

A CANTICLE TO POVERTY

by

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Wisdom of the ancients

I give you thanks, O Lord and King, and praise you, O God my saviour [Sir 51:1], because you have not kept my poor soul in *the sleep of death* [Ps 13:3]. When I wandered in the byways of youth, I heard *a word behind* [Isa 30:21] me calling out mercifully, *what are you waiting for* [2 Macc 7:30], poor one? Awakened from sleep by the goads of your kindness *upon my bed at night I sought him whom my soul loves* [Song 3:1]. I felt deep within me, gently indeed but in a natural way, that I should search for truth, love good and aim at blessed happiness. Nevertheless, I was not able to find these as long as I explored human arguments more obscure than night. Aware, moreover, that philosophy is human knowledge of oneself, I turned to look into myself only to find that my soul was weak in ambition, sluggish in study, inclined to vice, and I searched for a long time for a medicine for it. Since reason is blocked more effectively as bodily pleasure becomes more intense, and I wanted to have an unimpeded mind, I concluded that sensible pleasure must be shunned, and that the theories of the Epicureans are full of error.

I turned my attention, then, to the flow of earthly things. Because they are desired for pleasure which I had come to despise, and because they strongly divide and distract the soul of anyone involved in them, I decided to put them far from me in accord with the example of ancient philosophers.

I saw, once I raised my eyes, that earthly glory is like smoke; it quickly dissipates, blinds and afflicts the eyes of any who stupidly glory in it. These are *the leeks, the onions and the garlic* [Num 11:5] of Egypt, which excite and influence desire, and bring out the distress of useless tears; the Lord was angry when the murmuring people wanted these. Freed and yet hardly torn from all this, I turned my attention to the realm of the mind.

Logic

Logic comes first to one aiming to go higher. When I tried to tell true from false by its laws I was deceived by pleasure in its methods, and delighted more in its methods which seem to hide truth and support error than lead to truth by firm steps. At length, I saw that its study pandered to false pleasures, as sophistry promoted garrulous talk, dialectic did not give solid knowledge, analysis led one bound into the house of Daedalus¹ and stirs up *a spirit of confusion* [Isa 19:14] in Egypt and in the mind. Since *the workers in flax will be in despair* [Isa 19:9], and *their webs cannot serve as clothing* [Isa 59:6], I went on to the study of physics which deals with motion and things moving.

Physics

Being aware that the mind cannot find stability in what is unstable, and that in all the problems of physics the wise and most skilled disagree and are unable to find a full explanation for the divine actions, but rather

¹ Daedalus built the Cretan labyrinth, so the reference is to being led into labyrinthine ways.

increase the ignorance of the investigator, I turned to the study of Hippocrates,² since *everyone is stupid and without knowledge* [Jer 10:14]. When Hippocrates told me that life is short, skill is acquired slowly, experiments deceptive, I grew fearful of error and refused to spend even a short time in such study.

Mathematics

Hearing mathematics praised, I enrolled in its school because it guarantees truth by the excellence of its theorems and the certitude of its proofs. But, when I realized it depended on two accidents, namely, number and bodily size, and mindful that the noblest substances have neither size nor number, as spoken of by mathematicians, I was attracted a little to that section of mathematics which studies the movement of the stars as signs of future events. Mindful, however, that this study is not based on proofs but on frivolous tests, knowing also from the experts in this study that the effect of stars on people endowed with free will lies between the possible and necessary and that a wise person can influence others by the stars, I realized there is nothing to fear from signs in the sky, especially since the wise men of Pharaoh busily hasten to give advice on this. I concluded these are vain efforts to be laughed at. Because in these bodies which move in a uniform way there is no certainty of future events, I decided infallibly that one is much more likely to find error in the conjectures of such people regarding the arrangement of elements divined by fire, air, water, earth or necromancy. Judging all this to be a most shameful stupidity which faith shuns and reason ridicules, like being deceived by an old folk tale, I went on to the area of metaphysics.

Metaphysics

Finding, however, that metaphysics treats of insipid essences, and in a confused way mixes up the principles of material substances with abstract principles, and finally equates the number of separate substances with the movements of the first bodies, as if the most noble spirits were of little value unless they are commissioned to obey bodies, I saw that *you make them fall to ruin* [Ps 73:18]. I came to the conclusion that human wisdom is in error.

Moral philosophy

Seeing, moreover, that sickness cannot be healed while one is involved in such theories,³ and that as long as the remedy is delayed the greater the danger, I went to the discipline of moral philosophy, where I learnt that 'virtue aims at what is intermediate',⁴ that heroic virtues are difficult, and that all things are ordered toward the goal of happiness; but, I did not hear Aristotle affirm whether happiness is to be sought in the body or outside the body. On the other hand, I saw that the Pythagoreans and almost all other philosophers teach that the soul can be happy only when separate from the body.

² Hippocrates was a celebrated Greek physician about 430 B.C.E.

³ See Bonaventure, *Collations*, Seventh Collation, n. 9-10, pp. 114-115.

⁴ Aristotle, *Ethica Nicomachea*, book 2, n. 6, Oxford: University Press, 1915, p. 1106^b.

Ethics

But, because I had learnt in physics that the soul is united to the body as its form, and that it is impossible for a form to reach its final perfection without being united to the matter for which it is destined, I dreaded this foolishness recognizing such studies to be but the weapons of spiders. I moved on to the imperial laws dealing with ethics, and there I found ornaments of words and opinions established by the commands of princes but abrogated in many details by other principles; they dealt with transitory realities, enkindling the human heart to the love of temporal realities, because study in a studious person usually brings a love of one's subject. Seeing, therefore, that in the study of these laws the most subtle minds are quickly weakened, the most simple diverted into malice, and the purest become involved in earthly attachments, I learnt discipline from those who have suffered such shipwrecks, knowing that the Lord threatened the oppressors of his people in Palestine which means 'the mouth of one wielding a hammer'.⁵

I went back a little into a forest as one about to search for the refreshment of Gratian, and finding there a heap of silage [Isa 30:24] made up of laws, some abrogated and others still in force with a clamour of laws mixed up with the sacred canons, as if I could see them joined in a strong box of Dagon, I fled Philistia,⁶ precisely because I had learnt that race of people had killed *the mighty of Israel in the high places* [2 Sam 1:19].

After a thorough examination of the wisdom of the ancients, I understood clearly that wisdom cannot be found by human effort [see Isa 40:28]. I set out, therefore, to bind my mind to the light from which the rays of intellectual light are derived; from this study I learnt that 'religion is so called from the word to bind fast'.⁷ Reflecting that *there is balm in Gilead* [Jer 8:22] which means revelation, I thought to gain the peak of Lebanon from Gilead. Closing my eyes, then, to earthly things so as to be aware of what is permanent, becoming foolish to gain wisdom, I set out to gain the heights with the goats *moving down the slopes of Gilead* [Song 4:1].

Wisdom of the mendicants

Finally, I put myself into the company of people who crucify the flesh in a terrible way, despise earth's abundance, and who put themselves below the whole human race calling themselves lesser brothers as a sign of this decision. I perceived that their lifestyle was most similar in certain praiseworthy details to the lifestyle of the most famous philosophers: in poverty they were like the Socratics, in bareness of feet and politeness they were like the Platonists, in seriousness to the philosophers of the Academy, in their ceaseless search for wisdom they were like the Peripatetics; and they claimed they did this out of love for the Lord Jesus Christ, inspired to these things by his example and teachings. I examined this more closely to see if it was in accord with the gospel precepts, and I realized that the Lord himself despised all transitory realities and invited others to such contempt. Looking further at the way of life and the deeds of the Lord himself, I was

⁵ See Hugo a S. Charo, *Commentarius in Psalmum 86*, Venice edition, 1754, p. 226 B, col. 2.*

⁶ The name Philistia is used to refer to unenlightened people.

⁷ Lactantius, *The Divine Institutes*, book 4, ch. 28 (FOTC 49, 318); [religio from religo].

amazed not a little, for I saw that he walked in a way somewhat different from this; I found him drinking and *eating with sinners* [Mt 9:11] and so acting as the common people that those envious of him called him *a glutton and a drunkard* [Mt 11:19]. John seemed to me to be more perfect for he so abstained from ordinary customs that people said *John came neither eating nor drinking* [Mt 11:18], until I remembered that the Lord *fasted forty days and forty nights* [Mt 4:2] and refused the food offered to him when his body was exhausted and midday had passed [Jn 4:32ff.].

Our Lord's fasting

I consulted the most eminent Senior⁸ who wore *instead of a sash, a rope, and instead of well-set hair, baldness, and instead of a rich robe, a binding of sackcloth* [Isa 3:24], and who was seen to wear a prophet's habit, a beggar's covering distinguished by the qualities of the person putting it on [see Joel 1:13]. He said to me that in the one body of Christ which is the Church [Col 1:24], there are some who are stronger and carry burdens, leading an angelic life, while some are weaker and of necessity have to walk in a more human way.⁹ The same master teaches that those more capable in the study of any one skill can achieve greater things, while he instructs the less capable in the basics without detriment to his wisdom. The Lord himself while on earth invited the more capable by word and example to difficult tasks by being stricter in fasting; for the less capable, however, he was compassionate and tempered the rigor somewhat; while he humbly conformed himself¹⁰ to sinners in those things which are not sins, things in which even the perfect on occasion without imperfection can be in like circumstance. For he knew that future heretics would condemn the foods by which weaker people are normally sustained, and so by his action confirmed the lawfulness of such foods. Knowing, moreover, that future hypocrites would eat such foods in secret while abstaining from them in public, he fasted most rigorously in the desert but followed ordinary customs in public; by this he condemned the hypocrisy of being externally austere but fussy in private.¹¹

Our Lord hiding from the Jews

While approving this teaching of the Senior and examining other aspects of the matter, I found another discrepancy in Christ. I saw that he sought a place in which to hide when the Jews wanted to stone him [Jn 10:39], yet on another occasion he willingly put himself in the hands of his executioners [Mt 26:24; Isa 53:7]. I sought the advice of the Senior on this and, using the preceding rule, he gave this solid opinion: I have known it is safer for weaker persons to flee rather than to expose themselves foolishly to torment; the Lord wanted to give consolation to those who flee voluntarily in such circumstances lest they despair.¹² It is not always contrary to perfection to flee, for example to withdraw from rage when this is better for the Church, or when one senses clearly that a struggle is to

⁸ Bonaventure (Pseudo) as explained in the Introduction, page x.

⁹ Bonaventure, *The Six Wings of the Seraph*, c. 3, n. 9, pp. 155-156.

