Indeed, it *cf. Mt. 13:46* has been called the Pearl of the Gospel, for it has such value that in order to obtain it, everything else should be thrown away. Poverty is particularly valuable in four cases: as a destroyer of iniquity, an exercise of perfect virtue, a means toward the fruition of inner joy, and a manner of proclaiming the Gospel teaching.

14. Poverty is useful, first, as a DESTROYER OF INIQUITY, primarily as an expiation for past sins. It is, in a sense, a cleansing furnace, a flame that burns away the filth of vice, *Is. 48:10** as shown in Isaias: *I have chosen thee in the furnace of poverty*. This is to be understood, not of that poverty which afflicts the will internally through contempt for wealth, but of that which afflicts the body externally through dire necessity, and of which Gregory writes in his Homily on the Rich Man and Lazarus: "The fire of want had purged the sins of Lazarus and the pleasure of wealth repaid the dying man's good deeds. Poverty had afflicted and cleansed the former, abundance rewarded the latter and brought about his rejection. All you rich in the world, consider your good deeds and dread your wealth, for the prosperity you received

may have been your full reward. When you witness the sins of the poor, despise them not nor despair of them. While a man living in abundance may be sullied by the slightest sin, another may be cleansed in the furnace of poverty. As for you, great should be your fear, for certain misdeeds are a natural consequence of a life of luxury. Think with care about the poor, for their master, poverty, crucifies their lives and leads them all the way to righteousness."[18]

15. As a destroyer of iniquity, poverty is useful also because it eliminates many of the occasions of sin. While sins increase in number with the affluence of wealth, they decrease through voluntary poverty. In his Second Sermon on the Epistle to the Hebrews, Chrysostom says: "The Christian shines with greater brilliance in poverty than in wealth. How is this? Because he casts far away from him the arrogance of pride. Neither is he haughty, but patient, obedient, modest, mild, and wise. As for the rich man, many obstacles prevent him from obtaining these same benefits. Let us see what he does: he seizes other peoples' property, he burns with cupidity, he engages constantly in abominable associations, he commits every manner of wicked deed. Don't you see that all of this evil is born of wealth? Don't you see how much easier it is to be virtuous in poverty than abundance? Do not argue that the rich receive no punishment in the present life, for in addition to all the usual troubles, they must bear the evils of wealth. Those who sin by malice are watched by revenge, and no pain is remitted to the rich sinner: he suffers the wounds of sin without any atonement since there is no one to put a bridle upon him."[19]

Were anyone to say that many evils come from poverty, the same Chrysostom answers in his Eighteenth Sermon: "Let no one imagine that poverty is the cause of many evils

Mt. 19:21 nor object to the fact that Christ called it perfect: *'If thou wilt be perfect . . . .'* This He said in His own words and acted out in His own deeds and taught through His own disciples. Let us, then, follow poverty which is undoubtedly a very great good. . . . For no man is wealthier than the one who willingly loves poverty and receives it with joy."[20]

16. As a destroyer of iniquity, poverty is useful in the third place because it cuts away the root of vice. In the same sermon, Chrysostom says: "Let us throw out anything that makes the body blossom forth but damages the soul: riches, pleasures, glory. All these are of the flesh and pertain to body-love. Let us not seek greater abundance but always follow poverty which is a very great good indeed. *Eccl. 9:16* "It is written, however: *The wisdom of the poor man is de-* *Prv. 30:8* *spised;* and: *Give me neither poverty nor riches;* and again: *cf. Is. 48:10* Deliver me from the furnace of poverty. Why? These things are written in the Old Testament where riches are often praised and poverty is often scorned, the latter as a malediction, the former as a blessing. At present, however, it is not at all the same. Do you wish to hear poverty praised? *Mt. 8:20* Christ professed it and said: *The Son of Man has nowhere* *ibid. 10:9* *to lay His head;* again, talking to His disciples: *Do not keep gold or silver;* . . . And Peter said to the man who had been *Acts 3:6* lame from birth: *Silver and gold I have none.* Even in the *cf. 4 Kgs. 1:8;* *2:13* Old Testament, did not Elias own nothing but his mantle? And how about Eliseus and John?"[21] Thus does Chrysos- *cf. Mt. 3:4* tom praise the suffering of poverty because it removes desire for material goods, the primary root of vice. He praises it again because it removes also its secondary root,[22] fear that depresses man in a bad way. And he concludes: "Do you see that poverty is the state leading to the greatest confidence? The rich man is a slave exposed to harm and at

the mercy of every enemy, while the man who has nothing fears neither proscription nor condemnation, since he has nothing by which he can be harmed."[23] Chrysostom's teaching applies only to the almost destitute.

From all this it appears clearly that voluntary poverty is an important means for the destruction of all evil.

17. Poverty is useful, in the second place, as an EXERCISE OF PERFECT VIRTUE, first because it is a test for a virtue already present. In his first book "On Offices," Ambrose writes: "No one is entitled to a reward unless he has fought a lawful fight, nor is there any glorious history where there has been no strenuous combat. That is why the Lord says in the Gospel: *'Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.'* He did not say, blessed are the rich, but the poor. In the divine judgment, beatitude begins at a point where man sees nothing but pain."[24] The fact remains, then, that the pain of poverty consists, not in mental contempt for possessions, but in temporal indigence which we suffer in the body.

cf. Tm. 2:5

As an exercise of perfect virtue, poverty is useful also because it preserves a virtue that has been duly tested. Jerome writes to Paulinus: "Crates, a Theban who once had been very rich, discarded a great mass of gold before going to Athens to study philosophy, for he believed he could not possess virtues and riches together. You also, after hearing the Saviour's teaching: *'If thou wilt be perfect, go, sell what thou hast, and give to the poor, . . . and come, follow Me,'* you will change the words into deeds, and in your nakedness follow the naked cross. You will then climb Jacob's ladder more easily and lightly. With clean hands and a pure heart, you will glory in the poverty of your spirit and your works."[25]

Mt. 19:21

As an exercise of perfect virtue, poverty is useful, finally, because it more readily leads to its end a virtue that has been duly preserved, as Chrysostom explains in his Second Sermon on the Epistle to the Hebrews: "When we are poor, there is no reason to lament, but rather to give thanks to the God and Lord of the universe: for with little work we will deserve the same reward as the rich, and even a higher one if we so desire. Out of little we obtain great gains."[26] Gregory concurs in one of his homilies: "The value of the kingdom of heaven is proportionate to the measure in which you possess it."[27] And again: "In the eyes of God, the hand is never empty so long as the ark of the heart is filled with good will."[28] Since "intention, whenever it cannot be carried out, is considered as good as realization,"[29] and it is easier for the holy poor to intend than for the rich to both intend and realize, the destitution of poverty contributes greatly to the development of virtue.

If, then, voluntary privation of temporal goods can test, preserve and develop virtue, it is clear that the height of poverty has an important effect upon its perfect exercise.

18. As a consequence, poverty is useful also for the FRUITION OF INNER JOY, first because it procures external security. In his final homily on Matthew, Chrysostom writes: "The rich man must necessarily crave many things and serve them in shame. He must live in fear and suspicion, dread the eyes of those he suspects, the words of calumniators, and the greed of covetous men. In poverty, there is no such trouble, but the exact opposite: it is a country free from robbers, a protected and peaceful haven, a place to learn and practice philosophy."[30] In order to be free from robbers, poverty must consist in the absence of any possession. Speaking of it, the same author continues: "Listen, any of

you who are poor, and even more, any of you who crave to become rich: there is no evil in poverty, but in refusing to be poor. If you do not consider poverty evil, it will not be so to you. . . . If you take it philosophically, it will be the fountainhead and origin of ten thousand goods."[31]

Deep poverty makes a man secure, not only in this world, but also at the time of the judgment to come. Commenting on the Psalm *You who dwell* . . . , Bernard writes: "Happy the poverty of those who give up all things willfully and follow Thee, Lord Jesus! Oh, truly happy this poverty that makes them so safe and even glorious in this amazing destruction of the elements, in this dreadful examination of merits, in this so great difference between the sentences!"[32] *Ps. 90*

19. Again, poverty is useful for the fruition of inner joy by reason of the expected reward. Commenting on this passage from Job: *The simplicity of the just man is laughed to scorn. The lamp, despised in the thoughts of the rich, is ready for the time appointed,* Gregory writes: "Certainly, *the time appointed* for *the despised lamp* is the day appointed for the final judgment. Then will the eyes of the reprobate clearly see that those who gave up all earthly goods are sustained by a heavenly power. For any man, prodded with the goad of divine love, who has abandoned his worldly possessions shall undoubtedly obtain at that time the highest power of judgment. He who, at present and in view of the judgment, chastises himself through self-imposed poverty, shall then come as a judge together with the Supreme Judge."[33] *Jb. 12:4f.**

It is clear, then, that the poverty for which a man is mocked and despised is that which implies penury and humiliation. Hence, Bernard writes in his One Hundred and fifty-first Sermon: "The poverty of the Lord's followers has

two aspects: affliction and lowliness, of which the Prophet says: *See my abjection and my labor;* and, *therefore they shall receive double in their land,* so that instead of shame they shall have for reward the power to judge, and instead of labor the refreshment of the most restful abode. For it is this very poverty that chastises, cleanses, and tests, that humiliates and exalts."[34]

*Ps. 24:18** *Is. 61:7**

A spiritual joy goes hand in hand with the expectation of the reward. Hence the gloss on the Psalm: *I am afflicted and in pain; let your saving help, O God, protect me,* reads as follows: *"I will praise,* in myself and in my limbs, *the name of God in song,* that is, with delight, for even though all things may be lacking, *the Lord is with me."*[35] It is a fact that no man is poorer than the one who lacks everything: and yet there is in him no lack of mental joy. We may say, then: *See, you lowly ones, and be glad; you who seek God, may your heart be merry!*[36]

Ps. 68:30 *ibid. 31* *Jer. 20:11** *Ps. 68:33*

20. Finally, poverty is useful for the fruition of inner joy by reason of superinfused consolation. In his Fourth Homily on Matthew, Chrysostom writes: "Let us go down into the furnace of poverty; let us see who are those who walk about in it and tread upon the neck of the haughty; let us behold the miracle and paradox of a man singing psalms in the fire, of a man giving thanks in the midst of flames, praising God loudly while held down by the direst destitution. For those who suffer poverty and yet give thanks are comparable to the Three Youths, for poverty burns more fiercely than fire—and fire leaves the youths unscathed. If you could give thanks right now for your destitution, all shackles would fall and all flames die. And still greater wonder: if the fire did not go out, it is dew that would rise instead of flames. Here is proof, even for the

philosopher, that some men are abundantly rich in the midst of poverty and that they receive refreshing dew in the midst of flames: for abundant dew comes forth from renouncing the concupiscence of wealth. The youths, despising the king, became more brilliant than the king. You too, despising worldly concerns, will become more honorable than the whole world, like those saints *of whom the world was not worthy*. If, then, you desire to merit heaven, make light of the things of the earth. By doing so, you will become more illustrious in this present world while deserving also the joys of the world to come."[37] Thus does Chrysostom demonstrate with clarity that willful poverty is supremely useful for the fruition of inner joy.

Heb. 11:38

21. Poverty is useful, in the fourth place, for the DIFFUSION OF THE GOSPEL TEACHING, first because it makes it more readily believable. In his Fifteenth Homily on Matthew, Chrysostom writes: "Such is the power of light that it not only shines, but attracts those who follow it. When people see that we despise all the goods of the present time and prepare for future delights, they believe in our deeds before having heard our words. Who, indeed, would be so foolish as not to see a manifest proof of the reality of things to come when he beholds a man who had been living before in lust and wealth now despoiling himself of everything, and ready for hunger, destitution, hardships, danger, bloodshed, violent death and all such perils? On the other hand, had we become involved and implicated in the things of the present, how could anyone believe we were hastening toward the possession of something else?"[38] Thus does Chrysostom demonstrate clearly that the preacher's example of voluntary poverty makes the Gospel lessons more readily believable.

The example of poverty is useful, again, for the diffusion of the Gospel lessons because it makes their teaching more effective, as the Damascene explains in his Fourth Book: "The happy message of the knowledge of God has been preached, not by overwhelming its enemies with wars and armed troops, but by sending out a few men, destitute, poor, illiterate, persecuted, smitten, put to death, preaching the One who was crucified in the flesh and died, and these few men prevailed against the worldly wise and the powerful."[39] Their imitators were those of whom Eusebius writes in the Third Book of his "History of the Church": "A few men, inflamed by a more ardent desire, consecrated their souls to the word of God and began to fulfill in a salutary manner the precept of perfection by distributing all they had to the poor in order to be less encumbered when they preached the Gospel."[40]

Finally, the example of poverty is useful for the diffusion of the Gospel lessons because it makes this teaching more readily acceptable. Commenting on a passage from
Mt. 10:10 Matthew, *the laborer deserves his living,* Chrysostom says in his Thirty-second Homily: "It is clear that since the apostles were to be fed by their followers, they would not be swelled with pride in the presence of those who were being taught, which might have occurred if they had offered them everything and received nothing in return. Neither would the catechumens fall away, as might have occurred had they felt the apostles were despising them."[41]

22. Now, since voluntary poverty makes the Gospel lessons more believable, effective, and acceptable, leading the listeners to faith, raising them to hope, and drawing them to love, it is evident that this poverty is of the greatest value for the diffusion of evangelical truth. An evident sign of it

is the fact that evangelical truth was spread throughout the world by apostles who were poor in possessions and in spirit and few in number, so that it was truly said of them: *Through all the earth their voice resounds.* *Ps. 18:5*

In his Forty-sixth Homily on Matthew, Chrysostom says: "If, indeed, twelve men succeeded in converting the whole earth, consider how great is our malice when we, who are so many and should have been sufficient to ferment ten thousand worlds, are unable to straighten our own flock. 'But they were working miracles,' you say. It is not the miracles that made them worthy of admiration: many others who even cast out demons did not become admirable, but were punished for having done evil. 'But what is it,' you may ask, 'that reveals their greatness?' Contempt of riches, disdain of glory, detachment from all concern for the present life. Although they might have suffered ten thousand deaths, had they lacked these virtues, they would have been looked upon as deceivers."[42] Thus does Chrysostom clearly demonstrate that nothing is more effective for the diffusion of Christ's Gospel than a perfect contempt for earthly goods. *cf. Acts 5:12*

23. Since it appears from all this that voluntary and deep poverty has four incomparable merits, each one multiplied by three, such poverty is properly figured, not only by the *single pearl* of the Gospel, but also, because of its immense value and amazing beauty, by the twelve most brilliant pearls in the gates of the New Jerusalem *coming down out of heaven,* to which correspond the names of the Twelve Poor in Spirit, that is, the apostles placed in the foundations [of these gates]. Again, it may be represented by the twelve precious stones on the breastplate of decision—made distinct by a fourfold ordering—that adorned our supreme High Priest when He hung naked on the cross in *Mt. 13:46* *cf. Ap. 21:21* *ibid. 10* *cf. ibid. 14* *cf. Ex. 28:17ff.*

order to reconcile us with the Father. And, to this breastplate of decision, there is also attached an ephod, that is, the example of the twelve apostles, bound with the affection of love as with *violet ribbons.* Indeed, the great value of such poverty is not only varied, but also immense and beyond comparison with any value of the earth, as Chrysostom says in his Forty-sixth Homily on Matthew: "What if someone proposed to you either to have the power to change straw into gold, or to be able to despise all wealth as mere straw? Would you not accept the latter as better and more convenient? In fact, the former would be most attractive to men: for if they were to see straw turned into gold, like Simon they would want this power for themselves, and their craving for riches would greatly increase. But if they were to see all men despising wealth as mere straw, they would have been cured long since from this disease."[43]

ibid. 28

24. In his final homily the same Chrysostom says: "If someone offered you leadership, political power, riches, and carnal delights, and then proposed poverty, and gave you the faculty to choose whatever you wanted, it is poverty you would immediately grasp if only you could know its beauty. To me, poverty appears as a splendid and appealing maiden. It is in her company that Elias grew up, and that he was ravished in the blessed elevation; it is with her that Eliseus found his glory; and with her, also, that John and all the apostles did the same. We may even look upon this maiden's beauty: her eyes are pure and clear, never disturbed, but meek, quiet, delightful, looking to all, mild, humble, without hatred, and turning no men away; her mouth and tongue are sound, at all times filled with thanksgivings and blessings, and with mild and friendly words. And if you wish to see the proportions of her limbs, they

cf. 4Kgs. 2:11ff.
cf. ibid. 1:8; 2:13
cf. Mt. 3:4

are perfect, and much more elegant than those of over-abundance. And if many run away from her, do not wonder, for the foolish also flee from other virtues. 'But,' you say, 'the poor suffer insults from the rich?'—Again, you are singing to me the praise of destitution, for blessed is he who suffers abuse. And to suffer abuse is a sign of destitution. 'But,' you say, 'the poor are in a state of need?'—Paul also was in a state of need and hunger. 'But the poor have no repose?'—*The Son of Man,* likewise *has nowhere to lay His head.*"[44] In these words, the Golden-mouthed expressly declares that a willful privation of material goods is not only of great value, but also of wonderful beauty.

cf. Mt. 5:10

cf. 2 Cor. 11:27

Mt. 8:20

25. What is more, this privation is of great opulence and honor, as this same holy man says in his Forty-seventh Homily on Matthew: "The soul of the destitute man, of the willfully destitute, glitters like gold, shines like a glowing pearl, blossoms like a rose. For in such a state there is no moth, no thief, and no concern for matters of this life, but a conversation as of angels. Do you wish to behold the beauty of such a soul, and, also, to learn the riches of destitution? This soul does not submit to demons, nor does it serve a king, but it serves God; it does not contend with men, but with angels; it does not have two chests, or three, or even twenty, but such an abundance that it estimates the whole universe as nothing; it possesses no treasure, but heaven itself; nor is it in need of slaves, for it holds in slavery the thoughts and passions that dominate kings. It makes light of kingly power, and of gold, and other such childish amusements as paltry for them as are hoops and balls. Indeed, he possesses a world which those who play with such games are unable even to behold. What state could be better than that of a poor man? The sky is his floor,

cf. Lk. 12:33

and if such is his floor, think of what his roof must be! 'But he has no horse or carriage?' — What need for this in
Phil. 1:23 a man who is to be borne upon the clouds, *and to be with Christ?*"[45] Thus far John the Golden-mouthed, in fiery, striking, weighty, and precious words, commends the admirable height, beauty, and value of a willful poverty that implies privation of material goods.

