

# **THE PERFECTION OF THE SPIRITUAL LIFE**

by

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translated by

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under the title

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## **PROLOGUE**

### **In Which Is Set Forth the Author's Intention**

#### **In Undertaking this Work**

As certain persons, who know nothing about perfection, have nevertheless presumed to publish follies concerning this state, it is our purpose to draw up a treatise on perfection, explaining what is meant by the term; how perfection is acquired; what is the state of perfection; and what are the employments befitting those who embrace this state.

## **CHAPTER I**

### **That the Perfection of the Spiritual Life Is to Be Understood Absolutely**

#### **(*simpliciter*) According to Charity**

AT the outset of our work we must bear in mind that the word “perfect” is used in several senses. A thing may be absolutely perfect (*simpliciter*), or it may be perfect relatively (*secundum quid*). That which is perfect absolutely attains the end to which, according to its own nature, it is adapted. That which is relatively perfect is that which attains to the perfection of one of those qualities which are concomitant to its own nature. Thus, an animal is said to be perfect absolutely when it attains to its end in so far as to lack nothing necessary to the integrity of animal life, when, for instance, it possesses the requisite number and the proper disposition of its limbs, and the faculties necessary for performing the operations of animal life. An animal is, on the other hand, perfect relatively, if it be perfect in any attribute concomitant

to its nature, its colour, for instance, its odour, etc.

In the spiritual life a man may be called perfect absolutely, *i.e.* perfect in that wherein the spiritual life principally consists. He may, also, be perfect relatively, *i.e.* perfect in some quality which is a condition of the spiritual life. Now, the spiritual life consists, principally, in charity. For he that is without charity is spiritually nought. Hence St. Paul says (1 Cor. xiii. 2), “If I should have all prophecy, and should know all mysteries and all knowledge; and if I should have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity I am nothing.” And the blessed apostle John declares, that the whole spiritual life consists in love, saying, “We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren. He that does not love abides in death” (1 John iii. 14). Therefore, he that is perfect in charity is said to be perfect in the spiritual life absolutely. But he that is perfect relatively is perfect in something incidental to the spiritual life This is evident from the words of Holy Scripture.

St. Paul considers charity as the chief element in perfection. He enumerates several virtues, such as mercy, benignity, and humility, and then concludes by saying, “But above all these things, have charity which is the bond of perfection” (Col iii). Some men are also said to be perfect in point of understanding, “In malice be children and in sense be perfect,” writes St. Paul to the Corinthians (1 Epist. xiv. 20). Elsewhere in the same epistle, he bids them “be perfect in the same mind and in the same judgment” (1 Cor. i. 10); although, as has been said, a man who has perfect knowledge, without charity, must be judged to be nothing. Thus also, a man may be said to be perfect in patience which “performs a perfect work,” as St. James says, perfect also in other virtues. There is nothing surprising in this manner of speaking, for persons may be perfect in their vices. Thus we may talk of a man being “a perfect thief” or “a perfect robber.” Indeed, this mode of expression is used in Holy Scripture, for Isaias says, “his heart (*i.e.* the heart of the fool) will work iniquity to perfect hypocrisy” (xxxii. 6).

## CHAPTER II

### **Perfection Is Understood to Mean Both the Love of God, and the Love of Our Neighbour**

THE perfection of the spiritual life may be understood as signifying principally perfection, as it regards charity. Now there are two precepts of charity, one pertaining to the love of God; the other referring to the love of our neighbour. These two precepts bear a certain order to each other, proportioned to the order of charity. That which is chiefly to be loved, by charity, is the Supreme Good, which makes us

happy, that is to say, God. In the next place, we are, by charity, to love our neighbour, who is, by certain social bonds, united to us, either by the anticipation of beatitude, or in the enjoyment of it. Hence, we are bound in charity to love our neighbour, in order that, together with him, we may arrive at beatitude.

Our Lord establishes this order of charity in the Gospel of St. Matthew (xxii. 37), where He says, "Love the Lord your God with your whole heart and your whole soul and your whole mind. This is the first and greatest commandment; and the second is like to this: love your neighbour as yourself." Thus, the perfection of the spiritual life consists, primarily and principally, in the love of God. Hence the Lord, speaking to Abraham, says, "I am the Almighty God; walk before me and be perfect" (Gen. xvii. 1). We walk before God, not with bodily footsteps, but with the affections of the mind. The perfection of the spiritual life consists, secondarily, in the love of our neighbour. Therefore when our Lord had said, "Love your enemies" (Matt. v. 44), and had added several other precepts regarding charity to our neighbour, He concluded by saying, "Be therefore perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect."

### **CHAPTER III**

#### **The Perfection of Divine Love Which Exists in God Alone**

IN each of the two divisions of charity there are many degrees. As regards the love of God, the first and supreme degree of perfection of Divine love belongs to God alone. This is the case on account both of the One who is loved, and of the one who loves. It is the case on account of the loved one, because every object is loved in proportion to the qualities which make it lovable. It is the case on account of the lover, because an object is loved in proportion to the whole capacity of the one who loves. Now, as every object is lovable in proportion to its goodness, the goodness of God, which is infinite, must be infinitely lovable. But no creature can love infinitely, because no finite power is able to elicit an infinite act. Therefore, God alone, whose power of loving equals His Goodness, can love Himself perfectly in the first degree of perfection.

### **CHAPTER IV**

#### **The Perfection of Divine Love Which Exists in Those Who Have Attained to Beatitude**

THE only mode of loving God perfectly which is possible to rational creatures, is the mode which belongs to him that loves. In this manner a rational creature loves

God with all the completeness of his nature. This is made clear in the precept of Divine love. We read in Deuteronomy (vi. 5), “Love the Lord your God with your whole heart, and with your whole soul and with all your strength.” St. Luke (x. 27) adds, “and with all your mind”; as if the “heart” regulated the intention, the “mind” the thought, the “soul” the affections, and the “strength” the activities. For all these must be devoted to the love of God. We must remember that this precept may be fulfilled in a two-fold manner. When anything is perfect, nothing is wanting to it. Hence, when the love of God is complete and perfect, He is loved with the whole heart, and soul, and strength; so that there is nothing within us which is not actually turned to God.

This perfect mode of love is not possible to those who are on the way to Heaven, but only to those who have reached their goal. Hence, St. Paul writing to the Philippians says (chap. iii. 12), “Not as though I had already attained, or were already perfect; but I follow after, if I may by any means apprehend.” He writes as if he were hoping for perfection when he should have reached his goal, and when he should have received the palm of the blessed. But St. Paul does not use the word “attaining” in the sense of entire possession or perfect comprehension, for God in this sense is incomprehensible to every creature. By “attaining” he means reaching the end which he has been following and seeking. In Heaven, the understanding and the will of every rational creature is turned to God; since it is in the fruition of the Godhead that the beatitude of Heaven consists. For beatitude exists not in habit, but in act. And, since the rational creature will in Heaven cleave to God, the Supreme Truth, as to its last End, all its activities will, by intention, likewise be directed to that Last End, and will all be disposed towards the attainment of that End. Consequently, in that perfection of happiness, the rational creature will love God with its whole heart; since its whole intention in all its thoughts, deeds, and affections, will be wholly directed to Him. It will love God with its whole mind, for its mind will be ever actually fixed on Him, beholding Him, and seeing all things in Him, and judging of all things according to His truth. It will love God with its whole soul, for all its affection will be uninterruptedly fixed on Him, and for His sake it will love all things. It will love God with all its strength, since His love will be the motive governing all its exterior acts. This, then, is the second mode of perfect love, and this love is the portion only of the blessed.

## **CHAPTER V**

### **The Perfection of Divine Love Which is Necessary to Salvation**

THERE is another way in which we love God with our whole heart and soul and strength. We so love Him, if there be nothing in us which is wanting to divine love,

that is to say, if there is nothing which we do not, actually or habitually, refer to God. We are given a precept concerning this form of Divine love.

First, we are taught to refer everything to God as to our End by the words of the Apostle (1 Cor. x. 31), “Whether you eat or drink, or whatsoever else you do, do all to the glory of God.” We fulfil this precept when we order our life to the service of God; and when, in consequence, all our actions are, virtually, directed to Him, save those that are sinful, and which, therefore, withdraw us from Him. While we act thus, we love God with our whole heart.

Secondly, we love God with our whole mind, when we subject our understanding to Him, believing what has been divinely transmitted to us, according to the words of St. Paul (2 Cor. x. 5), “bringing into captivity every understanding unto the obedience of Christ.”

Thirdly, we love God with our whole soul, when all that we love is loved in God, and when we refer all our affections to the love of Him. St. Paul expresses this love in the following words: “For whether we be transported in mind it is to God, or whether we be sober, it is for you; for the charity of Christ presses us” (2 Cor. v. 13).

Fourthly, we love God with our whole strength, when all our words and works are established in divine charity according to the precept of St. Paul, “Let all your things be done in charity” (1 Cor. xvi. 14). This, then, is the third degree of perfection of divine love, to which all are bound of necessity and by precept. But the second degree is not possible in this life, save to one who, like Our Lord Jesus Christ, is, at the same time, both travelling on the road to Heaven, and enjoying the happiness of the Blessed.”

## **CHAPTER VI**

### **The Perfection of Divine Love Which is A Matter of Counsel**

WHEN St. Paul had said to the Philippians, “Not as though I had already attained, or were already perfect,” he continued, “but I follow after, if I may by any means apprehend.” Shortly afterwards he added, “Let us therefore, as many as are perfect, be thus minded.” From these words it is plain that, although the perfection of the blessed is not possible to us in this life, we ought, nevertheless, to endeavour, as far as we can, to emulate it. Now, it is in this effort that consists the perfection in this life, to which we are invited by the counsels.

It is abundantly clear, that the human heart is more intensely attracted to one object, in proportion as it is withdrawn from a multiplicity of desires. Therefore, the more a man is delivered from solicitude concerning temporal matters, the more perfectly he

will be enabled to love God. Hence St. Augustine says (*De Diversis Quaestionibus Octaginta Tribus*, Lib. lxxxiii. Quest.1) that, the hope of gaining, or keeping, material wealth, is the poison of charity; that, as charity increases, cupidity diminishes; and that, when charity becomes perfect, cupidity ceases to exist. Hence, all the counsels which call man to perfection tend to withdraw his affections from temporal objects; so that, his soul is enabled the more freely to turn to God by contemplating Him, loving Him, and fulfilling His will.

## CHAPTER VII

### **The First Means of Perfection, Viz.: the Renunciation of Earthly Possessions**

THE first among the material possessions to be renounced are those extrinsic goods that we call riches. Our Lord counselled us to relinquish them when He said, "If you would be perfect, go, sell all that you have and give to the poor, and you shall have treasure in Heaven; and come, follow me" (Matt. xix. 21). The utility of this counsel is evident. First, we have the evidence of a fact. For, when the young man who was inquiring about perfection heard the words of Christ, he went away sad. And "Behold," says St. Jerome in his commentary on St. Matthew, "the cause of this sadness. He had many possessions, which, like thorns and briars, choked the seed of the Lord's words." St. Chrysostom, writing on the same passage, says that, "they who possess but little, and they that abound in riches, do not encounter the same obstacles; for the renunciation of wealth enkindles a more mighty fire and causes avarice to grow greater." St. Augustine likewise says, in his epistle to Paulinus and Therasia, that "when earthly things are inordinately loved, those that we already possess fetter us more closely than those that we desire; for why did this young man go away sad, save because he had great possessions? For, it is one thing not to be anxious to acquire the things that we lack, but quite another to be ready to divest ourselves of those that we possess. For the things that are not ours we can repudiate as extrinsic to ourselves, but our own possessions are dear to us as the limbs of our body."

The utility of this counsel is again shown us by those words of our Lord, "A rich man shall hardly enter into the Kingdom of Heaven." St. Jerome tells us the reason of this difficulty. "It is," he says, "because it is hard to despise the riches that we possess. Our Lord does not say that it is impossible, but that it is *hard*, for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of Heaven. For difficulty does not mean impossibility, but signifies infrequency of performance." And, as St. Chrysostom, says on the Gospel of St. Matthew, If the Lord goes further, proving that it is impossible, "For," He says, "it is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of Heaven." "From these words," says St. Augustine (*lib.*

*de Quest. Evang.*), “the disciples understood that all they that covet riches are included in the number of the rich; otherwise, considering how small is the number of the wealthy in comparison to the vast multitude of the poor, they would not have asked, “Who then shall be saved?”

From these two utterances of Our Lord it is clearly evident, that he that possesses riches, will, with difficulty, enter into the Kingdom of Heaven. For, as He says elsewhere (Matt. xiii. 22), “The cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the Word, and it becomes fruitless.” In truth, it is impossible for those to enter Heaven who love money inordinately. Far easier is it for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle. The latter feat would indeed be impossible without violating the laws of nature. But if a covetous man were admitted into Heaven it would be contrary to Divine Justice, which is more unfailing than any natural law. Hence, we see the reasonableness of Our Lord’s counsel; for a counsel is given concerning that which is most useful, according to the words of St. Paul (2 Cor. viii. 10), “Herein I give my advice, for this is profitable for you.”

If we wish to attain eternal life, it is more advantageous for us to renounce our possessions than to retain them. They that possess wealth will hardly enter into the Kingdom of Heaven; the reason being that it is difficult to prevent our affections from being attached to riches, and that such an Attachment makes admission into Heaven impossible. Therefore, Our Lord, with good reason, has counselled the renunciation of riches as our most profitable course.

It may be objected, however, that St. Matthew St. Bartholomew, and Zaccheus were rich; nevertheless, they entered into Heaven. St. Jerome replies, that, “we must remember that they had ceased to be wealthy at the time of their admission to Heaven.” Abraham, however, never lost his wealth, but, as we read in Genesis, died a rich man, bequeathing his property to his sons. How then could he be perfect? Nevertheless God said to him, “Be perfect” (Gen. xvii. 1). This question cannot be answered if we hold that it is the mere renunciation of wealth which constitutes perfection. For, if such were the case, no one who was rich could be perfect. Our Lord does not say that perfection lies in giving up what we possess, but He mentions this renunciation of our possessions as a *means* to perfection. We see this by His own words, “If you would be perfect, go, sell all that you have and give to the poor, and follow me.” The following of Christ constitutes perfection; the sacrifice of riches is a means to perfection.

St. Jerome, commenting on the Gospel of St. Matthew, says, “As if to show that merely giving up our possessions does not suffice to make us perfect, Peter mentions that wherein perfection consists, when he says, ‘We have followed you.’” Origen, again, says on the same passage, “We are not to gather from the words, ‘if

you would be perfect' that when a man has given his goods to the poor, he becomes perfect at once. What we are to understand is, that from that time, his contemplation of God begins to attract him to all virtues." A rich man may be perfect if his affections be not entangled in his possessions, but devoted entirely to God. In this way Abraham was perfect. Although he possessed wealth, he was detached from it. The words of the Lord spoken to him, "Walk before me and be perfect," make it clear, that the perfection of the Patriarch was to consist in walking before God, and in loving Him with a love so perfect that it reached to contempt of himself, and of all that belonged to him. So perfect, indeed, was his love of God, that he showed it by his readiness to slay his son. Wherefore the Lord said to him, "Because you have done this thing, and have not spared your only begotten son for my sake, I will bless you" (Gen. xxii. 16).

If anyone should still argue, that the counsel of Our Lord concerning the renunciation of possessions is futile, because Abraham, though a rich man, was perfect, we will refer him for an answer to what has been already said. Our Lord, we repeat, did not mean, by this counsel, that rich men cannot be perfect, or cannot enter into the Kingdom of Heaven; but He meant that they cannot do so easily. The virtue of Abraham was very great; for, although possessed of great wealth, his heart was detached from riches. The virtue, likewise, of Samson was eminent, for, armed only with the jawbone of an ass, he slew many of his enemies; nevertheless the instruction which he gave to the soldier to take up arms in combat with his foes, was not unprofitable. Neither, then, is it useless to counsel those that seek perfection to part with their earthly goods, although Abraham was perfect with all his wealth.

We must not draw conclusions from wonderful deeds; for the weak among us are more capable of wondering at and praising such deeds, than of imitating them. Hence we read in Sirach xxxi. 8, "Blessed is the rich man who is found without blemish; who has not gone after gold, nor put his trust in money nor in treasures." This passage proves that the rich man who does not sin by covetousness, nor by pride, must, indeed, be a man of tried virtue, with a heart adhering closely, by perfect charity, to God. St. Paul bids Timothy to "charge the rich of this world not to be high-minded, nor to trust in the uncertainty of riches"(1 Tim. vi. 17). The greater the blessedness and the virtue of the wealthy who obey this behest, the smaller is their number. Thus Sirach (xxxii) speaking of a virtuous and yet a wealthy man, says: "Who is he, and we will praise him? for he has done wonderful things in his life." For truly, he who, while abounding in riches has not set his heart upon his treasures, has indeed done wonderful things, and without the shadow of a doubt has proved himself perfect. The same chapter of Sirach continues, "Who has been tried thereby," that is to say, who has been tested as to whether he can live a sinless life in the midst of wealth, "and made perfect." This is as much as to say: "such a man is

indeed rare, and his virtue will merit for him eternal glory.” This test of Sirach bears out the saying of Our Lord, that a rich man shall hardly enter into the Kingdom of Heaven.

This, then, is the first means of attaining perfection, to wit the-renunciation of riches, and the profession of poverty, from a desire of following Christ.

## CHAPTER VIII

### **The Second Means of Perfection Which is the Renunciation, of Earthly Ties and of Matrimony**

IN order the more clearly to understand this second means of perfection, we should reflect on the words of St. Augustine which occur in xii. *de Trinit.*: “The less a man loves his private possessions, the more closely will he cleave to God.” Hence, according to the order of the things which a man sacrifices for the love of God, will be the order of those things which will enable him to adhere perfectly to God.

The things to be first given up, are those least closely united to ourselves. Therefore, the renunciation of material possessions, which are extrinsic to. our nature, must be our first step on the road to perfection. The next objects to be sacrificed will be those which are united to our nature, by a certain communion and necessary affinity. Hence, Our Lord says, “If any man comes to me, and does not hate his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brothers, and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple “(Luke xiv. 26).

But, as St. Gregory says, “It is permissible to inquire how we can be commanded to hate our parents and kinsfolk, when we are bidden to love even our enemies? If, however, we carefully consider this precept, we shall be able to obey it by means of discretion. For, when we refuse to listen to one who, savouring earthly things, suggests to us to do what is wrong, we at the same time love him and hate him. Thus we must bear this discreet hatred towards our kinsfolk, loving in them what they are in themselves, and hating them when they hinder our progress towards God. For, whosoever desires eternal life must, for the love of God, be independent of father and mother, of wife, children, and relations, yea, detached from self, in order that he may the better know God, for whose sake he loses sight of every other. For it is but too clear, that earthly affections warp the mind, and blunt its keenness.”