¹⁰ Bonaventure, *Defense*, ch. 5, n. 5-6 and ch. 6, n. 2, pp. 82-84 and 108.

¹¹ *Expositio super regulam*, c. 2, n. 26 (8, 406).

¹² Bonaventure, *Defense*, ch. 4, n. 3 and 16, pp. 63-64 and 73.

ensue; but beyond these circumstances the Lord gave an example to be imitated by the more perfect when he willingly bore death on the cross.

Our Lord's instructions to the disciples especially about money

Enlightened by the prudent response of the Senior, I saw in the life of Christ a third discrepancy which moved me more than the others. For I saw Christ forbidding the disciples to take bread when sent to preach, forbidding also a bag and wallet, and not to possess or carry money [Lk 9:3]; but we read that the Lord just before his passion had money carried by Judas. Therefore, I asked the Senior to explain the discrepancy in these words and what they might mean. The Senior answered:¹³ See whether Christ always had money, and for whom he decreed the use of money was to be allowed. I said, Master, you know. Reflect, he said, that money is never mentioned in the gospel, except on the sixth day before the Passover, that is, the passing of the Lord himself from this world to the Father [Jn 16:28], and at the very hour of the meal after which he wanted to be arrested and crucified on the following day. However, in an earlier text of the gospel we read that holy women accompanied the Lord and provided for him and the disciples from their own resources [Lk 8:2-3]. We read also that constantly he ate as a guest at table,¹⁴ that he paid the imperial tax not from a wallet but with a coin miraculously found by Peter in the mouth of a fish [Mt 17:27], because, as Jerome¹⁵ says on this 'Christ said it is unlawful to apply money given for the poor to one's own use'. It is also recorded [Mk 11:11]¹⁶ that in the week of his passion, when he had preached in Jerusalem all day until evening, he looked around to see if anyone would receive him as a guest; not finding anyone, he turned to the house of Martha in Bethany, forced by his voluntary poverty because his need found no welcome in Jerusalem; had he possessed money he could easily have found a place. Reflect on these and similar incidents, that as he sometimes ate common food, sometimes he did not eat, sometimes he fled from his enemies, sometimes he did not flee, so at times he had money, sometimes he did not. When he had no money he gave a directive to his disciples, which he himself always observed, he who began to do and to teach [Acts 1:1]. But, because necessity has no law,

at the time of his passion he dispensed from the rule regarding money. So Luke says: *When I sent you out without a purse, bag, or sandals, did you lack anything? They said, No, not a thing. He said to them, But now, the one who has a purse must take it, and likewise a bag [22:35-36].* A Gloss¹⁷ on this text says: He instructed his disciples that rules for living are different in a time of persecution and in a time of peace. When he sent his disciples to preach, *he ordered them to take nothing for their journey [Mk 6:8],* he commanded that those who *proclaim the gospel should get their living by the gospel [1 Cor 9:14].* However, as the time for his death

¹³ *Expositio super regulam*, c. 4, n. 8ff (8, 415).

¹⁴ *Expositio super regulam*, c. 4, n. 8 (8, 415); Bonaventure, *Defense*, ch. 7, n. 39, pp. 161-162.

¹⁵ Hieronymus, *Commentarius in evangelium Matthaei*, l. 3, c. 17 (PL 26, 132); Bonaventure, *Defense*, ch. 7, n. 40, p. 163; *Expositio super regulam*, c. 4, n. 6 (8, 414).

¹⁶ Beda, *In Marci evangelium expositio*, l. 3, c. 11 (PL 92, 244); Bonaventure, *Defense*, ch. 7, n. 8, pp. 132-133.

¹⁷ Namely *Glossa Ordinaria*, in Beda, *In Lucae evangelium expositio*, l. 5, c. 22 (PL 92, 601); Bonaventure, *Defense*, ch. 7, n. 39, pp. 161-162.

was near and all the people were hostile to the shepherd and the sheep, he gave a rule suitable for the time, allowing one to take whatever is necessary for life until, safe from the fury of the persecutors, the time for preaching would return.¹⁸

Likewise, because the law of work in a special case and with reason is sometimes interrupted by a dispensation, Christ sometimes agreed to have money for a specific reason, knowing that not everyone can follow the strict way mentioned above. Christ kept money, therefore, for a double reason. Sometimes simply to meet the needs of others as is clear above from Jerome in the paying of the tax;¹⁹ by this example Christ left to the prelates of the church an example that they are to agree to negotiate over ecclesiastical goods only by way of dispensation, not for profit, advantage or honour. Sometimes he had money for himself and the disciples to teach it is not sinful for the servants of God to have money provided they have not vowed a higher way of life.²⁰

Whoever, therefore, lacks money for the sake of Christ, walks on a stricter and more difficult path and is more remote from the dangers of the world; so we read that among the disciples of Christ the only one to perish was the one who had money. Whoever have money only for the sake of others, have money without any prejudice to perfection; they choose, as much as it is possible, to be without money. But when, authorized by the authority of the Church, they keep money only by way of dispensation, preserving for themselves the strictness of the poor, and are generous towards others in the duties of their office, this way of having money is most necessary for the Church, although the many people who journey by this way illustrate clearly just how dangerous it is. Those who own money for themselves have money with a condition of imperfection, similar to Christ in having money but not in the manner of having it, and so they are not able in this to glory among the poor on the peak of perfection. Whoever lack money for the sake of Christ can be consoled in the Lord, for they alone preserve in this world that perfection of evangelical poverty commended to the apostles. Whoever have money only for others, as executors of the mercy of Christ are to be highly praised, if they *touch pitch* but do not get *dirty* [Sir 13:1]. However, whoever have money for themselves, the closer they come to evangelical perfection, so much the more are they content with little as they put aside the treasure of money.²¹

The prohibition against money

And while this opinion on money seemed to me to be probable, I began to question in what part of the gospel is such a strict statement on poverty contained. The Senior gave me a clear answer as I asked about the gospel of Matthew: *Take no gold, or silver, or copper in your belts, no bag for your journey, or two tunics, or sandals, or a staff* [10:9-10]; by referring to a

¹⁸ This quotation comes from *Glossa Ordinaria*, according to Nicholas of Lyra, quoting Beda, *In Marci evangelium expositio*, l. 4, c. 14 (PL 92, 279); Bonaventure, *Defense*, ch. 4, n. 10, pp. 68-69.

¹⁹ Page 67, footnote 3.

²⁰ *Expositio super regulam*, c. 4, n. 6. 11. 12 (8, 414, 416).

²¹ This is based on the Senior, *Expositio super regulam*, c. 4, n. 6 ff. (8, 414ff.) with some changes.

staff the Lord forbade any kind of weapon. Jerome²² says in a commentary on this text,

if they had these things they would be seen to preach not for the sake of the salvation of people but for profit. Christ almost eliminates the necessities of life so that the apostles might be seen as doctors of true religion who were teaching that everything is governed by divine providence, and they took no thought for the morrow.²³

For these reasons Christ committed them to such poverty:

- first, so that all suspicion would be taken from them as they preached, as they sought no earthly payment and even refused what was offered to them;
- second, so that they would recognize the virtues of Christ and show themselves to his servants as ones who minister without necessary human provisions;
- third, so that in a radical way they might tear out from their hearts the avarice which is found in an abundance of movable and immovable possessions, *seeking their own interests* [Phil 2:21] in personal possessions and in what is held in common;
- fourth, so that casting all the cares of their hearts on the Lord, they would be nourished by God's mercy;
- fifth, so that they might renew in themselves the state of innocence, in which, should a person stand firm in it, all things would be held in common, and no property would be contracted to a group or a single person;
- sixth, so that they might give people an example of most perfect generosity and piety, because, as Jerome²⁴ says, no one spends money in a more perfect way than one who keeps nothing back for oneself.

You will find these reasons attributed to those who are holy in evangelical perfection.²⁵

In these divine words some things were imposed as precepts, some were allowed or conceded.²⁶ Everything relating to poverty and severity was imposed as precepts, and the apostles observed these even after the Lord's passion; in Acts, Peter said to the poor person begging for an alms: *I have no silver or gold* [3:6], on which text a *Gloss*²⁷ adds: 'He said this mindful of the precept of the Lord who said: "Take no gold or silver"'. Ambrose on Luke, chapter ten,²⁸ and Augustine, *De mirabilibus sacrae scripturae*²⁹ in the second last chapter, explain this text of Acts in the same way. Almost all the Greek and Latin doctors hold the same opinion.³⁰ This is clear in the life of John the Evangelist as used in the Roman church; it is

²² Rabanus Maurus, *Commentarius in Matthaeum*, l. 3, c. 10 (PL 109, 893), following Jerome's commentary on the same passage (PL 26, 64).

²³ Bonaventure, *Defense*, ch. 7, n. 10, pp. 134-135.

²⁴ *Epistola* 52, n. 16 (NPNF 6, 96).

²⁵ *Expositio super regulam*, c. 4, n. 3 (8, 412-413) with some changes.

²⁶ *Expositio super regulam*, c. 4, n. 4 (8, 413-414).

²⁷ *Ordinaria*, from Beda, *Super Acta Apostolorum expositio*, c. 3 (PL 92, 951).

²⁸ Ambrosius, *Expositiones in Lucam*, l. 7, n. 55 (PL 15, 1800).

²⁹ Augustinus, (Pseudo), l. 3, c. 16 (PL 35, 2200); Bonaventura, *Expositio super regulam*, c. 4, n. 4 (8, 413).

³⁰ Bonaventure, *Defense*, ch. 7, n. 12, pp. 136-137.

also said of Thaddaeus the Apostle in *Ecclesiastical History*;³¹ it is recorded in the life of the apostles Simon and Jude which is readily available; it is not in the life which a certain apocryphal writer wickedly abbreviated.³²

What Matthew adds: *stay there until you leave* [10:11], refers to what Luke says: *eating and drinking whatever they provide* [10:7]; this is a permission because in this text no necessity to live from the gifts of others is imposed on the apostles. Otherwise Paul would have acted against this for sometimes, walking in a higher way, he provided for himself by the work of his hands, but he observed what was of precept. Chrysostom says in *De laudibus Pauli*³³: ‘Paul had no money for he said: *To the present hour we are hungry and thirsty* [1 Cor 4:11]’. This distinction between precept and permission can be seen in the words of Chrysostom commenting on the text of Matthew: *Take no gold etc* [10:9]: ‘To all who strip themselves of everything he gave everything, allowing those who have nothing to enter and stay in the houses of others’,³⁴

The poverty of bishops

But, I ask you, Senior, when the bishops followed the apostles, how was it lawful for the bishops who succeeded the apostles to have gold and silver, if this was not lawful for the apostles? The Senior³⁵ answered: Your question is good: know, therefore, that the command of poverty and severity was not imposed on the apostles as prelates but as founders of the general Church; because they were sent to stamp out all the bases of greed in the world, it was necessary that in them would shine forth a complete contempt for the world; when, however, they were sent out they were not yet prelates nor even priests. When they received the keys after Our Lord’s passion they set up prelates to stay in the churches, and these were never forbidden to have what is necessary for life; they were also commissioned to care for the poor. The lion goes ahead and is followed by the rooster, while in the third place comes the spider, each happy to move in order as stated in Prov 30:28-31. This is why, as Gregory³⁶ says, in the first place:

Christ came as symbolized by the lion, then the rooster, that is, the apostles prophesying in the middle darkness, and finally the spider, that is, the spiritual fathers, the prelates of the churches, the leaders of the flocks.