26. Yet, because such things are not revealed to the wise of the world, as it is said in the words of the Lord in Mat-
Mt. 11:25 thew: *"Thou didst hide these things from the wise and prudent, and didst reveal them to little ones,"* they are not proposed to carnal men, but to the spiritual, according to
ibid. 7:6 this saying: *"Do not give to dogs what is holy, neither cast your pearls before swine"*; they are not revealed to the lovers of riches, but to those who love and practice poverty, who have already overcome the world, according to this passage
Ap. 2:17 of the Apocalypse: *"To him who overcomes, I will give the hidden manna, and I will give him a white pebble and upon the pebble, a name written, which no one knows except him who receives it."* Thus, this manner of poverty is called
Mt. 13:44 *a treasure hidden in a field; he who finds it hides it, and in his joy goes and sells all that he has and buys that field.*

And so, if anyone wishes to know the value of holy poverty, let him either attempt to experience it in himself, or let him accept the opinion of those who experienced it, in accordance with the words of Bernard in the letter he wrote to Thomas who, out of love for science, postponed his intended entrance into the religious life: "How much more
1 Cor. 2:2 salutary would it be for you to learn *Jesus Christ and Him crucified,* a science which most certainly will be hard to
cf. Gal. 6:14 learn for anyone who has not been crucified to the world. You are mistaken, son, you are mistaken if you believe that

you will be able to find with the masters of the world the science which alone the disciples of Christ, that is, the contemptors of the world, obtain through the favor of God. Indeed, it is not reading that teaches it, but unction; not erudition, but training in the commandments of the Lord."[46] *cf. 1 Jn. 2:27*

27. Chrysostom is in harmony with this holy eloquence of Bernard when he speaks thus in his Thirty-eighth Homily on Matthew: "In truth, whatever things I may be saying, my words do not mean a thing compared to factual experience. That is why I would like any one of those who have already attained this summit of philosophy to be present among us: then, you would manifestly see the enjoyment of such a thing, and how none of those who love poverty would accept to be made rich with ten thousand prebends. . . . Such men do not lament in their necessities, but are more magnificently adorned in their poverty than those who wear a crown."[47]

If, indeed, experience teaches such things, and if those who embrace the riches, delights, and honors of the world neither practice them nor wish to do so, such men must condemn themselves to silence in these matters, lest they appear as blind men reasoning on colors. Such is the temerity Jerome condemned when he wrote to Demetriades: "Some men, who do not know how to speak, are yet unable to remain silent but attempt to expose the Scriptures they do not understand. When they have convinced others, they attract upon themselves the scorn of the learned for being the teachers of the ignorant, before having been the disciples of the doctors. Indeed, it is good to obey greater men and to yield to the perfect, and, after the rules of the Scriptures, to learn from others the pattern of one's life, not following the worst teacher: our own presumption."[48]

Now, if the one we are answering had not made use of this worst of teachers, he never would have presumed to propose with dishonest temerity, and as an assault on poverty, that temporal possessions are to be recommended. Even though evil may come from time to time from a privation of things, and good from their affluence, never does evil come from a poverty that is beloved, but from one that is hated; nor does good come from riches that are loved, but from those that are despised, and this is attested by
Eccl. 5:9 Solomon himself: *The lover of wealth reaps no fruit from it.*

28. On the other hand, it is a fact that, as praise of a thing leads to the love of it, so also disparagement leads to contempt. And so, since to despise wealth and love poverty is to uproot vice and bring in virtue; and, contrariwise, since to despise poverty and love wealth is to uproot virtue and bring in vice: it may be gathered for an obvious reason that as much as a commendation of poverty and of the poor in spirit and a low esteem of riches and of the teachings of the rich pertain to Christ, as much does the assertion of the opposite pertain to the impious doctrine of the antichrist. Thus, Jerome writes "On the Life of Paula": "It is not praiseworthy to possess riches, but to despise them for the sake of Christ; nor is it laudable to be excited by honors, but to consider them as little. For this reason, Paula, also, by avoiding glory, came to deserve honor, for she followed virtues as a shadow, and avoided those who sought her, and sought those who despised her. . . . The men of the world look up to those who excel in such privileges, but we praise those who look down upon such things for the sake of the Saviour. And, in a wonderful manner, those men for whom we have little consideration when they possess such things, we praise when they have refused them."[49]

29. And if, perchance, the enemy of the poor comes to say that he is not praising the honors and riches of the world, but only those of the Church, we will ask him whether he believes that desire for these ecclesiastic goods is dangerous, or more or less indifferent, or meritorious. If he believes the desire for ecclesiastic riches and honors is dangerous, and yet makes them desirable by praising them, either he is deceiving his auditors or he is talking nonsense. If he believes this desire to be indifferent, let him not attempt to persuade anyone by praising these things, for he is speaking in vain and working for nothing. But if he believes that the desire for the resources and honors of the Church is meritorious and holy, since no vice is more abominable than the covetousness and ambition of ecclesiastics, — because in these two sins the Holy Spirit is either bought or sold, so that the house of God becomes *a den of thieves*, — he is attacking both the foundation of Christian religion and evangelical poverty. *Mt. 21:13*

Let this be the end of the third answer, even though there is no corresponding subdivision in our adversary's book. From now on, this man prepares himself to attack the spiritual order by launching a new onslaught, and, with the help of Christ, we will put on the armor of a new response.

CHAPTER X

First Point of the Fourth Answer, in Which the Religious Life of Those Who Have No Purse Is Defended against Error, and the True Right of Ecclesiastic Possession Is Exposed

AS SOON as *covetousness, . . . the* primary *root of all evils,* has invaded the fortress of the human mind, it imposes upon it such cruel tyranny that it leads it back to the servitude of idols and makes it as cruel as a beast. A clear proof of this is the malice of Judas the betrayer. While he held the purse with which he might have appeased the voracity of his covetousness, he was driven by such craving for a promised sum of money that, small as it was, it made him thirst for the blood of the Saviour of All, and sell unto death the Author of Life.

1 Tm. 6:10

cf. Eph. 5:5; Col. 3:5

cf. Mt. 26:15

Laboring under the same scourge, the calumniator of the Mendicants begins like Judas by giving them a kiss of peace, by seeming to commend their poverty. Later, however, he deals them a death blow in his attempt to prove by argument that the profession of the Mendicants who have no purse is not only imperfect, but wicked, deceitful, and vicious. By so reasoning, he attempts to induce, not only prelates but also clerics and religious endowed with possessions, to detest and exterminate the Mendicants.

2. First, as offering a kiss, he says: "But you may ask, 'Do you not condemn those who have no purse and do not

work?' " And he answers: "I do not condemn them, I praise them; yet I do not prefer them to those who own ma-
Mt. 10:24 terial goods, for *no disciple is above his teacher.*" And he continues a little later: "Although a man alone may be able to live without a purse, yet it is unbelievable of a congregation that is in need of so many things." And later, again: "Something owned in common is in fact the purse of Christ. Hence, if you are a member of Christ, with Christ you have a purse." These are his actual words by which, like Judas, he first gives a kiss, saying that he praises those who have no purse, then suddenly inflicts a wound, adding immediately that Christ gave no example of such teaching. He is attempting to prove that to be without a purse is not per-
ibid. fect, but imperfect, because *no disciple is above his teacher.*

3. No prudent man gives up his purse for any other reason than to be more perfectly conformed to Christ. According to this man's perverse teaching, anyone who does so would be mistaken.

Furthermore, if it is unbelievable, as he says, that any congregation could subsist without a purse, he justifies such unbelief by either a difficulty or an impossibility. If a difficulty, then by the same token it is unbelievable that any congregation could live in holiness and chastity; if an impossibility, then any congregation that professes the impossible and binds itself to what it cannot do labors under superstition and conceit and needs to be reproved because it errs. Hence those who have no purse would be worthy, not of praise, but of blame.

Again, if, as he says, any member of Christ possesses a purse together with Him, it follows from the negation of the consequent [1] that a man without a purse is no member of Christ. And hence it also follows that all the Mendicants

who have nothing—and more so those who have surrendered everything—are outside the unity of the mystical body, for a man who renounces the possession of money would therefore be unable to obtain the grace of Christ. In this sense, Judas, who had a purse, was more blessed than Peter who said: *"Silver and gold I have none."* Also, according to this impious teaching, the Lord Jesus Himself, whose place of rest, as the prophet Isaias says, is *in him that is poor . . . and of a contrite spirit,* could find repose only among riches.

Acts 3:6

cf. Is. 66:1
*ibid. 2**

4. Behold the great eulogizer of the poor! In order to vomit more poison from his breast, he attempts in the following passage to brand the Mendicants with a twofold heresy. Relying on quotations from Augustine "On Heresies" and "Against Faustus,"[2] he continues: "There is a certain heresy of those who walk around barefoot, and do so, not for the sake of afflicting their body, but because they claim to be following a manifestation of God's will; in this same manner, the Manicheans were judged heretical, not for having no money or purse, but because they attempted to relate this privation to a manifestation of God's will."

Such are the words of this man, by which he opens the pit of error but fails to close it. For it manifestly remains from this saying that if some men walk barefoot and have no purse, and if they refer this to a manifestation of God's will, they fall into a double heresy, that is, of those who walk barefoot, and of the Manicheans. In reality, the Mendicants we are concerned with walk barefoot and have no purse in order to fulfill literally the passage of the Gospel in which the Lord tells the apostles not to have money in their belts or shoes on their feet. According to this man's wicked view the apostles have fallen twice into heresy!

cf. Mt. 10:9-10

Now, if this is true, the apostolic Church erred in every way, for it approved such a state,† and inscribed the authors of such heresies on the roster of the saints. And no less an error was committed by Ambrose, Augustine, Jerome, Chrysostom, Bede, Rabanus, and Bernard, all of whom affirm that the teaching of Christ to the apostles on the advisability of not carrying money is to be understood literally, as it clearly appears in the quotations from these same authors, given in the first part of the preceding answer.‡ And because it is impious to have such an opinion of the saints, this deceitful impostor will have to return to a pious understanding of the truth, if he wishes to avoid being struck with a just sentence of condemnation.

5. Let this unwise and perfidious man attend to the fact that manifestations of divine will may be adapted to such matters in two ways: that is, by manner of counsel, or by manner of precept. And so, if anyone tries to adapt the divine words to nudity of the feet or absence of a purse in such a way that he construes from the Scriptures that such things are prescribed and necessary for salvation—as if no one could be saved if he did not walk barefoot and without a purse—he is doubly mistaken.†† But, on the contrary, if anyone tries to adapt the expression of the divine will to these things as being counseled, and supererogatory, and advantageous for salvation, he should be taken, not for a heretic, but for a true disciple of Christ; not for a Manichean, but for a true Christian.

That this was the interpretation of the pious doctor Augustine is clearly gathered from his words in the Fifth Book

† Pope Honorius III.
‡ Cf. ch. VII, ¶¶ 9ff.
†† Cf. ch. VIII, ¶ 23.

"Against Faustus." After quoting Faustus' self-glorification for having accepted the Gospel because he rejects silver and gold, has no more money in his belt, and other such things, Augustine answers him in this order. He shows him first to be a hypocrite and a liar, and then a heretic, for the reason that the Church makes a distinction between perfect and imperfect on the basis of the manner in which the Gospel is received, but the Manicheans do not. Then he continues: "How many are those in our communion who truly fulfill these sublime precepts which you call upon as a pretext to deceive the ignorant!" In the next few lines, after showing the different states within the Church, he continues: "In fact, those who, for the sake of perfection, sell and distribute all they have and follow the Lord are not the only ones to belong to the kingdom of heaven: for there should be added to this Christian militia the group of those who have money and make charitable use of it, and to whom it shall be said at the end: *'I was hungry and you gave Me to eat; I was thirsty and you gave me to drink.'* Otherwise, damnation would be the lot of those whose houses the Apostle set in order with such diligent and attentive care, warning that wives be subject to their husbands, that husbands love their wives, and children obey their parents. Let us not judge such as these to be breaking the evangelical precept and forfeiting eternal life, for while the Lord says: *'He who does not take up his cross and follow Me, is not worthy of Me,'* thus exhorting the strong to perfection, He immediately consoles these others by saying: *'He who receives a just man because he is a just man, shall receive a just man's reward.'* Why, then, do you deceive your listeners, who minister to you through their wives, sons and families, through their houses and fields, and say that if anyone does

cf. Mt. 19:21

Mt. 25:35

cf. Col. 3:18

Mt. 10:38

cf. Lk. 14:27

Mt. 10:41

not renounce all such things, he is not receiving the Gospel? Since it is not resurrection, but a return to this mortal life that you are promising them, so that your elect lead a life as vain, inept, and sacrilegious as your own, by receiving great praise you are truly making them break the evangelical precept."[3] By these words Augustine clearly shows that some teachings of the Gospel are fitting for the perfect, that their observance is not indispensable for the salvation of the imperfect, and that the Manicheans believed all men to be equally bound to the observance of every one of these teachings. He meant that Faustus was mistaken, not for having said that these propositions were to be understood literally, but for having failed to see the distinction between counsels and precepts.

6. It appears from many attestations of the Doctors that the words referring to the question of not wearing shoes are also to be understood literally.† Indeed, holy Ambrose, in his book "On Flight from the World," speaks as follows: "Jesus sent his disciples without shoes or money lest they carry with them anything of the world."[4]

cf. Ex. 3:5
cf. Jos. 5::5
cf. Mt. 10:10

Jerome, also, writing to Eustochius, says: "Moses and Jesus Nave were ordered to stand barefoot on the earth; the disciples were sent out to preach the Gospel barefoot, without the burden of shoes or the bond of sandals; and the soldiers, when they shared the clothing of Jesus, found no sandals they could take. For the Lord could not have owned that which He had forbidden His servants to have."[5] By these words, Jerome shows that it is not only the disciples,

† The disputation that follows seems gratuitous since the counsel of poverty as applied to dress should be understood to mean, not "go barefoot," but "dress as do the poor," taking into consideration the circumstances of place and climate.

but also Christ, who walked barefoot, and that this is to be understood literally. He says the same to Ageruchias, in the book "On Monogamy": "In the course of their travels throughout the world, the disciples had no money in their belt, no staff in their hand, and no sandals on their feet."[6]

In his final homily on Matthew, John Chrysostom says: "The apostles went around clothed with a single garment and without shoes, and they overcame all men."[7] The same, also, says in his Thirty-second Homily: "Christ said to the apostles: *'When I sent you without purse . . . or shoes, did you want anything?'* "[8] *Lk. 22:35**

In the Sixth Book of the "History of the Church," Eusebius, also, has these words of praise for Origen, who at the time was still a Catholic: "Before anything else, he believed that the precepts of the Gospel and the words of the Saviour by which it was prescribed not to have two garments, or to wear shoes, or to be concerned with the future, were to be fulfilled with the greatest love and attention."[9] And a little later: "Finally, and after many years, the tradition was still that Christ walked barefoot, without any shoes."[10]

From such quotations as these, and from those given earlier,† it is clearly established that Christ went about with bare feet, and that the apostles did the same at His command.

