

Peter of John Olivi

*Questions on Evangelical Perfection. Question 9, On Poor Use*¹

Translated by Oleg Bychkov

/p. 3/ The ninth question is whether poor use is integrated into the advice or vow of evangelical poverty to such an extent that it is of its substance.

[Article 1: poor use in general]

[Arguments to the contrary]

And it appears that it is not.

1 Nothing that creates the obvious danger of multiple transgressions and sins can be helpful toward perfection or assist in any way with evangelical advice and vows. But to take a vow of poor use is of this sort. For this amounts to taking a vow not to accept or possess things except when current need requires them. However, to observe this or [even] to determine [what the current need is] is in some way impossible. Therefore it will easily and frequently happen that a person who takes such a vow will accept more or less than is needed: both cases constitute errors, and the former case constitutes a breaking of the vow.

2 Also, an inability to accept things to use except out of current and extreme need—which seems to be the proper meaning of ‘poor use’—can be hazardous to our physical body and even precipitate death on occasion. For there could be an occasion when one could not conveniently obtain things by himself or through someone else [at that moment].² But all such behavior is illicit.³ Therefore, etc.

3 Also, continuous anxiety in one’s heart about the necessities of life is highly detrimental to perfection. However, people who take a vow of poor use are mostly susceptible to this sort of anxiety, because they have to worry and be anxious on a day-by-day basis. Therefore, etc.

4 Also, the way of life that facilitates and promotes the quiet of contemplation the most is the way that removes one from the worldly distractions of this life the farthest. However, having a sufficient amount of things for one’s entire life, or at least for a long period of time, is less distracting than permanent indigence. Indeed, an indigent person is always busy trying to provide for himself, while the person who has enough is not in the least. Therefore, etc.

<...>

/p. 4/ Also, according to such a vow one would not be allowed to provide housing or clothes for himself except for the present day, for [the vow prohibits one from providing for himself] except out of current need. But this would be most stupid and an occasion for continuous vagrancy and nudity. Nor could any group of people practically live together according to such a way of life, nor could it maintain monastic discipline, nor could it have time for quiet prayer,

¹ Latin text according to Petrus Ioannis Olivi, *De usu paupere. The Quaestio and the Tractatus*, edited by D. Burr (Leo S. Olschki/University of W. Australia Press: Florence/Perth, 1992).

² Because poor use seems to forbid storing things for future use.

³ As it can be seen as self-harming or suicide.

study, or other exercises that are useful for people in religious orders. Therefore, it would present an occasion for multiple disgraceful things, which are in no way appropriate for an evangelical preacher. Therefore, etc.

Also, if evangelical perfection implies that one should think only of the current need, then by the same token why not only of the need of the current hour, or of the need of the current moment? But who could live like that? Therefore, etc.

<...>

/pp. 5-6/ Also, it is only the statement *Do not be anxious for the morrow* (Matthew 6:34) that suggests that evangelical perfection implies that one should provide only for one's current needs, and the reasons for this that Christ puts forth there are as follows: God feeds the birds and clothes or colors flowers without them making any prior provisions for that (Matthew 6:26-29); one cannot add an inch to one's stature by being anxious (Matthew 6:27); if God gave us greater goods, such as our bodies and our souls, without us making any provisions for that, we must hope all the more that he will give us minor necessities for our body. Also [one could conclude this] from the statement *Each day has enough trouble of its own; tomorrow will take care of itself* (Matthew 6:34). Or, perhaps, [this can be concluded] from the precept that Christ gave the apostles when he said: *Carry neither bag nor purse*, etc. (cf. Luke 10:4). However, as I will prove, the [vow of poor use] cannot be derived from those statements.

<...>

/pp. 6-7/ Also, Jesus does not say there that we should not provide for tomorrow, but only that we should not be anxious about it: these statements seem to prohibit undue anxiety and superfluous concern, but not modest provision of things [for the future].