The prelates, therefore, are the successors of the apostles in eminence of authority, in the duty of virtue, holiness and the pastoral office, but not in the form of that severe discipline and duty of poverty. Bernard³⁷ in *De consideratione* said to Pope Eugene: ‘There is no room for idleness as long as the *anxiety for all the churches* [2 Cor 11:28] presses. Did the holy apostle leave you anything else? He said: *What I have I give you* [Acts 3:6]. What else? I know one thing: Not gold nor silver, since he said: *I have no silver or gold*. You may lay claim to such things for yourself by

³¹ Eusebius, book 1, ch. 13 (FOTC 19, 81).

³² *Expositio super regulam*, c. 4, n. 4 (8, 413); and Bonaventure, *Defense*, ch. 7, n. 33, pp. 156-157.

³³ *Argumentum epistolae primae ad Corinthios*, Homilia 13 (PG 61, 107).

³⁴ For the preceding see *Expositio super regulam*, c. 4, n. 4 (8, 413); Bonaventure, *Defense*, ch. 7, n. 12, pp. 136-137.

³⁵ *Expositio super regulam*, c. 4, n. 13 (8, 416); Bonaventure, *Defense*, ch. 7, n. 20, pp. 143-145.

³⁶ *Moralia*, l. 30, c. 3, n. 9 (PL 76, 528).

³⁷ L. 5, c. 6, n. 10 (PL 182, 748).

any reason other than by apostolic right; for he could not give you what he did not have.³⁸

The poverty of the first believers

I think I have satisfied your doubts by these arguments, the Senior said. I replied, I admit you have in part but I beg you to teach me further. We read of Augustine and other saints,³⁹ that they began to live according to the rule established by the holy apostles, as recorded in Acts 4:32-35:

Everything they owned was held in common; for as many as owned lands or houses sold them and brought the proceeds of what was sold. They laid it at the apostles' feet.

Notice, said the Senior:

The rule given to the apostles by the Lord is more severe and sublime than the rule set up under the apostles for the large number of believers in the early church, in which many men and women were gathered together.⁴⁰

Such severity of poverty could not in the beginning be imposed as a general rule on such a mixed group of people, since they were to be an example of perfection for the whole world. For these converts, saints indeed, all things were to be held in common; and to them is addressed the words which follow immediately in Acts: *With great power the apostles gave their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus* [4:33]. A Gloss⁴¹ says:

There is a difference between the order of teachers and hearers; for the multitude of believers, having renounced possessions, was bound together by the bond of love, while the apostles, resplendent in virtue, proclaimed the mysteries of Christ.

Therefore, Saint Augustine began to live under this very rule to which he wanted to draw a large number, so that as clerics they might serve the Lord without personal possessions; seeing, however, that they had personal possessions he tolerated this, as is recorded in causa XII, q. 1, canon *Certe ego*.⁴²

Monastic poverty

Moreover, the holy Augustine neither prescribed nor observed abstinence from wine and meat. Saint Benedict at a later date added many other exercises of perfection; nor is it surprising that later saints added even more to the monastic observance. It is stated that the proceeds of what was sold was placed at the feet of the apostles, not put into their hands nor kept in boxes; it was dispensed, however, whenever they so indicated. This

³⁸ *Expositio super regulam*, c. 4, n. 13 (8, 416).

³⁹ Bonaventure, *Defense*, ch. 7, n. 37, pp. 159-160.

⁴⁰ *Expositio super regulam*, c. 2, n. 7 (8, 415).

⁴¹ *Ordinaria*, from Beda, *Super Acta Apostolorum expositio*, c. 4 (PL 92, 594); Bonaventure, *Defense*, ch. 7, n. 32, p. 155.

⁴² Canon 18, causa 12, q. 1, from Augustinus, *Sermo* 355, c. 4, n. 6 (PL 39, 1570).

arrangement, ‘as an obstacle to preaching the word’, they handed over to others, as recorded in Acts 6:1-7.

Many ancient monks observed the apostolic poverty, as is explicitly stated in the first book of *De institutionibus patrum*.⁴³ So it is said that some of the Fathers, spurred on by a higher spirit and fervour, left the communities in which all things were held in common, and fled to the desert owning nothing but providing for themselves by the work of their hands or from the fruits of trees, as Paul the first hermit. Saint Gregory in the third book of *Dialogues*,⁴⁴ states that when many people offered him their possessions for the building of a monastery, he refused all of them ‘for he held to the strong teaching of the Lord and said: a monk who looks for possessions on earth is not a monk’. On Luke: *But now, the one who has a purse must take it and likewise a bag* [22:36], a Gloss says⁴⁵:

In this we have an example that sometimes, for a pressing reason, we can interrupt without any fault certain things from the rigor of our profession, for example, if we journey through inhospitable places, we may carry more things as supplies than when we remain at home.

How little one had at home who could take more as supplies!

Those saints, whom Saint Mark set up in Alexandria, held to this way of life, as one reads in *Ecclesiastical History*,⁴⁶ namely, that they first of all divided what was theirs among those in need so as to be freer to preach the word of God. It is much stricter to renounce completely both communal and personal ownership and to live sparingly,⁴⁷ which they did, than to renounce only personal ownership and own goods held in common with others, as Saint Benedict taught, imitating the group of followers of the apostles in Acts. Jerome in a letter to Heliodorus,⁴⁸ whom he was encouraging about monasticism, says:

You believe in Christ, and believe his words: *But strive first for the kingdom of God and all these things will be given to you as well* [Mt 6:33]. Do not take a bag or a staff with you; one who is poor with Christ is abundantly rich. Anyone searching the writings and deeds of the early saints will come across this; if you have further queries, ask with confidence.

The reasons for poverty

I said then to the Senior: I ask, since riches are created by the Most High and are good, why is their abdication so strongly recommended; sin is not in the amount of goods but in the affections,⁴⁹ and we read that certain holy people such as Abraham and Job abounded in riches. The Senior⁵⁰

⁴³ See rather Cassiodorus, *Historia tripartita*, l. 1, c. 11 (PL 69, 898).

⁴⁴ 3, n. 14 (FOTC 39, 131).

⁴⁵ Ordinaria, from Beda on Lk 22:36, *In Lucae evangelium expositio*, l. 6, c. 22 (PL 92, 601); *Expositio super regulam*, c. 4, n. 15 (8, 417).

⁴⁶ Eusebius, book 2, ch. 17 (FOTC 19, 112-113).

⁴⁷ Bonaventure, *Defense*, ch. 7, n. 4, pp. 127-128; *Expositio super regulam*, c. 1, n. 7 (8, 395).

⁴⁸ *Epistola* 14 (alias 1) n. 1 (PL 22, 348).

⁴⁹ Gregorius, *Moralia*, l. 10, c. 30, n. 49 (PL 75, 948).

⁵⁰ Bonaventure, *Defense*, ch. 7, n. 24 and 25, pp. 148-150.

answered: Know, you who ask, there are three main reasons for abandoning riches.

[First,] because riches owned tend to stir up pride in the soul of the owner. So Augustine, in *De lapsu mundi*,⁵¹ says: ‘With riches nothing is to be more carefully avoided than the sickness of pride. One who has no money does not have numerous resources and so does not have pride’. Add here what the Apostle says, *As for those who in the present age are rich, command them not to be haughty, or to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches* [1 Tim 6:17].

Second, because riches owned inflame avarice; ‘the love of money increases as wealth itself increases,’ as the poet says.⁵² And Bernard in a sermon⁵³: ‘The main reason for avoiding wealth is that it can be held but rarely, even never, without love. A person’s spirit is tenacious and easily clings on to all the things with which it is in contact.’ Mark says: *How hard it is for those who trust in riches to enter the kingdom of God* [10:24]; the same thing is stated in Luke 18:24.

Third, the possession of wealth destroys all pleasure which cannot be bought with money. So Luke says: *Woe to you who are rich, for you have received your consolation* [6:24].

Riches, therefore, are not evil ‘in their essence but from the circumstances’, according to Wisdom: *the creatures of God are turned to an abomination, and a temptation to the souls of men* [14:11 DRB].⁵⁴ Therefore, while certain few people have possessed wealth without sin, one should rather imitate the Lord of all and the best teacher, who taught us not to have wealth, not only to avoid sin, but to gain more effectively the kingdom of heaven.

The most effective remedy against the dangers just mentioned and others similar is the severity of evangelical poverty, namely, not to have anything of which one might boast externally or rely on finding a certain security in it; not to have even money, which once possessed strongly allures the soul of the owner; and not to have money available as a store of pleasures, or a deposit of money by which pleasures are more easily bought.

Gregory in a homily *De divite et Lazaro*⁵⁵ says of such poor people: ‘Mistress poverty torments the life of the poor until she leads them to righteousness’. Scandals teach us, examples abound and can be hidden by no subterfuge, how the danger of riches sneaks around in deposit boxes or in other goods kept in place of money. Touching on this in a funeral oration for Nepotianus, Jerome⁵⁶ says: ‘Some add money to money and, choking the purse, pursue the wealth of matrons in their obsequies’ etc. That wealth and money bring danger with them is taught from the many who abuse them, because fire burns all the stronger the less the fuel is dispersed.

⁵¹ *Sermo* 14 (alias 110 de tempore) c. 1, n. 2 (PL 38, 112).

⁵² Juvenal, *Satire* XIV, line 139, p. 275.

⁵³ Rather Gaufridus, *Declamationes de colloquio Simonis cum Jesu*, c. 2 (PL 184, 438).

⁵⁴ *Expositio super regulam*, c. 6, n. 17ff. (8, 423ff.).

⁵⁵ *Homiliarum in evangelium*, l. 2, homilia 40, n. 6 (PL 76, 1307).