Now amongst all relationships the conjugal tie does, more than any other, engross men’s hearts. So that our first parent said (Gen. ii. 24): “A man shall leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife.” Hence, they who are aiming at perfection, must, above all things, avoid the bond of marriage, which, in a pre-eminent degree,

entangles men in earthly concerns. This is the reason which St. Paul gives for his counsel concerning continence. “He that is without a wife, is solicitous for the things that belong to the Lord, how he may please God. But he that is with a wife, is solicitous for the things of the world, how he may please his wife” (1 Cor. vii. 32).

Therefore, the second means whereby a man may be more free to devote himself to God, and to cleave more perfectly to Him, is by the observance of perpetual chastity. But continence possesses the further advantage of affording a peculiar facility to the acquirement of perfection. For, the soul is hindered in its free access to God, not only by the love of exterior things, but much more by force of interior passions. And, amongst these passions, the lust of the flesh does, beyond all others, overpower reason. Hence in *Soliloquiorum* (lib. 1) St. Augustine says, “I know nothing which doth more cast a manly soul down from the tower of its strength, than do the caresses of a woman, and the physical contact essential to marriage.” Thus, continence is most necessary to perfection. It is the way pointed out by St. Paul (1 Cor. vii. 25), “Concerning virgins I have no commandment of the Lord, but I give counsel, as having obtained mercy of the Lord to be faithful.”

The advantage of virginity is also shown in St. Matthew (xix. 12). When the disciples said to Our Lord, “If the case of a man with his wife be so, it is not expedient to marry,” He answered, “All men take not this word but those to whom it is given.” By these words we see the difficulty involved in continence, and the inadequacy of human virtue to lead such a life without the grace of God. We read in the Book of Wisdom (viii. 21), “I knew that I could not otherwise be continent except God gave it; and this also was a point of wisdom to know whose gift it was.” This saying is also borne out by the words of St. Paul (1 Cor. vii. 7), “I wish all men were as myself” (i.e. a virgin), “but everyone has his proper gift from God; one after this manner, and another after that.” In these words he distinctly asserts that continence is a gift of God.

But, lest anyone should, on the other hand, fail to use his own endeavour to obtain this gift, our Lord exhorts all men to it. He first gives an illustration, saying, “There are eunuchs who have made themselves eunuchs”; “not,” as St. Chrysostom explains, “by mutilation, but by resisting evil thoughts.” Then Christ goes on to invite all men to follow this example, for the sake of its reward. “There are some,” He continues, “who have made themselves eunuchs for the Kingdom of Heaven.” The Book of Wisdom also says (iv. 2), “The chaste generation triumphs, crowned for ever, winning the reward of undefiled conflicts.” Finally, Our Lord exhorts men to continence, by the words, “He that can take, let him take it.” “This,” says St. Jerome, “is the voice of the Lord encouraging his soldiers to win the prize of chastity. It is as if He said: he that can fight, let him fight and conquer.”

If anyone should object to us the example of Abraham, and of other just men of old, who were perfect without refraining from matrimony, we will answer them in the words written by St. Augustine in his book, *de bono conjugali*. “The continence that is a virtue is that of the mind, not of the body. And virtue is sometimes revealed in deeds, and sometimes lies disguised as a habit. The patience of John who did not suffer martyrdom was equal in merit to that of Peter who was slain; and Abraham who fathered sons, was equal in continence to the virgin John. The marriage of the one and the celibacy of the other fought, each in their season, for Christ. Therefore, any one of the faithful who observes continence may say, “I am certainly no better than Abraham; but the chastity of celibacy is superior to the chastity of married life. Abraham practised the one actually, the other habitually. For he lived chastely as a husband, and could have lived continently had he been unmarried. The latter state, however, did not befit the time at which he lived. It is easier for me not to marry at all, (although Abraham married) than to live such a married life as he lived. Therefore, am I better than they, who could not, by continence of heart, do what I do; but I am not better than they, who, on account of the different time at which they lived, did not what I do. Had it been fitting, they, in their time, would have accomplished far better than I, that which I now do; but I, even were it now required, could not do what they achieved.”

This conclusion of St. Augustine agrees with what has already been said about poverty. For Abraham had arrived at such perfection that his heart never wavered. in love to God on account either of temporal possessions or of wedded life. But if another man who has not reached this height of virtue, strives to attain perfection, while retaining riches and engaging in matrimony, he will soon be made aware of his error in presuming to treat Our Lord’s words as of small account.

## CHAPTER IX

### **Aids to the Preservation of Chastity**

SINCE chastity is so difficult a virtue that, in Our Lord’s words, not all men “take it,” but those only “to whom it is given,” it is necessary for those who desire to live a life of continence, so to conduct themselves as to avoid all that might prove an obstacle in the prosecution of their design. Now there are three principal hindrances to continence. The first arises from the body. The second from the mind. The third from external circumstances, whether they be of persons or of things.

The body is an obstacle to continence. As St. Paul says, “The flesh lusts against the Spirit” (Gal. v. 17), and “the works of the flesh are fornication, uncleanness, unchastity and the like.” Concupiscence is that law of the flesh, of which, in his

epistle to the Romans, St. Paul says, “I see another law in my members fighting against the law of my mind” (Rom. vii. 23). Now the more the flesh is pampered, by superabundance of food, and by effeminacy of life, the more will its concupiscence increase. For, as St. Jerome says, “A man heated with wine will quickly give the rein to lust.” The book of Proverbs warns us against wine as “a luxurious thing” (Prov. xx.1). Job, again, tells us that Behemoth (by whom Satan is signified) “sleeps under the shadow, in the covert of the reed and in moist places” (chap. xl. 16). St. Gregory (33 *Moral.*) thus interprets this passage. “Moist places,” he says, “betoken voluptuous works. We do not slip on dry ground; but, we have no sure foothold on slippery soil. Hence, those men pursue the journey of this present life in moist places, who cannot hold themselves upright in justice.” He, then, who desires to undertake a life of continence, must chastise his flesh, by abstention from pleasure, and by fasts, vigils, and such like exercises.

St. Paul sets before us his own conduct as an example in this respect, “Every one who strives for mastery, refrains himself from all things... I chastise my body and bring it into subjection, lest, perhaps, when I have preached to others, I myself should become a castaway” (1 Cor. ix. 25), What the Apostle practised in deed, he taught in word. In his Epistle to the Romans (xiii. 14), after his warning against “chambering and impurities,” he concludes, “make no provision for the flesh in its concupiscences.” He rightly lays stress upon the concupiscences of the flesh, i.e. its desire for pleasure; for it is incumbent on us to make provision for what is necessary for our body, and St. Paul himself says (Eph. v. 29), “No man ever hated his own flesh, but he nourishes and cherisheth it.”

An obstacle to continence arises also from the mind, if we dwell on unchaste thoughts. The Lord says by His prophet, “Take away the evil of your devices from my eyes” (Isa. i. 16). For, evil thoughts often lead to evil deeds. Hence the Prophet Micah says (ii. 1), “Woe to you who devise that which is unprofitable,” and he immediately continues, “and work evil in your beds.” Amongst all evil thoughts, those which most powerfully incline unto sin, are thoughts concerning carnal gratification. Philosophers assign two reasons for this fact. First, they say, that as concupiscence is innate in man, and grows with him from youth upwards, he is easily carried away by it, when his imagination sets it before him. Hence Aristotle says (2 *Ethics*), that “we cannot easily judge of pleasure, unless we enjoy it.” The second reason is given by the same philosopher (3 *Ethics*), “Pleasure is more voluntary in particular cases than in general.” It is clear that by dallying with a thought we descend to particulars; hence, by daily thoughts we are incited to lust. On this account St. Paul (1 Cor. vi 18) warns us to “Flee from fornication”; for, as the Gloss says, “It is permissible to await a conflict with other vices; but this one must be shunned; for in no other means can it be overcome.”

But, as there are many obstacles in the way of chastity, there are also many remedies against such obstacles. The first and chief remedy is to keep the mind busied in prayer and in the contemplation of Divine things. This lesson is taught us in St. Paul's epistle to the Ephesians (v. 18), wherein he says, "Be not drunk with wine wherein is luxury; but be filled with the Holy Spirit, speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual canticles" (which pertain to contemplation), "singing and making melody in your hearts to the Lord" (whereby prayer is implied). Hence in Isaiah (xlviii. 9), the Lord says, "For by my praise I will bridle you, lest you should perish." For the divine praise is, as it were, a bridle on the soul, checking it from sin.

The second remedy against lust is the study of the Scriptures. "Love the study of Holy Writ," says St. Jerome to the monk Rusticus, "and you will not love the vices of the flesh." And St. Paul in his exhortation to Timothy (1 Tim. iv. 12) says, Be an example of the faithful in word, in conversation, in charity, in faith, in chastity," immediately adding, "Till I come, attend unto reading."

The third preservative against concupiscence, is to occupy the mind with good thoughts. St. Chrysostom, in his commentary on the Gospel of St. Matthew, says that, "physical mutilation is not such a curb to temptation, and such a source of peace to the mind, as is a habit of bridling the thoughts." St. Paul also says to the Philippians (iv. 8), "For the rest, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever modest, whatsoever just, whatsoever holy, whatsoever lovely, whatsoever of good fame, if there be any virtue, if any praise of discipline, think on these things."

The fourth help to chastity is to shun idleness, and to engage in bodily toil. We read in the book of Sirach (xxxiii. 29), "Idleness has taught much evil." Idleness is pre-eminently an incentive to sins of the flesh. Hence Ezechiel says (xvi. 49), "Behold, this was the iniquity of Sodom your sister, pride, fulness of bread, abundance, and idleness." St. Jerome likewise writes, in his letter to the monk Rusticus, "Do some work, that so the devil may always find you employed."

A fifth remedy for concupiscence lies in certain kinds of mental disquietude. St. Jerome relates, in the epistle quoted above, that, in a congregation of cenobites there dwelt a young man who could not, by means of fasting or any laborious work, free himself from temptations of the flesh. The superior of the monastery, seeing that the youth was on the point of yielding, adopted the following means for his relief. He commanded one of the most discreet among the fathers to constantly upbraid the young man, to load him with insults and reproach, and, after treating him thus, to lodge complaints against him with the Superior. Witnesses were called, who all took the senior father's part. This treatment was continued for a year. At the end of that time, the superior questioned the youth about his old train of thought. "Father," was

the reply, “I am scarcely permitted to live. How, in such straits, shall I be inclined to sin?”

A great obstacle to continence arises from extrinsic circumstances, such as constant intercourse with women. We read in Sirach (ix. 9), “Many have perished by the beauty of a woman, and hereby lust is enkindled as a fire..., for her conversation burns as fire.” And, in the same chapter, the following safeguard is proposed against these dangers: “Do not look upon a woman who has a mind for many, lest you fall into her snares. Do not frequent the company of a dancer, and do not listen to her lest you perish by the force of her charms.” Again (chapter xlii. 12), “Do not gaze on everybody’s beauty; and do not tarry among women. For from garments comes a moth, and from a woman the iniquity of a man.” St. Jerome, in his book against Vigilantius, writes that a monk, knowing his own frailty, and how fragile is the vessel which he carries, will fear to slip or stumble, lest he fall and be broken. Hence, he will chiefly avoid gazing at women, and especially at young ones, lest he be caught by the eyes of a harlot, and lest beauty of form lead him on to unlawful embraces.

Abbot Moses, in his conferences to the fathers, says that, in order to preserve purity of heart, “we ought to seek solitude and to practise fasting, watching, and bodily labour: to wear scant clothing; and to attend to reading; in order, by these means, to be able to keep our heart uncontaminated by passion, and to ascend to a high degree of charity.” It is for this reason, that such exercises are practised in the religious life. Perfection does not consist in them; but they are, so to speak, instruments whereby perfection is acquired. Abbot Moses, therefore, continues, “Fasting, vigils, hunger, meditation on the scriptures, nakedness, and the privation of all possessions, are not themselves perfection; but they are the instruments of perfection. The end of discipline does not lie in them ; but, by their means we arrive at the end.”

But, perchance, someone may object, that it is possible to acquire perfection without fasting or vigils or the like, for we read that “the Son of Man came eating and drinking” (Matt. xi. 19), nor did His disciples fast, as did the Pharisees, and the followers of St. John. To this argument we find in the Gloss the following answer: “John drank no wine nor strong drink; for abstinence increases merit, though nature has no power to do so. But, why should the Lord, to Whom it belongs to forgive sin, turn away from sinners who feast, when he is able to make them more righteous than those who fast?” The disciples and Christ had no need to fast; for the presence of the Bridegroom gave them more strength than the followers of John gained by fasting. Hence our Lord says (Matt. ix. 15), “But the days will come when the Bridegroom shall be taken away from them, and then they shall fast.” St. Chrysostom makes the following comment on these words, “Fasting is not naturally grievous, save to those whose weakness is indisposed to it. They who desire to

contemplate heavenly wisdom rejoice in fasting. Now, as when our Lord spoke the words we have just quoted, the disciples were still weak in virtue, it was not the fitting season to bring sadness upon them. It was more meet to wait until they were strengthened in faith. They were dispensed from fasting, not by reason of their gluttony, but by a certain privilege.”

St. Paul, however, writing to the Corinthians (2 Ep. vi. 3), expressly shows how fasting enables men to avoid sin, and to acquire perfection. He says, “Giving no offence to any man, that our ministry be not blamed; but in all things let us exhibit ourselves as the ministers of God, in much patience, in tribulation, in necessities, in distress, in stripes, in prisons, in seditions, in labours, in watchings, in fastings, in chastity.”

## CHAPTER X

### **Of the Third Means of Perfection, Namely, the Abnegation of Our Own Will**

IT is not only necessary for the perfection of charity that a man should sacrifice his exterior possessions: he must also, in a certain sense, relinquish himself. Dionysius, in Chapter IV. *De Divinis Nominibus*, says that, “divine love causes a man to be out of himself, meaning thereby, that this love suffers him no longer to belong to himself but to Him whom he loves.” St. Paul, writing to the Galatians (ii. 20), illustrates this state by his own example, saying, “I live, now not I, but Christ lives in me,” as if he did not count his life as his own, but as belonging to Christ, and as if he spurned all that he possessed, in order to cleave to Him. He further shows that this state reaches perfection in certain souls; for he says to the Colossians (iii. 3), “For you are dead, and your life is hidden with Christ in God.” Again, he exhorts others to the same sublimity of love, in his second Epistle to the Corinthians (v. 15), “And Christ died for all, that they also who live, may not now live to themselves, but unto Him who died for them, and rose again.” Therefore, when our Lord had said (Luke xiv. 26), “If any man comes to me, and does not hate his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters,” He added something greater than all these, saying, “yes, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple.” He teaches the same thing in the Gospel of St. Matthew (xvi. 24) when He says, “If any man would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me.”

This practice of salutary self-abnegation, and charitable self-hatred, is, in part, necessary for all men in order to salvation, and is, partly, a point of perfection. As we have already seen from the words of Dionysius quoted above, it is in the nature of divine love that he who loves should belong, not to himself, but, to the one

beloved. It is necessary, therefore, that self-abnegation and self-hatred be proportionate to the degree of divine love existing in an individual soul. It is essential to salvation that a man should love God to such a degree, as to make Him his end, and to do nothing which he believes to be opposed to the Divine love. Consequently, self-hatred and self-denial are necessary for salvation. Hence St. Gregory says, in his Homily, "We relinquish and deny ourselves when we avoid what we were wont (through the old man dwelling in us) to be, and when we strive after that to which (by the new man) we are called." In another Homily he, likewise, says, "We hate our own life when we do not condescend to carnal desires, but resist the appetites and pleasures of the flesh."

But, in order to attain perfection, we must further, for the love of God, sacrifice what we might lawfully use, in order, thus to be more free to devote ourselves to Him. It follows, therefore, that self-hatred, and self-denial, pertain to perfection. We see that our Lord speaks of them as if they belonged to it. For, just as in the Gospel of St. Matthew (xix. 21) He says, "If you would be perfect, go, sell all that you have and give to the poor," but does not lay any necessity on us to do so, leaving it to our own will, so He likewise says (Matt. xvi. 24), "if any man would come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me." St. Chrysostom thus explains these words, "Christ does not make his saying compulsory; He does not say, 'whether you like it or not, you must bear these things.'" In the same manner, when He says: "If any man will come after Me and hate not his father" etc. (Luke xiv. 28), He immediately asks, "Which of you having a mind to build a tower, does not first sit down, and reckon the charges that are necessary, whether) he have enough to finish it?" St. Gregory in his Homily thus expounds these words, "The precepts which Christ gives are sublime, and, therefore, the comparison between them and the building of a high tower shortly follows them." And he says again, "That young man could not have had enough to finish his tower who, when he heard the counsel to leave all things, went away sad." We may hence understand, that these words of our Lord refer, in a certain manner, to a counsel of perfection.

The martyrs carried out this counsel of perfection most perfectly. Of them St. Augustine says (in his sermon *De martyribus*, that "none sacrifice so much as those who sacrifice themselves." The martyrs of Christ, denying themselves, did, in a certain manner, hate their lives, for the love of Christ. St. Chrysostom, again, says, writing on the Gospel of St. Matthew, "He who denies another, be it his brother, or his servant, or whomsoever it may be, will not assist him if he sees him suffering from the scourge or any other torture. And we, in like manner, ought to have so little regard for our body, that, if men should scourge, or in any other way maltreat, us, we ought not to spare ourselves."

Our Lord would not have us to think that we are to deny ourselves, only so far as to

endure insults and hard words. He shows us that we are to deny ourselves unto death, even unto the shameful death of the cross. For He says: "Let him take up his cross and follow Me." We, therefore, say that the martyrs did a most perfect work; for they renounced, for the love of God, life itself, which others hold so dear, that, for its sake, they are content to part with all temporal goods, and are willing to purchase it by any sacrifice whatsoever. For a man will prefer to lose friends and wealth, and to suffer sickness, or even slavery, rather than to be deprived of life. Conquerors will grant to their defeated foes the privilege of life, in order that they may keep them subject to them in slavery. Satan said to the Lord (Job ii. 4), "Skin for skin, and all that a man has he will give for life," *i.e.* to preserve his body.

Now, the more dearly a thing is loved according to nature, the more perfect it is to despise it, for the sake of Christ. Nothing is dearer to any man than the freedom of his will, whereby he is lord of others, can use what he pleases, can enjoy what he wills, and is master of his own actions. Just, therefore, as a person who relinquishes his wealth, and leaves those to whom he is bound by natural ties, denies these things and persons; so, he who renounces his own will, which makes him master, does truly deny himself. Nothing is so repugnant to human nature as slavery; and, therefore, there is no greater sacrifice (except that of life), which one man can make for another, than to give himself up to bondage for the sake of, that other. Hence, the younger Tobias said to the angel (Tobias ix. 2), "if I should give myself to be your servant, I should not make a worthy return for your care."