Also, it seems completely irrational that in the morning I can think of providing for the evening, but in the evening I cannot think of providing *for the morrow*. Therefore, estimating our needs on a daily basis seems to be completely arbitrary... <...> ...For in that case, if it were not lawful for us to think of providing anything for ourselves, the power of foresight or the ability to plan for the future, in which we surpass brute animals, would have been given to us in vain. <...> In addition, then it would follow that we should not think of providing for ourselves even on an hourly basis...

<...>

[Article 2: specific cases of poor use: money, clothes, shoes, and horses]

[Arguments to the contrary]

/pp. 7-8/ In addition to that, in order to clarify the idea of poor use, there is a specific question about the use of some specific things, namely the use of money, clothes, shoes, horses, and transportation on horseback. The question about the use of money is whether those who take the vow of evangelical poverty are totally banned from using money, and whether it is helpful to evangelical perfection to renounce any such use by a vow. It seems that they are not and it is not. For Christ had a purse in which money was carried to provide for his needs and the needs of his followers, as Augustine says in his polemic against Azimantus.

/p. 8/ Also, when it says that Jesus's disciples entered the city of Samaria *to buy food* (John 4:8), how could they *buy* it if they had no money? For it does not seem likely that they carried some other items to barter them for food, for that would have been more onerous than to carry money. For all those things that one carries around in order to barter them for something else count as money.

<...>

Also, at least from the text (John 13:29), it is clear that Judas lawfully carried a purse—and for the same reason that it was lawful for him, it should have been lawful also for the other apostles.

<...>

/p. 9/ Also, it seems that for the same reason that it is lawful to have the thing we need for our uses, it is also lawful to have equivalent amounts of money. Indeed, sometimes money is necessary or useful for obtaining the things we need. Furthermore, to possess such amounts of money does not suggest being rich any more than to have the things themselves [which this money is for], for the money is not worth more than the things [we buy for it].

Also, Aristotle says in *Politics* that in the beginning money was not in use, but subsequently, out of obvious need and general utility for the people, they learned how to use it. For it was a lot of work and distraction to carry around things to barter. Also, often it happened that someone had something to offer, but the other person who wanted that thing did not have anything to barter for it that would be useful or pleasing to the person offering the thing. Thus the difficult situation resulted in the invention of means of exchange that was acceptable to both parties. Therefore, if the use of money is necessary and useful for the common good, and this is the reason it was invented, it follows that to block this use would be harmful to the common good, and consequently something bad or imperfect.

<...>

/pp. 9-10/ Also, it seems ridiculous and not at all helpful toward perfection that someone else should handle money or other things on my behalf, while I could not handle it on my own behalf. For both asking someone else often to spend the money for you, and keeping accounts in such a case is an occasion for much distraction and aggravation—and yet someone can fulfill his wishes by means of the money handled this way almost to the same extent as when one handles it himself. For it seems laughable to allow someone else to hold large amounts of money on my behalf, while I could not hold even a small amount of money for my current needs, for the latter would seem incomparably more in harmony with both reason and perfection.

<...>

[Article 3: Can those who profess poor use reclaim (*repetere*)⁴ property or make debts?]

/p. 13/ Further, in order to clarify poor use even more, one raises a question about some specific behaviors that can be tolerated as regards the use of things. Namely, are those who take the vow of evangelical poverty allowed to reclaim (*repetere*) anything by themselves or through an intermediary? Also, are they allowed to put someone in charge who could, on their behalf, reclaim things that have been given or entrusted [to someone], and to summon debtors to court for the purpose of reclamation? <...>

[Arguments in favor]

And it seems that it is lawful for them to reclaim things. Indeed, it was lawful for the apostles to exercise the right to exact alms from those to whom they preached. And they could compel those people by using ecclesiastical authority to give them back. But this is about the same as to summon them to court for this purpose. Therefore, etc.