7. And if, perchance, anyone is impressed by the words of the Baptist who says: *"The latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to loose,"* let him consider the text itself and the glosses. For here John makes use of these words in a mystical and symbolical sense, as when he says that Christ has in His hands *the winnowing fan,* or *the axe.* By such symbols he gives to understand the separation at the time of *Lk. 3:16** *ibid. 17, 9*

† Cf. ch. VII, ¶¶ 8ff.

final judgment. So also by the latchet of the shoes he indicates the mystery of salvation. Thus the gloss reads: "The shoes represent the mystery of the incarnation, and the latchet, the lock of this mystery. John is not worthy to loose the latchet of the shoes because he is unable to solve the mystery of the incarnation."[11] And another gloss reads: "I am not worthy to loose the latchet of His shoes, that is, I do not usurp the name of the Spouse."[12] For this saying is to be understood spiritually, as having a mystical sense.

If anyone replies that it is to be understood literally, in the usual meaning of the words, let him note that when a man, speaking of another whose excellence he desires to proclaim, declares that he is unworthy to take off his shoes even though he may be wearing none, such expression is conditional, for it is understood to mean: if he were wearing shoes.[13]

Acts 12:8 Were someone to insist that the angel said to Peter: "*Put on thy sandals,*" and that, therefore, Peter was not without shoes any more than were the other apostles, let him listen to Bede in his original commentary on this same passage: "Instead of the word *caligulae* or *caligae,* as some texts have, the Greek has σανδάλια. Now, we read in the Gospel that this kind of footwear was permitted to the apostles."[14] This from Bede.

The grammarian Papias also agrees with him when he says: "*Caligae* or *caligulae* are named after the sole (*callus*) because they are tied to the foot."[15]

8. Hence if any man filled with the spirit of the world asserts that it is not fitting that the Lord prescribe literally that the apostles go barefoot, under the pretext that this would be something lowly, incompatible with apostolic dignity and foreign to proper customs, let him understand that

there are many reasons for this prescription. First, it was given AS A SIGN OF EXTREME POVERTY, according to this passage of Luke: *"When I sent you without purse . . . or shoes, did you want anything?"* Commenting on this in his Thirty-second Homily on Matthew, Chrysostom says: "Someone may say that Christ's other commands had a certain justification; but why did He prohibit the use of a purse, of shoes, or of two garments when traveling since there seems to be no reason for it?" And he answers: "The reason is that He who, earlier, had not permitted the apostles to be concerned about the morrow desired also to train them in all manner of destitution."[16]

*Lk. 22:35**

cf. Mt. 6:34

Second, Christ suggested this AS AN INDUCEMENT TO PENITENTIAL HUMILITY, in accordance with this passage from the Second Book of Kings: *But David went up by the ascent of Mount Olivet, going up and weeping, walking barefoot.* In this quotation, the noble king, model of all penitence and humility, gives an example to all true penitents. And the ecclesiastic custom by which feet are bared in processions in order to appease God's anger is a manifestation of the same spirit.

*2 Kgs. 15:30**

Third, Christ proposed it AS A PROOF OF PROMPT OBEDIENCE. Of this text from Isaias: *"As my servant Isaias hath walked, naked and barefoot,"* the gloss says: "Behold, this is subjection: this man is of royal seed, and yet he walks barefoot through the city of Jerusalem."[17]

*Is. 20:3**

Fourth, AS AN EXERCISE IN AUSTERITY OF LIFE. Thus, commenting on this passage from Matthew: "No shoes on their feet," the gloss says: "Even Plato teaches that both extremities of the body are to be left uncovered, and that head and feet are not to be pampered. For when the extremities are hardy, the remainder of the body is strong."

cf. Mt. 10:10

Fifth, AS A SIGN OF REMOTENESS FROM ALL CARNALITY.
Ex. 3:5 Thus, commenting on this passage from Exodus: "*Remove the sandals from your feet,*" the gloss says: "Because no one may stand in the presence of God, or see God, unless he casts off all carnal desire."[18]

Sixth, AS A SIGN OF PERFECT VIRTUE. Thus, Gregory Nazianzen, praising certain religious of his time, and weeping and crying after their dispersal, has this to say: "I had longed and sought with eager and attentive eyes to see the holy choir of those who offer glory to God and sing His
Ps. 1:2 praise, who *meditate on His law day and night,* who live as an example of better life and as a warning for all, as silent preachers of the law of God and the Gospel of Christ, in whom even the appearance and dress display the signs of virtue: a shaggy head with untrained and bristling hair; bare feet, also, like the apostles; cheap clothing that condemns the arrogance and conceit of the world; a belt all the more precious because of its very inelegance, hardly giving any support to the clothing."[19]†

And so, in order to avoid that bare feet, in themselves an affliction and a humiliation, be forsaken as a useless, erroneous, and detestable custom, we have produced these quotations from the fathers. Yet, we do not believe in absolutely rejecting shoes, nor do we mark with the sign of imperfection those who wear them, for the customs of the calced and of the discalced, and the professions of those

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† Another version reads in translation: "A belt that is graceful by its very lack of research, lightly holding the tunic, so that it seems hardly to hold it at all."

Such, unfortunately, seems to be an idealized interpretation, since there is no doubt about the medieval idea of the uncouth saint, clearly described here as having a "shaggy head with untrained and bristling hair."

who have purses and of those who have none, are pleasing to the Lord for different reasons and considerations, and make the Bride of Christ beautiful, perfect, and admirable by surrounding her with a certain manifold variety. *cf. Ps. 44:10**

9. And so, it is vainly that, intending to insult the Mendicants who have nothing, this man who has been accusing them of heresy and simulation,† now excuses Holy Mother Church from the vice of simulation by offering her worthless and deceitful praise, as if she had any need of his falsehood. Indeed, he continues: "But Holy Mother Church, *set on a mountain,* denies not that she possesses these things, but that she has dominion over them, since in her most faithful distribution of them, she is acting on behalf of the Head." These are his very words in which he makes use at the same time of two contradictory notions, that the Church "denies not that she possesses these things," and then, that "she has no dominion over them." If, indeed, he demonstrates that the Church possesses in her own name and without simulation, this is true possession, and backed with true right: and the Church, then, has the right to claim dominion over such things. Why, then, does he say that "she has no dominion over them," and then speak of distribution? We do not claim truly to possess that which we distribute in another's name, but only that which we hold under our power in our own right. Hence, if the Church shows herself as possessing temporal goods, and yet has none, she is laboring under a simulation opposed to that of the Manicheans: for while the latter pretend not to possess that which, in fact, they do, the Church would be pretending to possess that which, in fact, she does not. And so, if *cf. Jb. 31:7* *Mt. 5:14* *cf. 2 Cor. 5:20*

† Cf. ¶ 4.

the Church asserts that she has no possessions, and if she really has none, as this man claims, then the fact of not possessing temporal goods, not even a purse, is truly fitting for this Holy Mother. Why, then, does he accuse and condemn as heretics and simulators both those who have no purse, and those who declare they have none? On the other hand, if, as we have shown, the Church truly possesses and truthfully asserts that she does, this man is unduly taking away from her the dominion she has over ecclesiastic goods—and he is also contradicting himself.

10. Furthermore, if, as he says, dominion over things does not belong to Holy Mother Church, all those who have dominion over anything are excluded from the communion of this Church. Now, such a doctrine undoubtedly pertains to the impiety of the Manicheans, as it appears with evidence from Augustine's opinion quoted above,† taken from his Fifth Book against Faustus. Therefore, since this man burdens the poor of Christ with the impiety of
Ps. 7:16 the Manicheans, *he falls into the pit which he has made,* and is swallowed in the hole which he has dug.

And if he says that this principle does not apply to the universal Church, but to local churches, or, rather, to the clerical body, he is still holding an erroneous and impious opinion, since he is separating from the communion of the Church all the clerics who have possessions of their own.

Hence it is impossible to maintain that the Church is entirely free of such possessions, and also, contrariwise, that she possesses all her goods in proper: indeed, some churchmen, while respecting the truth of the Gospel and their future salvation, truly have private possessions, while others

† Cf. ¶ 5.

have common possessions, and others still are deprived of both, according to the degrees of evangelical perfection already indicated.†

11. Yet, it is true that tithes and offerings are due to the Lord, and that, by divine right, they are given to the Church. It is also true, nonetheless, that the ownership of real estate, such as fields, farms, dwelling places, cities, and counties, passes into ecclesiastical hands not only by divine but also by human right. Even though this stands out as a clear fact for prudent men and for those well informed in legal matters, yet it needs to be demonstrated through the sacred Canons, for the sake of refuting the malice of this ignorant and shameless man.

In the twelfth point, question two, from the Council of Orléans, we read: "If anyone among the clerics presumes either to suppress or to disclaim the documents on the strength of which the firm right of ownership of the Church is based, whatever goods may have been disposed of at a loss to the Church through lack of documents, let him pay for it out of his own possessions."[20] A little later, Gregory is quoted on the same matter: "In like manner as the Church is not to lose what belongs to her, so also it is not fitting that she invade with covetous ardor that which belongs to others."[21] Furthermore, in the same question, there is this excerpt from the Council of Agde: "If the bishop has granted freedom to slaves of the Church,‡ those things that were given to them in the act of manumission they will

† Cf. ch. IX, ¶ 11.

‡ Some ecclesiastic authorities, following the customs of the secular world of their time, actually believed themselves entitled to have slaves—which to us seems to contradict the most fundamental Christian teachings on the dignity of man. The fact of assigning the ownership of slaves, not to individual churchmen, but to the Church

firmly hold with a perpetual right."[22] This from the Canon. Thus, the Church has slaves; but where there is true slavery there is also true dominion; and so, if the Church is able to have slaves that properly belong to it, the conclusion is evident that it also must enjoy the rights of true property and true ownership.

12. Furthermore, the fact that distinct powers belong to distinct churches is clearly established by the Canons. There is, for instance, point sixteen, question five, by Pope Nicholas: "If any bishop, for the sake of some good to his flock, decides to build a church on the territory of a city foreign [to his diocese], let him not presume to dedicate it, for this function belongs to the bishop in whose territory the church is being erected."[23] In the same point, question three, there are also these words from Gelasius: "It was agreed to add that if — may it never occur — the riches of a church or of a certain diocese came to be owned by bishops, they should claim their own right as it derives from the thirty year [prescription] law, for thus has disposed the authority of our sons the princes."[24]

Again, in the same question, in the Canon *Among things remembered,* where the matter of boundaries is settled, Innocent says: "If a legitimate boundary does not enclose a given basilica, and yet it is proven that prescription has been claimed long, since the appeal of the present bishop

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itself makes things even worse, for the abomination is imputed, not to fallible men, but to the infallible Bride of Christ. This shows how deeply the Church has been influenced at times by established social customs which enlightened leaders should have fought with all their might. One of the main purposes of the present aggiornamento is precisely to eliminate lingering traces of medieval power-politics and autocratic forms of government dating from the days when the Church had degenerated into a worldly kingdom and the popes into potentates surrounded by their court.

shall not be valid, since the objection of the thirty year law imposes silence upon him. The laws of the princes of the world also prescribe this, and it is the authority of Roman magistrates that decreed it."[25] Not only is there here an affirmation of the fact that the churches have a true and distinct power of dominion, because there is between them mutual prescription, but also that they have this power both by divine and by human right, since prescription, as shown in these Canons, draws its origin from a law of the princes approved by the authority of the Supreme Pontiff.



This is even more clearly established in point eleven, question one, in the words of Ambrose against Auxentius: "If the Emperor requests tribute, we do not refuse it: let the fields of the church provide for it."[26] But he who must pay tribute to Caesar on some property owns it not so much by divine as by human right, as the Saviour attests when He says: *"Render . . . to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's."* *Mt. 22:21*

Furthermore, the eighth distinction says, in the words of Augustine on John: "By which right do you defend the estates of the Church, the divine or the human? Divine right is expressed in Holy Scriptures, human right in the laws of kings. Thus, whatever a man owns, is it not by human right? For by divine right, *the Lord's are the earth and its fullness."*[27] *Ps. 23:1*

The same, also, writes in his Sixth Homily on John: "Do not say: 'What has the king to do with me?' What, then, would you have to do with the right of ownership? For possessions are owned through the rights of kings.† If you say: 'What has the king to do with me?' do not claim that you own anything, since you have renounced those human rights by which possessions are owned."[28] What could be said more clearly than this to prove that the Church truly owns temporal goods by both human and divine rights?

13. Indeed, because the sacred Canons assert that offerings made to the Church are consecrated to the Lord, that ministers may not claim for themselves dominion over such things in the name of some faulty ownership,[29] and that such goods belong rather to heaven than to earth and should be owned in common rather than exclusively: it follows that, in order to remove all darkness of contradiction or doubt, we should understand that there is a fourfold common ownership of temporal goods, flowing from a fourfold right.

The first form of common ownership is that which flows from the RIGHT OF THE NECESSITY OF NATURE, through which anything required for the sustainment of natural life becomes the share of the man who is in extreme need of it, even though it may have been appropriated by someone else. It is impossible to renounce this form of common ownership because it flows from the law naturally imprinted upon man, since he is an image of God and the most honorable creature, for whose sake all the things of the world were made.

14. The second form of common ownership is that which flows from the RIGHT OF FRATERNAL CHARITY, through

† This is an application of the obsolete theory of the absolute and divine rights of kings.

which all things belong to the just, and those things that belong to individuals become common to all by way of a certain communion of love, as expressed in these words of the Apostle to the Corinthians: *All things are yours.* *1 Cor. 3:22*
Augustine says of this ownership, when speaking against the Donatist heretics:† "May they come to the Catholic Church, and may they possess with us not only the earth, but also *the Lord who made heaven and earth.*"[30] Renounce- *Ps. 113B:15*
ment to this form of common ownership is entirely illicit, because it flows from a divinely infused right, through which there is unity in the *dove*, that is, in the universal Church. No one is free to secede from this unity and communion as long as he is bound to the divine law, which is made up entirely of love.

15. The third form of common ownership is that which flows from the CIVIL LAW OF THE WORLD, through which an empire, kingdom, or city is made to be one community or association, as in the case of merchants or wrestlers who share their gains or losses, or of one family living with an undivided inheritance. Renouncement to this form of common ownership is required by evangelical perfection, for it implies personal property that flows from a humanly established right, and carries with it some consequences that may occasionally become obstacles to good and inducements to evil, and are, therefore, opposed to evangelical perfection. That is why a holy soul should be persuaded to give it up following the Psalm: *Hear, O daughter, and see; turn your* *Ps. 44:11*
ear, forget your people and your father's house.

† Donatism, a heretical and schismatical movement that developed in North Africa around the year 311, led to great trouble and violence, and was finally condemned by the *Collatio* (Conference) of the year 411, where St. Augustine spoke as the principal advocate for the Catholic cause.

16. The fourth form of common ownership is that which flows from the RIGHT OF ECCLESIASTICAL DOTATION, through which all goods conferred upon the churches are dedicated to God for the common sustainment of His ministers and of the poor. This particular form exists in all collegiate churches endowed with grants. Renouncement to such common ownership is not indispensable for perfection, for it may be kept without damage to perfection, as it appears in the case of holy prelates and religious; and because it flows from a divinely established right, so that *they who serve the altar have their share with the altar.* All the goods owned in common belong to these men who are *of one heart and one soul* and have one spiritual father and one rule of life. Renouncement to this form of common ownership is not opposed to perfection. On the contrary, it leads to the summit of evangelical perfection. The reason is that while it flows from divine right, it also flows from human right, and so it is not only spiritual, but also temporal. Although it excludes personal ownership, it still admits of collective ownership, by which any member of the collectivity is seen to have not only the right of use, but also dominion, since any one of them has by his own right the power to sue in order to obtain the return of his ecclesiastic goods, and the power to oppose exceptions in their defense. It is clear that a man who may sue and oppose exceptions in relation to certain things has some manner of dominion over them.

1 Cor. 9:13

Acts 4:32

17. Now, since it is very hard to rejoice in nothing but poverty after having abandoned all things, and since it is also hard to be content with mere ecclesiastic common ownership after having renounced all private property: it follows that both states are perfect, not by way of human tradition as the adversary of the poor asserts, but by way

of a divinely instituted right, most of all if these states are accompanied by the vows of chastity and of renouncement to one's own will.

