

Peter of John Olivi

*Questions on Evangelical Perfection. Question 8<sup>1</sup>*

translated by Oleg Bychkov

/p. 73/ Is the state of highest poverty simply better than any state of wealth, individual or common, and than any whatsoever other mode of relating to worldly things?

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*General Reply*

/p. 85/ I reply to this question by saying that voluntary poverty is better than riches, as well as better than every state in which one can legitimately acquire riches; also that highest poverty is better than every other [type of] poverty, or than every other mode of relating to worldly things. This will become sufficiently clear if we focus our attention on the height of this poverty. However, there are five ways of considering highest poverty:

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*Way no. 2. Highest poverty from the point of view of our nature and will*

/p. 125/ If one were to consider our will insofar as it is affected by vice, almost nothing is as hateful to it as death, although in many cases not even death itself seems the most hateful thing to it. Indeed, many wealthy and powerful people would rather be dead than fall into poverty. Many more would rather die a painful death than leave their children penniless by paying restitution, or than leave them not as rich as they initially intended by paying a rich ransom for their own life. The reason why poverty is so hateful to the will of this sort [i.e., affected by vice] is that poverty lacks almost all those things that carnal affection desires, and as a consequence contains in itself almost all those things that are opposed to this sort of affection. Now I speak here about the will that is affected not only by the vice of sin, either original or actual, but also by the vice of inflicted punishment. If, however, one considers our will insofar as it is righteous—either by the righteousness of nature taken in an absolute sense, or by the righteousness of innocence, or grace, or glory—this highest poverty is always highly agreeable to it.

1. Indeed, the natural righteousness of our will proclaims that [poverty] should be highest and that it is agreeable to it. One reason is that [our will] has natural freedom, by virtue of which it is elevated over all worldly things, and it desires to be elevated by way of some natural lordship. Hence neither our will nor our person is naturally determined to choose one thing over another, nor [is it determined], by the very nature of things, [to choose] one person over another. Another reason is that naturally it has such a capacity that every

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worldly thing is as a point to it, or even as nothing at all. Another reason is that it is naturally so unlike worldly things that according to its nature it is rather incapable of associating with them [than capable]. For of itself it is incapable of associating with them, but it is capable of associating with them only on account of its bond with the senses. I am speaking of the sort of association by which someone is associated with something else through some close bond of his own, which relates, by some special connection, one to another, as to a thing that is necessary to him and agreeable with his nature. Therefore, whenever our will is inclined to a state or mode of relation to worldly things that is inferior to the state or mode of highest poverty, it deviates in some manner from the highest point of its natural freedom, and the breadth of its natural capacity is constrained, and the unity of its intellectual powers falls apart, because then it starts to constrain itself and attach to and associate itself with some of these inferior things, either individually or communally owned, in some way that is inferior, restricted, distracting, and incompatible with its [natural] height, breadth, unity, and detachment.

[Natural righteousness of our will] also proclaims [that poverty should be] highest because when [our will] strives either to desire [this poverty] or actually to possess it, it always senses that it has not yet exercised the most powerful effort, and, desiring or achieving [highest poverty], it always senses that it is being elevated to something lofty that is by its nature extremely difficult to attain. And this is, or can be, most strongly attested to, through actual experience, by everyone who aspires to this [sort of poverty].

2. The righteousness of [the state of] innocence also proclaims that [poverty] should be highest. Indeed, according to Clement (the text contained in Cause 12, Question 1 [of the Civil Law Codex]), [in the state of innocence] “all humans had to share in the common use of all things that exist in this world,” /p. 126/ and the divisions of property that we currently have, according to him, were created by the injustice of the original or actual corruption. <...> However, if someone tried to claim that in the state of innocence things and rights over things belonged to a certain person or certain institutions, anyone of sound mind would judge him insane. <...>