Some men deprive themselves, for the love of God, of some particular use of their free will, binding themselves by vow, to do, or not to do, some specific thing. A vow imposes a certain obligation on him that makes it; so that, for the future, he is not at liberty to do, or not to do, what was formerly permissible to him; for he is bound to accomplish his vow. Thus, we read in Ps. lxxv. 13, "I will pay you my vows which my lips have uttered," and again (Eccles. v. 3), "If you have vowed anything to God, defer not to pay it; for an unfaithful and foolish promise displeases him."

Others there are, however, who make a complete sacrifice of their own will, for the love of God, submitting themselves to another by the vow of obedience, of which virtue Christ has given us a sublime example. For, as we read in the Epistle to the Romans (v. 19), "As by the disobedience of one man, many were made sinners; so also by the obedience of one, many shall be made just." Now this obedience consists in the abnegation of our own will. Hence, our Lord said, "Father, if it be possible, let this chalice pass from Me: nevertheless not as I will but as you will" (Matt. xxvi. 39). Again He said (John vi. 38), "I came down from Heaven, not to do my own will, but the will of Him who sent Me." By these words He shows us, that, as He renounced His own will, submitting it to the Divine will, so we ought

wholly to subject our will to God, and to those whom He has set over us as His ministers. To quote the words of St. Paul, “obey your prelates and be subject to them “ (Heb. xiii. 17).

## CHAPTER XI

### **The Three Means of Perfection, of Which We Have Hitherto Been Speaking, Belong, Peculiarly, to the Religious State**

WE find the three ways to perfection in religious life, embodied in the three vows of perpetual poverty, chastity, and obedience. Religious follow the first road to perfection by the vow of poverty, whereby they renounce all property. By the vow of chastity, whereby they renounce marriage, they enter on the second road to perfection. They set forth on the third road to perfection, by the vow of obedience, whereby they sacrifice their own will. Now these three vows well beseem the religious life. For, as St. Augustine says (lib. x. *de Civitate Dei*), “The word *religion* means, not any sort of worship, but the worship of God.” And Tully says, in his *Rhetorica*, that “religion is a virtue, paying worship and reverence to a certain higher nature which men term the Divine nature.”

Now the worship which is due to God alone, consists in the offering of sacrifice. Such sacrifices may consist in external things, when they are given for the love of God. Thus, St. Paul says, (Hebrews xiii. 3), “Do not forget to do good and to impart; for by such sacrifices God’s favour is obtained.” We also offer to God the sacrifice of our own bodies, when, as St. Paul says (Gal. v. 24), “we crucify the flesh with its vices and concupiscences,” or, when we obey, his exhortation to the Romans (xii. 1), “Present your bodies a living , sacrifice, holy, pleasing, unto God.” There is, again, a third and most agreeable sacrifice to God, spoken of in the 50th Psalm (v. 19), “a sacrifice to God is an afflicted spirit.”

The difference, says St. Gregory, in his Commentary on *Ezechiel*, between a sacrifice and a holocaust is, that, whereas every holocaust is a sacrifice, every sacrifice is not a holocaust, In a sacrifice a part of the victim was immolated; but in a holocaust the entire offering was consumed.” When, therefore, a man vows one thing to God, and does not vow another, he offers a sacrifice. When, however, he dedicates to the Almighty all that he has, all that he takes pleasure in, and his entire life, he is offering a holocaust.” This he does, most perfectly, by the three religious vows. Hence, it is clear that the name of *religious* is strictly applied, according to the very meaning of the word, to those who pay their vows as a holocaust to God.

According to the Levitical law the offering of sacrifice was ordained for the atonement of sin. Again, in Psalm Iv., immediately after the verse, “the things you

say in your hearts, be sorry for them upon your beds,” we read, “offer up the sacrifice of justice,” that is to say (as the Gloss explains), “perform works of justice after your lamentations of penitence.” Since, then, a holocaust is a perfect sacrifice, a man who makes the religious vows, (thereby offering, of his own will, a holocaust to God), makes perfect satisfaction for his sins. Hence we see, that the religious life, is not only the perfection of charity, but likewise the perfection of penitence, since, however heinous may be the sins committed by a man, he cannot be enjoined, as a penance for them, to go into religion; for the religious state transcends all satisfaction. We see (in Gratian, 33, Quest. II. cap. *Admonere*, that Astulplus, who had killed his wife, was advised to go into a monastery as the easiest and best course to pursue; for, if he remained in the world, a very severe penance would be imposed upon him.

The vow which, of all the three religious vows, belongs most peculiarly to the religious life, is that of obedience. This is clear for several reasons. First, because, by obedience man sacrifices to God his own will; by chastity, on the other hand, he offers his body, and by poverty his external possessions. Now, since the body is worth more than material goods the vow of chastity is superior in merit to that of poverty, but the vow of obedience is of more value than either of the other two. Secondly, because it is by his own will that a man makes use either of his body or his goods: therefore, he who sacrifices his own will, sacrifices everything else that he has. Again, the vow of obedience is more universal than is that of either poverty or chastity, and hence it includes them both. This is the reason why Samuel preferred obedience to all other offerings and sacrifices, saying, “Obedience is better than sacrifices” (1 Kings xv. 22).

## CHAPTER XII

### **Refutation of the Errors of Those Who Presume to Detract From the Merit of Obedience, Or of Vows**

SATAN, in his jealousy of human perfection, has raised up several foolish and misleading men, who, by their teaching, have shown themselves hostile to the different modes of perfection of which we have been speaking. Vigilantius attacked the first counsel of perfection. St. Jerome thus combats his objections to it: “Some men hold that they act more virtuously who keep the use of their fortune, and divide the fruit of their possessions piecemeal among the poor, than they do who sell their goods, and, at once, give all they possess to the poor. The fallacy of this assertion is proved not by my words but by those of the Lord Himself, “If you would be perfect, go, sell all that you have and give to the poor, and come follow me.” Christ is here speaking to one who desires to be perfect, and who, with the Apostles, leaves father,

ship, and net. The man who is praised for retaining the use of his possessions, is in the second or third degree of perfection; and we know that the first degree is preferable to either the second or the third.” Hence, in order to exclude error on this point, we find in the book, *De ecclesiasticis dogmatibus* the following words: “It is good to distribute one’s goods prudently among the poor; but it is better if it be done with the intention of following the Lord, to give them all away at once, and, in our dealings with Christ, to be free from all earthly solicitude.”

Jovinian argued against the second counsel of perfection, and declared that marriage was equal in merit to virginity. St. Jerome refuted his opinions, in the book which he wrote against him. St. Augustine, likewise, thus speaks of his error, in his book *Retractationum*: “The heresy of Jovinian asserted that the merit of consecrated virgins was equalled by conjugal chastity. Hence, it is said that in Rome, certain nuns who had not hitherto been suspected of immorality, contracted marriage. Our holy mother the Church has always stoutly resisted this error. In the book *De ecclesiasticis dogmatibus* we find the following declaration: “It is not Christian but Jovinian to set virginity on a level with matrimony, or to deny an increase of merit to those who, for the sake of mortifying the flesh, refrain from wine or flesh meat.”

But the devil is not content with these old devices. Even in our own days he has stirred up some men to declaim against the vow of obedience and all other vows, and to preach that good works are more meritorious when performed without obedience or vow, than when executed under such obligations. Others, again, say that a vow made to enter religion may, without danger to salvation, be broken, and they strive to confirm their opinion by frivolous and empty arguments. For they contend that an act is meritorious in proportion as it is voluntary, and that, if such an act be less voluntary in proportion as it is more necessary, good works done at a man’s pleasure, without the constraint of obedience or vow of any kind, are worth more than such as are performed under the obligation of a vow, either of obedience or of some other nature. They quote in support of their teaching the words of Prosper (*Book II. De vita contemplativa*), “We ought to fast and abstain, not as though forced by necessity, lest by acting reluctantly we should be called unwilling rather than devout,” They might also bring forward the words of St. Paul (2 Cor. ix. 7), “Every one as he has determined in his heart, not with sadness or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver.”

We must now show the fallacy of these arguments, and confute this foolish reasoning. First, in order to manifest the error of these arguments we will quote the Gloss on the verse of Ps. lxxv. 12, “Vow and pay to the Lord your God.” “We must observe,” says the Gloss, “that some vows made to God are common to all men, and are necessary to salvation: such are our Baptismal promises and the like, which we should be bound to keep, even if we had not made them. The verse, ‘Vow and pay,’

alludes to such vows as these, and is addressed to all men. There are also other vows made by individuals, such as chastity, virginity, and the like. The Psalmist invites us, but does not command us, to make such vows as these, and to pay them when we have made them. For the emission of a vow is a decision of the will; but the payment of such a vow is a decided necessity.”

Hence a vow is, in one sense, a matter partly of counsel, and, in another sense, a matter of precept. But, from whichever point of view we consider it, we shall see plainly that good works performed under vow, are more meritorious than those executed without a vow. For, it is clear, that, in all that is necessary for salvation, all men are bound by the precept of God; neither would it be Tight to think that God would give a command without a purpose. For, as St. Paul says (1 Tim. i. 5), “Now the end of the Commandment is charity.” In vain, then, would God have given a commandment concerning the performance of anything, if the execution of such a thing had not tended more towards the increase of charity than its omission would have done. Now we are not only bidden by precept to believe, and forbidden to steal, but, further, we are commanded to make a vow to believe and to abstain from theft. Therefore, believing on account of our vow, and abstention from theft on the same account, tend more to augment charity than would be the case if we had no vow. Again, the more anything increases charity, the more it is praiseworthy and meritorious. Hence it is more praiseworthy and meritorious to perform any work under vow, than without such an obligation. Once more, the counsel is given to us not only to preserve virginity or chastity, but (as the Gloss points out) to make a vow to do so. But since, as we have said, a counsel is only given concerning that which is the greater good, it must be better to observe chastity under a vow than without one.

The same argument holds good concerning the other counsels, Now, amongst other good works virginity meets with special commendation. our Lord speaking of it says, “He who can take it, let him take it” (Matt. xix. 12). It is, however, the vow of virginity which renders that state so praiseworthy. St. Augustine says, in his book, *Do virginitate*, “Virginity is honourable, not because it is virginity, but because it is consecrated to God, and because it vows to Him, and preserves for Him, the continence of piety.” And, again, he says, “We do not praise virgins because they are virgins, but because they are consecrated to God by the holy continence of virginity.” Hence we see, that the fact of their being performed under a vow, renders good works the more meritorious.

Again, every finite good acquires additional value by bearing a promise of some other good. There is no doubt that the promise of good is in itself a good. Hence, when one man makes a promise to another, he is considered to confer some advantage upon him; and he to whom the promise is made returns thanks. Now a

vow, is a promise made to God, as we see from Ecclesiastes (v. 3), “If you have vowed anything to God, defer not to pay it; for an unfaithful and foolish promise displeases him.” It is better, therefore, to make a vow and to perform it, than simply to execute a good work without being bound thereto by vow.

Again, the more one person gives to another, the more he deserves from that other. Now, he that does a good work without a vow, offers to God only that single act which he performs for love of him: he, on the contrary, who not only accomplishes a good work, but also makes a vow to perform it, gives to God not only that which he does, but also the power whereby he does it. For he puts it out of his power not to do such a good work; although, before making his vow, he might legitimately have omitted it. Hence he merits far more from God who acts under vow, than he who is not under any obligation.

Once more, the merit of a good work is increased in proportion as the will is confirmed in good, just as the heinousness of sin is aggravated in proportion to the obstinate malice of the will. Now it is evident, that he who makes a vow, confirms his will to accomplish that which he promises; and that when he accomplishes the good work which he has vowed to do, its consummation proceeds from the strength which his will has acquired. Just as the gravity of a crime proceeds from the fact that he who commits it acts from a determined purpose, or, as is usually said, sins out of malice; so the merit of any good work is enhanced by the fact that it is done under a vow.

Again, the more excellent the virtue from which any action proceeds, the more meritorious does that action become, since an action derives all its merit from the virtue which inspires it. Now, it may sometimes happen that an action of inferior virtue may have its origin in a superior virtue. For example we might do an act of justice from a motive of charity. Hence, it is far best to perform acts of inferior virtue from motives of superior virtue; just as an act of justice is enhanced in value, if it be performed out of charity. Now, we know, that, the particular good works that we accomplish proceed from inferior virtues; fasting, for instance, is an act of abstemiousness; continence proceeds from chastity, and so of the rest. But, on the other hand, a vow is, strictly speaking, an act of *latria*, which, undoubtedly, is a higher virtue than abstemiousness, chastity, or any other virtue. For it is more meritorious to worship God, than to order ourselves rightly, towards, either our neighbour or ourselves. Hence chastity, abstemiousness, or any other virtue, inferior to *latria*, derives additional value if it be performed under a vow.

This opinion is supported by the pious desire of the Church which invites men to make a vow to go to the Holy Land, or elsewhere, in her defence, and grants indulgences and other privileges to such as make this vow. She would certainly not

invite the faithful to bind themselves by vow, were good works, done without such obligation, more meritorious than those done under vow. Did she act thus, she would be disobeying the exhortation of St. Paul (1 Cor. xii. 31), "Be zealous for the better gifts." If the good works done without a vow were the most praiseworthy, the Church, far from encouraging her children to bind themselves by vow, would withhold them from so doing, either by prohibition or dissuasion; and, as it is her desire that the faithful should be in the most meritorious state, she would absolve them all from their vows, in order, as far as possible, to enhance the merit of their good works. Hence, the opinion that vows detract from the value of good works, is repugnant to the spirit of the Church, and must be rejected as heretical.

All the arguments alleged in favour of this opinion, may be easily answered. First, the proposition, that a good work performed under vow, is less voluntary than one done without an obligation, is by no means universally true. For many persons perform what they have vowed to do, so promptly, that even had they not already made vows, they would not only have done those same good works, but they would have also vowed to do them. Secondly, granted that a deed performed under vow, or under obedience, be in a sense involuntary, nevertheless, he who accomplishes such a deed, does so from the necessity of his vow or of obedience, which he has no desire to violate. Hence he acts in a more praiseworthy and meritorious manner, than if he were performing a good work at his own pleasure and without a vow. And, even if he have not a will to do some particular thing (e.g. to fast), he, nevertheless, desires to accomplish his vow, or to practise obedience, which is much more meritorious than fasting. Hence, he who fasts out of obedience performs a more acceptable work than he who fasts by his own desire. And the will to fulfil a vow, or to practise obedience, is held to be so much the more perfect in proportion as the deed accomplished for the sake of obedience, or of keeping a vow, is repugnant to nature. Hence St. Jerome says to Rusticus, "My principal exhortation to you is, not to be guided by your own judgment." Then he adds, "Nor should you act according to your own will; but you shall eat as you are bidden; you shall have as much as is given you; you shall wear the raiment appointed you; you shall perform the whole task allotted to you; you shall be subject to him to whom you would rather not submit; you shall go weary to bed; you shall fall asleep on your feet and shall be forced to rise before you have slumbered your fill."

The passage just cited shows us, that the merit of a good work consists in a man doing or suffering something for the love of God, which is contrary to his own will. For, alacrity of will, and fervour of divine love, are chiefly shown when that which we do for God is repugnant to our own inclinations. The martyrs are commended inasmuch as, for the love of God, they endured many things repugnant to nature. Hence, when Eleazar was tortured he said, "I suffer grievous pains in body: but in

soul I am well content to suffer these things because I fear you.”

It is argued, that a man may not perchance retain the will to fulfil his vow, or to practise obedience; but God, as we know, judges the heart, and will hold such an one unfaithful to his vow and to obedience. If a man perform what he has vowed, or obey an order, solely out of motives of fear or human respect he gains no merit before God; for he acts, not from a desire to please Him, but solely under compulsion. Nevertheless, his vow, if it were made out of charity, is not unprofitable to him; for he has merited more by making it, than others have done by fasting without any vow. Moreover, the merit of his vow remains to him if he repent of the infidelity of his heart. This is our answer to the authorities adduced. They apply to the cases wherein men keep their vows under the compulsion of human motives, such as fear, or shame; but they do not speak of the necessity whereby men are constrained, from motives of Divine love, to do or suffer what is naturally repugnant to them, in order thereby to fulfil the will of God. This is made clear by the words of St. Paul, “Not with sadness or of necessity “(2 Cor. ix. 7). For human necessity induces sadness; whereas the constraining of divine love dissipates, or lessens it.

We may, in support of what we have said, quote the words of Prosper. “Lest we should act not devoutly but unwillingly. For the necessity which proceeds from divine love does not diminish love, but increases it.” And St. Augustine, in his epistle (127) to Armentarius and Paulina, shows that this necessity is desirable and praiseworthy. “Since,” he says, “you now have bound yourself, it is not lawful for you to act otherwise. Before you were under a vow, you were free to do as you wouldst: now, however, you art subject to your vow. Nevertheless, liberty is not a matter of congratulation, since it renders man debtor for what he cannot repay with money. But now that your promise is made to God, I do not invite you to great justice (i.e. to the chastity which you have vowed), but I warn you against great iniquity. For, if you do not perform what you have vowed, you will not remain as you were before your vow. Before your vow you were lower than at present, not worse; now, if (which God forbid) you break your faith with Him, you will be as much the more accursed as you will be blessed if you dost keep your vow. Repent not of your promise to God; but rather rejoice that now it is no longer lawful for you to do that which formerly, to your detriment, was permissible to you. Act firmly and fulfil in deed what you have promised by word. He will help you who asks for your vows. Blessed necessity which constrains us to better things.” From these words we see, how erroneous is the doctrine, that persons are not bound to keep a vow that they may have made to go into religion.

## CHAPTER XIII

### The Pefection of Brotherly Love Which is Necessary for Salvation

WE may fittingly conclude these considerations about the perfection of charity, as it regards God, with some reflections touching perfect charity as it concerns our neighbour. There are several degrees of perfect love of our neighbour, just as there are several degrees of perfect love of God. There is a certain perfection of this virtue which is a matter of precept, and which is necessary to salvation. There is, further, a supererogatory perfection, which is a matter of counsel. The perfection of brotherly love necessary to salvation, is of the nature prescribed by the precept, "Thou shall love your neighbour as your self." As God is the universal Good, existing above us, it is necessary, as we have before said, for the perfection of divine love that the whole heart should be, in a certain sense, turned to God. This degree of divine love is expressed by the precept, "Love the Lord your God with your whole heart." But our neighbour is not the universal good existing above ourselves; he is a particular good beneath us. Therefore, we are not bidden to love him with our whole heart, but as ourselves. Three consequences follow from this proposition.

First, our love must be sincere. It is in the nature of love to wish well to the object beloved. Hence, love tends towards two things: to the one to whom we are wishing well, and to the good which we desire for him. And, although both these things are said to be loved, that object is truly loved to which we wish some good. For the good which we wish to another person is only loved *per accidens*, because it falls within the limits of the act of love. Now it is incorrect to say that we really and sincerely love an object which we desire to destroy; and as many of the things which we use are destroyed, we only love such things *per accidens*. For instance, we consume wine in drinking, we expose a horse to death in battle; in such cases, we are truly loving ourselves and are only loving these other things *per accidens*, on account of the use which they are to us.