Also, one cannot go against natural law to create a situation that would be contrary to natural law. However, natural law obligates me to procure what is necessary for my needs. Therefore, by the same token [it obligates me] to reclaim [things], especially when there is no other way of obtaining them.⁵

<...>

In addition to that, there is a question as to whether it is lawful for them [the people who profess poor use] to contract debts for whatever reason.

[Reply to the question: Article 1]

/p. 14/ I reply to this question by saying the following: poor use—as long as one understands it in modest terms and reasonably—is integrated into [the advice or vow of] evangelical perfection and is of its substance. Moreover, this is so fundamentally and certainly true that almost all those points that were adduced in the previous Question [8 “On Highest Poverty”]—in order to prove that highest poverty is one of the principal counsels (*consilium*) directed at evangelical perfection—are most pertinent in the case at hand [about poor use]; moreover, they are more directly and effectively pertinent [to poor use] than to renunciation of property or of all jurisdiction over property. This can become easily and abundantly clear if one looks briefly at the five principal parts of the reply to the immediately preceding question [about highest poverty]. For you will not find that any practice of highest poverty would contribute to the highest moral perfection without the addition of poor use.

⁴ The evangelical prohibition against reclaiming property that has been taken from you is contained in Luke 6:30 where the Greek term ἀπαίτέω is translated by the Latin *repetere* in the Vulgate (*et qui aufert quae tua sunt ne repetas*). The friars make a special mention of this practice in the *Earlier Rule* (*regula non bullata*), Chapter 14.

⁵ Cf. *Earlier Rule* (*regula non bullata*), Chapter 9.8.

[Part One]

/pp. 14-15/ This is clear if one looks at the fifteen points that are treated in sufficient detail in the first part of the preceding reply. **As far as humility is concerned, removing all jurisdiction [over property] does not completely remove all grounds and occasions for arrogance, as long as one has and can have the sumptuous use of lavish garments, elaborate dishes, magnificent residences, and the glory of being accompanied by a retinue and traveling on horseback or in carriages, and so forth.** For as long as one has these things, one would not feel deeply and wholly destitute of all the worldly beauty and pomp. Nor will he feel completely despicable and abject in the eyes of the world, for worldly and sensual people first and foremost base their evaluations on the exterior use, which is the first thing that catches the attention of their senses, as opposed to the absence of jurisdiction. <...> And if this is true of clothes, by the same token it is true also of other exterior lavishness. And since it is certain that, remarkably, poor use is perceived as vileness by the eyes of the world, it is most certain that humility and its grounds are not fully assumed without it.

/pp. 15-16/ Also, speaking of the second point about humility that is made there [in the preceding reply], it is clear that the will that actually assumes [the practice of] poor use is thereby affected and moved to embrace the height of vilification, abjection, and, as it were, its own annihilation. For if it does not assume [this practice] nor has any affection for it, but rather for sumptuous use, it is most certain that it is not perfectly moved to embrace the highest level of abjection, but rather seems to be moved to embrace worldly glory. <...> **Moreover, only an obviously blind person cannot see that without poor use no poverty should be called or considered highest.** Now if one asks simple-minded people, who for the most part have sound innate judgment, which sort of poverty is more conducive to deflating one's ego, the one that entails jurisdiction but only allows one to use few and worthless things, or the one that entails no jurisdiction but allows one to have abundant use [of things—if one asks this], I believe, all will commonly say that there is no comparison between the first and the second.

/p. 16/ Also, whoever desires to enjoy abundant use, despite the fact that no jurisdiction comes with it, must be attached to the riches of this world and worship them; he must be favorable to them and not hold riches and their magnificent use in low esteem but rather esteem them highly. <...>

As for the point about the strict sobriety and austerity of life, the situation is most clear. For who would doubt that opulent use is more conducive to lust and excesses of carnal delights than having jurisdiction over things, especially if each is considered by itself, without the other?⁶ And who would doubt that the lack and scarcity of use mortifies, castigates, and sobers one up incomparably more profoundly and more directly than a renunciation of one's rights? Read authoritative texts that we quote in that section for this purpose and you will clearly see that all of them speak directly and clearly about poor use rather than about the absence of jurisdiction. <...> Thus it is clear that [those arguments] are conclusive only with regard to the sort of poverty that includes poor use, and no other kind.