3. The righteousness of grace also proclaims that [poverty] should be highest. Indeed, according to the Apostle, 1 Corinthians 13:5, charity *seeks not her own*. Therefore of himself he says above in [1 Corinthians] 10:33, *I please all in all not by seeking profit for myself, but for many, that they may be saved*. And in [1 Corinthians] 9:22 he says *I am made all things to all, that I might save all*. So it is certain that charity does not amount to gathering worldly things for yourself in abundance, nor to claiming rights and privileges to them for yourself. Rather, charity directs us to distribute these things to the poor, dedicate to the worship of God and religious purposes, and, as far as you yourself are concerned, despise them as dung and abhor them as dangerous. For if charity directed us to [amass] those things instead, then everyone, out of love of God and his neighbor, would be driven to procure and acquire for himself rights over things and an abundance of things, and out of charity would be busy securing claims over these things. But then charity would force us to be greedy, stingy, pitiless, and force us to litigate and wage wars. But then the Apostle was wrong in reproaching citizens of Corinth when he said in 1 Corinthians 6:7: *Now therefore there is utterly a fault among you, because you litigate with one another*. Nor would he then advise correctly when he adds immediately after that: *Why do you not rather take wrong? Why do you not rather suffer yourselves to be defrauded?* <...> However, he who seeks [material] things out of natural necessity does

not have to seek rights to things, nor an abundance of things, for neither is necessary for a man's life. Otherwise no one would be able to live without those, which is most obviously false. And nevertheless even then charity does not seek those things as if they were of themselves good and virtuous, but only as a means of sustaining that person—something without which things that are virtuous and holy of themselves cannot exist or occur in this life. <...> In addition to authoritative texts, correct reasoning demands this as well. For if grace is higher and more upright than nature, and if every special rights over and possession of things deviate from the height, capacity, and unity of freedom and intellectuality of our nature, those [special rights and possessions] are even more likely to deviate from the height, breadth, and unity of charity or grace, which is such that, according to the Apostle, *he who is joined unto the Lord through it is one spirit* with him (1 Corinthians 6:17).

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*Way no. 3. Highest poverty from the point of view of its own condition and properties*

/p. 129/ In order to clarify this issue, let us examine the spiritual dimensions [of poverty] using an analogy with bodily dimensions. In this way we will grasp its amazing height or sublimity, its maximal breadth, and its maximal length and depth.

1. Just as among corporeal things we call 'higher' or 'more sublime' that which surpasses or transcends all, the same applies also to spiritual things. Indeed, this [sort of] poverty,<sup>2</sup> or the habitual love of this poverty, transcends not only every sensory thing, every sense faculty and every affection of the senses, but even the entire domain of our freedom, at least that part of it in each of us that pertains to other persons and things.<sup>3</sup> It also transcends, in some way, the our entire intellect. Indeed, this [sort of] poverty negates every sensory thing as such. For it does not pertain to its nature to *use* necessities [of life], even though in this life [such a use] is attached to it. [What does pertain to its nature,] however, is only to *moderate* and to *order* this sort of use. Nor can this [sort of poverty] be attained by any of our senses or by our intellect except by way of privation. For according to pseudo-Dionysius [the Areopagite,] in the books *The Celestial Hierarchy* and *Mystical Theology*, "in [statements about] the divine, negations are superior to, and more appropriate than affirmations." Hence this sort of poverty and the affection that it incites attain the invisible and the eternal by way of some super-excess of negations, or at least most perfectly and sublimely dispose the mind to attain these things. Hence [this poverty] is truly the seat and, as it were, some heavenly throne of most high contemplation.

Further, it surpasses all that over which we can have control by way of worldly law. Thus it surpasses, in some way, our power to control. Hence it seems to contain in itself celestial riches, over which, although we can fully possess them, we are, properly speaking, not able to have control. It is precisely this that Christ seems to have openly hinted at when, giving advice about poverty, he added: *and you will have treasure in heaven* (Matthew 19:21). For it is this [kind of poverty] that Christ appropriately refers to in Matthew 13, using the analogy of 'buying a hidden treasure and the most precious

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<sup>2</sup> I.e., highest poverty.