⁵⁶ *Epistola* 60 (alias 3) n. 11 (PL 22, 596).

The use of shoes and sandals

Agreeing with the Senior in this I presented another scruple, wondering whether the Lord literally forbade the apostles to wear shoes.⁵⁷ The opinion of the eminent Augustine in the book *De haeresibus*⁵⁸ is different:

It is a heresy to walk with bare feet because the Lord said to Moses: *Remove the sandals from your feet* [Ex 3:5], and because the prophet Isaiah is said to have walked with bare feet [Isa 20:2-3]. This is a heresy not because the body is afflicted by walking in this way, but because they do not understand the divine words.

When I said this to the Senior, he replied,⁵⁹ these heretics were so named because they thought the words of God about bare feet, in Exodus, chapter 3 and Isaiah, chapter 20, were given to Moses and Isaiah as a law obliging them literally and to be observed by everyone, when the sense of the words applied only to these two persons. Rightly, therefore, were they called heretics because they so perverted the wisdom of the scriptures. During the time when riches and pleasure with temporal glory were allowed, it was not fitting to impose a regimen of such austerity on the multitude of weak people; but when the glory of the kingdom of heaven and the penance mentioned above were revealed, then bareness of feet was spoken of, not as something to be imposed on everyone but on the disciples and on those who wish to imitate them voluntarily as a certain foundation of penance, according to Matthew, *No sandals* [10:10]. Commenting on this text Jerome⁶⁰ gives the reason for it:

Plato laid down that the two extremities of the body are not to be covered nor should one pamper the softness of the head and feet; when these are strong, the rest of the body is more robust.

Jerome says the same thing to Eustochius⁶¹

The disciples were sent to preach the gospel without the burden of sandals and coverings of skins. The soldiers who divided the clothes of Christ by lot found no sandals to take; the Lord was not able to have what he had forbidden in his servants.

I would have agreed fully with the opinion of the Senior but I was prevented by the opinion of Saint Augustine expounding the same words of the gospel. He says firstly in *De consensu evangelistarum*⁶²: ‘When Matthew says sandals are not to be worn, he is preventing the worry of not having shoes when one feels that shoes have to be worn.’ Likewise, the Baptist says of the Lord in the gospel of John: *the one who is coming after*

⁵⁷ For the following see Bonaventure, *Defense*, ch. 10, n. 4, pp. 219-220; *Expositio super regulam*, c. 2, n. 19 (8, 403).

⁵⁸ C. 68 (PL 42, 42).

⁵⁹ *Expositio super regulam*, c. 2, n. 19ff (8, 403ff.).

⁶⁰ According to the *Glossa ordinaria* from Hieronymus, *In Matthaeum* 10:10 (PL 26, 65); see Bonaventure, *Defense*, ch. 10, n. 8, p. 225.

⁶¹ Epistola 22, n. 19 (PL 22, 406); Bonaventura, *Epistola de sandaliis apostolorum*, n. 2 (8, 386).

⁶² L. 11, c. 30, n. 75 (PL 34, 1114).

me, I am not worthy to untie the thong of his sandal [1:27]. And in Acts the angel said to Peter: *put on your sandals* [12:8], on which text a Gloss⁶³ says: ‘By the angel commanding and the apostle obeying, an example of not walking without shoes is given’.

On hearing this, the Senior said⁶⁴: Such words might influence the unskilled, unless one turns the eyes to the light in which their solution is evident. When Augustine says that the Lord in that text is preventing worry I admit this is true; the apostles, while still beginners, on being ordered to go without sandals could fear damage to their feet, or from bare feet to fear infirmity of the whole body; in such circumstances they might think of sandals as being a remedy for the future, and so begin to worry over this. In this way he restrained worry, nor was this all, for they could take, with the exception of sandals, what is allowed in Mark when the Lord said: *He ordered them to take nothing for their journey ... but to wear sandals* [6:9]. Bede⁶⁵ on the text of Acts: *put on our sandals* [12:7-8], says:

In the original Greek text the word used is *sandalia*, not *caligae* or *caligulae*; we read in the gospels that this kind of footwear was allowed to the apostles.

Papian⁶⁶ also says that ‘caligae are sandals’.

The Lord forbids any worry over the wearing of sandals and clothes, but in a different way for each; the Lord forbids worry over having several garments when he said: *do not put on two tunics* [Mk 6:9], that is, not several of the same garment; he forbids worry over sandals by forbidding their use simply and without any qualification. He does not say: not two pairs of sandals, as he says: *not two tunics*, but *no sandals*, simply, absolutely.⁶⁷ So the Lord said to the disciples on the eve of the passion: *When I sent you out without a purse, bag, or sandals, did you lack anything?* [Lk 22:35]. In this passage mention is made of each of them having money in their purses for a while, until the fury of persecution has passed, because according to a Gloss on this text, the Lord dispensed them, but about sandals neither here nor in other texts were they dispensed.

Regarding what you said about the word of the Baptist in the text, Rabanus⁶⁸ says in his commentary on Matthew that: ‘When John spoke of the sandals of the Lord, he referred to nothing other than his excellence and humility’.

This, therefore, does not imply that the Lord had sandals, but, by a certain figure of speech which is called synaeresis, Christ’s excellence in this is stated. Such things are said in everyday speech. The words of John are usually expounded in a mystical sense by the saints.⁶⁹

⁶³ *Interlinearis* on this text, see Bonaventura, *Epistola de sandaliis apostolorum*, n. 7, footnote 4 (8, 388).

⁶⁴ *Expositio super regulam*, c. 2, n. 21 (8, 404).

⁶⁵ *Liber retractationis super Actus Apostolorum*, c. 12, (PL 92, 1021).

⁶⁶ See Bonaventura, *Opera omnia*, note 14 (8, 306); see also Bonaventura, *Defense*, ch. 10, n. 7, p. 224.

⁶⁷ *Expositio super regulam*, c. 2, n. 21 (8, 404).

⁶⁸ *Commentarius in Matthaum*, l. 1, c. 3, (PL 107, 772).

⁶⁹ *Expositio super regulam*, c. 2, n. 22 (8, 404).

The sandals represent the assumed humanity used by the Lord to lead him into Edom [Ps 108:10].

We state further that Christ while a child or up to his thirtieth year in which he was baptized, wore sandals, but did not wear them when he forbade them to the disciples, and began to do and to teach [Acts 1:1].

And as Jerome⁷⁰ said as quoted already: ‘the Lord could not have what he had forbidden his servants to have’.

This is clear also in Luke where the woman who was a sinner began to bathe his feet with her tears, dry them with her hair and anoint them with ointment [7:44-46]. For this reason the Lord in excusing the sinful woman turned the offence back on the Pharisee who gave me no water for my feet. The excusing of the woman as well as the reproof to the Pharisee would have been pointless unless the Lord had walked around in bare feet.⁷¹

We read that Origen, *Ecclesiastical History*,⁷² walked for many years with bare feet because the Lord forbade the disciples to wear sandals; so Origen did the same. Also, Gregory Naziansenus in the book *De reconciliatione monachi*⁷³:

I wanted to see that holy and singing choir who live as an example to all of a better life, whose bearing displays the signs of virtues, bare feet and such things in imitation of the apostles, etc.

The objection you made from Acts has been solved. The interlinear *Gloss* already quoted, while it has no authority,⁷⁴ in whatever truth it has ought to direct one’s mind to the text in which reference is made not to any kind of shoe but only to *caligae* which are sandals as already stated.

And when the text says the angel told him to put on his sandals, the command is really to the mystery to which the Apostle refers in Ephesians: *As shoes for your feet put on whatever will make you ready to proclaim the gospel of peace* [6:15]. Here, according to a *Gloss*,⁷⁵ what is commanded is virtue signified by the sandals.

I have explained more carefully your objections about sandals, because whoever persists in a wrong understanding of the words of the gospel, is to be considered to be a heretic. Nor should you be influenced, as some are, at finding that Augustine in the book 83 *Quaestiones* says in question 84 that Christ wore sandals; I say, do not let this influence you since you are aware that in the *Retractationes*, in the second last chapter, he listed the names and number of those 83 questions, in which no such thing is mentioned. It is offensive in defending a lie to impute error to the saint, an error which cannot be drawn clearly from any part of the gospel; however, if, and may it not be the case, Saint Augustine clearly held this, it is better to stay with the clear text and with all the other Greek and Latin

⁷⁰ *Epistola* 22, n. 19 (PL 22, 405).

⁷¹ *Expositio super regulam*, c. 2, n. 17 (8, 403).

⁷² Eusebius, book 6, ch. 3 (FOTC 29, 11).

⁷³ *Oratio* 6, n. 2 (PG 35, 723).

⁷⁴ *Expositio super regulam*, c. 2, n. 17 (8, 402); Bonaventure, *Defense*, ch. 10, n. 7, p. 224.

⁷⁵ Petrus Lombardus, *In Epistolam ad Ephesios*, c. 6 (PL 192, 220).

doctors to whom this opinion is repugnant; in the same way his opinion about the altar of incense being placed inside the veil of the holy of holies, is not to be held, as is clear in Exodus 30:33.⁷⁶

Nor would the Catholic Doctor himself want to be held to such an opinion, for he says in a letter to Fortunatianus⁷⁷:

We should not hold as canonical, as if they were scripture, any teachings even by Catholics, as though it is not lawful for us to disprove or reject something in their writings if they speak anything other than the truth; this is how I act in reading the writings of others, and I want my readers to do the same.⁷⁸

The poverty of the Friars Minor

When the Senior had more than adequately explained this, I realized that the strict way imposed by Christ on the more perfect shone out in the life and habit of the Friars Minor mentioned earlier. Stirred by the desire for Christ, I hurried to join myself to their company, unless certain obstacles would hold me back. I explained these obstacles to the Senior; when, I said, the Lord forbade the disciples to have or carry money, the Friars Minor are not like the disciples of Christ who:

like other poor people, usually received money offered to them; by whose authority do the Friars Minor act in this way; by the authority of the disciples it was approved to receive money given for their household and to use it as they saw fit, even often, as is evident, beyond the rights of the benefactors; clearly they did receive money.⁷⁹

The Senior replied: You are wrong in what you say; the friars do not receive money; in the rule they vow, it is laid down that they may not receive money in any way for themselves or through an intermediary. And while it is lawful for money to be given for the needs of one of their company or for someone else, they themselves do not receive it; the money is not held in any way as theirs by right, but the right to the money remains with the person giving the alms; the donor, whenever he or she should so wish, can ask for it back, until such time as it is used for the needs of the friars. Therefore, it remains always as a possession of the one who gave the money. The law⁸⁰ says that ‘we can be said to own something, as often as we own with exclusive rights or can take steps to regain what is lost’. Therefore, the money given to the friars is never outside the right and ownership of the donor because the donor can always ask for it back as his or her own. To give and to receive are contraries, so no one gives completely unless one intends to deprive oneself of the ownership of the thing given, and no one receives it for oneself or through another, unless one intends to accept the ownership of it for oneself or through another to have as one’s own or in common. So a verse says:

⁷⁶ See the *Glossa ordinaria* on this text from Augustinus, *Quaestiones in Heptateuchum*, l. 2, c. 136 (PL 34, 643).