/pp. 16-17/ **As for the point about chastity and purity, this is also clear. For it is clear that unless you remove the opulent use full of delights, you have not yet fully removed the incitements of lust and impurity, nor have you fully detached your mind from worldly things, and without this detachment one cannot achieve full purity of one's heart.** <...> for the very excess of amorous activities is in some way a large part of the use that is full of delights, and it

⁶ I.e., if jurisdiction is considered without the use.

naturally follows the delights of taste and nourishment. For a person is not rendered sufficiently incapable either of making love or of being sexually attractive for as long as he or she enjoys the use that includes splendid, lavish, and delightful things. <...>

/p. 17/ As for the fourth point, namely, faithfulness, truthfulness, and simplicity, this is also obvious. For just as the desire of enjoying common or private jurisdiction [over something] corrupts the truthfulness and faithfulness of friendship, so does the desire of common or private use, if not to a greater degree. <...> For does the desire of abundant use prevent the demonstration of deceitful or phony affections and services, as well as the numerous false signs of respect, love, and admiration [any better than the desire of jurisdiction]?

<...>

/p. 18/ As for the sixth point, namely maintaining peace in the community, this is most clear. For as long as desire for opulent use reigns supreme, there are still grounds for discord and division, envy and contention, lawsuits and litigation, and various opportunities for fraud, deceit, and mutual suspicion among companions. Indeed, because rights [over something] for the most part are desired and sought after on account of its use, he who loves the use attempts, in a totally inappropriate fashion, to lay claim to the use of a thing, at least to the extent that he can, under some appearance of legality. For this reason such people desire to lay claim to the use of lands and things, and on account of their use they start litigation and provoke dissention among themselves and others, and on this account they are envious both of their relatives and of others. <...> For it is hardly possible for the lovers of opulent use to be gentle and peaceful.

<...>

/p. 20/ As for the tenth point, about the exclusive reliance on and security of faith, this is clear. Indeed, because it is those people alone⁷ who have cast away every comfort, hope, and security of this life, it is only these people to whom the second point about faith truly applies. For because it is these people alone who do not care to secure the use of things [for themselves] by relying on human ingenuity and [caving in to] enticements, and, as it were, rejoice in their poverty and destitution, it is only these people who experience divine providence to an exceptional degree and whose sole and exclusive support is divine power and providence...

<...>

/pp. 20-21/ Also, as far as the twelfth point is concerned, namely the height of contemplation, the matter is clear... <...> For [the practice of poor use] is more conducive to contemplation, because through this practice one has greater freedom and greater will to spend time in the study of truth. For those who wish to live in opulence and to enjoy the opulent use of things are certainly busy with various pursuits and distracted by various desires of things, as well as continuously occupied by all sorts of household items, living spaces, and other things pertaining to opulent use.

<...>

⁷ The ones who practice poor use.

[Part Four]

/p. 27/ Also, one can argue this point [about poor use] in an irrefutable manner using the fourth principal part [of the previous reply] which deals with the institution [of this vow] and the person who instituted it...

<...>

/p. 29/ Also, when Christ imposed [the requirement of] poverty [on his disciples] and when he taught this poverty (which is in the second part of part four of the previous reply) he always specifically mentioned poor use. For when Christ says in Mark 6:8-9: *He commanded them that they should take nothing for their journey, [save a staff only; no scrip, no bread, no money in their purse]*; and in Matthew 10:9-10: *Possess neither gold, [nor silver, nor brass in your purses, nor scrip for your journey, neither two coats, neither shoes, nor yet staves]*; and in Luke 9:3: *Take nothing for your journey, [neither staves, nor scrip, neither bread, nor money; neither have two coats apiece]*—it is obvious that he gives them a clear commandment to practice poor use. For he does not say “do not have possession of those things that you will take on your journey” but rather “do not take,” although this also presupposes the former [i.e., no possessions], as was sufficiently proved in the preceding Question.