<sup>3</sup> I.e., our ability to act on, or freely operate with, other persons and things.

pearl by way of selling and abandoning all possessions.’ For, properly speaking, it is not in the nature of any other [kind of poverty] ‘to sell all that one has,’ and consequently it is not in the nature of any other [kind of poverty] ‘to buy the pearl and the field where the treasure lies hidden’ (cf. Matthew 13:44-46).

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/p. 131/ We can also clarify the extent of the sublimity or height of this sort of poverty from the way it is related to worldly things, or from the way it makes its admirer [relate to worldly things]. For it makes one regard everything as belonging to someone else: some things as alien and hostile, some as friendly and akin to oneself, and some as unlike and dissimilar to oneself. Indeed, since the one who professes this [sort of poverty] could not, or would not want to, have any jurisdiction over any worldly thing, he regards those things that are within his reach<sup>4</sup> in the same way as he regards those things that are ‘in the ends of the earth’ and in someone else’s possession. As for the abundance of things around him that ‘relishes riches,’ he rightly regards it as contrary and hostile to himself and his poverty, almost as if it were the poison of greed. As for the scarcity or lack of things around him, he regards it as akin and friendly to himself and his poverty, even when he sees such [scarcity] in others. As for the abundance that he sees in the rich men of the world, he regards it not as hostile, but as different and unlike to himself. Hence, he who does not relate in the above way to worldly things is not a perfect admirer or possessor of this [type of] poverty—for example, he who is more upset about the loss of things that he gets to use than about the loss of someone else’s things that are ‘in the ends of the earth.’ For he would not have been more upset about those things [that he gets to use] than about those [in the possession of others] if he did not regard the former somewhat differently than the things that are plainly someone else’s. The same goes for him who rejoices and glorifies himself on account of the abundance of his possessions and riches, and is saddened by the scarcity and lack of those. The same holds true for him who is distressed by and ashamed of the poverty of his parents, as well as of his own, if he is poor in worldly things. The same goes for him who rejoices and glorifies himself on account of the nobility and riches of his parents, as well as his own that he has in this world; and even more so for him who desires and tries to augment his riches—for it is most clear that all such people are in contempt of highest poverty either in themselves or in others, or that they do not sufficiently appreciate or desire it.

As for how grueling it is to be in such a state, it is clear not only from experience and actions, but even merely from thinking about it.

2. The height of its excellence is also clear from the consideration of its breadth and capacity.

Indeed, affection for all and everybody ‘enlarges one’s heart.’ For just as the ownership of [specific] goods by a certain institution or person results, in a sense, in the ownership of the said institution or person by those goods, in the same way general indifference to and lack of ownership of anything results /p. 132/ in a great expansion of affection in the heart of a person with such an attitude. Hence [such a person] has the same uniform attitude to all things and all persons, no matter what their nature is. Now

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<sup>4</sup> I.e., those he can use.

the Apostle felt that breadth when he said in 2 Corinthians 6:10-12: *As poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things. O you Corinthians, our mouth is open unto you, our heart is enlarged. You are not straitened in us*, etc. This means also that, above all, it contributes to the breadth of generosity or mercy, as has been touched upon earlier.

3. Also, it is of such depth that it reaches down to [the bottom] of things, [which is] nothingness. And for this reason it rejects and despises things as nothing. And on this account it contributes, above all, to the depth of humility, as was shown earlier. It is in these depths that Christ found himself when he said: *I sink in deep mire, where there is no substance* (Psalms 68:3). And in what follows: *I am poor and sorrowful* (Psalms 68:30). For according to the Gloss on this text, ‘substance’ stands for the riches that sustain a man. Hence that man is said to have *wasted his substance with riotous living* (Luke 15:13).