But when a man comes to assert that clerics are perfect for the sole reason that they give up their worldly fortune while retaining their ecclesiastic revenues, and that the only ones to be imperfect and limping are those who live on their own resources, perhaps very meagerly, as this calumniator of the poor would have us believe, he is gravely overlooking spiritual perfection. Would any man, with any amount of intelligence, be unaware of the fact that it is unreasonable to claim that a cleric who lives on his own resources and is hardly able to afford food and clothing is imperfect and limping; but that another who enjoys any amount of ecclesiastic revenues is righteous and perfect, so long as he has given up his personal fortune? Where is the man, the most covetous and carnal with the deepest mental limp, who would not eagerly exchange the former state against the latter? Is this state toward which any weak, imperfect, limping, covetous, conceited, and carnal man aspires, anything like the perfection of evangelical truth commended by Christ and called sublime and arduous? *cf. Mt. 19:21ff.*

18. How amazing that this new way — that a churchman, endowed with clerical revenue, renounce all private property — upon which almost none or, at least, very few of the perfect or imperfect ever proceeded, would come to be preferred to the ancient paths! Who, indeed, among the secular clergy of our time would ever do this? Who ever intended, or even dreamed, when he received ecclesiastic benefits, to cast off his inheritance and those goods he happened to possess, and to hand them out to the poor, and from then on, to make a vow never to own anything

cf. 1 Tm. 6:8 privately, and to be content with food and clothing alone? Thus, to praise such a state which is hardly, if ever at all, found among men, is nothing other than to propose a raven-colored whiteness, and certainly nothing more than to prefer the imagination of one's own brain to an estab-
Ps. 4:3 lished truth, so that in this manner *men of rank . . . love what is vain and seek after falsehood,* turn away from the
cf. ibid. 106:40 footsteps of Christ, and follow their own dreams, wandering in the wilderness instead of following the true way.

19. Yet, we do not deny that those who, contenting themselves with ecclesiastic goods, retain of them but what they need and give everything else to the poor, may attain a certain degree of perfection, but it is not to be compared in any way with the perfection of the Mendicants, demonstrated above in the third part of the first answer.†

And so, to this man and to his accomplices, the Saviour
Mt. 23:13 truly says: *"Woe to you, . . . hypocrites! Because you shut the kingdom of heaven against men. For you yourselves do not go in, nor do you allow those going in to enter."*

Thus, if any men come to believe, on the strength of this poisonous teaching, that they are perfect in the world, and are therefore dissuaded from entering the religious life, there is no doubt whatsoever that an account of the blood of such souls who remained in the filth of their sins will be required at the hand of these teachers in a severe judgment
cf. Gn. 9:5 by the just Judge, unless, in His immeasurable mercy for which we pray He deigns to recall them from their error by flooding them with the light of His truth.

† Cf. ch. III, ¶¶ 18ff.

CHAPTER XI

Second Point of the Fourth Answer, in Which the Profession of the Friars Minor Is Shown To Be Truly Without Appropriation of Real Estate or Furnishings, and Without Ownership of Money, Either in Private or in Common



HE puffed-up minds of arrogant men, fed on the vanity of the world, lead them to believe that they have gained for themselves no little glory for having accused of deceitful simulation the true holiness of simple souls, and reproved their spiritual prudence as if it were insanity. In order to reach this goal more effectively, they often change good into evil and put a stain on the elect.[1] *cf. Sir. 11:33*

Because of the corruption brought about by human weakness, there may hardly be found a single person or state exempt of any occasion of blame. Neither can we deny that among those who profess evangelical perfection, some are perverse and very many imperfect. Hence, if our opponent had been blaming the vices of the insolent, he would have been worthy of praise. Even if he had been heaping a general blame on individuals, evangelical men would have had to keep their mouths closed, particularly if he had been acting under divine inspiration: their duty would have been, then, to pray patiently for the detractor while covering up the insults. But now, because our opponent turns the poisoned *cf. Lk. 6:28*

darts of his eloquence against the whole Order of the Poor of Christ, and accuses their profession of the crimes of error and simulation, we are forced to fight his impudence, not that we seek to return curse for curse, but that we hope to exonerate the religious Order effectively of the crimes imputed to it.

2. Speaking as if he were the Church itself, this man attacks the Mendicants as enemies of this same Church.

Jb. 30:1 "*But now,*" he writes, "*they hold me in derision who are younger in years than I, whose fathers I should have disdained to rank with the dogs of my flock.*" Thus does he clearly suggest that the religious he is accusing should be blamed as enemies of the Church, as insurgents against it, and as mocking despisers of it. He even ends up by saying:

*ibid. 2, 3, 8** "*They were thought unworthy of life itself. Barren with want and hunger . . . , and not appearing at all upon the earth.*" This is no less than looking down in mockery upon his own father, the Vicar of Christ, by whom this manner of life had been approved,† and to make fun of the offspring of Holy Mother Church the Bride of Christ.

cf. Prv. 30:17 To quote Solomon, his is the eye that will be plucked out by the ravens and the eagles, that is, by those who seek the truth. Hence it is of him and his accomplices, the inventors

Jb. 30:1 of new dogmas, that the Church may say: "*Now they hold me in derision who are younger in years than I.*" His wicked eye is plucked out by his own blow, he is wounded with the very dart with which he attempts to strike.

But now, usurping the zeal and words of the apostles, while acting as an assailant of evangelical perfection rather

2 Cor. 11:1 than as its imitator, he continues: "*Would to God that you*

† Cf. ch. VIII, ¶ 14.

could bear with me a little. . . . *For I am jealous for you with a divine jealousy.* Why do you boast of perfection more than others?"

3. These are his very words, by which, forgetting the humility of the apostles, he fails to see that he should have said instead: "*Bear with a little of my foolishness,* for while he believes that he is speaking not unwisely but with wisdom, by a just judgment of God he is made to be foolish, and falls headlong into many great follies.

2 Cor. 11:1
cf. Rom. 1:22

In spite of what he says, we never boast of greater perfection than others, although we do commend the height of poverty as consonant with true perfection. Virginity is truly superior to any degree of modesty, but this does not prove necessarily that the state of the holy virgins should be considered any higher than that of prelates or even of men who are not held in the least to virginity. The same reasoning should apply to every level of poverty. The friar this man is fighting† never claimed that the state of the Mendicants was superior to that of other men who retain some private property, except with the qualification: "All other circumstances being identical." But a state in which all circumstances are identical to those of another simply does not exist.‡ Hence it cannot be argued that the said friar is exalting his state above every or any other. It was, then, an act of great malice to take the words of a truthful and humble writer as an occasion to compose a book full of invectives and calumnies against the whole Mendicant Order, as

† St. Bonaventure is referring here to the attack of his main adversary, Gerard of Abbeville, against a friar, presumed to be Thomas of York, author of the work entitled: "The hand that is lifted against the Almighty." Cf. footnotes to Prologue, ¶ 2; ch. I, ¶ 3; and ch. VI, ¶ 1.

‡ Cf. ch. III, ¶ 20, ad finem.

*Est. 3:6** if to this man of pride it had seemed too little *to lay . . . upon Mardochai alone* the *hands* of his speech. The detractions of this pamphlet show that its author was prompted, not by zeal for God, but by the goading of the one by *Wis. 2:24* whose *envy . . . death entered the world.*

4. Anyway, in order to throw confusion over all the *cf. Gn. 11:1ff.* states of the Church, this son of the confusion of Babel attempts with all his might to prove that the profession of poverty leads to no special level of perfection, and in fact makes no difference whatsoever. After a few irrelevant statements, he continues: "In what, therefore, do you glory against the ministers of the Church? For these men, to whom is conceded the use, and not the ownership, of the Lord's possessions, are not endowed with private goods any more than you are. On the other hand, they are all the more blessed and to be preferred because they use things that are under eternal dominion, while your goods are under the power of earthly masters." Such are this man's words by which he confuses and perverts everything to such a point that no degree of perfection is left in poverty; or, if any remains, it is in the state of the clerics who abound in ecclesiastic revenues, a state which must be preferred to that of any of the poor, or of any of those who, for the love of Christ, do not wish to possess anything at all. The pretext is that the goods of the former are heavenly and owned by eternal dominion, while those of the latter are but earthly: as if Christ, the Lord of the Universe, were not the Master of things owned by laymen, and the Church had no true dominion over temporal things, the opposite of which has been demonstrated earlier.† This man falsely suspects the

† Cf. ch. X, ¶¶ 9ff.

poverty of Mother Church herself, and actually attacks her power.

Finally, if it is true that the Church, together with its ministers, has no true dominion over things but only the right to use them, why the later calumny against the profession of those poor who claim to have no dominion over things, even though they do have the right to use them? This man says that such a position appears ridiculous to anyone, since, as regards those things that are entirely consummated through their use, people make no distinction between this use and the use of dominion. And later he ironically asks: "Anyway, whose are these riches that you ceaselessly beg from the wealthy and gather throughout the provinces if you do not possess anything in common?"

5. In order to silence these and other malicious and deceitful sophisms, we should understand that since four things are to be considered in temporal goods — ownership, possession, usufruct, and simple use — and since the life of mortals is possible without the first three but necessarily requires the fourth, no profession may ever be made that renounces entirely the simple use of temporal goods. But that profession which implies the willful vow to follow Christ to the extremities of poverty most fittingly calls for renouncement to dominion over anything whatsoever, and must be content with the limited use of things belonging to others and conceded to it. Thus it is said in the very rules: "Let the Friars appropriate nothing for themselves, neither house nor land nor anything."[2]

6. Now lest anyone believe that the ownership forbidden in these terms does not concern the collectivity but only private individuals, let him listen to what Gregory IX answers on this subject to a question of the Friars: "We declare,"

he says, "that they may have ownership neither in common nor in private, but that the Order must have the use of utensils, books, and other things permitted to it, and that the Friars may use such things by permission of the Ministers General and Provincial. Nor are they to sell appurtenances, or to exchange or alienate them outside of the Order in any way whatsoever, unless the Cardinal of the Roman Church who, at the time, is the Protector of the Order, has given either authority or permission in this regard to the Ministers General or Provincial."[3] These are the words of the Papal Rescript in which the pious and wise Pontiff makes a distinction between ownership and use, retaining the former for himself and for the Church, while conceding the latter because of the Friars' needs, in a manner truly holy, wise, and kind. If, indeed, as it appears clearly in the third answer,† there is not the slightest loss of perfection in the case of prelates who possess and distribute temporal goods in the name of others, the perfection of the Supreme Pontiff is safeguarded in a much greater manner, and there is added to him some merit before God, when he does the same for the sake of extending his protection, and without expecting any temporal reward.

7. But if perchance someone tries to oppose this reasoning by claiming that there is a warning in civil law[4] that use cannot be separated perpetually from dominion, we will answer that this principle of civil law has no application here, since the law pronounces such a decree lest dominion become useless, and hence be nothing but an empty word. Now, to retain this kind of dominion over things while the use of such things is conceded to the poor is not useless,

† Cf. ch. VIII, ¶¶ 21f.

since it is meritorious for the Father of the poor, and opportune for the profession of the sons who are serving Christ.

Neither is there any obstacle in the fact objected by our adversary that, in the case of things consumed through their use, dominion is not distinct from use: the same occurs, for instance, when a son receives from his father a sum of money, and makes use of it, without having dominion over it for a single instant.[5] The same is to be understood of the Order of the poor in its relationship with the Roman Church. It is true that all the faithful of Christ are by common law the sons of the Supreme Pontiff, but the Friars are subject to obedience toward him and committed to his care through a certain special right. Hence while others may be compared to emancipated sons to whom, through the power



of the rights granted to them, it is permitted to dispose of ecclesiastic goods as long as they do not dilapidate them, the Friars are like the little ones and the sons of the family entirely subject to the rule of the Supreme Pontiff. As the law cautions "that the sons of the family may not be seen to retain or recuperate the possession of any object in particular,"[6] but that the father be seen as acting through them, so also in the case of the Mendicants we must understand that the dominion over

the things they receive for their sustainment is delegated to the Father of the Poor, while their use is conceded to them.

8. Certainly, as essential as it is to any religious state that no individual possess anything in proper,[7] so is it to the whole Mendicant Order, which is considered a single person as regards abdication of property. And so, in the measure in which a monk or any religious makes use of clothing, shoes, food, or of any other thing that is consumed through its use, he does so without appropriating anything, nor does he become its owner, for ownership is always reserved to the community. This is also how things must be understood by anyone who wishes to have an opinion both true and kind concerning the community of this manner of poor, and their relationship with the Pope. And, therefore, as the gift of an object to a monk, whatever the intention of the giver may be, does not transfer the dominion to him but to the whole community and submits it to the dispositive authority of the abbot, even if the giver had nothing in mind concerning the community, so also whatever is given to the brotherhood of the Friars Minor passes under the law, dominion, and ownership of the Supreme Pontiff and of the Roman Church, particularly since the Friars have no intention whatsoever of acquiring for themselves a right to the ownership of any object.

9. What has been exposed is further supported by a command of natural law clearly developed through the civil laws. For there exists a legal warning that freedom cannot be acquired by a man who does not want it,[8] that "a benefit is not conferred upon a man who is unwilling to receive it," and that no one is bound to receive a donation or accept an inheritance, either at a profit or at a loss. Furthermore, since a sum total of things, for instance an inheritance, is

acquired through the sole acquiescing of the will, so also nothing more is required for its rejection than a contrary intention;[9] and as by means of a mere act of the will a stranger becomes an heir, so also by means of the opposite disposition he is immediately cut off from the inheritance. For this reason the jurisconsult Julian says: "To act as an heir is not so much a matter of fact as a matter of intention."[10] And another, the jurisconsult Paul, agrees with him when he says: "A madman and a minor cannot begin to own without the authorization of a tutor, for they lack the disposition to possess, even though they may be in physical contact with the object, as would also be the case if something were placed in the hand of a man asleep."[11] Thus through these express dispositions of the law it is clear that no one may acquire property, dominion, or even possession unless he actually or interpretatively intends to acquire it. But since the Friars Minor have no intention to acquire, but the very opposite intention, they obtain neither dominion nor possession even though they may be in physical contact with certain objects, and they cannot be called owners or masters of these objects.

10. Such is confirmed by Papal authority, an authority so eminent that it transcends all human power, and that in the Decretals "Extra," in the article "On Customs related to Precedence and Obedience," it is said: "For the enhancing of heaven, that is, for the universal Church, *God made the two great lights,* that is, He instituted the two dignities: the pontifical authority and the imperial power. But the light that presides over the days, that is, over spiritual matters, is the greater; and that which presides over the nights, that is, over matters of the flesh, is the lesser; thus as great a difference as there exists between the moon and the sun

Gn. 1:16

may be recognized as existing between kings and pontiffs."[12] While the imperial power has so much authority that it is not limited by law,† but is the very origin of law,—so great a power, in fact, that it can declare that actual events are to be considered as not having happened, as may be seen in the "Law of Homecoming" (*Postliminium*) by which a formerly enslaved prisoner of war is declared, upon his return home, to have been free and present at all times;[13] and that things that did not happen are to be considered as having happened, as may be seen in the Codex in the article on the "Undutiful Will"‡ wherein although no reference is made to a child born after his father's death, yet such reference is assumed to have been made[14]—if, I mean, the power of a king is so great, much greater is the authority of a pontiff. Although, from the viewpoint of civil law, use and dominion as regards any object may be considered as one, the pontifical authority may decree that in certain persons they are separate. And, with the power of his authority, the Vicar of Christ has in fact decreed that this was the case with the Order of the said Friars,†† and to go against such a decision is never permitted. For Gregory says in the nineteenth distinction: "It is not good for anyone either to desire or dare to transgress the commands of the Apostolic See . . . : may the man who has chosen to oppose its decrees be humbled with the pain of his own downfall."[15]

11. There is nothing, either in civil or canon law, that anyone could adduce to attack this state of poverty. For

† Cf. footnote p. 234.

‡ The "*Testamentum Inofficiosum*" is a will in which the testator neglects his nearest relatives.