<...>

/pp. 30-31/ Also, one can clearly demonstrate this point [about poor use] using the fifth principal part [of the previous reply]. Indeed, Francis, who reestablished Christ’s poverty in the most profound manner, observed poor use—and wanted it to be observed—with exceptional firmness and zeal, as his entire life demonstrated most clearly: so clearly, in fact, that it could not escape even a blind and deaf one! For factual written accounts show that he opposed opulent use, for example, the lavishness of housing and such things, more zealously than jurisdiction or power over something. Also, his most accomplished brothers, and mostly the brothers of the times past, were always most zealous in this regard. For this reason also at one of their general chapters,⁸ which was a very solemn occasion, [the brothers], establishing regulations against excessive use of [elaborate] buildings and inspired by the Holy Spirit, came up with the following wording, that the lavishness and whimsical appearance of buildings “are directly opposed to [the idea of] poverty.”⁹ They did not say “obliquely” or “indirectly” but “directly,” which could not at all be true if poor use were not included in our vow of poverty.

<...>

⁸ The Narbonne Chapter of 1260 presided over by Bonaventure.

⁹ The entire text of the statute reads as follows: (no. 15) “And since whimsicality and superfluity are directly opposed to [the idea of] poverty, we ordain that buildings that are whimsical as far as pictures, ceilings, windows, columns, and such things are concerned, as well as superfluity in length, breadth, and height [of buildings], taking into consideration the nature of the locale, be strictly avoided.” (no. 18) “Also, there should be no glass windows with stories or pictures in them, except that the principal glass window behind the main altar of the choir can have the images of the crucifix, Holy Virgin, Saint John, Saint Francis, and Saint Anthony, exclusively. And if they be otherwise, they are to be removed by the visitators.” Translated from the Latin text according to Bihl’s edition in *Archivum Franciscanum Historicum* 34 (1941): 48.

/p. 31/ Also, only an insane person would say that our Rule does not obligate us by vow to observe poverty. However, [poverty and thus our Rule] prescribes poor use just as strictly and in the same way as it prescribes renunciation of rights [of possession]. Indeed, the same passage contains the following words: “The brothers are not to take possession of anything for themselves: neither a dwelling, nor a piece of land, nor any thing, but, remaining as pilgrims and strangers in this world, let them go seeking alms with confidence.”¹⁰ For just as the former part [of this passage] refers to the renunciation of rights [of possession], the latter part refers to poor use and begging.

/pp. 31-32/ Also, this is extolled above all other vows in the Rule, in the same [chapter]. Therefore it says about this specifically: “This is the height of highest poverty.”¹¹ And (something that is addressed later in more detail) for certain the conditions of poor use according to the model of the gospel of Christ are laid out there in the most particular manner, such as poor clothing, scarce food, absence of shoes and change of clothes, prohibition of traveling on horseback and of using money. In fact, as far as the wording of the precept is concerned, nothing is prescribed there that concerns renunciation of one’s rights [to property] but rather that which concerns a certain condition of poor use, such as the use of money. But it would be ridiculous to list all these if they were not included in the vow of poverty. Also, it would be false to call something highest poverty if it didn’t include poor use, because the poverty that does include it is incomparably higher.