⁷⁷ Rather in *Letter 148* (FOTC 20, 235-236).

⁷⁸ *Expositio super regulam*, c. 2, n. 23 (8, 404).

⁷⁹ With a few changes from *Expositio super regulam*, c. 4, n. 16 (8, 417).

⁸⁰ *The Digest of Justinian*, vol. 4, book 41, 2, n. 52, p. 499.

No one gives you something without wanting to alienate it.
 Nor do you receive anything if you are unwilling to own it.
 For what is received as given is opposed to being restored.
 By giving one loses what one owns, and the receiver becomes the owner.⁸¹

Transferring and receiving ownership

But suppose that a servant known to a master gives money donated to the friars to another servant unknown to the master but with the advice and consent of the friars; this is clearly money received by the friars through an intermediary. But I say this is not so because the law⁸² says: ‘handing over should or can transfer nothing more to the one receiving than what the one giving has.’ Since, therefore, the first servant of the master held the money by the authority of the master, the second servant and even a hundredth servant, were it to pass through so many hands, would hold it in the same way, because the intention of the friars never to own money is to be protected always; also to be protected is the intention of the donor of the money who intends to meet the needs of the friars in every way which is honest, acceptable to the friars and possible. In this it is always necessary that in every way bad example be avoided.

Concerning what you have said, namely, that a donor intends to give up ownership of money given, I agree that this is intended but in such a way that it can be handed over to meet the needs of the friars; nor would ‘the donor want to cause the friars to transgress when he wants to have them as intercessors before God’.⁸³ Therefore, until the money is transferred to meet the needs of the friars, it remains a possession of the donor. Likewise a law⁸⁴ says:

The starting point when money is entrusted to you is: I permit you to use it, should you so wish, but the law says the ownership of the money is not yours until the transaction takes place.

Therefore, by the same argument in the question under discussion, if I have decided to give you money, should you so wish, it is not thought to be effectively given until, in a lawful way in accord with the intention of the donor, it is transferred to meet the needs of the friars; the friars then do not receive the money given as something they own of themselves or through an intermediary; not even if it is handed over to the personal keeping of the friars, provided they do not intend to acquire rights to the money nor separate it from the ownership of the donor. A law⁸⁵ states that:

It is the desire to possess which is to be weighed in alienating or acquiring ownership; if you share in a fund but have no wish to own it, you immediately lose ownership.

A law⁸⁶ also says that ‘a person who is insane does not begin to own because there is no desire to own’. When, therefore, the intention of the

⁸¹ *Expositio super regulam*, c. 4, n. 16 (8, 417).

⁸² *The Digest of Justinian*, vol. 4, book 41, 1, n. 20, p. 493.

⁸³ *Expositio super regulam*, c. 4, n. 21 (8, 418).

⁸⁴ *The Digest of Justinian*, vol. 1, book 12, 1, n. 10, p. 359.

⁸⁵ *The Digest of Justinian*, vol. 4, book 41, 2, n. 3, pp. 504-505.

⁸⁶ *The Digest of Justinian*, vol. 4, book 41, n. 1, p. 502.

friars is to acquire no ownership or rights for themselves, whenever money is entrusted to them, they do not receive it in any way as owners. I have said as owners but there is no prohibition against them holding money for the sake of others.

Donations and legacies

This applies to donations by the living and legacies of the dead. There is, however, this difference that a living donor in giving an alms always gives to someone for the needs of the friars, and until it is transferred the donor can recall it as belonging to himself or herself, and is also able to change his or her mind about giving; but with goods left in legacies the case is otherwise because the intention of the dead cannot change. Hence, if it were to happen that executors maliciously recall money from a legacy given to some friend of the friars to meet their needs, it does not have to be given back; this would be contrary to the last will of the donor, provided the money remains a possession of the dead person, as stated above for other money, until it be applied to the needs of the friars; the intention of the dying person was to leave it to the friars, in a way which is lawful, to meet their needs or necessities. If executors are unwilling to apply money left in a legacy to one of the faithful for the support of the friars, they can lawfully and without any injury to their perfection denounce to the prelates of the Church the fraud done to the dead person by such actions, but they cannot demand legally that it be restored to them as something belonging to them.⁸⁷

Money

The principal reason why the friars do not receive money is because the name money suggests ownership; for this reason Jupiter is called ‘money’ in the fables, as Saint Augustine teaches, in *The City of God*, VII, chapters 11 and 12⁸⁸:

While riches are heavenly and earthly, the name money suggests something which is only earthly; so by the name of money ‘a god is referred to in a most offensive and disparaging manner’, while, however, the god can rightly be said to be rich,

all of which is stated by Augustine in this book.⁸⁹

You may perhaps say,⁹⁰ that the friars use money by selling and buying, and they use many other things which are destroyed by their use of them; in such things the law does not distinguish use from ownership: therefore, the friars become owners of such things.

To this I reply, some use things by their own authority as true owners, some, such as servants, use things by someone else’s authority. A law⁹¹ says: ‘the clothing used by a servant is the private property of the master’; and another law⁹² says: ‘what is acquired by a servant is acquired by the

⁸⁷ *Expositio super regulam*, c. 4, n. 18 (8, 418).

⁸⁸ FOTC 8, 358-359.

⁸⁹ *Expositio super regulam*, c. 4, n. 20 (8, 418).

⁹⁰ *Expositio super regulam*, c. 6, n. 6 and 11 (8, 421 and 422).

⁹¹ *The Digest of Justinian*, vol. 1, book 1, 1, n. 25, p. 443.

⁹² *The Institutes of Justinian*, book 2, title 9, pp. 59-60.

master'. So the Friars Minor showing themselves to be servants for the sake of the name of Christ, in whatever they lack now, use the goods of others, thereby placing themselves in another's power *as aliens and exiles* [1 Pet 2:11]⁹³ in this world, imitating in this the most high Lord who *took on the form of a servant* [Phil 2:7] and, as Jerome says to Nepotianus⁹⁴: 'ate the food of others'. And it is certain that this one greater than us made a decision to stay outside the houses of others *and had nowhere to lay his most holy head* [Lk 9:58].

Therefore, the friars of whom you speak have a common use of certain things, but no ownership of these either personally or in common.

No ownership

And because, concerning the matter under discussion, a certain hesitation arose among the friars in the beginning of the Order, Pope Gregory IX, who claimed to know the intention of Saint Francis concerning the rule,⁹⁵ wanting to take away any ambiguity, explained the intention of the rule with these words:

We decree, that neither in common nor personally should they have ownership, but the Order has the use of utensils, books and other furnishings, which it is lawful for them to have. Nor should furnishings be sold or given away outside the Order or alienated in any way, unless the Cardinal of the Roman Church who at the time is the Protector of the Order, gives the authority or permission to the General or to the Provincial Ministers.

From this it is clear the ownership of the furnishings used by the Order, whether they be gifts from donors, or whether it be the money with which they were bought, is transferred and in every way belongs to the Apostolic See.

Likewise, concerning the use of money the same Pope says:⁹⁶

If the friars want to buy something they need, or pay for something already bought, they can pay the representative of the one from whom the purchase was made, or anyone from among those willing to give them alms; the one who is paid is not a representative of the friars, although paid by them, but the representative of the one who gave permission for the payment or purchase. If, however, a payment is to be made for other urgent needs, a friar, like an owner, can give an alms already donated to a particular or close friend by whom, as it is seen to be fitting, the payment is made at a place and time suitable to meet the needs.

Much gladdened, I spoke to the Senior again: You have truly made clearer than the sun what was obscure to me, but I am not able to understand, why at the very least those of whom you speak do not own in common their fixed furnishings, since in no way can these be considered to belong to the Apostolic See. For I see that frequently their monasteries and residences are built on the property of princes and barons and furnished

⁹³ See Rule, ch. 6, OSLF, p. 6.

⁹⁴ *Epistola* 52, n. 11 (PL 22, 536).

⁹⁵ Bull *Quo elongati* of 28 September 1230, Bullarium Franciscanum (1, 69).

⁹⁶ Gregorius IX, Bull *Quo elongati*, see Bonaventure, *Defense*, ch. 11, n. 137, p. 249-250.

with their goods, and, if the friars at some time are transferred, these places are added to the goods and buildings of the princes or barons.

The Senior⁹⁷ replied: My son, I want you to know that the houses of the friars, of which, as I see, you have asked, are sometimes built on the property of some lord, and paid for by him, in which case, there is no doubt that the houses belong to the lord. But sometimes they are built on the property of one and paid for by another; in this case the property belongs to one person and the building belongs to another. But if the buildings were constructed from alms freely given by several people, and since it is not sure who gave the alms, nor that they want to own the buildings or acquire them in any way, the ownership of such belongs only to the lord, as a law⁹⁸ states. Pope Gregory⁹⁹ says the same thing: ‘The ownership of the lands and buildings remains with those to whom it is known to belong’. By these words the Pope is not relaxing the rule, but declaring, as he says, ‘blessed Francis’ intention which he knew’, even though, the possibility of this rule and an observance in harmony with the life of the friars could be deduced from the force of civil law without a papal declaration. It is wrong to say¹⁰⁰ it cannot be observed by the friars, for a law¹⁰¹ also says that ‘laws are to be interpreted more kindly so that the purpose of the laws be preserved’, and again¹⁰²: ‘When the wording of a law is ambiguous, an interpretation which has nothing of evil in it is to be accepted’. Therefore, the use of money is possible without the friars receiving money, when it is understood according to their law and rule. The rule of the Friars Minor can be observed in this way without any scruple. Were one to say that the rule, which has apostolic approval,¹⁰³ cannot be kept, such a person is a heretic and is attacking the apostolic approval. Were one to say further that the words of Pope Gregory IX do not reflect the mind of the rule, such a person also is to be censured as a heretic for saying something contrary to the Pope; I repeat, a heretic, as is clear in XXII distinction, chapter *Omnes*,¹⁰⁴ and chapter *Sacrosancta*.¹⁰⁵

The poverty of clerics

Perhaps you will say further,¹⁰⁶ that in this the friars do not exceed the state of clerics, because a law¹⁰⁷ says that ‘no one can own what is of divine law’, and since all ecclesiastical goods are of divine law, it is clear, therefore, that clerics have only the use not the ownership of such goods.