†† Cf. ¶ 6.

in the Decretals "Extra," article "On Election," it is said: "No councils have the power to impose a law upon the Roman Church, since it is through the authority of the Roman Church that all councils are called and receive their power, and since, in the statutes of such councils, it is clearly the authority of the Church that is perceived."[16] And no decisions from earlier pontiffs may oppose such a fact, as Innocent III states in the Decretals "Extra," article "On Election," beginning with the word "Innotuit": "No power was taken away from Us by Our predecessor, since this was not the intention of the one who established the prohibition, for in such matters he was quite unable to give rise to a precedent that would bind his successors and equals who were to receive the same power,[17] since equals have no authority over one another."[18]†

What has been said is enough to refute the sophisms of malicious men: for as regards the testimony of truth, sufficient are the example and the counsel of the supreme Legislator, Christ, *the Sun of Justice*, who, since He is the original source of natural, civil, canon, and divine law, sanctioned with His sacred word the principle that it was fitting for the perfect to renounce dominion over temporal things, but also conceded, promised, and provided sufficiency as regards their use. Furthermore, in order to confirm by

*Mal. 4:2**

† This whole paragraph, containing quotations from the Decretals, is a legalistic interpretation of the autocracy of Romanism — identifying the Church with the central power of the Pope and his court — which is being strongly opposed at present by the proponents of the progressive notion that the Church consists in the assembly of the faithful, and that its authority resides, not in the Pope alone, but in the Pope and the bishops — i. e., the principle of collegiality. It is easy to understand why the Roman administration, fed on such traditions as expressed in the Decretals, would put up a hard fight against any aggiornamento.

example what he had taught by word, He chose to be sustained with food that belonged to another, as the story of the Gospel recounts, as Jerome points out to Nepotianus, and as evidently appears from the preceding answer.†

12. Now, concerning dominion over money that is given for the sustaining of the said Friars, undoubtedly we should hold that it belongs not at all to their community, for their Rule prescribes that "no Friar may, in any way at all, either directly or through an interposed person . . . receive coin or money."[19] And in order to remove every occasion of calumny, we should understand that an interposed person to whom money is entrusted to be spent may have received the power to collect it and to hold it by authority either of the giver or of those for the care of whom it has been given. If the interposed person holds it and spends it by authority of the giver, he is the proxy or agent of the giver, and the giver may claim and receive this money in return, and bring about a lawsuit against him to obtain this restitution; but not so the one in whose favor the money was given to be spent. And so the mendicant poor should not and could not be forbidden to have their needs taken care of by an interposed person, because it is perfectly absurd to assume that a rich man would not be free to make alms as he wished, either personally or by delegation. Now if money is held by authority of the one in favor of whom it is to be spent, it is to him that prosecution befalls together with the doing of the other things implied by the power of a man who claims for himself true dominion over an object; and since this is quite incompatible with the profession of the Friars, Blessed Francis expressly forbade it because in fact,

† Cf. ch. VII, ¶¶ 6-8.

so far as the ownership of an object is concerned, it makes no difference whether a man receives it in this case through his own hand or through that of another.

13. This distinction is at the same time indicated by natural reason, imposed by written law, and declared by papal rescript. Since important consequences derive from the fact that a man who serves another happens to be either his slave, or the servant of some higher personage by whose will and command this service is provided, as there is distinction between servile and liberal service, and between the service of men and that of angels, so also there is a great difference when the interposed agent takes the place either of the giver or of the receiver.

There is likewise a great difference in civil law, in the case of a debtor who entrusts the amount of his debt to an interposed person, when this person is the representative either of the debtor or of the creditor: if he is a representative of the creditor, and the money is lost before payment, it is lost to the creditor and is considered as having been paid; but if he is the representative of the debtor, it is lost to him, and is still to be paid, for it is not considered as having been acquitted.[20]

And so the Lord Gregory IX, a man extremely well versed in law both human and divine, and intimately aware of the spirit of blessed Francis, gave this definitive answer: "If the Friars desire to buy something they need, or to make payment for something they have acquired, they are permitted to present to anyone who is willing to make alms to them either a representative of the one from whom the object was purchased, or any other man who thus presented by the Friars is not their delegate, but the delegate of the one by whose command the payment is to be made, or of

the one who is to receive the payment; and this delegate is entitled, as would be the owner of the money, to deposit into the hands of a spiritual or close friend of the Friars the alms entrusted to him, so that such alms may be spent by this friend as it seems fit, at the time and place best suited to the Friars' needs."[21]

From this it appears clearly that the Rule of the Friars Minor is not in disharmony with their way of life, nor their way of common life with the Rule. For they never profess that no one is to provide for them, or to make alms personally or through an interposed person, since this would be impossible and foolish for a community of mendicant poor: they merely profess that, in the manner handed down through the Gospel by evangelical men, they possess no money whatsoever.

14. And if anyone happens to object that there is absolutely no holiness in the lack of money, he is not only calumniating the Rule of the Mendicants, but even more so the Gospel of Christ, in which money was actually forbidden to the apostles, as the text expressly states, and the saints construe in their writings.† And so we should not believe in any way whatsoever that such a proposition was made to the most perfect men by the Master of Truth without His knowing that through it there would accrue to them the merit of perfect virtue and of outstanding holiness. Since, indeed, it is very hard to travel through unknown regions and desert lands without sufficient resources, and since these men must necessarily go through life *in hunger and thirst, . . . in cold and nakedness,* if no increase in merit or holiness were to come from this manner of life,

cf. Mt. 10:9
Mk. 6:8
Lk. 9:3

2 Cor. 11:27

† Cf. ch. VII, ¶¶ 9-12.

to teach, profess, or practice it would be nothing less than insanity.

15. But instead, as it appears from the last point of the preceding answer,† there are twelve reasons of the greatest and most wonderful value for the penurious poverty imposed upon the first twelve apostles, and these reasons are represented by the twelve gems of the ephod. And because this enemy of the poor ignored them, treading like a swine upon such pearls, he bursts out with these blasphemous words from his polluted lips: "Had blessed Francis believed that holiness consisted in the lack of money, or in abstention from it, or had he asserted that the Lord forbade money to the perfect, before the Lord, I dare to say that he was mistaken."—But it is a fact that blessed Francis forbade the possession or contact of money to his imitators for no other reason than that he believed with pious conviction and knew with certain truth that there was some sanctity in this abstention: not that money would be evil, or that wealth would be formally or causally culpable,[22] or that money could not be owned or touched without sin, but because, of all the things to be possessed, money is the most alluring, the most easily attractive and distracting, not only for the imperfect but also for the perfect; and because he perceived, under the dictation of the Holy Spirit, that sanctity consists not only in the avoidance of sin, but also in the flight from occasions of sin. Thus he rightly believed that there was holiness in this abstention, and he was not mistaken. And so, when a man asserts that this foremost imitator of Christ, signed with His stigmata, inscribed in the roster of the saints, and accepted with veneration by the

† Cf. ch. IX, ¶¶ 13ff.

universal Church, has actually fallen into error, particularly as regards the profession and practice of evangelical life, he is attacking not only blessed Francis, but truly also the universal Church; and, which is more, he is also blaspheming against the teachings and life of the Master of Truth and of His disciples.

cf. Est. 3:6ff. Furthermore, as another Aman filled with the greatest pride, he even esteems that those who profess the rule are worthy of a sentence of death in time, and of damnation in eternity, as being approbators of error. As for this last absurdity which pious ears strongly abhor, we believe that the supporters of holy poverty should rather weep than *cf. ibid. 4:1ff.* speak, rather beg for the assistance of a spiritual Esther than indulge in a battle of words.

16. It is upon thee, O most holy Roman Church, like another Esther lifted up among nations as the mother of all churches, as their queen and teacher to propose and defend the truths of both morals and faith, it is upon thee that the mass of the Mendicants now trustingly call, so that those thou hast borne as a mother thou mayest now raise as a nurse, and also powerfully and justly defend as a queen, since for this purpose, through divine disposition, thou hast deserved to attain the supreme summit of pontifical and royal dignity, in order that thou mayest, in such straits, prepare the defense needed for the protection of Christ's *Ps. 73:22* people. *Arise,* therefore, Holy Mother, and *defend your cause,* for if this Order of Mendicant Friars Minor properly professes the truth of the Gospel, it concerns thee; and if in their profession they deviate from the truth thou hast sanctioned, it also concerns thee. If an error is imputed to such a holy profession, it is thou, who hast sanctioned it, who art accused of error. Thou, who hast stood out so long as

the teacher of truth, art now denounced as a proponent of error, and mocked by some presumptuous modern minds as being ignorant of divine and human right.

17. But thou, O most worthy Queen of the World,† defender of the poor and advocate of the humble, much more sublime than Esther in thine exaltation before the nations and in thy preparation throughout the times, be aroused by the cry of thy Mardochai, that is, Francis, so that thou mayest appeal to the King in order that, through thy sacred examples and merits, he may glorify and support the state of the Mendicants, which He desired to conform to thine own and unite with thee with special closeness. What, indeed, gives more fuel to the love of poverty, what more clearly declares its prerogatives and glory than thy manner of life, O most blessed Virgin and Mother of our Lord Jesus Christ, whose poverty was so deep that, as witnessed by the sacred narrative of the Gospel, in the very act of the most holy childbearing, thou didst have no place to lay down the God of Heaven and Lord of Hosts but a public road for travelers and a manger for beasts? And so, if thou, O most holy Virgin, art the exemplar of all perfection, as thy virginity is to be imitated by the perfect together with thy humility,[23] so also is thy deep poverty. It is a fact, based on the strength both of the Gospel and of the declarations of Doctors, that thou hast lived in extreme want of temporal goods, since Chrysostom says that thou didst possess but one poor garment, not an ornament for beauty, but a covering against nakedness;[24] and Bede, that in offering and presenting the King of kings to the Temple, thou couldst not even afford to give a single small lamb, and hence, in

cf. Lk. 2:7

cf. ibid.

† Preceding paragraph was addressed to Mother Church. The author is now addressing the Mother of God.

Lk. 2:24 the manner of the poor, thou gavest but *a pair of turtle-doves or two young pigeons.*[25] Those who, through their desire and their profession, through the outward sign of dress and truthful observance, make constant effort to conform to thee through poverty, really belong to thee: they *cf. Rom. 2:28* are the spiritual Jews whose circumcision is not in the flesh *cf. Phil. 3:3ff.* but in the spirit, and consists in joyfully bearing a multiple want, and completely renouncing all temporal good. Deign, O Queen of Mercy, especially and kindly to favor these, thine own; to protect them powerfully against the assaults of the enemy; and to lead a triumphant battle against this man, their worst enemy: not that, like Aman, he should die by hanging, but that his pride may be lowered, his error condemned, his intelligence enlightened, his will straight- *cf. 1 Cor. 5:5* ened, and his spirit saved.

CHAPTER XII

Third Point of the Fourth Answer, in Which the Gospel-Teaching of the Mendicants Is Shown to Yield Many Fruits and Their State Is Defended against Several Malicious Comments



REPARING snares for the offspring of Holy Mother Church with the malice of a manifold craftiness, the Ancient Serpent is attempting in these recent times to renew the old impiety of Pharaoh. By means of a certain man, filled with the wickedness of Egyptian deceit, he is busily suggesting, as a measure against the posterity of the Church, that all the boys be thrown into the river, but that the girls be spared.† What else, indeed, is this man doing when he attacks with his calumnies the reasons that lead to the virile spirit of holy poverty? Is he not strengthening by his approval the imaginations of effeminate hearts by recommending an affluence of softening riches? With this double purpose in mind, the calumniator of the poor concentrates all the power of his intellect upon this final section of his book. With the intent of oppressing the poor of Christ, he is tying anew and with greater frequency certain knots of sophistry, most of which have been untangled in earlier chapters [of our work]. After having extinguished the spirit of poverty, he is preventing the multiplication of

cf. Gn. 3:1; Ap. 12:4

cf. Ex. 1:22

† A classical sign of the Medieval contempt for women!

spiritual Israelites. But vain are his efforts. With the assistance of divine mercy, and in order that the event conform to the figure, the more the spiritual Israelites were oppressed, the more they increased in number.

cf. ibid. 12

2. And lest anyone take this lightly as a mere invention of ours, let him listen to Bernard who says in his Twenty-fourth Sermon: "If anyone resists, if anyone opposes whatever pertains to salvation or comes forth from religion, he is clearly attempting, with the Egyptians, to kill the young boys of the Israelite race; even more, with Herod, he is persecuting the Saviour at the time of His birth."[1] We must believe that it is not at all by chance, but by an act of divine Providence that—like Joseph, going down into Egypt for the sake of storing and distributing material food, a truly growing son whom God made to increase in the land of his poverty—men in the state of the gospel-preaching poor are sent out into the world for the sake of preserving and dispensing the teachings of the Scriptures as a spiritual food; and that in all matters related to the salvation of souls they stand out as assistants of the priests of Christ in charge of the flock.

cf. Gn. 37:28; ibid. 41:47ff; ibid. 49:22

3. The principal function of the priestly office is to lead back to God those under its authority by means of a sevenfold hierarchical action,[2] that is, by instructing in matters of faith, developing virtues, giving examples, interceding through prayers, healing injuries inflicted by enemies, warning against imminent dangers, and repealing actual assaults. In actual fact, the Scriptures reveal this sevenfold sacerdotal function by making use of a sevenfold metaphor, that is, by means of the examples of the builder, the gardener, the shepherd, the trustee, the physician, the watchman, and the leader.

First, by the example of the BUILDER, the Scriptures describe the priestly office in its function of instructing in matters of faith, as indicated in this passage from the Epistle to the Corinthians: *As a wise builder, I laid the foundations;* for the stones in a building correspond to the articles of faith in a soul in which Christ dwells as in His temple, according to these words of the Apostle to the Ephesians: *You are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets with Christ Jesus Himself as the chief corner stone. In Him the whole structure is closely fitted together and grows into a temple holy in the Lord;* and a little later: *To have Christ dwelling through faith in your hearts.* Thus, as the builder is related to the building, so is the priest to the people as regards their establishment and promotion in the truth of faith.

1 Cor. 3:10

Eph. 2:20-21

ibid. 3:17

Second, by the example of the GARDENER, as regards the function of developing virtues, which the priest is to irrigate through the teaching of the Scriptures, according to the words of the Apostle to the Corinthians: *I have planted, Apollos watered.* If, indeed, the people of the Church are a garden and a paradise planted and thriving with many virtues, one who keeps the people informed as to the principles of ethics is rightly called a gardener; and he is represented by the first man, whom *the Lord God . . . placed in the garden of Eden to till and to keep it.*

1 Cor. 3:6

Gn. 2:15

4. Third, by the example of the SHEPHERD, as regards the function of giving examples, according to these words of the Lord in the Gospel of John: *He who enters by the door is shepherd of the sheep. . . . And when he has let out his own sheep, he goes before them;* and this, indeed, the priest does when he goes before the people with the example of his holiness. Thus Peter, to whom the Lord had said: *"Feed*

Jn. 10:2, 4

ibid. 21:17

my sheep," exhorts the elders or priests to feed the people
1 Pt. 5:3 entrusted to them, *becoming from the heart a pattern to the flock.* And, according to the teaching of the saints,† this is the pattern: the more excellent the pastor compared to the flock, the holier his priestly life, the more exalted will be the life of the people.[3]

Fourth, by the example of the TRUSTEE, as regards the function of interceding through prayers to God, according
Heb. 5:1 to these words of the Apostle to the Hebrews: *For every high priest taken from among men is appointed for men in the things pertaining to God, that he may offer gifts and sacrifices for sins.* The priest, indeed, pleads the cause of men before God; he must also plead the cause of God before the men entrusted to his care, according to this pas-
*3 Kgs. 20:39** sage from the Third Book of Kings: *Keep this man, and if he shall slip away, thy life shall be for his life.* For this
Prv. 6:1 reason the Wise Man says in the Proverbs: *My son, if you have become surety to your neighbor,* you have given your life *in pledge to another.*[4]

5. Fifth, by the example of the PHYSICIAN, as regards the function of healing the injuries received from enemies, according to this passage that Luke inserts in the parable
Lk. 10:34 of the man who fell in with robbers: the Samaritan *bound up his wounds, pouring on oil and wine.* The Samaritan represents Christ the supreme Healer and those who hold His place in the cleansing of vices.[5] That is why James also
Jas. 5:14-15 says: *Is any one among you sick? Let him bring in the presbyters of the Church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil. . . . And the prayer of faith will save the sick man, . . . and if he be in sins, they shall be forgiven him.*

† Cf. ch. III, ¶¶ 23ff.

Sixth, by the example of the WATCHMAN, as regards the function of warning against imminent danger, according to this passage from Ezechiel: *Son of man, I have made thee a watchman to the house of Israel;* and on this same subject, Ezechiel adds: *And if the watchman see the sword coming,* that is, the sign of imminent temptations, *and sound not the trumpet* for those entrusted to his care, their blood shall be required at his hand.

*Ez. 3:17**
*ibid. 33:6**
ibid.

Seventh, by the example of the LEADER who bears the standard, as regards the function of repealing actual assaults, in the manner of the noble Machabeus who *put on a breastplate as a giant and girt his warlike armor about him in battles and protected the camp with his sword.* For, indeed, at the head is the Church, *as awe-inspiring as bannered troops,* and it is in charge of the defense of Solomon's litter, *which sixty valiant men surround, of the valiant men of Israel: all of them expert with the sword, skilled in battle.*

*1 Mc 3:3**
Ct. 6:4
ibid. 3:7-8

Hence, the function of the priestly office is sevenfold, as it was said to be.

6. If, therefore, the Christian people have already been made to resemble a building in ruins, as happens because of the great number of those who wander away from the faith, would any builder discard the men who, together with him, are erecting and supporting its structure, unless he believes himself to be so wise as to be self-sufficient — or is in fact so foolish as to want the edifice of the Church to fall apart under his hand?