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Way no. 4. *Highest poverty from the point of view of its institution and the person who instituted it*

/p. 133/ For this [sort of] poverty was specifically expressed and exemplified in Christ and his life, specifically taught and imposed by Christ, and specifically assumed by the Apostles.

1. Now Christ provided an example of this poverty at birth, during the course of his life and in death.

First about his birth. For he chose poor parents, and for this reason he is called contemptuously the *son of a carpenter* (Matthew 13:55). And Luke (2:7) says that *she laid him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn*. For it is clear that if Mary and Joseph had any possessions that they could offer honestly in the case of such a need, they would have certainly offered them.<sup>5</sup> On this occasion John Chrysostom comments on Matthew: “The magi saw a dark and filthy inn, suitable rather for cattle than for humans, and his mother who barely had a tunic, not to make herself look pretty but to cover her nakedness.” Also, Bede, in his commentary on Mark explaining the passage *If any one serve me* (John 12:26), etc., says: “He did not wish to be born in this world to rich parents, but chose poor ones. This is why also there was no lamb to offer a sacrifice for him, but his mother found [a pair of] *turtledoves* and an equal number of *young pigeons* for a sacrifice (Luke 2:24).” According to Bernard, in his childhood Christ also experienced extreme poverty. Therefore Bernard comments on the passage from Luke 2:42, *When he was twelve years old*: “O Lord, in order that you might conform to our poverty in all respects, and take on all the hardships of human life, you begged for alms by the gates among a crowd of paupers. O how I wish to partake of those morsels of food and fatten myself on the leftovers of the Lord’s meal!” For Bernard speaks of that three-day period during which Jesus, according to him, being away from his mother, lived off alms.

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<sup>5</sup> To procure a room for them.

This poverty was also clear during the course of his life. Thus the Apostle says in 2 Corinthians 8:9: *For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that you might be rich through his poverty.* And the Psalmist impersonating [Christ] says: *But I am needy and poor* (Psalms 69:6). The Gloss comments on this passage: “he was ‘needy’ because he begged, and he was ‘poor’ because he was incapable of providing for himself, for he had no worldly riches.” Commenting on another passage from Psalms (39:18), where it says about Christ *For I am poor and a beggar*, the Gloss says that Christ was a beggar, and that a “beggar is a person who asks another [for alms], and a pauper is incapable of providing for himself.” Moreover, [Christ] says the following of himself in Luke 9:58: *Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man has not where to lay his head.* Jerome in his letter to Nepotianus also writes of Christ that “he was so poor that he had to eat /p. 134/ someone else’s bread.” Also the Gloss on the passage from Mark 11:11, *and when he had looked around about upon all, and now the eventide was come, he went out unto Bethany with the twelve*, supplies: *when he had looked around about upon all* “if anybody would agree to host him” and comments: “for he was that poor. And he was so far from ingratiating himself to anybody that he could find no host in such a great city.” Also, the Gloss on the passage from John 14:30, *for the prince of this world comes, and has nothing in me*, comments: “The Lord did not wish to have something that he could lose. He was poor, lest the Devil might have something to take away from him.” Also, John Chrysostom demonstrates in his Sermon 13 on John that the reason John the Baptist repeated his testimony about Christ so many times was that perhaps the baseness of [Christ’s] poverty conflicted with the greatness of things that were said about him. Chrysostom says as follows: “For Christ presented himself to others in such a common and base appearance that even Samaritan women and tax collectors dared to approach him boldly and converse with him.” Also, Rhabanus, commenting on the passage from Matthew 17:26, *take up the fish that first comes up*, says: “The Lord was so poor that he did not have with what to pay his dues. And if someone perchance raises an objection (after all, Judas did carry money in a purse), we will reply that he did not think it legitimate to turn the property of the poor to his use.” Jerome says something similar commenting on Matthew. Also, the Gloss on the passage from The Acts 1:21, *the Lord Jesus went in and out among us*, says: “he who preached the gospel to many cities was continuously going in and out of places, for he *had not where to lay his head.*”