It is clear, likewise, that every man does, by nature, love himself truly, in so far as to wish benefits to himself, happiness, for instance, virtue, knowledge, and the necessities of life. But those things of which he avails himself he does not truly love in themselves; rather, he loves the service they render him, and he prefers himself to them. Now this proposition is as true with regard to persons, as it is with regard to things. We love some men only because they are of use to us; and when this is the case, it is evident that we do not truly love them as we love ourselves. He that loves another because he is of service- to him, or affords him gratification, proves that he loves himself. As he seeks only convenience and profit from his friend and not his friend himself, he can only be said to love his friend in the sense in which we are said to love wine or horses, i.e. not as ourselves by wishing well to

them, but rather as valuing them as an advantage to ourselves.

It is not difficult to prove, that sincerity is necessary to perfect charity. We see this, first, from the precept which bids us to love our neighbour as ourselves. “The end of the commandment is charity from a pure heart, and a good conscience, and an unfeigned faith,” says St. Paul (1 Tim. i. 5). Again he says, “Charity does not seek her own” (1 Cor. xiii. 5), but wishes well to those whom she loves. He gives his own example, as a lesson of charity, “not seeking that which is profitable to myself, but to many, that they may be saved” (1 Cor. x. 33).

Secondly, the way in which we are commanded to love our neighbour, viz. “as ourselves,” proves that our charity ought to be rightly ordered and sincere. For true and rightly ordered love prefers the greater to the lesser good. Now it is clear, that, of all human good, the welfare of the soul is the greatest: next in degree comes physical well-being; and external goods occupy the last place. It is natural to man to observe this order in his preference. For who would not rather lose bodily eyesight than the use of reason? Who would not part with all his property in order to save his life? “Skin for skin,” said Satan to the Lord, “and all that a man has he will give for his life” (Job ii. 4). Very few, if any, fail to observe this order in their preference concerning the natural goods of which we have given examples. There are, nevertheless, many who pervert this order of charity, in the case of the other goods which exist in addition to the purely natural ones of which we have spoken. They will, for instance, prefer physical health or comfort, to the acquisition of virtue or learning; and they will expose their bodies to danger and hardship, in order to gain material wealth. Now this, as we shall show more at large, is not true love. Neither do they who act thus, love themselves sincerely. It is quite clear that the chief part of a thing is really the thing itself. When we say that a city acted thus or thus, we mean that the chief citizens acted in such or such a manner. Now we know, that the principal thing in man is the soul, and that the chief among the powers or faculties of the soul, is the reason or understanding. He, therefore, who despises the good of the rational soul, for the sake of physical welfare, or of the advantage of the sensitive soul, plainly show that he does not truly love himself. “He who loves iniquity, hates his own soul” (Pa. x. 6).

Now we are commanded to observe the same order in the love of our neighbour that we ought to observe in the love of ourselves. Hence we must desire his welfare in the same manner as we ought to desire our own, *i.e.* first his spiritual good, secondly his physical prosperity, including in the latter category such good as consists in extrinsic possessions. But, if we wish our neighbour to have material goods harmful to his health of body, or physical welfare opposed to his spiritual profit, we do not truly love him.

We see, thirdly, from the precept concerning charity, that our love of our neighbour must be holy. That is called holy which is directed to God. An altar, and the other things used in the sacred ministry, are holy, because they are dedicated to His service. Now, when one man loves another as himself, there must be intercommunion between them; and, in so far as the two persons are united together, they are considered as forming one; and the one behaves to the other as to himself. There are, however, several ways in which two persons may be joined together. They may be joined by ties of blood, *i.e.* by being born of the same parents. They may be joined by certain social ties—they may be fellow-citizens, under the same ruler and the same laws. Or, they may be joined by certain professional or commercial bonds—they may be fellow-workmen, or fellow-soldiers. Now the neighbourly love which may exist between men, united by these various bonds, may be just and seemly, but it cannot, on that account, be called holy. For love can only be called holy in so far as it is directed to God.

Fellow-citizens agree in being subject to the same ruler whose laws they obey; and all men, inasmuch as they naturally aspire to happiness, are united in their inclinations towards God, the Beginning of all things, the Source of happiness, and the Principle of justice. But, we must remember, that, in the right order, the general is preferable to the particular good. A part is, by a natural instinct governed by the good of the whole. The hand, for example, is exposed to danger in order to shield the head or heart, the source of life. Now, in the communion, whereof we have been speaking, and in which all men are united by their natural tendency towards happiness, each individual must be considered as a part, and God, in whom the happiness of all consists, must be regarded as the universal Good of the whole. Hence, according to right reason and natural instinct, each man orders himself towards God, as a part is ordered to the whole; and this order is made perfect by charity, whereby man loves himself for God's sake. Now, when he also loves his neighbour for God's sake, he loves him as himself; and his love thus becomes holy. This is plainly expressed by St. John, in the following words: "This commandment we have from God that he who loves God, should also love his brother" (1 John iv. 21).

The precept to love our neighbour as ourselves teaches us, fourthly, that our love of our neighbour must be practical and fruitful. Men love themselves, not only by wishing good to befall them, and by desiring protection from evil; but also, by endeavouring, by all means in their power, to procure prosperity for themselves, and to defend themselves from adversity. Hence, when a man truly loves another as himself, he will show his love not only by good wishes, but by practical benefits. He will obey the teaching of St. John (1 Jn. iii. 18), "My little children, let us not love in word, nor in tongue, but in deed and in truth."

## CHAPTER XIV

### **The Perfection of Love of Our Neighbour Considered As A Matter of Counsel**

WE devoted the last chapter to the consideration of the perfection of brotherly love, as exhibited in the degree necessary to salvation. We will now treat of the same virtue, as manifested in a degree exceeding common perfection, and thus forming a matter of counsel. This perfection of fraternal charity may be regarded from a triple point of view. First we may consider its comprehensiveness; for love is perfect in proportion to the number of persons whom it includes.

Now there are three degrees in the comprehensiveness of charity. Some men love their neighbours, either on account of the benefits they receive from them, or by reason of some tie of blood or of social life. This love is bounded by the limits of human friendship, and of it our Lord says, "It you love those who love you, what reward shall you have? do not even the publicans this? And if you salute your brethren only, what do you more? Do not even the heathens this?" (Matt. v. 46). Others, again, include strangers in their charity, as long as they meet with nothing in these strangers antipathetic to themselves. This degree of charity is limited by natural feeling; for as all men form one species, each individual man is by nature the friend of all others. Thus, it is natural to us to put one who has lost his way on the right road, to help a man who has fallen down, and to perform similar kindly offices. As, however, we naturally prefer ourselves to others, it follows, that we shall love one thing and hate what is opposed to it. Therefore a merely natural love never includes the love of our enemies. But the third degree of charity is the love extended even to our enemies. Speaking of this love, our Lord says (Matt. v. 44), "Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you." He shows that this love constitutes the perfection of charity, by concluding His instruction with the words, "Be, therefore, perfect, as also your heavenly Father is perfect."

The fact that this perfection is beyond ordinary perfection, appears in the words of St. Augustine (*Enchirid.*), "These things belong to the perfect among the sons of God. Nevertheless, all the faithful ought to strive to fulfil them; and by prayer and self-conquest the soul of man ought to be brought to these sentiments. But this sublime virtue is not found in the generality of mankind, although we believe that the prayer: 'Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive them that trespass against us,' is heard by God."

But, as by the term "our neighbour" all men are understood; and as no exception is made in the precept of loving our neighbour as ourselves; it may be thought, that the love of our enemies is commanded as necessary to salvation. This difficulty is easily

solved, if we call to mind what has been said about the perfection of Divine love. The precept, “Love the Lord your God with your whole heart,” etc., may be understood as a matter either of precept, to be obeyed as a necessity, or as a counsel, or as perfection attained only by the Blessed in Heaven. If the command, “Love the Lord your God with your whole heart” be understood to mean that man’s heart is to be always actually fixed on God, it can only be obeyed by the Blessed in Heaven. If it be taken as signifying that man is not to admit anything into his heart contrary to Divine love, it is, in this sense, a precept which must of necessity be obeyed. If, again, we understand by these words, the renunciation of all things for the sake of greater freedom in communion with God, it is a counsel of perfection. In the same way we may say that it is a precept not to exclude even our enemies from the universal love of our neighbour enjoined upon us, nor to admit within our heart anything opposed to this love.

But to love our enemies with an actual love when there is no necessity for so doing, is a counsel of perfection. Of course it is necessary for salvation to love our enemies by doing them actual service and assisting them, if they be in any extremity, if, for example, they be dying of hunger. The precept of brotherly love does not ‘however, bind us to show any special affection nor to do any particular service to our enemies, unless they be in the extreme distress of which we have spoken; neither are we bound by precept to do any special service to any other of our neighbours. Love of our enemies springs, directly and purely, from love of God; whereas our love for other men arises from divers motives, e.g., from gratitude, from kinship, from fellow-citizenship, and the like. But nothing save the love of God can make us love our enemies; for we love them because they are His creatures, made in His image, and capable of enjoying Him. And, as charity prefers God before all other good, the consideration of the Divine Good which inclines it to love its enemies, outweighs the consideration of any injury received from them which would incline our nature to hate them. Thus, in proportion to the love of God in a man’s soul, will be his readiness to love his enemies.

The perfection of brotherly love depends, secondly, upon its intensity. We know that the more intensely a man loves one object, the more easily will he for its sake despise other things. Hence the perfection of his love for his neighbour, may be gauged by what he sacrifices on his neighbour’s account. Some men, in their love of others, will give up their material possessions, either dispensing them to their neighbours at their discretion, or relinquishing them entirely, in order to supply the necessities of other men. St. Paul seems to refer to this form of charity in his First Epistle to the Corinthians (xiii. 3), where he says, “If I should distribute all my goods to feed the poor.” In the book of Canticles, also, we are told that, “If a man should give all the substance of his house for love, he shall despise it as

nothing” (Cant. viii. 7). our Lord includes this in the counsel of perfection, which He gave when He said, “If you would be perfect, go, sell all that you hast, and give to the poor and you shall have treasure in Heaven; and come follow me” (Matt. xix. 21). In this passage the sacrifice of material possession seems to be recommended for two ends. The words, “give to the poor,” point to love of our neighbour; the other words, “follow Me,” indicate love of God. But a man fulfils the same end, whether he suffers the loss of his material goods for the love of God, or for the sake of his neighbour. St. Paul commends the charity of the Hebrews in these words, “You took with joy the being stripped of your own goods” (Heb. x. 34). In the Book of Proverbs (xii. 26) we are told also that, “He who neglects a loss for the sake of a friend is just.” St. John says in like manner (1 Ep. iii. 17), “He who has the substance of this world and sees his brother in need, and shuts up his bowels from him, how does the charity of God abide in him?”

The second degree of love of our neighbour, consists in exposing ourselves to physical hardships for his sake. St. Paul gives us an example of this kind of charity when he says, “In labour and toil we worked day and night, lest we should be chargeable to any of you” (2 Thess. iii. 8). This second degree of charity also includes a willingness to bear suffering and persecution for the love of our neighbour. St. Paul mentions this charity in the 2nd Epistle to the Corinthians (i. 6), “Whether we be in tribulation, it is for your exhortation and salvation,” and also in his Epistle to Timothy, “Wherein I labour even unto bands as an evil doer; but the word of God is not bound. Therefore I endure all things, for the sake of the elect, that they may obtain salvation” (2 Tim. ii. 9). Those fail to attain to this degree of charity who will deprive themselves of no luxury, and submit to no inconvenience for the sake of others. It is to such men as these that Amos (vi. 4) addresses the following words: “You that sleep upon beds of ivory, and are wanton on your couches: you that eat the lambs out of the Rock, and the calves out of the midst of the herd; you that sing to the sound of the psaltery: they have thought themselves to have instruments of music like David; that drink wine in bowls, and anoint themselves with the best ointments; and they are not concerned for the affliction of Joseph.” And Ezechiel also says (xiii. 5), “You have not gone up to face the enemy, nor have you set up a wall for the house of Israel, to stand in battle in the day of the Lord.”

The third degree of charity consists in sacrificing our life for another. St. John (1 Jn iii. 16) says, “In this we have known the charity of God, because He has laid down his life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.” Our Lord Himself declares that, “Greater love than this has no man, that a man lay down his life for his friends” (John xv. 13). Hence it is in this sacrifice of life that the perfection of charity consists.

The word “life” may be understood, however, in two senses. There is the spiritual life whereby God Himself animates the soul. We may not sacrifice this life. For our love of our soul is proportionate to our love of God; and we ought to love God more than we love our neighbour. Therefore, we may not, in order to save another, injure our own soul by sin. We have also the physical life which animates our body. This life we ought to lay down for the brethren. For, it is our duty to prefer our neighbour to our body; and therefore it is right to sacrifice our physical life for the spiritual welfare of others. We are bound by precept to act thus if we see our neighbour exposed to any extreme spiritual danger. Thus, if we were to see another seduced from the Faith by unbelievers, we should be bound to expose ourselves to death if, thereby, we could save him from such ruin. But it pertains to the perfection of justice, and is a matter of counsel, to sacrifice life for the salvation of those who are not in grave spiritual necessity. St. Paul teaches us to do so by his own example, for he says, “But I, most gladly will spend and be spent myself for your souls” (2 Cor. xii. 15). On this passage the Gloss remarks, “It is perfect charity to be prepared to die for the brethren.” The state of slavery does in some sort resemble death, and is therefore called civil death. For life is chiefly manifested in ability to move; he that cannot move save by the agency of others, may be accounted dead. Now, a slave has no power over himself, but is governed by the will of his master; and therefore this condition of bondage may be compared to death. Hence a man, who, for the love of another, delivers himself to bondage, practises the same perfection of charity, as he who exposes himself to death. Nay, we may say that he does more; for slavery is more abhorrent to our nature than is death.

The perfection of fraternal charity must next be considered as manifested by the value of what we do for others. For our love for our neighbour is proved by the value of the gifts that we bestow upon him. Now there are three degrees in this charity. The first degree consists in ministering to the bodily wants of our brethren by clothing the naked, feeding the hungry, tending the sick, and the like. our Lord promises to consider as done to Himself, everything of this nature that we do for others. The second degree of charity consists in bestowing upon our neighbour such spiritual benefits as do not exceed the capability of human nature. Among such benefits we may mention the instruction of the ignorant, advice given to those in doubt, or the conversion of such as have gone astray. Such works of mercy are commended in Job iv. 3, “Behold, you have taught many, and you have strengthened the weary hands: your words have confirmed them that were staggering, and you have strengthened the trembling knees.”

The third degree of charity consists in enriching our neighbour with such spiritual benefits as are supernatural and exceed human reason. Such benefits are, instruction in divine truth, direction to God, and the spiritual communication of the Sacraments.

Of gifts such as these, St. Paul says, “He who gives you the Spirit, and works miracles among you” (Gal. iii. 5). Again he says (1 Thess. ii. 13), “When you had received of us the word of the hearing of God, you received it, not as the word of men, but (as it is indeed) the word of God.” And writing to the Corinthians the Apostle, after saying, “I have espoused you to one husband,” continues, “for if someone comes and preaches another Christ whom we have not preached, or if you receive another Spirit whom you have not received, or another Gospel which you have not received, you might well bear with him” (2 Cor. xi. 2). He who bestows upon others gifts of this nature practises a singular perfection of brotherly love; for, it is by means, of these gifts, that man attains to union with his last End, in which consists his highest perfection.

Job was asked by one of his friends, “Do you know the great paths of the clouds, and perfect knowledge?” (Job xxxvii. 16). The clouds, says St. Gregory, typify holy preachers. For these clouds have most intricate “paths,” or ways of holy preaching, and “perfect knowledge” when they recognise that of their own merits, they are nothing, and that all that they impart to their neighbours is above them. A further degree of perfection is attained when spiritual gifts of this nature are bestowed not on one alone, or on two, but on a whole multitude. For, according to the Philosopher, the good of a nation is better and more divine, than is the good of an individual man. Hence St. Paul writes to the Ephesians (iv. 13), “Other some pastors and doctors, for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ,” i.e. the Church. And again, in the First Epistle to the Corinthians (xiv. 12), he says, “Forasmuch as you are zealous of spirits, seek to abound unto the edifying of the Church.”

## **CHAPTER XV**

### **What is Required to Constitute the State of Perfection**

IT must, as we have before said, be borne in mind that perfection does not consist in the mere accomplishment of a perfect work, but, likewise, in the vow to accomplish such a work. A counsel, as we have already observed, has been given us on each of these two points. He therefore who performs a perfect work under a vow attains to a twofold perfection. For, just as a man who observes continence is practising one form of perfection; so, he who obliges himself by vow to live in continence and who keeps his vow, practises both the perfection of continence and the perfection of a vow. For that perfection which comes from the observance of a vow changes the state and condition of a man as completely, as freedom alters the state and condition of a slave. This proposition is established in Gratian, *II quaestio IX*, where Pope Hadrian says, “If at any time we are called upon for judgment in a capital cause, or

in a cause affecting a state of life, we must act at our own discretion, and not depend upon others to examine the case.” For, if a man make a vow to observe chastity, he deprives himself of liberty to marry. But he who simply observes chastity without a vow, is not deprived of his liberty. Therefore, he is not in an altered condition, as is the case with a man bound by a vow. Again, if one man serve another, his state is not thereby changed, as it is if, he lay himself under an obligation to serve him.

We must remember, however, that a man may deprive himself of liberty either absolutely (*simpliciter*) or relatively (*secundum quid*). If he bind himself, either to God or man, to perform some specific work for some allotted time, he renounces his freedom, not absolutely but partially, i.e., with regard to the particular matter, about which he has laid himself under an obligation. If, however, he place himself entirely at the disposal of another, reserving to himself no liberty whatsoever, he makes himself a slave absolutely, and thereby absolutely alters his condition. Thus, if a person make a vow to God to perform some specified work, such as a pilgrimage or a fast, he does not change his condition entirely, but only partially, *i.e.*, with regard to that particular work which he vows to accomplish. If he dedicate his whole life to serve God in works of perfection he absolutely embraces the condition or state of perfection. But, as some men perform works of perfection without any vow, and others fail to accomplish the works of perfection to which they have vowed their whole lives, it is perfectly possible for persons to be perfect without being in the state of perfection, or to be in a state of perfection without being perfect.

## CHAPTER XVI

### **The State of Perfection is A Condition Befitting Bishops and Religious**

FROM all that has been said it is easy to see which are the classes of men whom the state of perfection befits. We know that there are three roads to the perfection of divine love, to wit the giving up of material possessions; the sacrifice of marriage and of earthly ties; and total self-denial either by death for Christ, or by the abnegation of self-will. Now, they who by vow dedicate their whole lives to these works of perfection, manifestly embrace the state of perfection. And, as in every religious order these three vows are made, it is plain that every form of religious life is included in the state of perfection.