<...>

/p. 34/ Also, Brother Bonaventure, the greatest Doctor of our times and our Order, in Chapter 7.3 of his *Apologia pauperum* (*Defense of the Poor*) says about this matter as follows: “One must consider two things as far as the ownership of worldly goods is concerned, namely, jurisdiction [over them] and their use. Since their use is necessarily tied to the condition of our present life, evangelical poverty consists in relinquishing earthly things as far as their use¹² and ownership is concerned, provided that their use is not completely rejected, but restricted in accordance with what the Apostle said [to Timothy]: *Having food and sufficient clothing, let us be content with these* (1 Timothy 6:8).” Also, in Chapter 12.20, around the middle of the chapter, speaking about observing some balance in pursuing the virtue of poverty, he says: “For evangelical poverty, on account of lifting the spirit toward eternal things—as the sort of poverty that *lays up all its treasures in heaven* (Matthew 6:20)—persuades the one who professes the perfect form of it that he should strip himself entirely of all worldly things as far as attachment to them and jurisdiction over them is concerned, and that he should be content with their use that narrowly supports his needs. And it is in this that the proper measure or balance in the practice of [poverty] consists: in relinquishing jurisdiction without rejecting use; in observing austerity in this use without abstaining from the necessities of life; in providing for one’s needs without deviating from austerity.” This is what this Master says, and it is clear that, according to him, the following two things are conducive of evangelical poverty and observing balance in practicing it: on the one hand, restricted use, and on the other hand, total renunciation of use of [lavish] possessions, such as lands, estates, and similar things.

¹⁰ *Later Rule* (*regula bullata*) c. 6; cf. *Earlier Rule* (*regula non bullata*) c. 7; Francis’s *Testament* 24-25; *Rule of St. Clare* c. 8.

¹¹ *Later Rule* (*regula bullata*) c. 6.

¹² Thus Olivi; there is a variant that has “jurisdiction” instead of “use,” which makes more sense.

<...>

/p. 35/ Now Francis, who had a good sense for these things, almost always added in his statements that pertained to poor use: "Unless they are compelled by obvious need or utility."

<...>

/p. 37/ Therefore, poor use is included in the vow [of poverty] in an indeterminate way, except for some cases that will be addressed later. Therefore, not every deviation from poor use in those who profess it results in a mortal sin, but only a deviation of such quality or magnitude that, once one has weighed the circumstances from various angles, one can conclude that this is lavish use rather than poor. And if you ask when one ought to judge a use lavish or not, I will do my best to address this in my replies to objections.

However, the conclusion that poor use is included in the vow [of poverty] in an indeterminate way implies that one and the same state of highest poverty can allow for various degrees of perfection, according to whether one observes poor use in a more or less perfect, strict or lax manner. <...>

[Replies to the objections: Article 1]

/p. 38/ To the third, one must say that although involuntary paupers are likely to be anxious and concerned about the necessities of life, those who take the vow of poor use voluntarily are not. Moreover, undue anxiety and concern stand in direct opposition to the will to maintain such a vow. At the same time, even a moderate concern about superfluous things easily can be more culpable and dangerous than even a greater concern merely about the necessities of life, for the most part because the person who is concerned about superfluous things thereby develops a hidden and potential proclivity [to be concerned]; therefore his level of concern about the necessities of life, should they become unavailable, would be far greater than that of the person who is anxious merely about the necessities of life.

<...>

/p. 39/ To the fifth point one must say that although on the surface having sufficient possessions may seem to be less burdensome to society than to be lacking material things, on a deeper level the situation is different. Indeed, society draws on world resources much more when it practices abundant use and provides sufficiently for itself than when it practices poor use. Furthermore, those who have a lot and love opulence can be and are very harmful in many more ways compared to those who love and serve poverty. Also, the troubles for societies that result from the vices of those societies (now societies think they should blame certain people for their troubles, but the link here is purely accidental!) cannot always be cured, and mostly not to the extent that would remedy the loss of the perfect status. As for when a comment is added that sometimes it is easier [for a community] to give a year's worth of supplies at once than to provide them on a day-by-day basis, one must say that such an inconvenience can result for the people [of the community] from daily donations that in such cases it would be better to accept a year's worth of supplies when there is no other way to provide those supplies in a way that

would better agree with evangelical perfection. After all, as we mentioned before, the evangelical vow contains nothing irrational or dangerous. In other cases, the goodness and usefulness of the evangelical state—not only to the people who take this vow, but also to the community at large—must be always valued more highly than any temporary nuisance experienced by this community.