Also, Bernard in *On the Conversation between Simon and Jesus*, commenting on the passage *lay not up for yourselves treasures*, etc. (Matthew 6:19), says: “This is perfection, for *the Son of man has not where to lay his head*, and neither Peter nor John had any silver or gold.” Also, Bede, commenting on the passage from Matthew 8:20, *the Son of man has not*, etc., says: “If you are concerned with riches and worldly profits, why do you wish to follow me? I am so poor that I have neither a place to stay nor a home of my own.” Also, Anselm says in his book *On the Sacraments*: “He was so poor that coming into this world he was born not in his own house but in a stranger’s. And after birth, because there was no place [for him], he was placed in a manger with brute animals. Living in the world, also he *had not where to lay his head.* /p. 135/ Nor did he have anything to cover his nakedness in death. Nor was there anything to wrap his dead body. Nor was there any grave or place to put his dead body.” Also, the Gloss on the passage from Psalms 108:17, *he persecuted the poor and needy man*, comments: “Judas

[persecuted] Christ.” Also, the Gloss on the passage from Luke 19:5, *Zacchaeus, make haste, and come down*, comments: “He who has not been invited invites himself.” Also, Augustine comments on the passage from Psalms 146:8, *who makes grass grow upon the mountains*, as follows: “He had a purse, and that purse was entrusted to Judas the traitor. And those who contributed [alms], contributed to the [Lord’s] purse. But do not think that the Lord, whom the angels serve and who fed so many thousands with five loaves of bread, was really forced to walk and beg out of indigence. He chose to be poor—to be sure, to serve as an example to the mountains in order that they might produce [grass].” So Augustine here clearly intends to say that he chose to be poor, so as to walk and beg, even though temporarily he had a purse for a certain reason.

It is also clear how poor he was at the time of death, for he was put to death outside the city and outside the gates; with no clothes, for *they divided his garments* (Mark 15:24); and even without his disciples, for they had fled, leaving him. And if he had anything left at the time of death, it is likely that he bequeathed it to his mother when he entrusted her to John’s care. Anselm provides an authoritative statement to this effect which we quoted earlier.

2. As for the fact that highest poverty was most appropriate for Christ, this is shown by the height or sublimity of his power, the clarity of his exemplary capacity, the fullness of his goodness, and the disposition of the human heart or human kind.

The height or sublimity of his power certainly shows this. Indeed, it would be a disgrace for Christ, the universal Lord of everything, to claim for himself rights of ownership over a specific thing, especially if it were a worldly thing, and especially in ways that humans claim [rights of ownership over] such things. This is why this poverty demonstrated Christ’s universal power much better than abundance of any human riches, for even a true lord of earthly things holds them in contempt—otherwise he would not have full power over them. And if Christ did not show that he held [earthly] things in contempt in the highest degree, he would not have shown fully his most spiritual power, which allows him to surpass all even in his humanity. Moreover, if Christ had worldly power, the things of worth that he accomplished in the world would have been attributed to the power of riches rather than to the power of his divinity and holiness. However, when he worked wondrous things in a state of abject poverty, that could not have been attributed to any worldly power, /p. 136/ but only to divine and spiritual. Chrysostom touches upon this argument. And a certain sermon at the Council of Ephesus says: “He chose all poor and abject things, all ordinary and unnoticed by most, in order to show that it was [his] divinity that transformed the world. This is why he chose a pauper mother, an even more poor land to be born in, and lacked money. The manger makes it clear to you.”

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3. Also, it was specifically taught and imposed by Christ.

/p. 138/ Indeed, he imposed it before other advice in a very strict manner of a commandment; he repeated, explained, and recommended this commandment vigorously; and he condemned vociferously apostasy or hypocrisy in respect to this commandment.