In like manner, if the people are compared to an uncultivated, thorny, and arid garden, as happens because of the lack of wisdom or virtue in the men who compose it, would any diligent and hard-working gardener reject the servants who labor with him, particularly those who offer their

deeds and teachings, unless he is insane enough to want
*Is. 32:13** *thorns and briars to come up* on his land?

Furthermore, if the majority of the Christian people are like a flock, wandering and lost, established in the midst of wolves, as happens because they stray away from the paths of the divine laws, would any merciful shepherd cast out those who were leading back his sheep upon the road? Would he not rejoice instead with the angels, at the exam-
Lk. 15:6 ple of the Good Shepherd who said: *"Rejoice with me, because I have found my sheep that was lost"?*

And if the Christian people are similar to men oppressed
cf. 1 Kgs. 22:2 by debts, as happens because of the manifold guilt of their transgressions of God's commands, would any sensible man who is a surety for another be appalled by the idea of easing this load through an increase of intercessions with God, in order partly to beg remission, and partly to obtain means and assistance to pay off the spiritual dues?

Again, if there prevails such a spiritual plague and pesti-
*Is. 1:5** lence that almost *the whole head is sick, and the whole*
*ibid. 6** *heart is sad,* so that *from the sole of the foot unto the top of the head there is* almost *no soundness therein,* as happens because of the variety of perversions among these people, would any faithful physician dare to cast out not only the men well versed in the art of spiritual healing, but even the
cf. Lk. 16:21 dogs that would be licking the wounds, unless he wanted to extinguish the lives of the wounded and the languishing?

Or if the snares of cruel enemies were set all around, and swords were almost vibrating over the heads of the citizens, as happens because of the multiplicity of temptations, would any provident watchman, in the most terrifying darkness of a deep and horrible night, refuse to have others with him to guard the camp?

Finally, if there is in the camp of the faithful an almost continual upheaval, and if the dragon, together with the many-headed beast, is attempting to besiege the forces of the Church in order ferociously to mangle, kill, and devour it, as happens because of the frequency of scandals, the perpetration of crimes, and the despotic rule of tyrants, would any prudent leader of the army of the Lord refuse to have the assistance of those who fight the common fight, who go so far as to expose themselves with them to any kind of risk, and to offer their very persons as *a wall for the house of Israel?*

cf. Ap. 13:1

*Ez. 13:5**

7. And so, because the disposition of the pontiff or priest toward the people is to be the same as that of a father toward his son, of a mother toward her offspring, or of a nurse toward an infant, as the Apostle manifestly declares—for when he speaks of those he converted to the faith, he says in one instance that he has engendered them in Christ, in another, that he has given birth to them, and in yet another, that he has fed with milk the little ones in Christ—and because it is not irksome at all, but desirable, sweet, and pleasing for a father, mother, or nurse, to sustain a little son who has nothing, to foster a weak child, or to give milk to a crying babe, so also for all holy and pious priests it must be a great consolation every time they bring salvation to the multitude of their subjects. For this reason, in the Gospel of Matthew, the Lord says to the apostles and to their successors: *"The harvest indeed is great, but the laborers are few. Pray therefore the Lord of the harvest to send forth laborers into His harvest,"* suggesting that good priests should not only bear patiently with their assistants, but ardently desire coevangelists to reap the multitude of the divine harvest.

cf. 1 Cor. 4:15
cf. Gal. 4:19
cf. 1 Cor. 3:2
cf. Heb. 5:12ff.

Mt 9:37-38

8. Taking heed of this, the Vicar of Christ and Successor of Peter,† inspired by the light of the Holy Spirit, accepted with joy as a gift from heaven this state of the gospel-preaching Mendicants who were to take care of the salvation of souls.[6] He favored it with his kindness, strengthened it with his authority, defended it with his power, and blessed it many times, as did the Patriarch Jacob with the sons to be born to Joseph. Thus he carefully provided for the salvation of souls, and, without prejudice to the authority of the Popes,‡ he adorned the hierarchy of the Church without disorganizing it. For such was the scarcity of preachers at the time of the advent of these Mendicants that a passage from the Gospel seemed to have been fulfilled: *The harvest indeed is great, but the laborers are few.* Speaking of this, Gregory says: "Behold, the world is full of priests, and yet seldom is a laborer to be found in God's harvest. For even though many hear the good words, few are those who pronounce them, for we may have received the priestly office, but we do not fulfill its tasks."[7]

cf. Gn. 49:22ff.

Mt. 9:37

9. Chrysostom clearly shows how much the task of preaching is necessary to the Church, pious in itself, and acceptable to God, when, in his Twenty-seventh Homily on Matthew, he comments on these words of the Lord to the disciple who wished to bury his father: *"Let the dead bury their dead, but do thou go and proclaim the kingdom of God."* He says here: "Was it not ingratitude of nature not to be present at his father's burial? Yet, Christ forbade it in order to show that nothing should be given priority over heavenly concerns, and that heavenly things should not be

cf. Mt. 8:22

Lk. 9:60

† Innocent III, and later Honorius III. Cf. ch. VIII, ¶ 19.

‡ Cf. ch. XI, ¶ 11.

put off even for a little while, however unavoidable or compelling the reasons to postpone them."[8] Now, since to bury one's father is an important work of piety, and since, according to the rule of divine justice, a lesser good cannot be preferred to a greater one, it remains that to preach the word of salvation pertains to a higher piety than to perform a corporal work of mercy, however important it may be,[9] because, through the preaching of the word of salvation, the soul that is made to the image of God is spiritually fed, and given to drink, and clothed, and sheltered, and raised from its weakness, and delivered from its shackles and from death. If, then, it is a grievous crime to prevent anyone from performing corporal works of piety and mercy, *cf. Mt. 25:35ff.* it is an act of much greater impiety and perfidy to throw obstacles in the way of worthy ministers of the divine word. Considering the services and needs related to the many aspects of the salvation of souls, the great number of indigents, and the scarcity of able ministers, no one should deem it damageable or superfluous if it pleased the heavenly hierarchy to choose for the priestly office men not bound by compulsion but induced by love whom the sub-heavenly hierarchy should have the desire and duty to approve.[10]

10. And if any man happens to feel that it is quite incompatible with the order of hierarchical dispositions that those who profess the monastic life assume the task of teaching—under the pretext that Dionysius says that, in the hierarchy of the Church, monks do not have the state of those who make perfect, but of those who are to be perfected;[11] that Jerome himself says that "monks have the office of weeping, not of teaching";[12] and that, according to the decrees of the holy canons, monks, being intended for solitary life by the very meaning of their name,[13] should be

concerned with their own salvation, and not with that of others—let this man understand that such sayings of the Fathers and of the Canons concerning monastic life were issued at a time when in the monastic state there were laymen, quite unlearned, and neither priestly nor literate. While this same well-ordered man [Dionysius] teaches that "it pertains to monks to be cleansed, enlightened, and perfected,"[14] he never witholds the fact that "to cleanse, enlighten, and perfect pertains to the priestly order."[15]

Furthermore, the profession of this manner of poor is different in no small measure from the profession of monks, and, more important still, they do not perform these hierarchizing operations† on their own authority, but on that of the ordinaries, and most of all, on that of the Sovereign Pontiff whose dispositive power transcends all positive right.‡

11. It is not by a decision of their own will that they are led to such operations, but by order of their superiors through whom they are instituted, ruled, chastised, and sent out on their way as true sons of obedience, not as Gyrovagues or Sarabaites,†† not in approximate and undetermined numbers, but in numbers certain and well known.[16] Would that many be worthy to be received, not only in one corner of the earth, but throughout the whole width of the universal Church! Certainly, the whole body of priests should desire this, and they should give any one who wishes to hinder such men the answer of Moses to Josue: *"Are you jealous for my sake? Would that all the people of the Lord were prophets! Would that the Lord might bestow His spirit on them all!"* And so, as long as this manner of poor

Nm. 11:29

† To cleanse, enlighten, and perfect.
‡ Cf. ch. XI, ¶¶ 10-11.
†† Vagabond monks, or monks without a rule.

obey the divine laws, follow the evangelical counsels as they promised to do, take care of the salvation of souls, and are humbly subject to holy Mother Church, if anyone claims that they should be expelled as false preachers, seductors, Gyrovagues, and as *they who make their way into houses,* he must fall under the indictment of a just condemnation as a despiser of the authority of the Church, as envious of the grace of his brother, and as an enemy of evangelical truth. *2 Tm. 3:6*

12. In order that the road to error may be closed in advance, we must answer some of the more obvious sophisms with which this calumniator of the poor attempts, in the last section of his work, to smear the life of the Mendicants: that is, as regards absence of manual labor, renouncement to common property, and the begging of alms. On the basis of what the Apostle, writing to the Thessalonians, commands to some men, that *they work quietly and eat their own bread,* and because these poor do not work manually, our adversary attempts to convict them of idle living, as if they had transgressed an apostolic command. And to this, we answer[17] that, as it appears from the text, the Apostle does not prescribe manual labor in a general manner for all men — since in such case all those who are not thus employed would be in a state of guilt, and the calumniator himself would be included among them — but he imposes manual labor upon some men who live in idleness, vain curiosity, and unrest, lest they provide themselves with food through the blandishments of flattery and shameful begging, while compromising their own salvation and impeding that of others. *2 Thes. 3:12*

13. Truly, these poor, who are intent upon the salvation of their own soul and of that of their neighbors through the sevenfold hierarchical operation explained

earlier,† cannot achieve such an end without the assistance of the Scriptures, a clear understanding of which is not attained outside of a wise zeal that consists in reading, meditating, praying, contemplating, listening, conversing, and preaching; thus the sevenfold operation that corresponds to such zeal properly belongs to them. And because the difficulty of that zeal requires the attention of the whole man—which is signified in Exodus in the passage where the Lord commands that the poles with which the Ark is to be carried are always to remain in the rings, a passage Gregory explains by saying that "those who are dedicated to the office of preaching should never cease to study the texts, for it is shameful for a man to seek to teach while he still has problems to solve"[18]—it follows that those who, even though they do not work with their hands, intently pursue this sevenfold zeal because it is loftier in itself, more difficult to the mind, more useful to the Church, and more necessary to the people, are worthy to be sustained by the Church according to this passage of Deuteronomy: *You shall not muzzle an ox when it is treading out grain.* The gloss on this reads: "Do not refuse supplies to the preacher, so that he may be free for prayer and preaching."[19] And another gloss on the same passage: "Those who are engaged in teaching are unable to provide for their own needs."[20]

cf. Ex. 25:15

Dt. 25:4

From all this it clearly remains that the zeal of wisdom and the watchfulness of preaching make up in full for the absence of manual labor.

14. Holy Ambrose, in his commentary of this passage from Luke: *"Mary has chosen the best part,"* concurs when he says: "Do not accuse and judge these men as being idle

Lk. 10:42

† Cf. ¶¶ 3ff.

when you see them studying wisdom: for the peace-loving Solomon took this wisdom unto himself, and lived with it."[21] Finally, the apostles did not deem it desirable that they *should forsake the word of God and serve at table.* And Jerome, in his prologue on Job, is also in accord with this opinion: "If I were to weave a wicker basket, or to intertwine the fibers of the palm in order to eat my bread in the sweat of my brow, and if I were mentally absorbed in this work of providing for my belly, no one would express ill will or would think of blaming me; yet now, because I follow the word of the Saviour and wish to work for imperishable food, I am called a deceiver."

Acts 6:2

cf. Gn. 3:19

cf. Jn. 6:27

To this matter also is related what Augustine says about the passage of the Psalm: *My eyes strain.* "He is not idle who studies nothing but the word of God; nor is the man who works on external things greater than another who endeavors to study the truth that offers itself to his knowledge: for this very wisdom is the greatest of works, and Mary who listened is preferred to Martha who served."[22]

Ps. 118:82

cf. Lk. 10:39ff.

Anselm also agrees when he says in his book "On Similitudes": "There are three classes of men: those who pray, those who farm, and those who defend, and God disposed them in this world for different functions: . . . the monks, in order that they may pray for others and nourish them with the milk of preaching; the farmers, in order that they and the others may live on their labor; and the soldiers, in order to defend both."[23] And so, if the work of monks is higher than that of farmers or soldiers, and if farmers and soldiers who fulfill their duties are justly entitled to a salary, much more so the monks who attend to God through their prayers, and condescend to their neighbors' needs through the office of preaching.

15. Neither is Augustine opposed to this in his work "On the Labor of Monks," where the holy doctor speaks principally of certain heretics called Euchites who claim that "it is not permissible to monks to do anything to sustain their life," and who thus improperly understand the Gospel of Christ; and where he proves their guilt by quoting the Apostle.[24] He is condemning at the same time those monks, mostly laymen with no concern for preaching or the salvation of souls, who refuse to work manually and who, while they had been poor working men in the world, believe that to be supported by others is not only their right, but even their due, now that they have professed the monastic life. Against such a thesis, Augustine says: "As far as I know, it is presumptuous on the part of these brothers to claim such a right. If they are teachers of the Gospel, I agree that they possess it; if they are ministers of the altar, or dispensators of the sacraments, or if at least they had owned in the world enough to support themselves easily without work, and had distributed it to the needy, their weakness would then have had to be acknowledged and supported."[25]

16. We may gather from these quotations that four categories of men justly and worthily deserve to be supported by others, even though they are able to work with their own hands: that is, those who sustain others, either by word or teaching, or by the viaticum of the altar, or by dispensing the divine sacraments, or by distributing their own possessions. Those who accomplish any one of these functions
cf. 1 Cor. 9:14 are worthy to live of the Gospel; those who accomplish several stand out as even more worthy of it; as for those who accomplish them all, that is, who preach, celebrate Mass, hear confessions, and despise temporal wealth, they are proven to be the most worthy of all. But as for those who

do none of these things, and yet are both strong and poor, those who are perhaps idle and fruitless, and may become a burden to the Church, in the opinion of Augustine, they are obliged to work, unless held excused by the fact that they serve and assist the men who fill the said conditions, and thus deserve to be sustained together with them according to the mysterious expression in Job where it is said that *the oxen were plowing and the asses grazing beside;*[26] and this opinion is understood to be confirmed by the law justly decreed by David, the powerful warrior, that *equal shall be the portion of him that went down to battle and of him that abode at the baggage.* If, then, some men, even quite ignorant and simple-minded, happen to be so devout in their prayers, so very strict in their way of life, and such a good example to the people that through this example alone they bear as much fruit as others would through both example and word, they are justified by the merit of their life even though they may fail to teach by word.

Jb. 1:14

*1 Kgs. 30:24**

17. Now if we have said this, it is not that we approve the idle or idleness, but rather that we believe idle men should be chastised and compelled to work. Since, however, the difficulty of spiritual study requires the whole man, since the body is weak, and experience in the practical arts is seldom available, it is hardly ever, if at all, that we will find a man who, like the Apostle Paul, is able efficiently to attend both to manual labor and to the sevenfold pursuit of wisdom.† Hence, to force into manual labor those who are capable of such studies is nothing else than to dispel wisdom, and, in the manner of the Philistines, to take away in advance from the sons of Israel the weapons of divine

cf. Acts 18:3 and 20:31; 1 Cor. 4:12; 1 Thes. 2:9; 2 Thes. 3:8

cf. 1 Kgs. 13:19

† Cf. ¶ 13.

eloquence; or, in the manner of Pharaoh, to prevent them from entering the religious life by violently oppressing them
Ex. 1:14 *with hard work in mortar and brick,* and the yoke of an unbearable servitude; or again, to force them out of this life,
ibid. 5:4 as indicated in Exodus by these words of Pharaoh: "*What do you mean . . . by taking the people away from their work? Off to your labor!*" The gloss of holy Ambrose says here: "Today, if Moses and Aaron, that is, the word of a prophet and of a priest, were to call the soul to serve God, to leave the world, to abandon everything and to attend to the law and to the word of God, you would soon hear the friends of Pharaoh saying all together: 'Behold how men are being seduced, how youths are perverted so as not to work or join the armed forces or do anything that would be good for them: instead they become the devotees of senseless teachings and of idleness; they refuse to work, and seek occasions to do nothing.' "[27] Thus far the gloss by which the enemy of the poor stands clearly convicted of fraud, since he does not attempt, as a disciple of Christ, to raise men to the practice of virtue, but tries, as a friend of Pharaoh, to attack the spiritual sons of Israel.

18. There is yet another manner in which this calumniator of the Mendicants attempts to belittle their way of life: from the fact that they keep nothing in private or common property, for "they do not appear to be keeping to the middle way of virtue, but to the extreme of viciousness, since Ambrose says that riches are not to be dilapidated, but properly managed."[28] In fact, by using the same argument, we could demonstrate that holy virginity is worthy not of praise but of blame since it excludes all intercourse, both illicit and legitimate, both in the spirit and in the flesh. And so anyone who diligently considers this question will

notice that as there is a difference between the middle way of conjugal chastity and that of virginal holiness, so also there is a difference between the middle way of liberality in public office and that of evangelical poverty.