<...>

/p. 40/ [To the sixth point; regarding the discussion about procuring clothes, housing, and food] Therefore, whatever is clearly needed [to be procured] at present, even though it may not be needed [to be used] right now for the present moment, can be lawfully provided and even possessed, as long as one always keeps in mind poor use. I add this last part because one ought not estimate that something is needed at present if, according to one's estimate, it can be conveniently procured in the future, or at the time when it will be needed [for use].

To the seventh point one must say that 'to think only about our present needs' can mean two things. One meaning is to think about that which is needed right now for the present moment. The other meaning is to think about that which needs to be obtained or procured [right now at the present moment] for some occasion in the future. Now this latter sense is the more appropriate one, and from this it does not follow that if it is a sign of perfection to think only about our present needs, then it is a sign of perfection to think only about the needs of the present hour—mainly for the reason that if one only thinks of what one needs for the present hour, one cannot provide well [for this present hour] during this present hour unless one has thought ahead of time of the [needs of this hour].

<...>

/p. 43/ To the fifteenth point... however, one must know that 'currently present need' must be understood in a balanced way: not too strictly and not too loosely. For it would be understood too strictly if one thinks that the only thing that is 'presently needed' is that which I urgently need to use at this very moment. It would be understood too loosely if one extends one's 'currently present need' to all those things that one may need throughout his entire life. In that case, I believe, the appropriate interpretation [of 'current need'] if something is judged as 'presently needed' when our need for this thing is sufficiently imminent and when it cannot be procured easily in any other way. For example, the need for next year's harvest is sufficiently eminent at the time of sowing [even though it is a year away], because unless one makes preparations at the time [of sowing], the harvest [next year] cannot be obtained except by a miracle. <...> /p. 44/ [However,] all those things that are not needed in this way, pertain to the *morrow* or the future time rather than to our present needs. Therefore to be concerned about such things would amount to *being concerned about the morrow*, and this is prohibited by Christ in that passage.

<...>

[Replies to the objections based on Augustine's text]

/p. 47/ As for the ninth point, one must say that 'going beyond' one's current needs is not always so contrary to this vow or precept [of poverty] that it would result in a mortal sin, because, as

was said above, **the vow does not determine exactly or precisely the point in time to which 'current or present needs' refer.** Least of all does it limit [these needs] to the needs of one day, for 'current need' does not apply merely to the needs of one day or of today, but also to the needs of the future time that must be addressed at present.

Also one must know that the meaning of 'going beyond' [poor] use must be different, in accordance with the diversity of things we use. For there are things for which we have need frequently and in large quantities and that can be commonly preserved and stored and are commonly stored, such as bread and wine. There are also things for which we have need frequently and in comparable quantities but that cannot be commonly preserved, and one could have them available only by way of continuously growing them, such as garden herbs. There are also things for which we have need rarely and in moderate quantities, such as oil or vegetables. Also, there are food stuffs whose preservation and storage is more suggestive of riches and more opposed to indigence than that of other food stuffs, even according to the common opinion and use of the world, for example storing grain in barns and wine in cellars, as opposed to storing oil or firewood, unless perhaps oil would equal [grain and wine] in quantity and price.

<...>

/p. 48/ Now 'current need' for things must be evaluated differently according to those three different classes of things to be used. Indeed, preserving vegetables or oil for part of the year is not suggestive of riches: [first,] they are not commonly used in large quantities that can be pricey; [second,] they cannot be commonly obtained by way of a gift or in any other way, especially for the use of a large group of people. Therefore, preserving such things is not against [the idea of] poor use—and for the most part because even if these foodstuffs are available, still the principal provisions, that is bread and wine, are absent.