Again, we have pointed out that there are three elements in the perfection of brotherly love. It is necessary to perfect brotherly love, first, that a man love his enemies and assist them; secondly, that he lay down his life for the brethren either by exposing himself to the danger of death or by devoting his whole life to their service; and thirdly, that he minister to their spiritual needs. Now, bishops are bound

to fulfil these three offices of charity. As they undertake the entire charge of their churches, wherein oftentimes many will be found to hate, persecute, and revile them, they are under the obligation of repaying their enemies and persecutors by benevolence and charity, after the example of the Apostles, whose successors they are, and who dwelt among those most hostile to them and laboured for their conversion. Thus were verified the words of our Lord (Matt. x. 16), “Behold I send you as sheep in the midst of wolves.” For, although the Apostles were, so to speak, torn by their enemies, they were not destroyed, but, on the contrary, they converted those who maltreated them. St. Augustine in his book, *De Sermone Domini in monte*, has the following commentary on the words, “If one strike you on your right cheek, turn to him the other also” (Matt. v. 39): “These words (he says), inviting us to mercy, appeal most to such as have to minister to those whom they love, whether they be children, or men of frenzied brain. For, from such persons they suffer much; and they are prepared, if need be, to suffer more. Thus, the great Physician and Master of souls instructs His disciples, that they must bear, with serenity, the follies of those whose salvation they desire to secure. For crime is an indication of a weak mind, as innocence is a proof of perfect strength.” Hence St. Paul, writing to the Corinthians, says, “We are reviled and we bless; we are persecuted and we suffer it; we are blasphemed and we entreat”(1 Cor. iv. 12).

Bishops are farther bound to sacrifice their lives for the salvation of those committed to them, and thus to put in practice the words of our Lord, “I am the Good Shepherd: the Good Shepherd lays down his life for his sheep” (John x. 11). Speaking of these words, St. Gregory says, “In the Gospel which has been read to you, beloved brethren, you learn both a lesson for yourselves, and the danger which threatens us, There is set before us both the contempt of death, with which we ought to be inspired, and the model that we ought to imitate.” He further adds, “Our first duty is, in charity, to distribute our goods to our sheep; and we are further bound, if need be, to serve them by our death.... The wolf that comes upon the sheep signifies any unjust seducer or oppressor of the faithful and the lowly. He that is no true shepherd but only bears the semblance of such, will leave his sheep and take to flight, being too fearful of death to dare to resist iniquity.” From these words it is clear, that it is one of the duties of those discharging the episcopal office to face death for the sake of the church committed to them.

Hence, those who undertake this office are bound to practise such perfection of charity as consists in the sacrifice of their life for the brethren. In the same manner, a bishop is bound by his office to dispense spiritual gifts to his neighbour, and thus to become a mediator between God and man, acting in the place of Him who is “the one Mediator of God and man, the man Christ Jesus” (1 Tim. ii). Moses, speaking as a type of our Lord, said, “I was the mediator and stood between the Lord and you

at that time” (Deut. v. 1). Hence, a bishop must, in the name of his people, offer up prayers and supplications to God. “For every high priest taken from among men, is ordained for men in the things that appertain to God, that he may offer up gifts and sacrifices for sins” (Heb. v. 1). And, on the other hand, he must act with regard to his people as the vicar of God, giving to his flock by the power of the Lord, judgment, instruction, example, and sacraments. St. Paul says, “For what I have pardoned, if I have pardoned anything, for your sakes have I done it in the person of Christ” (2 Cor. ii. 10). Again, in the same epistle (xiii. 3) he says, “Do you seek a proof of Christ who speaks in me?” Again (1 Cor. ix. 11), he uses these words, “If we have sown for you spiritual things, is it a great matter if we reap your carnal things?” Now a bishop, at his ordination or consecration, and a religious at his profession, engages himself to this degree of perfection. St. Paul encourages St. Timothy to its practice, in the following words: “Fight the good fight of faith: lay hold on eternal life, to which you were called when you made a good confession before many witnesses” (1 Tim. vi. 12). This “good confession” is interpreted by the Gloss to mean ordination. Hence, bishops, as well as religious, are bound to a state of perfection. And, as human contracts are drawn up with certain ceremonies, so, both the consecration of bishops and the profession of religious are solemnized by certain rites and blessings. Dionysius (VI. Cap. *Eccles. Hierarch.*) speaking of monks, says, “On this account the holy law has given them perfect grace, and has granted it to them with a certain sanctifying ceremonial (*invocatione*).”

## CHAPTER XVII

### **The Episcopal Office is More Sacred Than is the Religious Life**

TO one who has not duly considered the subject, the religious state might appear to be more sublime than the episcopal office. For the love of God, to the perfection of which religious dedicate their lives, far surpasses the love of our neighbour to which the pontifical state is devoted; just as the contemplative life, in which religious are engaged, is nobler than the active life, to which bishops are ordained. Dionysius (VI. Cap. *Recles. Hierarch.*) says that, “Some persons call religious *servants*, and others call them *monks*, on account of their pure service and ministry to God, and by reason of their simple undivided life which lifts them by holy contemplation of those things which are unseen, to a godlike oneness and to perfection pleasing to the Lord.” Again the episcopal office may appear to fall short of perfection, because bishops are allowed to possess money, notwithstanding the words of our Lord, “If you will be perfect, go, sell what you hast, and give to the poor” (Matt. xix 21).

But this way of thinking is not in accordance with truth. Dionysius says (V. Cap. *Eccles. Hierarch.*) that the “duty of bishops is to produce perfection,” and elsewhere

(Cap. VI.), he says, that “the life of monks is a state of the perfect.” Now it is evident that greater perfection is needed in order to make others perfect than is required in a state which in itself is perfect; just as it is better to *do* something than to *be* something, and just as a cause is more powerful than its effect. Hence, the episcopal state is one of greater perfection, than is that of any religious order.

This conclusion is still more clearly established, if we consider the obligations attached to the episcopal office, and those belonging to the religious life. Religious are bound to renounce material possessions, to observe chastity, and to live in obedience. But the duties of bishops are far more onerous and difficult of fulfilment. For they, as we have seen, are obliged to lay down their lives for their flocks. Hence the obligation of a bishop is much weightier than is that of a religious.

Bishops are further bound by the same obligations as those imposed upon religious. For, as it is their duty to feed their flocks, not only by word and example, but likewise by temporal assistance, they are obliged, if need arise, to distribute their worldly goods among those committed to their care. St. Peter was three times commanded by our Lord to feed His sheep. The exhortation Bank into his mind, and he recalls it in his epistle, saying, “Feed the flock of God which is among you” (1 St. Peter v. 2). St. Gregory, likewise, speaking as though in the person of bishops, says: “We ought in charity to distribute our goods among our sheep... for how shall he who will not of his temporal substance minister unto his flock, be ready for its sake to sacrifice his life?”

Bishops, likewise, are bound to live in chastity. For it is only meet that they who are to preach purity to others, should themselves lead spotless lives. Hence Dionysius (III. cap. *Coelest. Hierarch.*) says that from the abundance of their own chastity, they must impart purity to others.

Religious, by their vow of obedience, bind themselves to submit to one superior; but a bishop constitutes himself the servant of all of whom he undertakes the care. He is bound to imitate the example of St. Paul, who tells us that he sought not that which was profitable to himself but to many, that they might be saved (1 Cor. x. 33). Again the Apostle says of himself, “For whereas I was free unto all, I made myself the servant of all” (1 Cor. ix. 19). “For we preach not ourselves, but Jesus Christ our Lord; and ourselves your servants through Jesus” (2 Cor. iv. 5). Hence it is the custom for the Sovereign Pontiff to subscribe himself as “the servant of the servants of God.” We must conclude, then, that the episcopal office is a condition of higher perfection than is the religious life.

Dionysius, again, writes (VI. Cap. *Eccles. Hierarch.*) “The monastic state is not intended to lead others forward, but is ordained for its own sake, and remains on its own peculiar and sacred basis.” Bishops, on the other hand, are under the obligation

of guiding others to God. St. Gregory, writing on the book of Ezechiel, says that, “no sacrifice is more acceptable to God than is zeal for souls.” These words clearly point out that the episcopal is, of all states, the most perfect. This conclusion is further proved by the custom of the church, which, when a religious is appointed to a bishopric, releases him from obedience to the superiors of his order. For this could not be done, were not the episcopal state one of greater perfection than the religious. In acting thus the Church of God obeys the counsel of St. Paul, “Be therefore zealous for the better gifts” (1 Cor. xii. 31).

## CHAPTER XVIII

### **An Answer to Certain Arguments Which May Seem to Call in Question the Perfection of the Episcopal State**

IT is not difficult to answer the objections brought against the perfection of the Episcopal office. The perfection of fraternal charity springs, as we have seen, from the perfection of the love of God, which in the hearts of some men is so vigorous that it urges them, not only to desire to enjoy God and to serve Him, but likewise for His sake to assist their neighbours. Hence in the 2nd Epistle to the Corinthians (v. 13), St. Paul says, “Whether we be transported in mind” (by contemplation) “it is to God” (*i.e.* to the glory of God), “or whether we be sober” (in condescension to you) “it is to you,” *i.e.* for your profit; “for the love of Christ presses us,” “causing us (as the Gloss explains) to do all things for you.” For it is clear that it is a greater sign of love if a man, for the sake of his friend, be willing to serve another, than if he will only render service to his friend in his own person.

The argument drawn from the comparison between the perfection of the contemplative and the active life, does not seem to have much bearing on the point in question. A bishop, being singled out as mediator between God and men, must, as minister to men, be pre-eminent in the active life. At the same time he must excel in contemplation, in order to draw from God the spiritual wisdom which he is bound to impart to those committed to his care. Hence St. Gregory says (in *Liber regulae pastoralia*), “A bishop should be foremost in action, and he should be raised above all men by contemplation. He should be solicitous, lest, on account of external occupation, he relax in his zeal for spiritual affairs; neither should his care for spiritual things lessen his diligence concerning such as are temporal.” It may happen, indeed, that a man occupied in the service of others, may suffer some loss of sweetness in contemplation; but this very sacrifice is a proof of the perfection of his love of God. For if, for the sake of doing service to one whom we love, we deprive ourselves of the happiness of being in his presence, we show stronger affection for him, than if we endeavoured always to enjoy his company. St. Paul

writing to the Romans (ix. 3) says, “Neither death, nor life shall separate me from the love of God”; he then continues, “I wished myself to be anathema from Christ for my brethren.” St. Chrysostom, in his book, *De compunctione cordis* has the following commentary on these words: “The love of Christ had thus so completely conquered the heart of this Apostle, that, in order to please Him, he was ready to sacrifice His presence, which to him was the thing dear above all others.”

The third objection brought against the perfection of the episcopal state admits of a double answer. First, although a bishop holds certain possessions, he does not regard them as his own; but he distributes them as common property; and thus he does not violate evangelical perfection. On this point Prosper says (XII. quaestione 1), “It is right to possess the property of the Church and to renounce one’s own belongings for the love of perfection.” Again in the same chapter, after quoting the example of St. Paulinus, he says, “By this action we clearly learn, that it befits us to part with our own possessions for the sake of perfection, and that, without any imperfection, we may possess the common property of the Church.”

We must bear in mind that if anyone has charge of the goods of the Church, and does not gain any personal profit from them, but only acts as a steward or dispenser, he does not fail in evangelical perfection. Were this so, abbots and superiors of monasteries would sin against their vow of poverty and would fail in religious perfection, which cannot at all be admitted. Of course, if a bishop, not content with dispensing the revenues of his see, should make himself their owner by using them to his own personal profit, he would plainly be the possessor of private property; and he would thus, fail to attain to the perfection of those who renounce everything, and live with nothing of their own. But, it may be thought that bishops fail in the evangelical perfection set forth in the words, “If you would be perfect,” etc. (Matt. xix. 21), since they are not only at liberty to possess the property of their Church, but are also free to keep their own patrimony, and to dispose of it by will. This objection is easily answered, if the preceding remarks be called to mind. As we have already said, the renunciation of riches does not constitute perfection; it is merely a means to it. It is quite possible for a man to acquire perfection, without actually giving up what he possesses. This may be made clear by the following example. Our Lord, amongst other counsels of perfection, gave this: “If someone strikes you on your right cheek, turn to him the other: and if a man contends with you in judgment and takes away your coat, let him take your cloak also. And whoever forces you to go one mile, go two miles with him” (Matt. v. 39-41). But even the perfect do not obey these words literally. Nay, our Lord Himself when He suffered a blow on the face, did not turn His other cheek. He said, “If I have spoken evil, give testimony of the evil, but if well why do you strike me?” (John xviii. 23). Neither did St. Paul, when he was smitten, offer his cheek. He exclaimed, “God shall strike you, you

whited wall” (Acts xxiii. 3).

Hence, we see that it is not necessary that these counsels should be actually obeyed; but, as St. Augustine says in his book *De Sermone Domini in Monte*, they are to be understood as signifying the preparation of the heart. For, perfection consists in a man’s readiness to perform any work that may be required of him. In like manner St. Augustine cites in his book *Quaestionum Evangelii* (and we find the same in *Decretis*, Dist. xli.), our Lord’s words, “Wisdom is justified by all her children,” as proving that the sons of wisdom understand that justice consists neither in eating nor in abstinence, but in suffering want with patience. St. Paul expresses the same thought when he writes to the Philippians (iv. 12), “I know both how to abound and to suffer need.”

Religious learn this serenity and patience in bearing poverty, by their practice of possessing nothing. Bishops, on the other hand, may attain to it, by exercising solicitude about their church and by fraternal charity, which ought to make them willing not merely to sacrifice their money, but, if need be, their very life for their flocks. St. Chrysostom says in his *Dialogue*, “Monks do in truth wage a severe war.” He then adds, “For the fasting, and vigils, and other penitential exercises of the monastic state are very hard and painful. But in the episcopal state, the conflict is more felt by the soul than by the body.” The saint further, by way of example, draws a comparison between a craftsman, who, by means of various instruments, produces marvellous pieces of mechanism, and a philosopher who displays his skill merely by the operations of his intellect.

It may be urged, that bishops are bound to practise this perfection of the renunciation of riches, not in will alone, but also in deed. For, when our Lord sent His disciples on their mission, He said to them: “Do not possess gold, nor silver, nor money . in your purses: nor scrip for your journey, nor two coats, nor shoes, nor a staff” (Matt. x. 9). Now, as bishops are the successors of the Apostles, they ought to obey the precept given to the Apostles. But this conclusion is clearly fallacious. For some of the most saintly bishops of the Church, whose holiness is beyond question, such as Athanasius, Hilary, and many of their successors, have not observed this command of our Lord. As St. Augustine says, in his book *Contra mendacium*, “We must not only bear in mind the precepts of God, but we must also be attentive to the lives and customs of the just.” For, although we fail to understand many things that are written for us, we can gather their meaning from the deeds of the saints, and thus learn in what sense we are to interpret them. It is on this account, that the Holy Spirit, Who speaks by the Scriptures, inspires the actions of the Saints. St. Paul tells us the same truth when he says, “Whosoever are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God (Rom. viii. 14). Hence, we have no right to conclude that what is commonly done by holy men, is contrary to the Divine commandments. our Lord, in

the chapter of St. Matthew already quoted, gives a reason for His words to His Apostles, bidding them not to possess anything, nor to take anything on their journey. “The labourer,” He says, “is worthy of his hire.” Thus He gives a permission, not a command, to His disciples, to accept hospitality. Therefore, if any one of them desired not to avail himself of this permission, but preferred to carry provisions with him, he would not be disobeying a precept of his Master. For there is a difference between disobeying a command, and omitting (after the example of St. Paul) to make use of a permission.

We may further understand these words of Christ to the Apostles, by remembering that He was sending them to preach to the Jews, with whom it was customary for the teachers to live by the contributions of their disciples. Our Lord (says St. Chrysostom) desired, first, that His disciples should be above suspicion, and should not be thought to be preaching for the sake of gain. Secondly, He wished them to be free from anxiety about material things. Thirdly, He willed that they should, by experience, learn that, without anxiety on their part, His power could provide them with all that they might need. But He acted differently on the Eve of His Passion, when He was about to send them forth to preach to the Gentiles. For, then, He said to them, “When I sent you without purse, and scrip, and shoes) did you want anything? But they said: nothing. Then said He unto them: But now he that has a purse let him take it, and likewise a scrip” (Luke xxii). These words prove that bishops, as successors of the Apostles, are not bound to possess nothing, nor to carry nothing with them on their journeys.

## **CHAPTER XIX**

### **The Episcopal Office, Although A State of Greater Perfection Than is the Religious Life, Is, Nevertheless, Not to Be Coveted**

ST. PAUL exhorts the Corinthians (1 Ep. xii. 31) to be “zealous for the better gifts.” Seeing, then, how far the episcopal office exceeds, in perfection, the religious life, ought men not to be more eager to be made bishops, than to become religious? If anyone who asks this question will give a little consideration to the matter, he will see that while there is abundant reason why the religious life should be desired, the episcopal office, on the contrary, should, by no means, be coveted. For he who enters religion, renounces himself together with all that belongs to him, and, for the love of God, submits himself to the government of another. On the other hand, he who is promoted to a bishopric, is raised to an exalted position in God’s kingdom upon earth. Consequently, as honour and power are not rightfully bestowed on any save on the best among men, it would be presumptuous to aspire to such a dignity.

St. Augustine, in chapter xix. *De civitate Dei*, says that, “the Apostle wished to explain what is meant by the episcopate, for it is a title not of honour but of labour. The Latin word *episcopus* (from which is derived our word episcopate) is precisely the same word as the Greek *episkopos*, signifying an overseer or superintendent. Hence he is no true bishop who desires to be placed above others, rather than to be of use to them. We need not disguise the truth, that the episcopate is accompanied by honourable leisure. Nevertheless, it is a sublime post, essential in the government of a people, and so much is required for the due performance of the duties connected with it, that no man possessed of common modesty, could aspire to such an office. For, although the love of truth may seek holy leisure; the necessity of charity accepts fitting employment; and if no one lay this burden upon us, we must devote ourselves to truth, both of perception and study. But if the burthen be imposed upon us, we must accept it as a duty of charity.” St. Chrysostom, commenting on the words in the Gospel of St. Matthew, “the rulers of the Gentiles have dominion over them,” says: “It is well to wish for a good thing, because it be according to our will, and is our reward; but it is vanity to desire a supremacy of honour. The Apostle was not exalted by God because he was an apostle, but because he duly accomplished the work of his apostolate. Worthiness of life is to be desired, not superior dignity.”

We must, further, remark that the religious life leads indeed to perfection, but does not presuppose it; whereas the episcopal dignity presupposes perfection. For he who enters the episcopal state takes upon himself the office of a spiritual teacher. As St. Paul says (1 Tim. ii. 7), “I am appointed a preacher, an Apostle (I say the truth, I lie not), a teacher of the Gentiles, in faith and, truth.” It would be an absurdity to undertake to teach others to be perfect, without previous personal experience of perfection. St. Gregory says in his Pastoral, “The deeds of a bishop ought to surpass those of his flock, as greatly as his life is removed from theirs.” This distinction is clearly expressed by our Lord. For, when He gave the counsel of poverty, He merely said, “If you would be perfect, go, sell what you have, and give to the poor.” This shows that the practice of poverty does not presuppose perfection, although it leads men to it. But when He gave St. Peter supremacy over his brethren, He said, “Simon, son of John, do you love me?” And when St. Peter answered: “You know that I love you,” Christ replied, in turn, “Feed my sheep.”