19. For liberality in public office,[29] because it is concerned with the business of the world, never prompts a man toward the renouncement of terrestrial possessions as counseled by Christ, but rather to a moderate love of the goods justly possessed, and to a kind and generous spending of them. Concerning the moderation of this love, Solomon, speaking as a man in public office, says in Proverbs: *Two things I ask of you, deny them not to me . . . give me neither poverty nor riches; provide me only with the food I need.* By these words he desired to show that virtue in a public office consists in remaining in the middle way, and in avoiding extremes. Concerning the proper attitude toward money, and speaking in the character of the leader of the Church, Ecclesiastes says: *Wisdom with riches is more profitable and bringeth more advantage to them that see the sun.* This has been said because even though a wise shepheld may usefully feed his flock by edifying it through deed and word in the absence of any wealth, he more effectively feeds it when, by a proper use of riches, he provides for it through deed, word, and temporal assistance. And this is what the Canon says: "It is fitting that the Church possess riches."[30] Therefore, Ecclesiastes says, a little before the quoted passage: *Do not say: How is it that former times were better than these? For it is not in wisdom that you ask about this.* Here he is opposing the folly of the heretics who approved the state of the Church while it had not yet been endowed by princes, but reproved it after it had received wealth from them. To these heretics he replies that *wisdom with riches*

Prv. 30:7, 8

*Eccl. 7:12**

ibid. 10

*Eccl. 7:12**

is more profitable, that is, more fitting for the public estate of holy Mother Church, because of the various conditions, weaknesses, and requirements of the many different faithful of Christ gathered within the unity of this same Church,
cf. Gn. 7:8f. like the different animals in Noah's Ark. Even a prelate, displaying a solicitous care for the faithful, and providing for them as much food as required in view of the time and place, must conform to the rule of public distribution by observing moderation in this spending. Hence, in the [acts of the] council of Agde, prelates are forbidden to alienate the goods of the Church that were placed at their disposal: they are permitted the middle way of a moderate spending, but not the extreme of dilapidation.[31]

20. Now, evangelical poverty — because it lifts the spirit
cf. Mt. 6:20 toward eternal things, as does that poverty which lays up all its treasures in heaven — leads the one who practices it perfectly to the notion that he should strip himself entirely of all temporal affections and possessions, and be content with the simple use of the bare necessities of life. And it is in this that the proper measure, or middle way, of poverty consists: in renouncing ownership without rejecting use, while accepting use without claiming ownership; in observing austerity in this use without abstaining from the necessities of life, while providing for our needs without deviating from austerity.[32]

Therefore, because of this complete abdication of all possessions and of this renouncement to all earthly affections, the bride of the Canticle says, in the character of such a
Ct. 5:3 poor: *"I have taken off my robe, am I then to put it on? I have bathed my feet, am I then to soil them?"* And the gloss reads here: "As soon as concern for temporal matters is permitted, even the most distinguished doctor is hardly

able to avoid sin."[33] Speaking of this abdication of temporal goods, Jerome writes to Lucinius: "Christians and apostles should offer themselves to God: when, together with the widow, they place in the treasury the two mites of their poverty, they have given the Lord all the wealth they possess and deserve to hear these words: *'You . . . shall . . . sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.'* "[34]

cf. Lk. 21:2 and Mk. 12:42

Mt. 19:28

Referring to limitations in the means of sustainment, the Apostle speaks as one such poor, and writes to Timothy: *Having food and sufficient clothing, with these let us be content.* He uses the word "having" not in the sense of the power of dominion, but of the right to use, as we say that we "have" anything we use, even though it does not belong to us, but was provided without cost by someone else. This is the kind of poverty displayed in His own Person, as a middle and virtuous way, *by the Mediator between God and men, Christ, the power of God and the wisdom of God,* for, in the words of Jerome to Nepotianus, "He was sustained with food that belonged to another."[35] The Apostle Paul followed Christ as His main imitator, and Chrysostom says of him in his "Praises" that "he owned nothing but his body."[36] Now, in so doing, Paul also showed himself as an example to others, for he said: *Be imitators of me as I am of Christ.*

1 Tm. 6:8

1 Tm. 2:5

1 Cor. 1:24

ibid. 11:1

Therefore, to argue that this manner of life is foreign to the middle way of virtue is nothing else than to accuse of vicious excess the very Master of truth and virtue.

21. That is why we should carefully note that as the middle road is quite a different thing when referred to the virtue of public office, to purgative virtue, or to the virtue of an already cleansed soul,[37] so also this middle road is different for the man who, with true virtue, generously spends

in public life, or for the Christ-like needy in the blessed state of poverty.[38] And this is precisely what the holy doctor means in the passage given above,† which the calumniator quotes, as is his custom, in a truncated form. "Anyway," writes Ambrose, "the Lord does not want wealth to be dilapidated, but properly managed." By these words, he explains the middle road of spending in public office; but lest anyone believe from this that he does not approve the way of life of evangelical poverty, he immediately continues: "Unless, perhaps, like Eliseus, he kills his oxen and feeds the poor upon what he possessed, so as not to be encumbered with any domestic trouble but free to devote himself to the prophetical discipline as soon as he has abandoned all material concerns." Ambrose added these words in order to exalt evangelical poverty in the highest manner, while this deceitful man overlooks them in order to attack fraudulently those who profess this same poverty.

cf. 3 Kgs. 19:21

22. For there is no sense whatsoever in arguing against the Mendicants that "they expose themselves to danger," and thus are either "suicides or tempters of God." Had they refused to take sufficient food to satisfy their daily needs, they would indeed have been killing themselves. In fact they renounce dominion over things in such a manner as not to reject the use of what is required for their survival; they entrust themselves to divine providence in such a manner as not to overlook the way of human foresight, for they live on those things that are graciously offered, on those for which they humbly beg, or on those they gain through their labor. It is in this manner that, for over sixty years, these poor have been living in great numbers, while God's

† Cf. ¶ 18.

promise was being so well fulfilled in them, and His action appeared so clearly, that we have never heard any one of them ever to have been in danger of death from lack of food or clothing.

Let all distrust vanish from the minds of the preachers of truth and of the perfect disciples of Christ since enough food is promised to them by the Lord, for it is said to them: *"Do not be anxious for your life, what you shall eat."* Lk. 12:22
Indeed, they are instructed *to take nothing for their journey, but a staff only,* as it is said in Mark. Mk. 6:8 And Bede says of this passage: "So great a confidence should a preacher have in God that, even without provisions for the necessities of the present life, he should know with utmost certainty that such things will not be lacking to him, lest, while his mind is concerned with temporal matters, he may be less able to provide eternal goods for others."[39] Now, the calumniator attempts to pervert this saying that so clearly expresses total confidence, for this is how he explains it: " 'Even without providing,' that is, without having the time to provide," as if the preacher needed confidence in a sufficiency of food only when he could do nothing else but trust: to such confidence as this, it is not only the preacher of truth who is held, but also every Christian, as imperfect as he may be.

23. And so, in order to avoid any occasion of calumny, we should understand that there are two kinds of diffidence: the one proceeds from perversity, and the other from weakness of heart. Diffidence proceeds from perversity when it comes with some form of lack of faith or of despair, as for instance when a man mistrusts God, when in his unbelief he feels that God is not concerned with human affairs, or when in his despair he thinks that God has abandoned him because of his sins.[40] Such diffidence and the anguish that

proceeds from it are forbidden to all, and the confidence opposed to it is prescribed to all.

Diffidence that comes from weakness of heart is one that is accompanied by a decrease of the love for God and an increase of human fear: it may be consistent with imperfect love, but not with perfect love. Thus the diffidence of a weak heart and the anxiety derived from it are forbidden to evangelical and perfect men, and the opposite confidence is enjoined upon them by the Master of Perfection, so that the preachers of truth may avoid the cold sweat of a faint-heartedness that begs for food, and constantly enjoy the warmth of a love that eagerly trusts in God as a means to bear the inconveniences of poverty.

24. It is to such confidence that Augustine invites us in his book "On Almsgiving": "You are afraid," he says, "that your fortune might fail you if you begin generously to hand it out. When has it ever happened that the necessary means were lacking to the just? For it is written: *The Lord permits not the just to hunger.* Elias in the desert was fed by crows who took care of his needs; and to Daniel who, by order of the king, was thrown into the den as a prey to lions, a meal was provided by divine action. And you are afraid that a man who works for God and acquires merit may be left without food, while God Himself, as a refutation of those whose mind is doubtful and whose faith is weak, reproaches them in the Gospel and says: *"Look at the birds of the air: they do not sow, or reap, or gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them."* God feeds the birds, and these creatures, in which there is no understanding of the things of God, never lack food or drink; and you, a Christian, who serve God, who are dedicated to good works, and are beloved by your Lord, you believe that

Prv. 10:3
cf. 3 Kgs. 17:6
cf. Dn. 14:32ff.
Mt. 6:26

something will be lacking to you? Do you think that he who feeds Christ will not be fed by Christ in person? Or that those to whom divine and heavenly things have been granted will be left without the things of the earth? Whence such an incredulous thought, such a sacrilegious and impious cogitation?"[41] And to strengthen such words, Augustine then continues by giving the example of the widow of Sarepta who fed Elias.[42] Parallel to this, there is also the generous offering of the poor widow who, because she gave all she had, deserved praise from divine lips.

cf. 3 Kgs. 17: 10ff.
cf. Mk. 12:41ff. and Lk. 21:2ff.

25. The calumniator of the poor preachers now strives to use a third manner of calumny filled with no less malice: speaking of the begging of alms, he first adduces against it the argument that "it is not accompanied with a spiritual consolation, as would be a work of virtue, but rather by a punishing pain on account of which the Prophet calls down this begging upon the heads of the sons of the impious, when he says in the Psalm: *'May his children be roaming vagrants and beggars';* and the holy Canons assert that a mendicant cleric is unhappy."[43]

Ps. 108:10

26. In order to refute the calumny contained in such false reasoning and in others of the same kind, we should understand that there are five different manners of begging, distinct from one another in their origin, mode, and effect.[44]

The first is that born of a CALAMITY, as in the case of wretched and destitute people; it brings about a punishing pain, but also merit when patiently sustained: for instance, the begging of Lazarus covered with sores and forsaken who lay before the door of the feasting rich; but it may also bring about sin when borne impatiently. And it is this state of begging that is called down as a malediction by the Prophet, and that the Wise Man abhors when, speaking in

cf. Lk. 16:20

the character of a weak man afraid of falling into impatience because of involuntary destitution, he says: "Give
cf. Prv. 30:8, 9 me neither mendicity nor riches," and continues, "lest, being compelled by poverty, I should steal, and profane the name of my God." And this is mendicity properly so called, as indicated by Isidore in the Tenth Book of "Etymologies": " 'Mendicant' is said of a man who has less (*minus*) means of living, or of one who expresses his need with his hand (*manus*)."[45]

The second form of begging is that born of CUPIDITY; it exists in those who simulate poverty, and comes together with a pain of guilt by which all misers and covetous men are tortured, not so much by the hunger of a physical need for food as by a spiritual anguish due to the insatiable voracity of avarice as expressed in this passage from Job:
*Jb. 18:12** *Let his strength be wasted with famine: and let hunger invade his ribs.*[46] The Apostle also, writing to the Thessa-
1 Thes. 4:11, 12 lonians, cautions them against it: *Strive . . . that you . . . may need nothing.* The gloss says here: "Do not ask for anything, or take anything,"[47] thus forbidding the desire to possess anything that belongs to another, and also the begging that follows upon such desire, as expressed in this
Eph. 4:28 passage of the Epistle to the Ephesians: *He who was wont to steal, let him steal no longer; but rather let him labor, working with his hands,* etc.

The third form of begging is that born of SLOTH, as found in the mendicant poor who happens to be both strong and idle. Together with the pain of poverty, there comes some consolation, but it is vicious and imaginary: indeed, those who avoid steady labor and crave the freedom of idleness lose all fruitful repose and incur a pernicious exhaustion, as indicated by these words of the Wise Man:

The sluggard's propensity slays him, for his hands refuse to work: and again: *In seedtime the sluggard plows not; when he looks for the harvest, it is not there.* And this form of begging is forbidden, not only by divine law but also by civil law;[48] and in order to avoid it, the Apostle enjoins that the Thessalonians work with their hands when he says: *We have heard that some among you live irregularly, doing no work but busy at meddling. Now such persons we charge . . . that they work quietly and eat their own bread.* And the gloss gives the reason for such a command: "The man who, because of his devotion to idleness, has frequent access to someone else's table must flatter his host."[49]

Prv. 21:25
ibid. 20:4
2 Thes. 3:11-12

27. The fourth form of begging is that born of a PARTICULAR ACTIVITY, as is the case with the studious poor engaged in some scholarly discipline; together with the pain of poverty, there comes with this begging the consolation of spiritual truth that gives generous souls such delight that many days filled with privations and labors appear to be full of joy, and seem but little compared to the greatness of love; and that some men would rather beg and blush while serving this love than live in luxury while ignoring it. This is verified in many men who obtained learning through begging, and later occupied important positions in God's Church. Of such as these, Augustine says in his book "On the Labor of Monks": "The faithful should not fail to perform good works in their favor by providing them with what they need, for they are unable to handle such physical tasks, absorbed as they are in the cultivation of the mind."[50]

The fifth form of begging is that born of RIGHTEOUSNESS, as found in those who are poor of their own will, and immune against the love of temporal gain and the slothfulness of temporal repose. Together with the pain of poverty, this

begging procures a virtuous and true consolation, for such beggars are deeply moved by the sole love of extreme poverty, which they embrace so as to seek wisdom more freely, and to attain the summit of virtue more efficiently: until
*Is. 48:10** such time as those who have been *chosen . . . in the furnace of poverty* may be cleansed of sin by its want, humiliated in their heart by its blushing, chastised in their flesh by its frugality, reconciled to their neighbor by its reverent gratitude, conformed to Christ by its condescending kindness, and lifted up to God by its sublime elevation.

28. The efficacy of such deep and voluntary poverty has been declared above in the last point of the third answer† through quotations from the saints who praised it. No sensible man could have any doubt concerning the truths that destitution cleanses, blushing humiliates, frugality chastises, gratitude on the part of the beneficiary brings him close to the giver, condescension of kindness conforms to Christ—
2 Cor. 8:9 who, *being rich*, desired to become needy and poor, out of love for our salvation—and that the height of poverty, where a man treads upon all things and upon himself together with everything else, lifts him up to God not only because of freedom of spirit, but also because of the cruel experiences that are the lot of the poor. As Gregory says: "The evils that press us in this world compel us to go to God."[51] While destitution is a pain to the miser, blushing a pain to the proud, frugality a pain to the pleasure-seeker, thanksgiving a pain to the ungrateful, conformity with Christ a pain to the unfaithful, and elevation of the mind in God a pain to the desperate, yet the poor find
cf. Phil. 4:12 consolation in destitution, the humble in humiliation, the

† Cf. ch. IX, ¶¶ 13ff.

self-controlled in chastisement, the lovers in gratitude, the faithful in conformity with Christ, and the hopeful in separation from the world and union with the eternal God.

29. As a confirmation to all this, it is sufficient to mention the words of Gregory in the First Book of the "Dialogue": "As the proud are gratified with honors, so most often are the humble with their humiliation: for when they feel belittled in the eyes of others, they rejoice because of it, understanding that this judgment is merely a confirmation of the opinion they have of themselves."[52]

In the case of the true and humble poor, there comes about with mendicity an external torment combined with an inner joy. Wherefore, in the opinion of Chrysostom, poverty is properly designated by the furnace in which the youth went down so as not to adore the golden idol, and thus deserved to receive the dew from heaven.[53] This spiritual consolation, unknown to carnal men, this consolation whose admirers covetous men deride as did the Pharisees, Paula, a woman of the greatest virtue, desired to experience, as Jerome recounts in his "Praises" of her, where he admirably preaches on this same desire, and commends her on account of it, saying: "This she had promised by vow: to remain a beggar for the sake of Christ, to hand down to her daughter not a single coin, and to be buried in a shroud that would belong to someone else."[54]

Thus, never does it occur, as the calumniator attempts to infer, that mendicity is approved exclusively when it proceeds from dire necessity or some calamity, for poverty is much more praiseworthy when freely chosen than when imposed by necessity, unless a man be so unwise as to prefer the compulsion of necessity to the spontaneity of the will in works of supererogation — which is as absurd as if

someone were to prefer the hanging of robbers to the suffering of martyrs, since martyrs suffer voluntarily, and robbers necessarily. If then anyone wishes to draw the conclusion that mendicity is not to be listed among the decent and commendable states under the pretext that we are forced to accept it through lack of goods and insufficiency of natural resources, by the same token neither was the martyrdom of the saints perfect and commendable since they were forced to bear it through the evil violence of other men's malice. Now the pain of poverty has an even more voluntary cause than martyrdom, since the former is both wilfully assumed and wilfully borne, while the latter is violently inflicted from the outside even though wilfully borne.