The first is clear. For it is said clearly in Mark 6:8-9: *He commanded them that they should take nothing for their journey, [save a staff only; no scribe, no bread, no money in their purse]*. And in the passage from Matthew 11:1, *And it came to pass, when Jesus had made an end of commanding his twelve disciples, he departed thence*, it is clearly hinted that what he said previously were commandments. For he maintains the same manner of expression here as when giving the Ten Commandments, saying in Matthew 10:9-10: *Possess neither gold, [nor silver, nor brass in your purses, nor scribe for your journey, neither two coats, neither shoes, nor yet staves]*; and in Luke 10:4: *Carry neither purse, [nor scribe, nor shoes]*; and in Luke 9:3: *Take nothing for your journey, [neither staves, nor scribe, neither bread, nor money; neither have two coats apiece]*. For this is how it is in [the passage on] the Ten Commandments: verbs are used either in the imperative or in the indicative of the future tense.

Now many Saints attest to this, namely that he gave such an advice to the Apostles in the form of a commandment. For example, Ambrose, commenting on the passage from Luke 10:4, *Carry neither purse*, etc., says: “If we are prohibited [even] from possessing gold, what can one say about snatching? Apostle Peter, the first executor of the Lord’s will, shows that the Lord’s commandments were not in vain: when a poor man asked him to spare some money, he said: *Silver and gold have I none* (The Acts 3:6). /p. 139/ And yet Peter prides himself not so much on the fact that he does not have silver and gold, but rather on the fact that he maintains the Lord’s commandment *Possess no gold* (Matthew 10:9). This amounts to saying: You see that I am Christ’s disciple and asks me for gold?” Also, the same author, commenting on the passage from Luke 9:3, *Take nothing for your journey*, says: “Commandments given in the Gospel specify how one should go about proclaiming the kingdom of God, namely, that he [should walk] without a staff, a purse,” etc. <...> Also, the Gloss on the passage from The Acts 3:6, *Silver and gold have I none*, says: “This is what Peter, remembering the commandment *Possess no gold* (Matthew 10:9), said to a cripple who asked alms of him.” Also, Augustine [of Hibernia] says at the end of Book 3 of *On the Miraculous Things in Sacred Scripture*: “Excusing himself from giving alms and proclaiming his poverty he said to the cripple: *Rise up and walk* (The Acts 3:6), following the commandment of his master who said *Possess no gold* (Matthew 10:9).” Also, the Gloss on the passage from Luke 10:7, *And in the same house remain, [eating and drinking such things as they give]*, says: “He who banned [them from carrying] a sack and a purse, allowed [them] to take contributions for preaching, but in such a manner as to be content with what food and drink is given them.” <...> Also, Bede, commenting on the passage from Luke 22:35, *When I sent you without a purse, [and scribe, and shoes, lacked you any thing?]*, says: “Thus the Master and Lord of virtues, in order to promote a discreet manner in his disciples whom he was sending off to preach, commanded them not to carry anything for their journey, so that those who proclaimed the gospel might live according to the gospel.” <...> Also, Bernard in his *Letter to the Brothers from de Monte* says: “While he was rich, he became poor on our account. And he who of his own will gave us the commandment to live in poverty, deemed it appropriate to demonstrate to us this form [of poor life] using his own example. For in order to teach the poor followers of the gospel what they are to do, he also chose to seek sustenance from the faithful, and on occasion did not even refuse to receive the necessities of life from the unfaithful, but in order to make them faithful.” Bernard there also touches upon one other reason why Christ

himself maintained the highest level of poverty (the reason that we knowingly omitted earlier). And the reason is that Christ had to present the perfect example of those things that he commanded to his disciples. For this reason even Jerome says in a letter to Eustochius: “The disciples without the burden of sandals /p. 140/ or the shackles of overcoats are destined for the preaching of the new gospel. The soldiers who cast dice for Jesus’s garments found no shoes to take away. Nor could the Lord have what he banned his servants from having.”

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4. Also, [highest poverty] was specifically assumed by the Apostles.