But note that *The earth is the Lord’s and all that is in it* [Ps 24:1] but the goods of the Church belong in a special way to God. They are consecrated forever to the use of God’s ministers, and because

⁹⁷ Bonaventure, *A Letter in Response to three Questions of an Unknown Master*, pp. 48-49.

⁹⁸ *The Digest of Justinian*, vol. 4, book 1, 7, pp. 488-489.

⁹⁹ Gregorius IX in the Bull *Quo elongati*, in, *Bullarium Franciscanum* (1, 69).

¹⁰⁰ *Expositio super regulam*, in confirmatione regulae, (8, 437).

¹⁰¹ *The Digest of Justinian*, vol. 1, book 1, 3, n. 18, p. 12.

¹⁰² *The Digest of Justinian*, vol. 1, book 1, 3, n. 19, p. 13.

¹⁰³ *Expositio super regulam*, in confirmatione regulae (8, 437).

¹⁰⁴ Gratian, *Decretum*, pars prima, d. 22, c. 1 (PL 187, 123).

¹⁰⁵ Gratian, *Decretum*, pars prima, d. 22, c. 2 (PL 187, 123).

¹⁰⁶ *Expositio super regulam*, c. 6, n. 3 (8, 421).

¹⁰⁷ *The Digest of Justinian*, vol. 1, book 1, 8, n. 1, p. 24.

they are not the property of any single person because they do not properly belong to a person, but are owned by the Church as common property'.¹⁰⁸

Read what is written in XII q. 1 c. *Videntes*,¹⁰⁹ in the text and in the *Gloss*.

Perhaps you will say: This speaks against any business conducted by the Roman Church and its members, who, while giving up the right to ownership for the sake of perfection, are accused in general of an imperfection which reflects on the whole Roman Church, which is something presumptuous and profane. But, if you think back, this has been explained satisfactorily above,¹¹⁰ since to own only for the sake of others is not contrary to perfection; the Lord himself had money in this way, as is clear from his actions and their circumstances. The friars, however, as far as is possible for human frailty, imitate the poverty which the Lord lived, for the most part not having money.

Is the poverty of the friars something new?

While the words of the Senior pleased me in a way I did not understand, I said, from a sudden prompting of my heart, that he had described for me something beautiful but suspect, since it seems to be new in the world; for in Jeremiah is written: *Stand at the crossroads, and look, and ask for the ancient paths, where the good way lies; and walk in it* [6:16].

The Senior¹¹¹ replied: It is not a new thing but something renewed; I have stated above¹¹² in many ways that this was the way of life of the apostles, before that even of some of the pagan philosophers, and also of the most holy monks of long ago. Therefore this life is not something new, but the oldest of the old ways by which the Christian Church was founded. It is, further, *the glories of the ancestors* [Wis 18:24] and most truly a new life suitable to the fullest degree for renewing minds, Jeremiah says: *Break up your fallow ground, and do not sow among thorns* [4:3]; a *Gloss*¹¹³ adds 'which choke the word'; it is certain that wealth is represented by the thorns.

Four objections against poverty

On hearing these words, my soul was so filled with happiness that I decided to join these friars straight away, but certain things rushed immediately into my mind, which delayed my decision. Going again to the Senior for advice I said that while I greatly wanted to pursue the study of wisdom I could see many obstacles to this in these friars:

- first, because the variety of offices which occupied the bulk of their day left little time for pursuing the places where wisdom resides;

¹⁰⁸ *Expositio super regulam*, c. 6, n. 8 (8, 422).

¹⁰⁹ Namely, Gratian, *Decretum*, pars 2, quaestio 1, c. 16 (PL 187, 890), where is explained that the Church may have possessions, that the goods of the Church ought to be under the control of the bishops, in whose name they are considered to be goods of the Church, and also of the penalties laid down for those who take such goods.

¹¹⁰ See pages 68-70.

¹¹¹ *Expositio super regulam*, c. 1, n. 3 (8, 393).

¹¹² Pages 72-73.

¹¹³ *Biblorum sacrorum cum Glossa ordinaria cum postilla Nicolai Lyrani*, vol. 4, Venetiis, 1603.

- second, because the rule itself¹¹⁴ seemed to discourage study since it says: ‘Those who are illiterate should not be anxious to study’;
- third, because the rule seems to oblige the friars to corporal work;¹¹⁵
- fourth, the rule¹¹⁶ forbids them to own anything and consequently forbids them to acquire books; however, without some books and possessions a student cannot effectively develop the memory.

The Senior replied: I ask you to call to mind what has already been said from which it is clear that this way of life follows most exactly the lives of the most famous philosophers and, what is more, of the most famous among the saints, namely, the apostles and the Lord himself.¹¹⁷ From these two types of people can be seen examples of all human and divine wisdom; one type, therefore, is not better suited than the other for acquiring wisdom. Judas desiring money lost wisdom; therefore, the utmost freedom from money is the most suitable disposition for wisdom.

Concerning the variety of ecclesiastical offices you argue unwisely, since such an exercise of wisdom has not been put on you, as on those who, as directors of the Church, set up these offices and at the same time ruled the Church, resolved arguments and wrote books by which the Church was directed, as is clear especially in Gregory who set up these offices. The Roman Church also until today, dispensing wisdom and knowledge throughout the whole world, completing all its main duties, venerates the Most High by the discharge of this variety of offices. For what reason then, poor mortal, do you desire lesser praise? For sure, sloth, laziness, presumption and foolishness are responsible for forming such fantasies in the mind. You hold, certainly, that the merit of divine praises is excellent, and, consequently, that a lessening of praise argues for a lessening of merit.¹¹⁸

You have rather recklessly spoken out in the second objection, since it forbids lay friars who are not suited for study and are unable to read from a rash attempt to study.¹¹⁹ This cannot be applied to clerics; because the rule¹²⁰ instructs preachers that ‘their words should be examined and chaste. They should aim only at the advantage and spiritual good of their listeners, telling them briefly about vice and virtue, punishment and glory’. It is certainly necessary for one to study if one must weigh one’s words and be able to distinguish virtues and vices from one another because virtues and vices sometimes have to be identified with subtlety.

What you have touched on with regard to manual work¹²¹ should not disturb you at all for the rule¹²² says : ‘The friars to whom God has given the grace of working’; it does not say all the friars are to work, nor does it say that all the friars to whom the Lord has given the grace of teaching are to work but not to teach; had the rule said this it would be contrary to 1 Peter: *Like good stewards of the manifold grace of God, serve one another*

¹¹⁴ Ch. 10, OSLF, p. 63.

¹¹⁵ Ch. 5, OSLF, p. 61.

¹¹⁶ Ch. 6, OSLF, p. 61.

¹¹⁷ *Expositio super regulam*, c. 1, n. 3 (8, 393); *Sermo super regulam Fratrum Minorum*, n. 15 (8, 441).

¹¹⁸ *Expositio super regulam*, c. 3, n. 2 (8, 407).

¹¹⁹ *Expositio super regulam*, c. 10, n. 6 (8, 433).

¹²⁰ Chapter 9, OSLF, p. 63; see *A Letter in Response to an Unknown Master*, n. 6, p. 46.

¹²¹ What follows is found in *Expositio super regulam*, c. 5, n. 1ff. (8, 419ff.).

¹²² Ch. 5, OSLF, p. 61.

with whatever gift you have received [4:10]. In this question take note that work, as spoken of in the rule, is concerned with three things, namely, to avoid idleness, to nourish the spirit of devotion and to provide the necessities of life from the returns for work done. By manual labour idleness is excluded from the body but not from the heart; it is not unusual for labourers to reflect in their hearts on most shameful matters and to speak of them with their lips. For this reason *physical training is of some value* [1 Tim 4:8], while spiritual exercises have much value for they exclude idleness from the heart, because as Ecclesiastes says: *much study is a weariness of the heart* [12:12]. This type of exercise is especially envisaged in the words¹²³: ‘The friars ... should work ... to avoid idleness, which is the enemy of the soul’ etc. This type of spiritual meditation and exercise fosters devotion according to the text: *While I mused, the fire burned* [Ps 39:3]. No returns for work are better than those of which Luke speaks: *the labourer deserves to be paid* [10:7].¹²⁴ Nevertheless, it is fitting that those who have not received a higher grace should be engaged in manual work according to the grace given them.

Your question on books is answered in what has already been said above. The friars may and should have the use of books necessary for doctrine, books specified by persons skilled in doctrine, provided they do not own them in such a way that they become the property of the Order for, as has been said, by right they belong to someone else.

The office of preaching

On hearing this reply from the Senior in which he touched on preaching, I questioned him further on this subject, because out of a love for truth I wanted to consecrate myself to the office of preaching. I said to him: It is by accident that the office of preaching is found in that Order because it does not pertain essentially to the friars to preach; so, it would be better for me to exercise this office in another way of life. Likewise, bare feet would prevent one from going out to preach during winter; bareness of feet is a hindrance to preaching and to other good things which are normally provided for the poor. For this reason, preachers must give an example of life, and eating meat is in the main a pleasure of the world; austerity of life cannot, therefore, be upheld by the example of such a life.

The Senior answered¹²⁵: Your first observation comes from much unhappiness of heart. Know, therefore, that the office of preaching belongs to the Church and in a particular way to prelates; hence, the office of a bishop is to be occupied ‘with reading and prayer and preaching’, as stated in a canon, 88 distinction, cap. *Episcopus nullam*¹²⁶; for the office of preaching demands not only a way of life and knowledge, but also authority and jurisdiction over others. Only prelates have the personal authority and duty to preach from the very fact that they are prelates; others cannot preach without permission from the Apostolic See or from other prelates of the Church. Such a permission to preach is given more fittingly

¹²³ Rule, ch. 5, OSLF, p. 61.

¹²⁴ *Expositio super regulam*, c. 5, n. 3 (8, 420).

¹²⁵ See Bonaventure, *Defense*, ch. 12, n. 9ff, and *A Letter in Response to an Unknown Master*, n. 11, p. 51.