30. There is yet another false reasoning by which mendicity—a state both noble in itself and accepted by Christ the Lord—is calumniously attacked, as if it were accompanied, not with evangelical beatitude, but with a spiritual imperfection, under the pretext that we read in the Acts of
Acts 20:35 the Apostles: *It is more blessed to give than to receive.*[55] It may seem from this text that the Mendicants would have been more blessed and perfect if they had been in the state of those who give alms, instead of the state of those who receive them; and that they would have been much more blessed if they had been in the state of those who give alms with lavishness, instead of in the state of those who beg, since Jerome says to Nepotianus: "Let us never provide for ourselves by begging, and seldom by accepting what is offered."[56] And Augustine, commenting on Psalm One Hundred and Three: "By having a purse and requesting food, Christ in a certain sense became poor not through begging, but through providing."[57] From such texts as these, it may be inferred that clerics endowed with benefits

are closer to Christ and more perfect than those in the state of the mendicant poor.

31. But if such reasoning is carefully analyzed, stronger arguments may be found in favor of the opposite opinion. If, indeed, it is more blessed to give than to receive, the man who receives more and gives less is less blessed. Now, since all ecclesiastical goods, as Prosper says, are "the prayers of the faithful, the ransom of sin, and the share of the poor,"[58] it follows that any man who enjoys ecclesiastical revenues will be more miserable through his rich receiving than blessed through his meager giving, since he receives much more than he gives. On the contrary, the truly poor man abandons and gives up all things for the sake of Christ—not only what he has, but even what he might desire. He remains content with the few and modest necessities required for the sustaining of nature. Hence he will be the least miserable through his limited receiving, and the most blessed through his generous giving. As a clear confirmation, we have the words of the Gospel, which, according to Chrysostom, reads in the Greek version: "Blessed are the Mendicants, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven,"[59] whereas the Latin has: *"Blessed are the poor in spirit."* *Mt. 5:3*

Also in accord is the opinion of holy Ambrose, who writes in his book "On Offices": "The poor man, having not the means to pay with currency, pays with gratitude, and thus certainly gives more than he receives: for money is paid out in coins, but gratitude is inexhaustible; money is lost when given in payment, but gratitude is lost when held back, and retained when handed out."[60]

32. On the strength of these quotations, it appears with evidence that the testimony of truth mentioned above cannot be distortedly used against the evangelical poor. And

there is also the gloss of Bede on the same passage: "He is not placing those who distribute rich alms above those who abandon everything and follow the Lord: he is supremely glorifying those who have abandoned everything they possessed and now labor with their own hands in order to provide for the needs of the suffering."[61]

Cassian, writing "On the Rules of Monks," concurs: "This," he says, "is more a blessed generosity on the part of the giver than it is a gain† on the part of the receiver, for there is no spending of a treasure hidden by greed, but an offering of the fruits of one's own work and of pious sweat."[62]

It follows that anyone who lives in the state of poverty and is engaged in spiritual studies, and yet is able to feed both himself and others through the labor of his hands, thus becoming an imitator of the Apostle Paul, is performing a greater work of supererogation than the one who begs and receives his sustenance from others. Therefore Francis, the lover of all perfection, moderately and prudently recommends manual labor to his followers and sons, while instructing and prompting those who are able to do so to "work in such a way as to avoid idleness, but without extinguishing the spirit."[63] Even though such life as this is perfect and holy, he did not wish to make it the object of a binding and universal command, since the weak body and slow intelligence of our contemporaries do not permit such a height of supererogatory perfection.[64]

Acts 20:35 Let it then remain that in this particular sense *it is more blessed to give than to receive*, according to the example of the apostles; but let us not conclude that those who receive

† Cassian has: " . . . than it is a loss (*penuria*) on the part of the receiver." Bonaventure has *pecunia*, wealth, money, gain.

are imperfect, since the apostles themselves could not have been imperfect for having obtained their sustenance from others, nor could Christ have been a teacher of imperfection for having commanded the preachers of evangelical perfection to be sustained by others, and for having demonstrated this very thing through His example.† Thus Augustine, commenting on the passage from the Psalm: *Who makes grass sprout on the mountains,* has this to say: "Why did the Lord choose to be needy if not to give an example to the *mountains,* so that they may prepare their *grass* instead of offering sterility in return for rain?"[65] Augustine designates by "rain" the doctrine through which the mind is developed, and by "grass," the temporal things through which the body is sustained.

Ps. 146:8

33. Undoubtedly, in order to remove all occasion of calumny, we should understand that even though, in the classification of works, receiving is less holy and less perfect than giving, yet it may become more holy and more perfect through some additional circumstances, as, for instance, when a man receives out of love for extreme poverty, in conformity with the six conditions indicated above,‡ in the conjunction of which consists the full perfection of this poverty: not only in the abdication of property, but also in the acceptance of need, as, for instance, when a man begs and receives in order that he may be cleansed by accepting when in need, humiliated by accepting with blushings, restrained and chastised by accepting small gifts, reconciled to his neighbor by accepting with gratitude, conformed to Christ by accepting with condescension, and lifted up to God by accepting with great faith. This,

† Cf. ¶¶ 20ff., and ch. VII, ¶¶ 5ff.
‡ Cf. ¶ 27.

indeed, is more excellent than to provide food for the poor. Thus Jerome writes to Julian: "You have built a monastery, and a great number of holy men are sustained by you . . . ; but you would have done better if you yourself had lived as a saint among saints."[66] And Bernard, in a certain letter: "I wish you to be a friend of the poor, but even more, an imitator."[67] In the spirit of these quotations, it is more perfect to be in need with Christ and to receive alms together with Him than to be a friend of the poor and to sustain them.

34. And so the words of Jerome, that "we should never provide for ourselves by begging,"[68] are to be understood as addressed to the cleric Nepotianus, and to apply to those clerics who receive sufficient support from the goods of the Church without ever ascending to the height of extreme poverty. In the case of such men, who have enough to live and refuse to be in need, it is indeed shameful to receive, and more so to beg. And because for such as these it is shameful to beg, except for the sake of studies, the council of Carthage decreed that "a cleric who is poor should provide for his food and clothing by means of his own skill."[69] And since it was difficult to force all clerics into such labor, the order was given — as it appears in the first rule applying to the consecration [of a church] — that no church be dedicated before having been endowed;[70] and this, in order that the clerics who serve in it may have enough to live. At the same time also — and this was a new law — it was added that clerics could not be ordained unless they were attached to a specific church. If already ordained, they were to be sustained by those who had ordained them.[71] Certainly, such a law is not binding in the least to those who, in the name of Christ, made the vow to live in

extreme poverty: the authority of the Supreme Pontiff and the testimony of the Gospels concur in this.†

35. Now, as regards the proper meaning of Augustine's saying, that Christ became poor not through begging but through providing,‡ the author himself reveals it when he continues by quoting the example of Christ and Zacchaeus, of Elias and the widow, and then says: "When someone receives a saint, it is not to the guest, but to the host that a gift is imparted." What he means is that when the Lord requested food, He sought, not His own welfare, but the occasion of merit for the other; not the gift, but the profit it would impart. Out of the received good and because of the merit of giving, a greater advantage would accrue to Christ's host than to Christ Himself. This is true, not only of the Head in person, but also of His members, for He promised a reward to their benefactors when He said, in Matthew: *"As long as you did it for one of these, the least of My brethren, you did it for Me."* And again: *"Whoever gives to one of these little ones but a cup of cold water to drink because he is a disciple, amen I say to you, he shall not lose his reward."* And the gloss says here: "The little ones are those who possess absolutely nothing in this world, and who will be the judges together with Christ."[72] Very poor indeed are those who, having nothing at all in the world, are in need of a cup of water; but at the same time they are very rich, for Christ says that He is received in their person, and He has promised them the gift of the power of judgment.

cf. Lk. 19:6
cf. 3 Kgs. 17:6
cf. Phil. 4:17
Mt. 25:40
ibid. 10:42
cf. Mt. 19:28

36. Finally, in the worst of all deceptive reasonings, this oppressor of the Mendicants accuses them of being

† Cf. ch. XI, ¶¶ 10f.
‡ Cf. ¶ 30.

criminals, under the pretext that "they received alms by means of which the helpless poor, unable to work, should have been sustained. Thus in a certain sense they commit homicide by impiously defrauding these poor of alms that
Sir. 34:21 compassion owed them, for Sirach says: *The bread of charity is life itself for the needy; he who withholds it is a man of blood.*" "Furthermore," this man continues, "they burden the Church of Christ and expose themselves to many dangers that follow upon destitution, for as the same holy
*Ecclus. 27:1** writer says: *Through poverty many have sinned.* The conclusion may also be drawn from these quotations that to profess such poverty is impious, since it is not accompanied with merit, but with sin."

This is what the calumniator of the Mendicants finally attempts to make us believe: that the state of the Mendicants should be reproved as perverse by the universal Church. A passage from the Psalms seems to have been fulfilled in
Ps. 108:16 him: *He . . . persecuted the wretched and poor and the brokenhearted, to do them to death.*

37. Let us say, in defense of the Mendicants, that these evangelical men, who gave up their own fortune for the sake of the salvation of souls, are not men of blood, but
Sir. 44:10 *godly men whose virtues have not been forgotten,* for in the abundance of their mercy, they have lavishly furnished temporal goods for the sustainment of the bodies of the poor, and continually provided spiritual goods for the sustainment of their souls. Therefore, these Mendicants are worthy of the support of the Church, for they do not burden it: instead, they relieve it of its charge much better than do those who fatten themselves on an abundance of ecclesiastical revenues, since most of these Mendicants would have had the opportunity to enjoy such revenues,

but preferred to do without them for the sake of Christ. And so when men such as these beg for alms and receive them, they are not defrauding the poor; instead, they are supporting the cause of the poor. Through their holy examples and counsels, they are inducing impious men to perform works of mercy. None of the poor are being injured in the least, for in begging, the Mendicants are within their right and they receive nothing but their due.

38. By virtue of the law of mercy these men have the right to be materially supported since they are poor, and all the more so since they are willingly poor and devoted to Christ. Jerome writes against Vigilantius: "We do not deny that subsidies should be given to all the poor, if such generosity were possible. The Apostle teaches that alms must be given *to all men, but especially to those who are of the household of faith,* of whom the Saviour spoke in the Gospel: *Make friends for yourselves with the mammon of wickedness, so that . . . they may receive you in the everlasting dwellings.* Is it those poor among whose rags and filth a burning concupiscence of the flesh has full sway who will ever be able to obtain everlasting dwellings when they have none either in the present or in the future? Indeed, it is not the poor as such, but the poor in spirit who are called,† of whom it is written: *Blessed is he that understandeth concerning the needy and the poor.* The ordinary poor are not in need of understanding, but of alms; but the holy poor possess the beatitude of understanding, so that you should give to the one who blushes to receive, and who grieves when he does receive, fearing carnal things and sowing the spiritual."[73]

Gal. 6:10

Lk. 16:9

cf. Mt. 5:3

*Ps. 40:2**

cf. 1 Cor. 9:11

† Jerome has the word "blessed" here.

39. Material support is also due to the Mendicants by virtue of the law of justice, since they are preachers of truth. They are entitled to claim such a right, not on the strength of a public law as is the case with prelates for whom the receiving of stipends is not mendicity but a privilege, but as citizens. Yet they must claim their right with humility, they must seek gifts for the love of Christ in order that others may acquire merit in giving, and that they themselves may be humiliated in receiving. They must be sustained in order to preach the Gospel, and not preach the Gospel in order to be sustained. Wherefore Bernard writes
2 Cor. 8:9 to the Brothers of the Mountain of God: "*Being rich, He became poor for our sake;* and He who gave the precept of voluntary poverty deigned to demonstrate its application in His own Person. And so, in order that the evangelical poor may know what to do, He Himself chose to be fed by the faithful, and sometimes even by the infidels: in order to make them faithful, He accepted from them the necessities of life."[74] It is a fact that this does not concern prelates, but the poor religious to whom Christ shows through His example that they are to be sustained with alms, not by requesting them in virtue of some privilege, but by begging with kindness and humility.

40. To sustain this manner of poor for the sake of Christ is of no lesser merit than to build basilicas, as Jerome writes to Demetriades: "Some men build churches, cover the walls
Rom. 14:5 with marble veneer: I do not blame them or disagree. *Let everyone be convinced in his own mind,* for it is better to do such things than to renounce all work and lie down.
cf. Mt. 25:35 But it is another task that is proposed to you: to clothe Christ in the poor, to visit Him in the sick, to feed Him in the needy, to shelter Him in those who have no roof,

especially in those who are of the household of faith; to support the monasteries of virgins, to take care of the servants of God, and of the poor in spirit who *serve* your Lord *day and night;* who, while placed on earth, imitate the manner of life of angels and do not speak except to praise God; and who, having sufficient food and clothing, rejoice in such riches; who do not desire to possess anything else, that is, as long as they remain within their purpose: otherwise, if they desire more than they actually need, they are proven unworthy."[75] From these words of Jerome we may gather that to sustain this manner of poor is a work of the very greatest piety; and, consequently, that to calumniate them through persecution is a sin of no small malice. Voluntary poverty is not the cause of evil and of many crimes, as our adversary claims; but as Chrysostom says, and as it has been established earlier,† voluntary poverty is the cause of an infinity of goods. Indeed, as *covetousness,* which is the love of riches, *is the root of all evils,* so also poverty, which is contempt for riches and love of penury, is the source of all spiritual goods. If *many have sinned through poverty,* it is not by loving, but by hating. As the gloss explains, we must understand this saying as applying to an absence, not of temporal goods, but of spiritual charismatic gifts and virtues.[76]

Gal. 6:10
Ap. 7:15
cf. 1 Tm. 6:8
1 Tm. 6:10
*Ecclus. 21:7**

41. This we say, not that we recommend an unrestricted multiplication of Mendicants, or that we wish to approve as perfect every form of mendicant life: we approve only that which is accompanied with a sevenfold effort to gain wisdom;‡ we approve manual labor united to the profession and observance of evangelical poverty and to the practice of perfect virtue. Now since the whole life of Christ and

† Cf. ch. IX, ¶ 18.
‡ Cf. ¶ 13.

the whole teaching of the Gospel confirms such a state, if anyone preaches against it, may he, in the words of the
Gal. 1:8 Apostle, *be anathema.* And so, may this persecutor of the Mendicants abstain from malicious calumnies and male-
cf. Nm. 23:8 dictions. Let him not exceed the wickedness of Balaam by speaking evil of those whom the Lord blesses, lest, by losing the blessing promised in heaven, he himself may come to deserve an eternal malediction. And if he refuses to desist,
Ps. 108:26 may the true poor never cease to cry out: *Help me, O Lord, my God; save me, in Your kindness;* and, fulfilling what is
ibid. 30:31 written later, let him finally conclude: *I will speak my thanks earnestly to the Lord, and in the midst of the throng I will praise Him, for He stood at the right hand of the poor man, to save him from those who would condemn him.*

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63. Rule, ch. 5. - - - - - - - - 284
64. Cf. ch. V, note 54. - - - - - - 284
65. Augustine, "Enarrationes in psalmos," Ps. 146:8, ¶ 7. 285
66. Jerome, "Epistolae," 118 (alias 34):5. - - - 286
67. Bernard, "Epistolae," 103:1. - - - - - 286
68. Cf. note 56. - - - - - - - 286
69. Cf. fourth council of Carthage, (anno 398) c. 52; Gratian, "Decreti," pars I, c. 3, D. XCI; and ibid., c. 4, where he quotes other canons from the same council. - 286
70. Cf. ibid., pars III, c. 9, D. I. - - - - - 286
71. Cf. Gregory IX, I "Decretal.," XIV "De aetate et qualitate," cap. 13. - - - - - - - - 286
72. "Glossa ordinaria." - - - - - - - 287
73. Jerome, "Contra Vigilantium," 15. - - - - 289

74. "Ad fratres de Monte Dei," 13:39. Cf. ch. IX, note 1. 290
75. Cf. Jerome, "Epistolae," 130 (alias 8):14. Cf. ch. VIII, note 12. - - - - - - - 291
76. Cf. "Glossa interlinearis," according to Nicholas of Lyra. Cf. also Rabanus Maurus on the same passage. - 291

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