/p. 142/ This can be shown based on the fact of how proud they were especially about its profession and observance. Thus Peter said on behalf of himself and all the Apostles: *Behold, we have forsaken all, and followed you* (Matthew 19:27); and then he asked, as if he thought it was some great and special thing: *What shall we have therefore?* (ibid.) Also, this advice is singled out when the scene of the calling is described in Matthew 4:20, where it is said of Peter and Andrew: *And they straightaway left their nets, and followed him.* And the same is said of James and John there (4:22). And the same is said of Matthew (sic!) in Luke 5:28: *And he left all, rose up, and followed him.* And the same is said of the second calling of the aforesaid four, that *they forsook all, and followed him* (Luke 5:11). This is also specifically proclaimed by the Apostle when he says in 1 Corinthians 4:11: *Even unto this present hour we both hunger, and thirst, and are naked, and are buffeted, [and have no certain dwelling-place], i.e., they have no certain abode or house.* <...> And in 1 Timothy 6:8 he says: *And having food and clothes, let us be therewith content.* As for the reason for this, he premises this statement by saying (6:7): *For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out.* And in 2 Corinthians 11:27 he says that he is *in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness.* Also, Peter told Clement, as Clement recalls in his *Journey*: “I eat only bread and olives, rarely vegetables. I am dressed in what you see, a tunic and a cloak. Apart from this, I require nothing else. This is enough for me, for my mind is not fixed on these present things, but on eternal.” Also, Eusebius says in Book 1 of his *Ecclesiastical History* that after Christ’s ascension, when king Abgar, who had been healed by Apostle Thaddeus, began offering Thaddeus gold and silver, the latter declined to accept it and said: “If we left behind our own possessions, why would we accept others’?” Also, in the *Life* of St. John the Baptist it is sufficiently clear what sort of poverty the Apostles maintained, when he refused to pass on the riches of the two disciples of Crato, and later those of his disciples, to his own community, but rather ordered them to be given to the poor. For when his own people later complained about their own impoverished state, he told them: “Is God not powerful enough to make his servants swim in delights? However, he established the following trial for the souls: those who refuse to have worldly possessions in his name must believe that they will have eternal riches.”

For if the Apostles had not left everything, as far as it was possible for them without jeopardizing what was necessary for them to survive in this life, they could not have said specifically and with full truthfulness that they had *forsaken all* (Matthew 19:27). For it is certain that the rights to common or individual ownership, as well as the

license to acquire such rights, belong to the things that can be *forsaken*. Therefore by taking a solemn and irrevocable vow, [the Apostles] have relinquished not only all that could be relinquished by them, but also any possibility of gaining it back or returning to their properties. Otherwise one could not speak of an imposition of the highest mode of highest poverty on them as a commandment <...>.

<...>

5. Finally, right reason itself commands this.

/p. 147/ Indeed, it was fitting for them to exhibit this kind of poverty in a privileged way on account of their special association with Christ; due to their status as founders and examples [for the entire church]; and also due to the pressing need to exercise their office properly.

As for the first reason (association with Christ), it was fitting for them because it was not fitting for Christ to have associates who would lead a different type of life, and also because on the basis of their association [with Christ] they should have obtained an exceptional and privileged position as far as virtue is concerned. For Christ's virtue must have stood out and shone forth exceptionally in his immediate associates.

Also, it was fitting for them due to their status as founders and examples [for the entire church]. Indeed, those who were chosen as founders and examples for the entire church must have been exceptionally firm and exemplary in their perfection.

It was also required by their office, which was to preach: the poor man crucified (*pauperem crucifixum*); the contempt of the world; the invalidation of the carnal rites and sacrifices of the Law; and the conversion, in the most divine and spiritual way, of the entire world filled with arrogance, avarice, lust, and every evil, in order to bring about their contraries[, i.e., humility, poverty, chastity, and every good]—and the only people who could accomplish all that in a proper way would be those who profess highest poverty, as has been shown earlier. <...>