¹²⁶ Gratianus, *Decretum*, pars 1, d. 88, c. 6 (PL 187, 318).

to those who, by reason of their way of life, belong to an Order more directed towards preaching both from the nature of the Order and the intention of the founder; I say the nature of the Order because it is not the monk's way of life to preach, because neither from their rule nor by statute do they have this office, but they act correctly when they are sent to preach officially as long as their way of life and knowledge support their preaching. However, this does not belong to them in so far as they are monks but in so far as they are clerics, as is clear in Jerome,¹²⁷ in the chapter *Monachus*. It applies more to those belonging to an Order which contains this permission in its statutes confirmed by the Apostolic See. It applies even more to those who have this permission from their rule which is the final foundation of religious profession provided the same rule is confirmed by the Apostolic See. This is the case with the friars of whom you speak as is clear from their rule which, in its ninth chapter treats of the accepting, style and effect of the office of preaching. Since, however, their way of life is most similar to the way of life of the apostles, namely, the main preachers, none are more apt for preaching.¹²⁸ If you enquire further about the intention of the Founder, even though it is clear in the rule, know, nevertheless, that blessed Francis was inspired to follow this life style before he wrote the rule; so a hymn¹²⁹ to Francis says: 'Holy Francis, from earlier efforts in prayer, was shown what he was to do, namely, not to live for himself alone, but, led by zeal for God, to help others'; and even before the writing of the rule Pope Innocent III commanded him and the friars to exercise the office of preaching.¹³⁰ The friars, therefore, have the office of preaching not from imitating or because of others but from the fact of who they are.

Words about bare feet are in vain, since it was with bare feet the truth of the faith was spread through the whole world.¹³¹ Hence Jerome says in *Epistola ad Geruntiam*¹³²: 'The disciples were pilgrims in the whole world without coins in their purses or sandals on their feet'; From this word of Jerome it is clear that the disciples had no shoes as they went through the whole world and not just in Judea. However, a certain person in error held the contrary opinion.¹³³ He was unaware that bare feet did not refer to the physical feet but to a strong discipling of the body and to an effective example inspiring in others a desire for penance.¹³⁴ Learn, you also, to serve the Lord *cold and naked* [2 Cor 11:27], especially because there is no corner of the earth to which Christians have access, be it among the Tartars, the Greeks, the barbarians or even among the Saracens, which the

¹²⁷ *Contra Vigilantium*, n. 15 (PL 23, 367): 'The duty of a monk is not to teach but to lament'.

¹²⁸ Bonaventure, *A Letter in Response to an Unknown Master*, n. 3, p. 44; *Defense*, c. 7, n. 5, p. 128; *Determinationes quaestionum*, pars 1, q. 2 (8, 338).

¹²⁹ *Officium S. P. Francisci*, antiphona 1 ad Laudes, p. 589.

¹³⁰ When Innocent III confirmed the first rule without a Bull, 'he gave them a mission to preach repentance'; see Bonaventure, *Major Life*, part 1, ch. 3, n. 10, OSLF, p. 653; Celano, *First Life*, book 1, ch. 13, n. 33, OSLF, p. 255; Celano, *Second Life*, book 1, ch. 11, n. 17, OSLF, p. 377; see also *The Rule of 1221*, ch. 17, OSLF, p. 44.

¹³¹ For the following see *Expositio super regulam*, c. 2, n. 18 (8, 403).

¹³² *Epistola* 123, n. 15 (PL 22, 1057).

¹³³ See Bonaventura, *Epistola de sandaliis apostolorum*, especially note 1, n. 1 and 16 (8, 386 and 390).

¹³⁴ See Bonaventure, *Defense*, c. 10, n. 8, p. 224.

friars have not visited, everywhere bringing benefit to souls;¹³⁵ hence, the eleventh chapter of the rule speaks of going among the Saracens and other unbelievers. Note also in this matter that the rule¹³⁶ itself in case of ‘manifest necessity or infirmity’ not only allows one to wear shoes but even to ride, remedies sometimes necessary for weak feet; this is true in summer more than in winter for the reason that ‘heat more than cold compacts more tightly the clods of earth, when the intensity of heat increases as the sun rises higher in the sky and the intensity of cold decreases’;¹³⁷ if you wish you can put this to the test.

Regarding your query about eating meat, note¹³⁸ that it is fitting for those who profess penance to abstain at all times from eating meat, so that weakness may be experienced, and this from the example of the Church, which is accustomed to abstain from meat in times of penance. It is right for the friars, by reason of high poverty, to flee from luxuries of food and clothing and to remain innocent in thought not judging nor despising others, whom they see using luxuries;¹³⁹ for this reason the friars have a statute from their General Chapter,¹⁴⁰ allowing only the weak and the sick to eat meat in a friary. But because it is expedient for the poor when begging not to be troublesome to those who receive them, the rule¹⁴¹ says, as do the gospels, it is lawful to eat what is offered to them as they go through the world; 1 Thessalonians says: *though we might have made demands as apostles of Christ [2:7]* etc. Therefore, it is not right for those who are not apostles nor share in their authority, to be troublesome to the faithful; consequently, such poor act in a much better way when they are content with what is offered them at the table of others less fortunate and poorer than themselves, taking as their rule the edification of others and the duty of poverty. And I know from experience, that to use most strictly meat put before one, as should those who profess most high poverty, is much more difficult for a hungry person than, forgoing meat, to satisfy oneself with other kinds of food. To act in this way is much closer to the way of life of him who fasted most severely in the desert but in company deigned to eat the same food as others [Mt 4:1ff., and 11:9 and 19], than to feign abstinence exteriorly while relaxing it at home.¹⁴² Gregory¹⁴³ on the text of Job: *and he shall strew gold under him like mire [41:21 DRB; 41:30 NRSV]*, says:

When virtue comes to the notice of others, undoubtedly it is praised and its praise is eagerly desired; so it happens that a virtue is not virtue in the eyes of God when it hides what displeases God and publicizes what pleases God. What merit can there be before God when evil is hidden and good made public?

¹³⁵ *Expositio super regulam*, c. 2, n. 18 (8, 403).

¹³⁶ Chs 2 and 3, OSLF, pp. 58-60.

¹³⁷ *Expositio super regulam*, c. 2, n. 18 (8, 403).

¹³⁸ *Expositio super regulam*, c. 2, n. 26 (8, 406).

¹³⁹ Rule, ch. 2, OSLF p. 59.

¹⁴⁰ See *The Constitutions of Narbonne*, Rubric IV, n. 4, p. 89.

¹⁴¹ Ch. 3, OSLF p. 60.

¹⁴² *Expositio super regulam*, c. 2, n. 26 (8, 406).

¹⁴³ *Moralia*, l. 34, c. 15, n. 29 (PL 76, 734).

Hold, therefore, for certain that this way of life as lived by the Lord himself and recommended in the apostles, is holier than other ways of life, and if well observed, more effective in moving hearts and further from the danger of hypocrisy, a vice refuted by the Lord in the gospels before other vices. Hold also for certain that many living another way of life do preserve, in my opinion, an innocence of heart as they are pleasing to God.

The way of life in the Order

Hearing these things my heart was quieted; but I wanted to be further consoled in considering this way of life. So I asked the Senior who had given his answers, to explain to me the way of life and the arrangement of that Order; I said: Tell me, if that Order was heralded by some visions. Tell me, further, if a person professed in that Order is allowed to transfer to another Order, is it allowed for one professed in that Order to enter another Order? In brief show me what are the customs which the friars of that Order are, by the grace of God, to adopt.

Smiling, the Senior answered: *The wild asses stand on the bare heights, they pant for air like jackals* [Jer 14:6], and those who take glory in visions during sleep are inflated by a great gust of wind; the wise say: *dreams give wings to fools, for dreams have deceived many* [Sir 34:1 and 7]. I do not speak in this way because I consider that visions are to be completely rejected, and certainly not those of the saints who were not deceived by dreams. If, therefore, you aspire to the way of life of St Francis, there you will find an abundance of visions which are not old folk tales but are most sure and holy. Being surer than any vision, you are to respect the gospel way of life of the apostles, a way of life expressly commended by the sign of the Crucified, namely, the stigmata in the body of blessed Francis. I regard Francis, leaving aside other mysteries, to be the person of the sixth day made in the image of God,¹⁴⁴ and to be the angel of the sixth seal showing to mortals the sign of God *ascending from the rising of the sun* [Rev 7:2]. He is the youngest son of Jacob, namely, Benjamin in whose sack Joseph's golden cup was found [Gen 44:12]; and Jerusalem was built in the area of his tribe [Josh 18:28]. He is Kohath the son of Aaron, whose sons were given no wagons or oxen [Num 7:9] because they were to carry on their shoulders the secrets of the sanctuary; Kohath means penance.¹⁴⁵ He is Othoniel,¹⁴⁶ which means a sign of God, the younger brother of Caleph; Caleph¹⁴⁷ means a dog representing the apostles according to the text: *so that the tongues of your dogs may have their share from the foe* [Ps 68:23] etc; he is the one who struck Kiriath-sepher,¹⁴⁸ which means a city of learning, and who merited to have revealed to himself the things hidden from the wise and the prudent [Mt 11:25]. Francis is certainly the dog of Tobias [Tob 11:4], for the reason that by wagging its tail it announced the returning of the one whom it had followed

¹⁴⁴ See Bonaventura, *Sermo 3 de S. P. Francisco* (9, 584).

¹⁴⁵ See Hugo a S. Charo, *Commentarius in Matthaem*, 13, 11.*

¹⁴⁶ See Origen, *In librum Iesu Nave*, Homilia 20, n. 6 (PG 12, 927): 'Othoniel, who accepted the city of letters, means "the reply of God"'; see also Origen, *Exodus*, homilia 5, n. 2 (FOTC 71, 278).

¹⁴⁷ Hieronymus, *De nominibus hebraicis* (PL 23, 837).

¹⁴⁸ See Hieronymus, *Epistola* 108, n. 11 (PL 22, 886).

when he set out, because in the form of apostolic preaching, by which one follows the Lord, the leader of the way, he preached loudly as did the apostles, separating the wolves from the flock of the Lord. Francis announced the return of the judge by running ahead with the tail wagging and foretold the perseverance of the Order until the end of time.¹⁴⁹ He, without doubt, is Medus refusing gold and not asking for silver.¹⁵⁰ He fulfilled these and other types as you can discover if you become a diligent searcher of the Scriptures.

The Pope has replied to your second question by confirming the rule¹⁵¹ which says:

It is absolutely forbidden to leave the Order, as his holiness the Pope has laid down. For the gospel tells us, *No one who puts a hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God* [Lk 9:62].