Hence, it is evident, that elevation to the episcopate assumes perfection in the person thus honoured; and that it would be the height of presumption, for any man to consider himself perfect. Even St. Paul says, “Not as though I had already attained or were already perfect” (Philipp. iii. 12). Again, in the same chapter, he adds, “Let us, therefore, as many as are perfect, be thus minded.” To desire perfection, and to strive to follow after it, is not presumption. It is that holy zeal to which St. Paul exhorts us, saying, “Be, therefore, zealous for the better gifts” (1 Cor.

xii. 31). Hence, it is praiseworthy to wish to embrace the religious life, although a desire for the episcopate is gross presumption. St. Gregory says, in his Pastoral, “He who has refused a bishopric has not completely resisted it; and he who has willed to be raised to it, has first seen himself cleansed by the stone of the altar.” By these words we are to understand, that a man, chosen for the episcopate, should not absolutely refuse this honour. Nor yet should he aspire to it, unless he knows that he be cleansed in preparation for it. Nor should anyone, who is not thus purified, dare to approach the sacred mysteries. Neither, if he be chosen by divine grace, for this dignity, ought he, through pride disguised as humility, to decline to accept it. But, as it is exceedingly difficult for any man to know whether he be purified or not, the safest course is to decline a bishopric.

Another point must be considered in our comparison between the religious and episcopal state. The religious life implies a renunciation of earthly possessions; whereas a bishopric is accompanied by great additional wealth. They who become religious give up all they possess, thus showing that they seek not temporal but spiritual goods. They who undertake the episcopal office are frequently wont to think more of temporal, than of eternal riches. St. Gregory says in his Pastoral, “that the truly praiseworthy condition under which to accept a bishopric, would be, if a man were to know, as a certainty, that such an office would involve severe torture.” Again, he says, “It is not every man who loves the sanctity of the episcopal office. But that sanctity is completely ignored by those, who, aspiring to such a dignity, are entranced by the idea of having others subject to them, are rejoiced at the thought of being praised, set their hearts on being honoured, and rejoice at the prospect of affluence. In such a case as that, men are coveting worldly advancement under the disguise of an office, in which it is their duty to try to extirpate earthly ambition.”

Again, we must remember that bishops are exposed to many risks. We may, on this point, again quote St. Gregory. He writes in his Pastoral, “It often happens that in the office of governing, others, a man loses the habit of good works, which he practised in private life. For on a calm sea, even an inexperienced seaman can steer a vessel; whereas, in a gale, the most experienced mariner may lose his bearings. And may not a position of great power be fitly compared to a tempest of the mind, where the heart is incessantly rocked to and fro by waves of thought, to be dashed to pieces (as by rocks) by some sudden excess of word or deed?” David is quoted by St. Gregory as an example of the dangers to which men in an exalted position are exposed. “David,” he says, “whose every act was pleasing in the sight of the Supreme Judge, became, after he was raised to kingly magnificence, puffed up with pride, and so cruelly hardened, as to cause the death of a man. He, who, in former times, refused to slay his captured enemy, was, in his later days, so led away by his desire for a woman, that, to the detriment of his own army, he artfully caused the

death of a most loyal soldier.”

He who embraces the religious life escapes the danger of sin. Hence St. Jerome, speaking in the person of a monk, writes in his Epistle against Vigilantius, “When I forsake the world, I shall not be overcome, because I have fled it; but I shall flee from it, lest by it I should be overcome. There is no security in sleeping near a serpent; for, though perchance it may not molest me, it may on the other hand inflict on me a grievous wound. Thus, it is an act of prudence to enter religious life, in order to avoid the occasions of sin. But he who aspires to the episcopate, has either the extreme presumption to consider that he will be safe in the midst of dangers, or else he is so heedless of his salvation, that he cares not to escape from the occasions of sinning.” Hence, we must conclude, that, although the episcopal office be a state of perfection, it cannot, without the sin of covetousness, be desired.

## CHAPTER XX

### **Arguments Used by Certain Men to Prove That Parish Priests and Archdeacons Are in A State of Higher Perfection Than Are Religious. Answers to These Arguments**

THERE are certain men, who, not content with teaching that the episcopate is a condition of superior perfection to the religious life, also maintain that deans, parish priests, archdeacons, and all others entrusted with the care of souls, are in a more perfect state than are religious. They base their arguments on various grounds.

First, they quote the following words of St. Chrysostom. (*Dialogue, lib. VT*). “Let any man show me a monk resembling even Elijah, and let us grant that this monk, living alone, without annoyance or vexation of any kind, is not troubled by temptation, and does not fall into grave sin. I tell you, nevertheless, that such a man is not to be compared to one, who, although the minister of the people, and laden with the sins of men, perseveres with energy and fidelity.” These words naturally convey the impression that no monk, howsoever perfect he may be, can bear comparison with a priest who is entrusted with the cure of souls, and who discharges his trust with diligence. Again, St. Chrysostom says, “Were I given my choice as to whether I would prefer to serve God in the functions of the priesthood, or in monastic solitude, I should, without hesitation, choose the first of these conditions.” Hence the cure of souls is, indubitably, to be preferred to religious solitude, which is reckoned as the most perfect state of life.

Again, St. Augustine, in his epistle to Valerius, says, “Do thou, in your religious prudence, mark well the following truth. Of all things in the world, especially in our days, there is nothing so easy, so pleasant, so attractive to human nature, as to be a

perfunctory and time-serving bishop, priest, or deacon. Yet, in the eyes of God, no sight is so execrable, so sad, or so worthy of condemnation, as these sacred offices fulfilled in such a manner. On the other hand, there is nothing in life, especially in our days, more difficult, more laborious or more beset by danger, than is the office of bishop, priest, or deacon. Yet, in the eyes of God, no one presents a more glorious spectacle, than he who, in such an office, fights manfully, according to the precepts of our Sovereign Master.” Hence, the religious life is not a more perfect state than is that of priests or deacons, who have the cure of souls, and whose duty it is to mingle with men.

Again, St. Augustine says to Aurelius, “It is, indeed, lamentable, if we puff monks up with pride, and decry the dignity of the clergy, to whose order we belong. Shall we suffer ignorant people to say of us: ‘a bad monk will make a good cleric,’ when as we know that even a good monk is not always a good cleric?” The perfection of a good cleric is, therefore, greater than is that of a good monk. The same Saint had previously written, “We must not open a way to the servants of God (*i.e.*, to monks), whereby they may think that it may be easier for them to be chosen for some better office (*i.e.*, for some clerical post), if, by such a step, leaving their monastery they should grow worse.” The clerical office is, consequently, better than the monastic state. In the same spirit St. Jerome writes to Rusticus, “So live in your monastery, that you may deserve to be made a cleric.” The clerical office is, therefore, superior to the monastic life.

Again, it is not permissible to pass from a higher to a lower state. Nevertheless, it is lawful to pass from the monastic life to that of a cleric, entrusted with the cure of souls. We learn this fact from the words of Pope Gelasius (XVI. question I), “If there be any monk, who, by virtue of his holy life, should seem worthy to be raised to the priesthood, and if the abbot, under whose rule such a monk is fighting in the army of Christ, should beg this favour for him from the bishop, that monk ought to be chosen. Further a monk so elected, whether by the bishop or the people, must discreetly and uprightly fulfil all the duties of the priesthood in the place wherein it shall have seemed good to ordain him.” Several other rules about the same matter are laid down in this chapter and in *dist.* 47. Hence, it is plain to all men, that the state of any clerics, and especially of such as have the care of souls, is superior to the religious life.

Now the reasons for these propositions will be easily perceived, if we recall to mind (what has already been said. We have seen that a perfect *work* is one thing, and a perfect *state* another. The state of perfection does nothing save impose perpetual obligation of accomplishing those things which pertain to perfection. Now, many accomplish the works of perfection, without any vow; thus, many observe continence and practise poverty.

We must also remember that, in speaking of priests and archdeacons charged with the cure of souls, two points must be taken into consideration, to wit, the office of the cure of souls, and the dignity of their orders. Now, as parish priests and archdeacons often leave their parishes and archidiaconates to go into religion, it is clear, that, by accepting the cure of souls, they do not contract any perpetual obligation. But, from what has been already said, we know that no state of perfection can exist without a perpetual obligation. Hence, we cannot say that archdeacons, or parish priests, or candidates for ordination, have embraced a state of perfection, any more than we can say that novices, before their profession, have embraced this state.

It may, however, happen, as we have already observed, that a man who does not live in a state of perfection may perform works of perfection, and may be perfect according to the habit of charity. Thus, archdeacons and parish priests may be perfect according to the habit of charity, and may share in certain offices of perfection, although they are not living in a perfect state. A token that they are not living in a state of perfection lies in the fact that, when a man is deputed to, or bound in perpetuity to, some office, this obligation is imposed upon him with the accompaniment of some ecclesiastical solemnity. For instance, bishops are consecrated, and religious received to profession by an ancient rite of the Church, as Dionysius observes (*de Ecclesiast. Hierarch. cap. VI.*). Nothing of the sort, however, takes place at the election of an archdeacon or parish priest. He is invested, merely, with a ring, or some other symbol of the same description. Hence it is clear that no archdeacon, or parish priest embraces a state implying perpetual obligation. This conclusion will enable us easily to answer the arguments wherewith this chapter began.

When St. Chrysostom says, “Even if you can show me a monk, who vies with Elias in holiness, he is not to be compared to a priest who is compelled to bear the sins of his people,” it is clear that the Saint is not drawing a comparison between the priesthood and the religious state. He only wishes (as we shall see if we read the context of the words) to point out that the difficulty of perseverance in virtue, is far greater for one set over a flock, than for a monk in solitude. St. Chrysostom does not say absolutely, that a monk is not to be compared to a priest who bears the sins of his people upon his shoulders. What he says, is, that the perseverance of a monk, who, living a solitary life, is not tempted, and does not fall into grievous sin, is not to be compared to the constancy of a priest who perseveres, with valour and fidelity, though surrounded on all sides by his people. The courage of self-defence is chiefly shown in positions of great danger. Hence, St. Chrysostom prefaces the remark which we have quoted, by saying, “The mariner who is able to save his vessel when she is in danger of being submerged by a tempest, is deservedly held by all men to

be an experienced seaman.” In the same manner we may say, that he who is able to live uprightly in the midst of bad men, gives proof of greater virtue than he who leads a worthy life amongst good men. Hence, St. Peter says, in praise of Lot (2 Pet. ii. 8), that “in sight and hearing he was just: dwelling among them, who, from day to day, vexed the just soul with unjust works.” But we cannot say, that to live among wicked men belongs to the state of perfection, since, according to the teaching of the Holy Scripture, prudence instructs us to shun their company. We see, then, that the state of priests, charged with the care of souls, is not more perfect; but that it is more exposed to danger, than is that of religious.

This gives us the key to those other words of St. Chrysostom which were quoted above, “If I were given my choice of pleasing God in the performance of the duties of the priesthood, or in monastic solitude, I should unhesitatingly choose to please Him in the priestly office.” The Saint does not say that he would rather be a priest than a monk, but that he would prefer to please God rather as a priest than as a monk. For, it is more difficult to avoid sin in the performance of the sacerdotal functions, than in the solitude of a monastery. As we have before said, the greater the perils which we encounter, the greater the virtue that we exhibit. But, although a wise man must desire that his virtue were so solid as to remain intact in the midst of danger, no one but a fool would, on account of its danger, prefer a perilous position to one more secure. St. Augustine, in words already cited, points out that no duties can be more laborious and more beset by danger, than are those of bishops, priests, and deacons; though, if these duties be rightly performed they are the most agreeable offering that can be made to God. It is because it is so difficult to avoid sin in the episcopate or priesthood, that a virtuous bishop or priest is so acceptable to God. This, however, does not prove that the state of parish priests or archdeacons, is one of higher perfection than is that of religious.

To all the arguments which follow those which we have been answering, there is but one reply which is the same for all. In the quotations given above, the authors cited do not compare the religious state to the state of parish priests, but the state of monks, as monks, to the clerical state. For monks are not necessarily clerics. There are multitudes of lay brethren. Indeed, in former days almost all monks were laymen (cf. XVI, quiest. I). It is plain that the clergy occupy a higher position in the Church than do laymen. Hence, when a layman is chosen for the priesthood, he is promoted to a superior rank than that which he already holds; and, as he ascends to a higher position, he naturally requires more virtue to be a good cleric than to be a good layman, although, as a layman, he was a monk. But a monk who becomes a priest, is, at the same time, both in the clerical and in the religious state; just as a priest who has the care of souls is invested with both the pastorate and the priesthood. When, therefore, parish priests are said to be in a superior position to monks, it does

not mean, that, regarded merely as parish priests, they are superior to monks. It means, that if they perform their duties well, and live without sin, they give proof, as we have already said, of a greater degree of virtue, than does a monk who lives innocently in his monastery. But if a religious be entrusted with the care of souls in a parish church, this does not prove that the state of parish priests, as parish priests, is more perfect than is that of religious. For the religious who takes charge of a parish is not, on that account, released from his religious life. In Gratian, *XIV, Quest. I, De monachis*, we find the following words: “We ordain that they, who after living long in monasteries, are enrolled among the clergy, are not, for that reason, to quit their former life.” Hence, there is no proof, that the state of a priest entrusted with the cure of souls, is more perfect than is that of a religious; for, religious may accept this same office while remaining in their orders. They, however, who are promoted to the episcopate, ascend to a higher position.

## CHAPTER XXI

### Other Arguments Used to Overthrow the Conclusion At Which We Have Arrived

AFTER I had finished writing that upon which I have just been engaged, certain objections to my arguments came to my ears made by men who are too fond of disputing, to bestow much reflection either upon what they say or what they hear. In order to confute their arguments, I must return to what has already been said.

First, these objectors endeavour to prove, by divers arguments, that archdeacons and parish priests are in a higher and more perfect state than are religious. For, if a priest fall into sin, he is ordered by the Canons to be deposed from his state (cf. Gratian, *LXXXI, distinction: “Si quis amodo episcopus”* and *XIV. Quest. IV: “Si quis oblitus”*). Hence he must have been in a certain state, or he could not be deposed from it. Now a state can be used in a threefold signification. First, it implies uprightness of life; the elect are spoken of as “standing in justice.” St. Gregory says (*VII. Moral.*), “They who sin by mischievous words, fall from the state of rectitude.” Again, a state conveys an idea of permanence and, stability, as we see from the words of St. Gregory (*VIII. Moral.*), “It is the care and protection of our Creator that keeps us in a state of being.” Again, in the ninth Homily (2<sup>nd</sup> part) on Ezechiel, “A stone is square; and, by means of each of its four sides, it is kept in such a state, that it will not fall, howsoever its position may be altered.” State (derived from *stare* and *stando*) also signifies greatness or length. Now archdeacons and parish priests have a certain spiritual greatness, since, on account of. their zeal, they undertake the cure of souls. They, likewise, give proofs of stability, for they remain firm and constant in the midst of dangers. They are further upright in

intention, and just in their dealings Why, then, should we deny that they are in a state of perfection. Thus, St. Paul writes to Timothy (1 Ep. v. 17), “Let the priests who rule well,” to wit by good life and doctrine, “be esteemed worthy of a double honour”; let them, that is to say, be obeyed in spiritual matters, and be provided for in their temporal wants. If, then, before the existence of religious orders, priests were in a state of perfection, the same must also be the case since the religious life has been established.

It is further said, that in the days of St. Jerome, the titles *bishops* and *priests* were synonymous. The following words of this Saint (super *Epist. ad Titum*) are quoted in proof of this assertion: “Formerly bishop and priest were one and the same, but now, it is decreed throughout the whole world, that one man should be set over priests, in order that the seeds of schism may be extirpated.” If, then, the episcopate be a state of greater perfection than the religious life, why is not the priesthood, likewise, a state of greater perfection?

Again, the more sublime and important the ecclesiastical office to which a man is appointed, the higher his state is accounted. Now, archdeacons and parish priests exercise a more exalted office than do religious. For, although the contemplative life be the safer, the active life is by far the more fruitful of the two (cf. Gratian, *Extra de renuntiatione: Nisi cum pridem*). It follows therefore, that parish priests are in a state of greater perfection than is the case with religious.

Further, our Lord says, “Greater love than this has no man, that a man lay down his life for his friend” (John xv. 13). Now, good parish priests do sacrifice their lives for their flocks, and make themselves the servants of their people. In this they imitate St. Paul, who says (1 Cor. ix. 19), “For, whereas I was free as to all, I made myself the servant of all.” It would seem, then, that theirs must be the greater merit, since theirs is the severer toil. “I have laboured more abundantly than all they,” says St. Paul (1 Cor. xv. 15). And again he writes, “Every man shall receive his own reward, according to his own labour” (1 Cor., iii. 8). Hence, parish priests should be regarded as in a more perfect state than religious. The same must be said of archdeacons; for the seven deacons elected by the Apostles were in a state of eminent perfection. We are told (Acts vi. 3), “Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of good repute, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business.” On which words Venerable Bede says in his Gloss, “The Apostles designed that the Churches should establish seven deacons, who should be in a superior position to others, and who should stand round the altar, like columns.” If they were to be superior to others, and if they were to be set apart as columns round the altar, they must have been in a state of perfection. Now, according to the Gloss of Ven. Bede, their representatives are the archdeacons, who themselves minister, and who also superintend the ministry of others. Hence, it

would appear that archdeacons are in a state of higher perfection than are the parish priests, over whom they are set; and that they are, consequently, in a more perfect state than are religious.

It would be absurd to say that the holy martyrs and deacons Lawrence and Vincent were not in a state of perfection. Parish priests, then, and archdeacons resemble bishops, rather than monks and religious, who are in the lowest rank of subjection. Hence, priests are sometimes called by the name of bishops as appears from Acts xx., "Take heed to yourselves and to the whole flock, wherein the Holy Ghost has placed you bishops, to rule the church of God." These words are considered by the Gloss to have been addressed to the priests of Ephesus. This is, consequently, a still further proof that parish priests are in a state of perfection.

Again, as we know from Gratian, XII. quest. I, cap. *Expedit*, that the administration of the goods of the Church is not detrimental to the state of perfection, since these goods are common property it is clear that neither parish priests nor archdeacons fail in perfection, because they have the management of ecclesiastical revenues. Furthermore, both parish priests and archdeacons are bound to exercise hospitality (cf. Gratian, XLII, distinct cap. I), which a monk cannot do, as he possesses nothing of his own. Therefore, a parish priest gains more merit than does a monk. St. Gregory says that, "there is no sacrifice so agreeable to God as zeal for souls." St. Bernard, likewise, in his book *De amore Dei*, says that, "the love of God is strongest in him who draws most souls to God." This saying applies to an archdeacon, or parish priest, but not to a monk, who has no duty of leading souls to God.