As for garden herbs, they could not be commonly and conveniently obtained by any group of people unless one has a garden to use, as they are needed commonly and frequently. For this reason, it is not against poor use to have gardens to use, at least where they are not suggestive of possession but rather of [a way of] living, and where no one doubts that [this way of living] is necessary for a group of people. Especially this applies to an enclosed community, for which it is appropriate to have some open areas and spaces around their enclosures, both to lift their spirits and to promote bodily health, and gardens can serve as such open spaces. <...>

However, in all such matters one must take into consideration the number of people in the community. Indeed, what is suggestive of riches in the case of one or two people, is suggestive of poor use in the case of thirty or a hundred people.

In addition to these different classes of things, objects and stuffs to be used have some other characteristics [that need to be taken into consideration when estimating whether the use of them is poor]. Thus some things, such as food and drink, are used by humans only by way of continuous consumption. However, some things, such as clothes and dwellings, serve our needs for a long duration of time while [not being consumed] but remaining one and the same item. Such things can be [had and] used continuously for the duration of their existence, but in such a manner as to not exceed our 'current needs.' **For it would be a notable excess to have another home, in addition to the one we live in now, in the way that the bourgeois in cities have two different types of houses, summer homes and winter homes, in the same area or on the same estate, or in some other ways.** It is the same if some had multiple changes of clothes, for this is prohibited in the aforementioned passage, when it is said, *not two tunics* (Matthew 10:10).

<...>

/p. 49/ But then again, some things have uses for our bodies, as all of the aforesaid things and those similar to them, but some things have exclusively spiritual uses, such as books, churches, and ecclesiastical ornaments. And although one must also avoid excess in such things, however, since these things serve the spirit, and a great number of books is necessarily needed in order to study a great number of subjects, it is not as easy to estimate what would be excessive when we deal with such things, as opposed to the case of the aforesaid [material] things, except if perchance some curious ornaments might be found to serve vanity rather than spirituality,¹³ or if perchance someone keeps some of these things (such as multiple copies of the same book or similar things) in duplicate or triplicate, which is not necessary. These examples reveal multiple possible difficulties and problematic cases that are implicitly contained in this way of looking at things.

[Reply to the Question: Article 2]

<...>

/pp. 51-52/ As for the use of money, this issue is clear. Indeed, handling money as such, for its own sake, is not immediately useful to humans. For this reason, Aristotle in *Politics* 1, ch. 9 calls the monetary subdivision [of economy] ‘useless riches.’ For money is directly useful only for contracts. However, being intent on making contracts is suggestive of commercial operations and having jurisdiction and rights [over things], which can hardly exist without sinful behavior. For this reason it is written in Ecclesiasticus 27: *As a stake is driven firmly into a fissure between stones, so sin is wedged in between selling and buying.* For money is always at hand and is most easy to use, for it is easy to carry, hide, preserve, and exchange, and therefore much fraud and many evils can be perpetrated most easily through the use of money.

<...>

[Reply to the objections: Article 2]

/p. 51/ To the first objection one must reply that Christ did not carry a purse for himself or for his own disciples, except perhaps on certain occasions in cases of pressing need. <...> /p. 52/ Also, Bede, commenting on the passage from Luke 22:35-36, *When I sent you [without purse, and scrip, and shoes, lacked you anything? And they said, Nothing. Then said he unto them, But now, he that has a purse, let him take it, and likewise his scrip: and he that has no sword, let him sell his garment, and buy one]*, says that Christ permitted his disciples to carry the money that would be necessary for their provisions while their persecution raged on, despite the fact that previously he had banned them from carrying anything on their journey.... Therefore, Christ held a purse in his role as a prelate: not by virtue of the evangelical vow, but rather due to the responsibilities of pastoral care. <...>

¹³ This point is addressed in the Narbonne Constitutions of 1260 produced under Bonaventure; see text quoted in footnote 7.

/p. 52/ And if one asks when such need [to carry money] might occur, given that money in itself is not useful, one must know that there could be multiple occasions for such a need: for example, when one travels in the lands where one cannot obtain things except by buying them... <...> [for example] when one has to live among enemies, where one cannot obtain things conveniently and without danger except by way of clandestine trade, and in similar cases....