This would be invalid if professed members of that way of life were free to look back and enter any other way of life, thereby serving God less than they have promised in this way of life. From this it follows, no one voluntarily leaving this way of life and voluntarily remaining outside it is to be thought to be in a state leading to salvation. Were any who have left voluntarily or who have been expelled, to strive with all their strength and with long perseverance to be readmitted to the Order, and if this grace is denied them, they will be able to save themselves in some other way of life which is highly reputable, provided that, as far as they can, they persevere with the intention of returning.

Obligations in the way of life

It is now clear what must be said of obligations: since vows and oaths must be faithfully kept. Unless there be a suitable substitution given by a dispensation, those bound to this Order would sin mortally were they to enter another Order with the intention of remaining in it permanently; the reason for this, as is clear above, is that gospel perfection is not equal in any other. They sin also who support them, like those who *have ripped open pregnant women in Gilead* [Amos 1:13], and, in my opinion, are bound to restitution before God; and in vain do they defend themselves with apostolic permissions obtained with lies.¹⁵²

Finally, I will set out briefly for you the way of life which you will have to observe should you wish to enter this Order. Above all, know you must be magnanimous in virtue, not being content to observe some degree of virtue, but you are to strive, as much as possible, to fly in everything to the peak of the virtues. This I explain to you in a sixfold perfection, which I think of as represented in the six wings of the Seraph who, as one crucified, appeared to Blessed Francis.

[First], the rule states the first virtue is obedience, not any obedience, but an obedience which copies the obedience of Our Lord just as his human weakness suffered when he humbly obeyed the Father even to

¹⁴⁹ See Thomas of Eccleston, *Chronicle*, p. 95.

¹⁵⁰ See Tobias, chapter 12.

¹⁵¹ Ch. 2, OSLF p. 58.

¹⁵² *Expositio super regulam*, c. 2, n. 13ff. (8, 401ff).

death.¹⁵³ While, therefore, others are accustomed to obey within the limits of stability of place, not according to a rule vowed, know, you will have no right to any place, nor can any place be beyond the demands of obedience. Know that you will not be able to claim with validity that anything is above the duty to obey, unless it be contrary to the rule, or to your salvation in general, or from some evident special reason. Know, moreover, the more severe, humble and abhorrent to the flesh is whatever is imposed on you by obedience, the more ready for it should you be in your heart; you should decline obediences which suit you.¹⁵⁴ This is perfect obedience to which you will be bound; this is what it means to observe the holy gospel in obedience. In this way you will ensure that whatever you do is done in obedience to a superior, so that, when you do something good, merit is always doubled because it comes from a meeting of two virtues, namely, from the root of love and the foundation of obedience.

Second, the rule states that you are to live without property¹⁵⁵ and in strictest poverty as is clear from what follows in the rule, not allowing yourself to possess anything which in any way is presented to you from a motive of avarice, pleasure, or pride. You are not to have cellars, vineyards, granaries, or any resources apart from those demanded by present and evident need, not a possible but an actual need of clear necessity. Houses are not to be grand, grounds unnecessarily large, nor, as can easily happen, are you to have other things of much value. And, to finish briefly, you are not to claim anything which you can avoid without spiritual danger; all this comes from the duty of most holy poverty.¹⁵⁶

Third, in the same rule, there is put before you chastity which is equivalent to avoiding a serious action or a suspicious association, and further to take care never to see, hear or speak with a woman, when this can be avoided without danger to conscience. You will think of this as trivial if your thoughts are purified with tears. Every feeling, not only sensual feelings, which are contrary to freedom of spirit or are distracting, you will treat as leading you to forsake the Lord [Hos 1:2]. In such turmoil your only comfort is to be sorrow, your recreation fasting, laziness is to be abominable to you, pleasures abhorrent, while vigils and long drawn out prayers you are to love with all your heart.¹⁵⁷

Fourth, you are to live humbly wearing poor clothing and the tenor of your conversation is to make it clear that you despise only yourself; you are to want to reverence every person, dignity, especially prelates of the church, that you are deeply ashamed when you see someone bearing himself or herself more humbly than you. You can hardly be forced to take the higher places, you will sincerely want the lower places. When praised you will hear it as the song of the Sirens; you will refer to what is good in yourself and the brothers only when forced to do so; when necessary you will speak the truth without adornment of eloquence, not attributing any research to yourself, nor would you utter a word without sorrow in your heart if you think the word would lead people to think of you as holy or

¹⁵³ *Expositio super regulam*, c. 1, n. 5-6 (8, 394).

¹⁵⁴ See Bonaventure, *Instructions for Novices*, ch. 14, n. 2, p. 171.

¹⁵⁵ Ch. 1, OSLF p. 57.

¹⁵⁶ *Expositio super regulam*, c. 6, n. 15 (8, 422); *Determinationes Quaestionum*, p. 1, q. 6 (8, 341).

¹⁵⁷ *Expositio super regulam*, c. 1, n. 9 (8, 396); Bonaventure, *Instructions for Novices*, ch. 13, p. 170.

wise. Nor can this aspect of humility satisfy you, but you are to want ‘not to be spoken of as humble but as base;¹⁵⁸ you are not to do anything deliberately by which you might merit to be highly thought of by people, provided the effectiveness of teaching and good example does not forbid this. This depth of humility is implied in the name Minor, which clearly places you below every other person.¹⁵⁹

Fifth, in the same rule there is taught a peaceful simplicity, hurting no one by word or deed, never repaying evil with evil, rejecting every involvement in the world, hardly tolerating an exalted position, and trying to accept evils which happen as acts of God. Holy simplicity is unsatisfied unless one tries to pardon those who trouble us, to love them genuinely, to show this love by action and sign, and to pray for sinners. This involves not speaking or acting in a frivolous or impetuous manner, but trying with an undivided attention to seek the glory of the Redeemer.¹⁶⁰

Sixth, the rule imposes charity, that is, to support, when necessary, the brothers without exception as members of one’s family, to take care of the sick, to correct sinners with mercy, to seek in the office of preaching the salvation of souls with a strong zeal and untiring effort of body, to carry an unshakable care in one’s heart, and above all to desire to cling to the Lord and what pleases the Lord, held by bonds of holy devotion and fervent love, to use this life to the point of weariness for the salvation of people and to desire to offer one’s life and blood to the Most High from the action of a hostile hand. All of this you can find in the same rule¹⁶¹ if you give yourself to it as a careful reader.

On hearing this I said to the Senior: As I understand it, you have collected the peaks of all the virtues; setting out from *the slopes of Gilead* you have led me *to the mountain of myrrh and the hill of frankincense* [Cant 4:1 and 6]; there is nothing more my soul could desire. You have shown me the Shunammite *comely as Jerusalem terrible as an army with banners, all of them shields of warriors* [1 Kings 1:3; Cant 6:4 and 4:4]. *This is my resting place forever; here I will reside, for I have desired it* [Ps 132:14], a place of wisdom and virtue. But does one who vows this rule, vow also all these marks of perfection and all that they imply?

The Senior answered¹⁶²: All friars, by professing the rule of Blessed Francis, do not vow to observe everything contained in it as being of obligation by precept, since it contains many things which are clearly requests and exhortations. They do vow, however, to observe the rule according to the intention of the Founder, whose intention was clearly to impose certain things in the rule to be observed by the friars as obligatory, and they vow to observe these in every detail; but some things in the rule are admonitions, and they do not vow to keep them in every detail, but they regard them as exhortations helpful for salvation. Therefore, they vow the

¹⁵⁸ See Bernard, *Sermons on the Canticle of Canticles*, Sermon 16, p. 158; see Bonaventure, *On the Perfection of Life addressed to Sisters*, ch. 2, n. 1, p. 216.

¹⁵⁹ *Expositio super regulam*, c. 1, n. 2, and c. 4, n. 12 (8, 393 and 416); *Letter containing Twenty-five Points to Remember*, n. 7-8, pp. 254-255.

¹⁶⁰ *Expositio super regulam*, c. 3, n. 12 (8, 410); and *Sermo super regulam*, n. 9 and 32 (8, 437 and 446).

¹⁶¹ *Expositio super regulam*, c. 5, 6, 7 and 9 (8, 419-431).

¹⁶² *Expositio super regulam*, c. 1, n. 3 (8, 393).

whole rule, part of which is to be observed as necessary, parts of it they observe out of reverence for discipline.

The gates to the city of God

Having grasped the garment of the truthful man, I said: I will go with you, for I have heard that God is with you, *and the name of your city shall be, the Lord is there* [Zech 8:23 and Ezek 48:35; 48:31ff; Rev 21:12ff].¹⁶³ You will find twelve gates in the city, because there are twelve chapters in the rule of which three face the east:

1. the first is the beginning of religious life by the profession of the gospel;
2. the second is the beginning of the growth of the Order through the reception of those entering;
3. the third is the formation of those received into the discipline of the way of life.

Likewise, three face the north:

1. the first keeps out the danger of Judas abusing money;
3. the second takes away the danger of a false way of life from living in idleness;
3. the third removes the danger of the common sickness of wanting to own things in common.

Likewise, three face the west:

1. the first gives a remedy for friars who sin;
2. the second provides for the general administration in all details;
3. the third through preaching distributes bread to all outside the Order.

Likewise, three face the south, the region of light and heat:

1. the first teaches us to observe the total perfection of every virtue, especially of charity;
2. the second teaches us to preserve a sincere good name especially from the sin of impurity;
3. the third teaches all who thirst for the trials of martyrdom to go to the unbelievers, leaving one's home behind.

These gates pleased me greatly, each being adorned with a precious stone of the apostles. And because I saw that *the city lies foursquare* [Rev 21:16] and could not be changed, that *its lamp is the Lamb* [Rev 21:23], and one of its citizens could not easily be in darkness and that it abounded in the fruits necessary for health, *One thing I asked of the Lord, that will I seek after: to live in the house of the Lord all the days of my life* [Ps 27:4].

¹⁶³ *Expositio super regulam*, c. 1, n. 1 (8, 393).

APPENDIX

ABBREVIATIONS

DRB	<i>The Holy Bible</i> . Douay Rheims translation of the Bible.
FOTC	The Fathers of the Church. Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 1941.
NPNF	Nicene and Post Nicene Fathers. New York: Christian Life Company, 1890.
NRSV	<i>The Holy Bible</i> . New Revised Standard Version. In the present work the abbreviations for the names of the books of the Bible are the abbreviations used in the NRSV.
OSLF	<i>English Omnibus of the Sources for the Life of St Francis</i> . Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1987.
PG	J. P. Migne, ed., <i>Patrologia Graeca</i> , Paris, 1857-1866.
PL	J. P. Migne, ed., <i>Patrologia Latina</i> , Paris, 1841-1855.

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