Further, a patriarch rules in his patriarchate, and a bishop in his see. In the same manner, an archdeacon governs in his archidiaconate; and a parish priest in his parish. But what (with the exception of ordinations) does a bishop do that a parish priest does not likewise do? (cf. Gratian, dist. XCIII. cap. *Legiraus*). All that is said, according to the fourteen Apostolic rules, about bishops or bishops elect, is equally applicable to parish priests and archdeacons (Gratian, LXXXI, dist. cap. I.). If, then, a bishop be in a state of greater perfection than a monk, the same fact must be true of a parish priest, and also of an archdeacon. Again, it is appointed (Gratian, LXXXI, dist. cap. *Dictum est*, et cap. *Si quis clericus*), that a lapsed priest or deacon is to be banished from his office, and imprisoned in a monastery, to do penance. Hence, it would appear as though the condition of an archdeacon or parish priest is truly to be called a state; where entrance into religion is not a state but rather a degradation or downfall.

These are the chief objections, though placed in a somewhat different order, which I have been able to gather from the writings of those who argue against me.

As we have already shown that archdeacons and parish priests are not in a state of

perfection, we must now examine what answer has been made to the proofs which we have brought forward in support of our proposition. It has been said that entrance into any state of perfection, is accompanied by some solemn rite or blessing; and that this is not the case with the election of a parish priest or archdeacon. Now this is, by our adversaries, denied on several grounds. First, they say that the same words are used in the ordination of a priest as in the consecration of a bishop, to wit, “May these hands, O Lord, be consecrated and sanctified,” etc. When we point out that the head of a bishop is anointed with oil, but that priests do not receive this unction, they reply that this fact does not touch the matter in hand; for kings, who lay no claim to a state of perfection, are anointed. Again, they say that merit lies not in consecration, but in good works; and that, when a bad man is raised to the episcopate, he, by his consecration, incurs a greater chastisement. For it is not they who receive the greatest honour who are the most righteous, but they are the greatest whose justice is greatest (cf. Gratian, dist. cap. *Multi*). And in the same distinction it is remarked, that, “it is not places nor offices which give us access to our Creator, but that virtue unites us to Him; whereas sin separates us from Him. Neither are they to be considered the children of the Saints who occupy the places of the Saints, but they, rather, who do the work of the Saints.” Bishops, then, because their consecration is greater, are not, therefore, in a more perfect state than priests who have cure of souls.

Again, it is urged, that the anointing of the head is a sign of a certain rank in the priesthood. For the episcopate is not a new order but a grade of Orders; otherwise there would be more orders than seven. Now the perfection of charity is a question not of rank, but of holiness. Hence bishops, who, by the unction of the head are raised to a superior grade of the priesthood, are not thereby placed in a more perfect state. Again, a bishop appoints an archdeacon, a parish priest or a curate by giving him a ring or a book, as is laid down in “*De sententia et re judicata*,” just as when the pope sends anyone to be attached to any church as a canon or brother, he desires him to be appointed with complete honours, as we learn in *Extra de concessione ecclesiae*, cap. *Proposuit*. Thus, the state of parish priests or archdeacons appears to be a true state from which a man can be ejected.

## CHAPTER XXII

### **Showing That the Liability to Suspension Does Not Suffice to Prove, That Parish Priests Or Archdeacons Are in A State of Perfection**

MANY objections are made to the proposition, that archdeacons or parish priests are not in a state of perfection because they can, without sin, resign their office. We are told, first, that pastors of souls may resign their posts and retire into religion;

because while the pastorate is a more useful and more perfect state than the religious, the religious life is the safer of the two. In proof of this, the passage, *Nisi cum priden* from *Extra de renuntiat.* is quoted. A husband may not put his wife away against her will, in order to become a religious (*Extra de conversione conjugatorum*, cap. *Uxoratus*). This, however is not because the married state is more perfect than, or even equal to, the religious, but because a husband binds himself indissolubly to his wife. And, *a pari*, the fact that a parish priest can pass into the religious life, does not prove that the religious state exceeds, or even equals, the pastorate in perfection.

The example of David is also alleged as an argument against our proposition. Being unable to meet Saul with ordinary armour, which would have been too heavy for him, David provided himself with lowlier weapons, to wit with a sling and stones; and with these alone he overthrew the mighty Philistine. After this example, a parish priest may, likewise, take to himself arms of greater humility, *i.e.*, he may transfer himself from his own more perfect state to the religious life.

It is further objected, that, if the essence of a state depend upon the fact that that state cannot be changed, it would not be lawful for a man to pass from one state to another. Hence, immutability is not essential to a state. Again, according to the written law, a prelate can recall to a parish one of his priests who has entered religion, if he know that he is likely to be of use in the diocese; and if a priest go into a monastery, without the consent of his bishop, he is liable to a canonical penance (*Extra de renuntiatione*, cap. *Amovet; et de privilegiis et exceau privilegiatorum*, can. *Cum et plantare in ecclesiis*, and VII. Quest. I. can. *Episcopus de loco*). Hence, it is not true to say, that the religious state is more perfect than that of parish priests, because the latter can embrace the religious life. But, on the other band, a monk may, for the good of the Church, and for the welfare of souls, pass from the religious life to a secular church with parish work (XVI. quaest I. cap. *Vos autem*, and cap. *Monachos*). For, the profit of many is to be preferred to the advantage of a individual (VII. q. 1. cap. *Scias*).

Again, the fact that men are liable to fall from th perfection of charity, is no proof that they neve were in the perfection of charity. Their fall is rather a witness to the contrary. Hence, the laps of a parish priest does not prove that before his sin he was not in a state of perfection.

An ecclesiastical decree, promulgated in the time of Pope Innocent, forbids prelates of the highest rank (*i.e.* bishops) to become religious, without the permission of the Sovereign Pontiff. This appears in the decretal *Extra de renuntiatione*, cap. *Nisi cum pridem*. But before the promulgation of this decree, the highest in the Church as well as the lowest, were free to become religious; and yet bishops are in a more

perfect state than are the inferior clergy. The fact, then, that parish priests can become religious without the permission of the Sovereign Pontiff, does not prevent their being in a more perfect state than are religious.

Again, no one can be consecrated bishop who has not already received Holy Orders (LX. distinct. *Nullus in episcopatu*). But no ordained person can marry. Hence it is untrue to say that a bishop elect can marry.

## CHAPTER XXIII

### **An Answer to the Foregoing Arguments, in Which An Attempt Was Made to Show That Archdeacons and Parish Priests Are in A Higher Degree of Perfection Than Are Religious**

WE will now carefully examine each of the arguments quoted in the last chapter, in order to show how truly they may be set aside, as frivolous, absurd, and erroneous.

First. We are told that certain canonical decrees prove that archdeacons and pastors of souls are in a fixed state. This argument is worthless, for the Canons in question speak, not of the state, of the clergy, but of their rank. The words used in distinction LXXXI are, "Henceforth, should any bishop, priest, or deacon, take a wife, or keep one whom he has married, let him be degraded from his rank." Again (in XIV, question IV, can. "*Si quis dicetur*"), we find the following passage, "If any man, forgetful of the Law of the Lord, and of the words of Holy Scripture 'who has not given his money out at usury' shall, after the constitution of the Great Council, have committed usury, or received interest on his money, or enriched himself by any dishonest practice, or by selling or buying wine, corn or property of any kind, let him be degraded from his rank; and let him be considered an outcast from the clergy." Thus, these words cannot be understood to speak of clerical state, but of that clerical rank which must necessarily exist. For, wheresoever there be any order or superiority, there must be specified degrees of rank.

With regard to the second argument, we may say that its absurdity is so patent, that none can fail to see it. No one doubts that the word *state* is used with several meanings. For he who is erect is said to stand. We also distinguish between the state of beginners, of proficients, and of the perfect. To stand also means to be firm. Thus St. Paul says (1 Cor. xv. 58), "Be steadfast and immovable: always abounding in the work of the Lord." But this is not the usual way in which the word *state* is used. We employ it, rather, to indicate a certain condition; we say, a state of liberty, or a state of slavery. It is made use of in this sense in II, Quest. VI., where these words occur, "If we should by chance be appealed to in a capital charge, or in a suit concerning a state, we must act at our own discretion, not by means of examiners."

If we accept the word state in this sense, it is true to say, that they embrace the state of perfection who, as we have before said, bind themselves to the service of works of perfection. This cannot be the case save by a vow, implying a perpetual obligation of service or servitude, as opposed to liberty. As long, then, as a man is free to abandon the works of perfection, he is not in a state of perfection.

The third objection is, likewise, so frivolous, that it would seem hardly to need an answer. In the words, “Priests who govern well,” there is no mention either of a state, or of perfection. Government does not indicate a state, but a rank. Honour is due, not only to perfection, but to all who do good works; and this fact is shown by the very words, “they who govern well.” We read, also, in the Epistle to the Romans (ii. 10), “Glory and peace and honour to everyone who does good.”

The fourth argument contains a manifest untruth. We are told, that, in the days of Sts. Jerome and Augustine, a bishop and priest were one and the same. Now, St. Augustine expressly says the opposite in his epistle *ad Hieronymum*. We give his words. “Although,” he says, “in the language of good men, which has become current in the Church, the episcopate is accounted greater than the priesthood, it is nevertheless, in many things less.” But as some men may deny, that, in the days of St. Jerome, bishops were generally regarded as superior to priests, we will quote the authority of Dionysius, who wrote concerning the order of ecclesiastical hierarchy, as it was established in the primitive Church. These are his words: “There are three orders in the ecclesiastical hierarchy, to wit, bishops, priests, and deacons” (V. cap. *Eccl. hierarch.*). We may remark, that the same writer speaks of deacons as composing the purifying order, of priests as forming the illuminative order, and of bishops as being the order producing perfection. “There are further,” he continues, “three other orders corresponding to the three already mentioned. For, the order of the unpurified is subject to that of the deacons, whose duty it is to cleanse. The order of those needing light (*i.e.*, the holy people of God) is subject to the order of priests, whose office it is to illuminate by the administration of the Sacraments. The order of the perfect (*i.e.*, the monks) is subject to the order of bishops, and is by them, instructed in, and elevated to, sublime perfection.” Hence, we see that Dionysius attributes perfection only to bishops and monks: to bishops as to the more perfect, to monks as perfect. But, lest anyone should make the objection, that he describes an ecclesiastical hierarchy established by the Apostles, whereas, by the institution of our Lord, bishops and priests were one and the same, we will disprove this fallacy by quoting the words of the Gloss on St. Luke (x. 1), “After these things the Lord appointed, etc.” The Gloss observes that, “whereas the first order, that of the bishops, is represented by the Apostles, the second order, that of the priesthood, is typified by the seventy-two disciples.”

It is strange how those who uphold this argument, appear to misunderstand simple

words. They assert, that it is only since the days of St. Jerome, that bishops have been distinguished from priests. Yet, if anyone will examine the Old Law, of which the priesthood prefigured our priesthood, he will see that the High Priests were an order distinct from the priests. It is stated (distinct. XXI. cap. *De quibus*), that, “The High Priests and inferior priests were instituted by Moses, who, at the bidding of the Lord, anointed Aaron to be High Priest, and his sons inferior priests.” This passage proves that the words of St. Jerome have been misinterpreted. For, the Saint does not say, that in the primitive Church the order, or state, of the episcopate and that of the priesthood was one and the same. What he says is, that the same word was used to designate the two orders. For priests spoke of bishops, literally, as superintendents; and bishops used the same word of priests, on account of their priestly dignity. Hence Isidore says (and it is laid down, distinct. XXI, cap. *Cleros*) that, “the inferior clergy, although priests, have not attained to the highest dignity of the pontificate; for their foreheads are not anointed with chrism; neither have they power to confer the Holy Ghost, a power, as we know from the Acts of the Apostles, reserved to bishops. Hence (he concludes), in the early Church the same word was used both for bishops and priests; for the name denotes dignity and not age.” There is a difference in the thing signified; but the same word is, on account of the priestly dignity, used both for bishops and priests. In later times, however, it was found necessary, for the removal of a schism, arising from the similarity of name, to make a distinction in the appellation of the ranks of the clergy. Since then, the superior priesthood only has been called the episcopate; and the inferior clergy are known, simply, as priests.

The argument brought forward in the fifth objection is not tenable. The contemplative life is superior to the active, not, merely, because it is more secure, but simply because it is better. This, our Lord’s own words point out: “Mary has chosen the better part” (Luke x. 43). And in so far as contemplation is superior to activity, so much the more would he seem to do for God, who, at the expense of his much loved contemplation, devotes himself, for God’s sake, to his neighbour’s salvation. Hence, it is a proof of a greater perfection of charity, to be willing, for the love of God and of our neighbour, to labour for the salvation of others, even though, by so doing, contemplation be somewhat impaired, than to cleave so closely to the sweetness of contemplation as to be unwilling to sacrifice it, even for the salvation of others. St. Paul was so zealous for the salvation of his brethren, that he desired, for their sake, not merely the prolongation of this present life, but also the temporary postponement of the Beatific vision. His own words to the Philippians (i. 23) are a proof of his disposition. “I am straitened,” he says, “between two: having a desire to be dissolved and to be with Christ, a thing by far the better. But to abide still in the flesh, is needful for you.”

If by perfection of charity we mean (according to the teaching of St. Augustine), preparation of heart, many who lead a contemplative life have attained to a degree of charity not found in some who are entirely occupied in labouring for the salvation of their neighbour. For, many contemplatives are ready, in order to please God, to suspend for a time their cherished contemplation, in order to devote themselves to the welfare of their brethren. Whereas, those who are busied in exterior works, are often led to engage in them, rather from the tedium which they experience in contemplation, than from the desire of attaining to the fulness of divine love, which would induce them to lay aside for a time that contemplation which is their delight. But, the faults of individuals do not detract from the merit of any state or office; and care for the salvation of others must always be esteemed an act of perfection, since it pertains to the love, both of God, and of our neighbour.

But, here we must remember, that not everyone who performs acts of perfection, is necessarily in a state of perfection. No one doubts, that a life of virginity pertains to perfection. our Lord says of it: "He that can take let him take" (Matt. xix. 12). And St. Paul writes to the Corinthians, (1 Ep. vii. 25), "Concerning virgins I have no commandment from the Lord, but I give a counsel." Now there are counsels concerning the works of perfection; nevertheless a life of virginity without a vow, does not constitute a state of perfection. St. Augustine says, in his book, *De virginibus*, "Virginity is not honoured because it is virginity, but because it is dedicated to God. And by this consecration, even virginity of the body, preserved by piety, becomes spiritual." And, again, he says, "That continence is to be numbered among the goods of the soul, by which the body is preserved inviolate, for the Creator of soul and body, and which is dedicated and consecrated to Him."

Now, it is clear, that neither archdeacons nor parish priests, even if they are entrusted with the care of souls, are bound by vow to that office. If they were, they could not relinquish an archidiaconate or a parish, without a dispensation from him who has power to annul perpetual vows. Hence, although an archdeacon, or a parish priest performs a work of perfection or accepts a position involving such work, he is, nevertheless, not in a state of perfection. And, if we reflect carefully, we shall see that the religious life is, really, the state of perfection; since, by the vow of their order, religious are obliged, more strictly than are archdeacons or priests, to submit to their bishops, in all that regards the cure of souls, such as preaching and hearing confessions.

With regard to the sixth objection, we declare that, as has been already shown, it is untrue to say that there cannot be increase, or perfection of charity, in a person who is not living in a state of perfection. Some men live in a state of perfection, while their charity is either very imperfect, or does not exist; for there are many religious and bishops living in a state of mortal sin. But, on the other hand, the fact that there

are many good parish priests, whose charity is perfect, and who are ready to lay down their lives for others, does not prove that they are in a state of perfection. For there are many laymen, even married people, who have attained to such perfection of charity, that they, also, are willing to die for their neighbour. This virtue, however, does not prove such persons to be in a state of perfection.

As for the seventh objection, viz. that the deacons pointed by the Apostles were in a state of perfection, there is no proof of the truth of this assertion, either in the text of the Bible, or in the Gloss. We are told that the deacons were “filled with the Holy Spirit and with wisdom”; but this merely shows, that they possessed that perfection of grace which may exist in those who are not in a state of perfection. And the fact that they ministered around the altar, only points out that they held a certain high rank in the Church. For, as we have before said, there is a difference between a state and a rank. It is, nevertheless, true that the deacons were in that state of perfection, to which our Lord referred when He said, “If you will be perfect, go, sell what you hast, and follow Me” (Matt. xix. 21). For the deacons followed Christ, forsaking all things, and possessing nothing of their own, but having all things in common (Acts iv.). It is on their example that religious orders are moulded.

In the eighth objection it is maintained that the archdeacons SS. Stephen, Lawrence, and Vincent, were in a state of perfection. They most certainly were. But this state was due, not to the fact that they were archdeacons, but that they were martyrs. Martyrdom surpasses all religious perfection. St. Augustine in his book *De virginibus*, says, “Ecclesiastical authority gives us the plainest evidence of this fact. For, by the authority of the Church, it is made known to the faithful, in what places the names of martyrs and of holy women deceased, are mentioned at the mysteries of the altar.” Yet, I say, that even though Sebastian and George were in a state of perfection, we cannot, on their account, call the military life a state of perfection.

The ninth objection brought against us, is, that parish priests and archdeacons resemble bishops rather than religious. This is true as regards their work, to wit the care of souls committed to them. But it is not the case with regard to that perpetual obligation, which is essential to a state of perfection. From the point of view of obligation, religious, as has been pointed out, resemble bishops more closely than do archdeacons or parish priests.

We fully agree with the tenth proposition, viz. that the administration of ecclesiastical property does not detract from the state of perfection. Were this the case, the superiors and ministers of temporal affairs in religious orders would become imperfect. But perfection is weakened in those who do not renounce all that they possess, for the sake of Christ, and who make a profit out of the revenues of the Church, as if they were their own property.

They who put forward the eleventh objection, are plainly led astray by the folly of Vigilantius, against whom St. Jerome thus writes, “Those who assert that it is more perfect to keep the use of their own goods and to distribute their income among the poor in driblets, rather than to renounce and give away all their possessions at once, must take their answer, not from me, but from the Lord, who said, ‘If you would be perfect, go, sell all that you have, and give to the poor, and come follow me.’ He is speaking to those who desire to be perfect, and who, with the Apostles, leave father, boat, and net. He whose example you praise, is in the second or third rank of perfection.” Further, it is incorrect to say that archdeacons and parish priests are more perfect than monks, because they show hospitality and monks do not. For, as religious renounce all that they possess, they have no means of entertaining guests.

The twelfth argument, viz. that the most agreeable offering that can be made to God is zeal for souls, is undoubtedly true. But a certain order must be observed in this zeal. A man must, first, have zeal for his own soul, and strip it of all earthly affections in accordance with those words of the wise man (Eccles. xxx. 24), “Have pity on thine own soul, pleasing God.” This duty is pointed out by St. Augustine (XXI. *De civitate Dei*). Now, if a man, having arrived at contempt for earthly concerns, and even for himself, proceed, further, to zeal for the soul of others, he will, thereby, offer a more perfect sacrifice to God, than he would have presented by zeal only for his own salvation. But the most perfect of all offerings that can be made to the Almighty, is the obligation, whereby bishops and religious are bound, by vow or profession, to live a life of zeal for souls.

The thirteenth argument, viz. that, as a patriarch presides in his patriarchate, and a bishop in his see, so, likewise, an archdeacon rules in his archidiaconate, and a pastor in his parish, is manifestly faulty. For, a bishop rules the whole of his diocese; whereas archdeacons and parish priests have their sphere of government allotted to them by their bishop; they are, so to speak, his lieutenants, The Gloss, commenting on the words of St. Paul (1 Cor. xii. 28), “helps, governments,” interprets these “helps” as coadjutors to their superiors as was Titus to St. Paul, or as archdeacons are to their bishops. “Governments,” according to the Gloss, signify the clergy of inferior rank, such as priests, whose duty it is to teach. This interpretation is borne out by the words used by the bishop in the ordination of priests: “Inasmuch as we are weaker than they (*i.e.* than the Apostles), by so much the more do we need these helps.” Hence, it is laid down (XVI. Quest. I. cap. *Cunctis*), “That all priests, deacons and other clerics, must do nothing, without the permission of their own bishop.” Thus, without the license of his bishop, a priest cannot celebrate Mass, nor baptize in his own parish. This rule is again established in distinct. LXXX., “Priests shall do nothing without the command and advice of their bishop.”

The fourteenth objection bears witness to the sentiments of those that make it. It is

founded on the fact, that priests when guilty of heinous crimes, are imprisoned in monasteries. “When crafty people say what is true,” observes St. Gregory (X. *Moral.*), “it is very difficult for them to conceal their secret ambition.” Those who bring forward the argument about the imprisonment of criminal priests, conclude that priests are in a state of perfection in which monks are not, because guilty priests are condemned to a rigorous penance, which innocent religious voluntarily embrace. But that state is highest before God which is the most lowly in the eyes of the world. For, “he who humbles himself shall be exalted” (Luke xiv. 11), and “God has chosen the poor of this world, rich in faith and heirs of the Kingdom” (James ii. 5). But those who are ambitious of the glory of this world, reckon earthly honour to be a state; and they account as abject, whatsoever the world despises.

## CHAPTER XXIV

### **An Answer to the Argument, Whereby Certain Persons Endeavour to Prove, That the Defect of A Solemn Blessing Or Consecration Does Not Hinder Archdeacons Or Parish Priests From Being in A State of Perfection**

WE have already shown the absurdity of the arguments, on which is based the theory that archdeacons and parish priests are in a more perfect state than are religious. We will now, therefore, point out the frivolity of the objections raised against the proposition, that a man is placed in a state of perfection by means of a solemn blessing or consecration.

But, first, we must remember that a solemn rite of this nature, is not a cause, but a sign, of a state of perfection. It is not bestowed on any save on those who are entering some state of life; though that state need not necessarily be one of perfection. Those who are joined in matrimony embrace a state, in which neither husband nor wife will hereafter belong to themselves (1 Cor. vii.). For, matrimony is a perpetual bond uniting one to the other. Hence, the Church, to signify this state of perpetuity (though it be not a state of perfection), pronounces a solemn nuptial blessing over man and wife. In the same way, when a state is changed in social life, a certain form is used; thus, when a slave receives his freedom a deed of manumission is drawn up.

We are not speaking at random. For, all that we say, is confirmed by the authority of Dionysius, who says (VI. cap. *Eccles. hierarch.*) that, “our divine masters (to wit the Apostles), have vouchsafed to distinguish men by certain holy appellations,” namely, those who are in the state of the perfect; “some are servants, while others are called monks by reason of their pure service and ministry to God, and their single and undivided life which unites them, by holy ties, to godlike unity and

perfection most pleasing to God. On this account, the holy law has given them perfect grace, and has deemed them worthy of invocation.” We are, also, expressly told, that, as monks embrace a state of perfection, they are blessed by a solemn rite, handed down by Apostolical tradition.

The argument, that both in the consecration of a bishop and in the ordination of a priest, the same words are used, viz., “may these hands be sanctified and consecrated,” is irrelevant to our point. For, we are not now speaking of a priest in his priestly character. For, by his solemn consecration, he is placed not in a state of perfection, be it active or passive, but (as Dionysius tells us), in an illuminative state. We are speaking of a priest, in so far as he receives a certain charge or commission. And, when this charge is laid upon him, it is not accompanied by any special blessing; for he does not, by it, embrace a state, but merely accepts an office. A bishop, on the other hand, is solemnly consecrated to the pastoral office, by reason of the perpetual obligation, whereby he binds himself to it.

With regard to the second objection (viz., that regarding the anointing of kings), we answer that this unction was a sign, that he who received it, was entering a state involving the chief government of the kingdom. The other officers of the kingdom were not anointed, because they had no plenitude of power. In like manner in the Kingdom of the Church, a bishop receives unction on his head, to signify that he is the principal ruler of his diocese, while archdeacons and parish priests, who only hold a commission from the bishop, and who act as his lieutenants, are not anointed. But the fact of his receiving unction, is no proof that a king enters a state of perfection; since his charge extends only to temporal matters. It is not like that of bishops, which extends to such as are spiritual. Charity, wherein perfection consists, regards the spiritual welfare of others. Hence, solicitude about the spiritual, not about the temporal, wants of our neighbour, is essential to perfection; although perfect charity may, likewise, occupy itself about the material needs of others.

The third argument is quite irrelevant to the matter of which we are treating. The point with which we are at present dealing, is not that of perfection of merit, which may of course be greater in a parish priest, or even in a married man, than in a bishop or religious. The subject with which we are occupied is the state of perfection. It would seem, by the argument of our adversaries, that they do not understand the meaning of their own words; since, according to their reasoning, even bishops themselves, are not in a higher state of perfection than priests; for it may happen that their lives are less meritorious than are the lives of priests.

The fourth objection, *i.e.*, that the episcopate is not an order, contains, if it be taken in its literal meaning, a palpable falsehood. For Dionysius expressly says that there are three orders of the ecclesiastical hierarchy, to wit, bishops, priests, and deacons.

Again, in the distinct. XXI. cap. *Cleros*, it is said, that the order of bishops is divided into four parts. A bishop has a certain order with respect to the mystical body of Christ, *i.e.*, the Church in whose government he takes the chief part. But, with regard to the true Body of Christ which is contained in the Blessed Sacrament, he has no superiority over a priest. The proof that a bishop has a certain order, and not merely jurisdiction, like an archdeacon or parish priest, lies in the fact, that a bishop can do many things, such as administering Confirmation and Holy Orders, and consecrating churches, which he cannot commission others to do. The duties which are matters of jurisdiction only, he can transfer to others. Another proof that the episcopate is an order, lies in the fact, that, if a bishop be suspended, and then be ultimately restored to his see, he is not reconsecrated; for he has never lost the power of his order. This too is the case with men who are in other orders.

The fifth argument, viz., that an archdeacon or parish priest, is solemnly appointed, because he is invested with a ring, or some other symbol of the sort, is absolutely ridiculous. This investiture resembles certain civil ceremonies, whereby men when invested with a fief are presented with a ring or staff, rather than the rites of the Church, which consist in a solemn blessing or consecration.

## CHAPTER XXV

### **An Answer to the Arguments Which Are Brought Forward, to Prove That the Power of An Archdeacon Or Parish Priest to Resign His Duties is No Hindrance to His Being in A State of Perfection**

WE must next point out, that they argue with great inconsistency, who say that archdeacons and parish priests, in spite of their being able to resign their office, are in a state of perfection, equal to that of the episcopate or of the religious life. With regard to this point, it must be remembered, that, whoever leaves a state of perfection for one less perfect, is considered an apostate. Hence St. Paul writes concerning widows, "For when they have grown wanton in Christ they will marry; having damnation, because they have made void their first faith" (1 Tim. v. 11). On these words, the Gloss remarks, "Violation of a vow is damnable. Fidelity to a broken vow is, likewise, damnable. And they are in a state of damnation who make void their first promise of continence, and who, like the wife of Lot, look back; for this is apostasy." Hence, if archdeacons or parish Priests were in a state of perfection, they would, by renouncing the archidiaconates or parishes, put themselves in a state of damnation by becoming apostates.

Those who argue against us, maintain, first, that archdeacons and parish priests can embrace the religious life, not because the religious state is more perfect than that in

which they have been living, but because it is safer. This, however, is eminently untrue. It is distinctly stated, XIX. Quest. I., that, “such of the clergy as desire to become religious, in order that, thus, they may be able to lead a better life, shall be permitted by their bishops to enter monasteries.” Hence, it is clear, that their desire of embracing the religious state, must be on account of its greater perfection, not by reason of the security which it offers. Archdeacons and parish priests may not only resign their archidiaconates or parishes in order to go into monasteries, but they are free to resign them and stay in the world. This is done by those who become prebendaries of a cathedral. Likewise, if they be not in Holy Orders, they are free to marry. We thus have an incontestable proof that they are not in a state of perfection.

The second argument brought against us is, that if the inability of a religious man to leave his order be a proof that he is in a state of perfection, a married man must also be in a perfect state, because he may not forsake his wife. The absurdity of this reasoning is made clear by what we have already said. The religious life and the wedded life have this one circumstance in common, that they both entail a perpetual obligation. But while obligations of matrimony are not undertaken with a view to the accomplishment of works of perfection but to render a carnal debt, the ties of the religious life bind men solely to works of perfection, i.e., to poverty, chastity, and obedience. Hence, the religious state is one of perfection.

The third argument is partly true and partly false. It embodies the proposition, that, as David laid aside his armour for a sling and stones, so, likewise, it is permissible for men to abandon a more perfect state for one more lowly. A religious may, by reason of his weakness, and with a dispensation, quit his order for one less severe. But the Church never allows a religious to leave the religious life for that of a secular priest, be it as archdeacon, or as parish priest. Hence, we see that there is far more difference between the excellence of the religious state and the state of the archidiaconate or of parish priests (If theirs is to be called a state), than there is between the superiority of the more severe religious orders, and that of the less rigorous ones.

The fourth objection, to wit, that if immutability be essential to the perfection of a state, it cannot be permissible to pass from one state to another, is absolutely frivolous. It is lawful to pass from a lower to a higher state, but not *vice versa* (*Extra de regularibus*). For, a more perfect state embraces all that is contained in that which is less perfect; but the less perfect state does not contain what is included in a state of greater perfection. Therefore, a man who has bound himself to that which is less, cannot be blamed for embracing that which is greater.

The fifth assertion, viz. that a bishop can recall one of his clergy from the religious life to resume the charge of his parish, is untrue, and is contrary to the sacred

canons. The following words occur in *Extra de renuntiatione*, cap. *Admonet*, “You are strictly to forbid the priests belonging to your see, to enter, to hold, or to leave, without your permission, the churches of your diocese, coming under your jurisdiction. Should any priest dare to come to one of your churches without your license, he will incur canonical penalties.” In like manner it is laid down (*et de privileg. Cum et plantare*) that “Religious who are in churches which do not absolutely belong to them, must present to the bishops, for ordination, the priests who shall be responsible for the care of such churches. Further, they must render to such priests an account of the temporal concerns of these churches. Nor must they presume, without consulting the bishop, to remove these priests from their charge.” These words are only tantamount to saying, that parish priests, who, without consulting their bishop, resign their cures, render themselves liable to canonical penalties. But it is illogical to apply this general rule to a particular case, and to say, that priests cannot leave their parishes to enter religion. For in XIX. Quest. I. cap. *Duae*, it is expressly stated that, “even against the desire of their bishop, secular priests may quit their churches and enter monasteries.” Hence the words which occur in VII. Quest. I. *Episcopus de loco*, etc., manifestly apply to the passing of the clergy from one church to another, not from the secular to the religious life.

The sixth objection does not touch the point in question. It is urged, that religious pass from the religious life to a secular church, to which the cure of souls is attached. This is true. But they do not, in undertaking charge of a church, abandon the religious state. For it is established by XVI. Quest. I. *De monachis*, that “they, who, having lived a long while in religion, are admitted to Holy Orders, do not, on, that account, relinquish their former state.” But an archdeacon or parish priest can resign his office, and embrace the religious life; since, he is thereby passing from a less to a more perfect state under the guidance of the Divine Spirit (XIX. Quest. I. *Duae*).

The seventh argument is too foolish to need an answer. It is urged, that because a man who was in charity can fall from charity, therefore, it does not follow that he who falls from a state of perfection, was not in a state of perfection. No one falls from charity except, by sin; and by sin, likewise, a man falls from a state of perfection. For as men are bound by a common law to the love of charity, they are also bound to a state of perfection by particular vows.

The eighth proposition, viz., that by ecclesiastical constitution no bishop can become a religious without the permission of the Pope, from the practice of the Church is evidently untrue. The obstacle is, rather, on account of the perpetual obligation whereby bishops bind themselves to the care of their flocks. Hence St. Paul says (1 Cor. ix. 16), “Necessity is laid upon me; for woe is unto me if I preach not the Gospel.” He adds the cause of this necessity, when he says, “For whereas I

was free unto all, I made myself the servant of all.” Hence this prohibition is not laid down in the *Decretals* as a statute, but as a fact, approved by reason.

The ninth objection is worthless. It is certain, as a general rule, that no one who has not received Holy Orders according to the ecclesiastical. statute, is eligible to a bishopric, an archidiaconate, or to the care of a parish. But the Pope has, in this matter, power of granting dispensation, a power which at times he exercises. In such a case those in charge of an archidiaconate or parish, or even of an episcopal see, can resign their office, and marry. By so doing they are not breaking any contract. A religious, however, who marries, breaks his vow, or contract, of celibacy.

## CHAPTER XXVI

### Concerning the Works That A Religious May Lawfully Undertake

IT remains, now, for us to consider which are the works befitting those living in the religious state. We have already fully treated of this matter elsewhere. We will, therefore merely add a few words, in the hope of putting the calumniators of religious to silence. The following words of St. Jerome which are found in the decrees (distinct. LXV. *Olim*) are quoted by the enemies of the religious life.

“Before study was, by the suggestion of Satan, introduced into the religious life,” etc. I wonder if they who quote these words are of opinion that religious ought not to study? For study, especially of Holy Scripture, peculiarly befits men consecrated to a life of contemplation. St. Augustine thought study a fit occupation for religious. He writes, (XIX. *De Civitate Dei*), “None ought to be hindered from knowledge of the truth, a knowledge which beseems meritorious leisure.” If they who quote the saying of St. Jerome, intend to prove that study is reprehensible in religious, the words that follow in the same chapter ought to convince them of their error. “The people will say among themselves: I am of Paul, I am of Apollo.”

Whence it is clear what is meant by the words cited, “Before, by the suggestion of the devil, there was study,” *i.e.* dissensions in the Christian religion.

It is also maintained, that the power of binding and loosing, or rather the right to exercise this power, does not belong to religious who are priests. I wonder what those who speak thus, mean by their words. If they mean, that because monks are ordained priests, they cannot *ipso facto* exercise the power of the keys, they are perfectly right. This applies, likewise, to secular priests. For a secular priest does not receive faculties to exercise the power of the keys because he is ordained priest. He has these faculties given him on account of the cure of souls, wherewith he is entrusted. Therefore, if it be argued, that monks, as monks, may not exercise the power of the keys, it is a plain falsehood. This is evident from the following words

(XVI. Quest. L.): “Certain men, supported by no authority whatsoever, and inflamed rather, by presumptuous and bitter zeal than by charity, assert that monks, being dead to the world, and living only to God, are unworthy to exercise the functions of the priesthood. They hold that monks cannot instruct men in penance, or in the truths of Christianity, and that they are unable, by the power divinely committed to them in their priestly office, to absolve sinners. But this is completely erroneous. Blessed Benedict, the gentle guide of monks, has never prohibited them from performing this office. And, it is observed, that those things only, are unlawful to religious, which are forbidden them by their rule.”

Those who would fain limit the sphere of activity open to religious, also quote the following words: “The office of a monk is not that of a doctor, but of a mourner”(XVI. Quest. I.). If, by these words, they intend to prove that because a man is a monk, he need not, necessarily, be a teacher, the proposition is perfectly true. Otherwise, every monk must needs be a teacher. But, if they mean that the fact that a man is a monk, is in some way incompatible with his being, likewise, a teacher, their opinion is clearly erroneous. On the contrary, the office of teaching, especially of teaching Holy Scripture, belongs, pre-eminently, to religious. On the words of St. John’s Gospel, “The woman therefore left her water pot,” etc., the Gloss says, quoting St. Augustine: “From these words let those intending to preach the Gospel learn to put away worldly anxieties and cares. our Lord entrusted to those who had left all things and followed Him, the office of universal teaching, saying to His disciples, ‘Go, therefore, teach all nations’” (Matt. xxviii.).

The same answer may be made to all other objections of the same sort: as, for instance, to the argument, that the position of the cleric and the monk differ, for the cleric having charge of souls, says “I feed my sheep,” but the monk says “I am fed.” The same reply must, also, be made to those who say, “Let the monk sit solitary and hold his peace.” These words, and others resembling them, certainly point out the conduct befitting a monk as a monk; but they do not forbid him to undertake superior offices, if such be entrusted to him. A secular priest cannot, by reason of his being a priest, pronounce excommunication; but he has, nevertheless, power to do so, if he be commissioned by his bishop to excommunicate.

Again, it is urged that only two orders were established by our Lord: one being that of the twelve Apostles, represented by bishops; the other that of the seventy-two disciples, represented by priests exercising the pastoral office. If, from these premises, it be argued that monks, unless they be bishops or pastors, have not, as a matter, of course, the care of souls, the conclusion is perfectly true. But, if it be maintained that religious have not power to preach, or to hear confessions, even with the sanction of their bishop, the conclusion is clearly false. For the higher the dignity of any man, the greater is his power (XVI. Quest. I. *Sunt nonnulli*). Hence, if

secular priests, not engaged in pastoral work, can, with the permission of a bishop, discharge these functions, religious are certainly better entitled to do so, if they have the same commission.

It has occurred to me to say these things in answer to those who strive to detract from the perfection of religious life. Nevertheless, I abstain from reproaches. For, “he who utters reproach is foolish” (Prov. x. 18), and “all fools are meddling with reproaches” (Prov. xx. 3). If anyone desire to send me a reply, his words will be very welcome to me. For the surest way to elucidate truth and to confound error is by confuting the arguments brought against the truth. Solomon says, “Iron sharpens iron, so a man sharpens the countenance of a friend” (Prov. xxvii. 17).

And may the Lord God, blessed for ever, judge between us and them. Amen.