

BONAVENTURE
De paupertate quoad abrenuntiationem
(De perfectione evangelica, q. 2 a. 1)

Translated from:
Bonaventure, *Opera omnia edita studio et cura PP. Collegii a S. Bonaventura*,
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AS REGARDS THE FIRST QUESTION, we proceed thus and ask: whether it be of christian perfection to renounce all things, both in common and in private.

It Seems That It Is the Case:

1. Mt. 19.21: *If you wish to be perfect, go and sell all your goods, and give to the poor, and come follow me.* The Gloss: ‘Behold the contemplative life (*contemplativa*), which pertains to the Gospel.’ It is agreed that the Lord did not call that one to riches, nor to manual works, but rather to the contemplative life, as the Gloss says. Therefore, etc.
2. Mt. 19.27: *Behold, we relinquished everything, etc.* In treating of that verse, Gregory says: ‘The more things were dismissed by the followers, the more they were unable to be loved by the followers’; therefore, perfect imitation totally extinguishes the desire for riches; but this extinction is most potent in he who renounces everything. Therefore, etc.
3. Mk. 10.21: *Go, sell whatever you have and give to the poor.* The Gloss: ‘Not part, like Ananias’. But he who gives the whole, reserving nothing for himself, that one does especially what the Lord counselled: reserving nothing for Himself, neither in common nor individually₁; and he who does this does most perfectly. Therefore, etc.
4. The Lord says of the widow in Mk. 12.43: *Amen I say to you, because this widow gave away (misit) more than everyone. For all gave from what they abounded in; but she, from her own penuria, gave all that she had—the whole of her victual.* But a poor little widow is praised in this; therefore, those who do this are more praiseworthy by how much more perfectly they do this. Therefore, etc.

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5. Lk. 12.24: *Consider the ravens*, etc. The Gloss: ‘The holy are deservedly compared to birds, who, /**125b**/ doing no labour in the world, desire only eternal things, similar already to the angels’; but by how much more someone dismisses these things, by that much more he is assimilated to the angels. Therefore, etc.
6. Lk. 14.33: *If one shall not have renounced everything they possess, he is not able*, etc. The Gloss: ‘This distinguishes between “renouncing all things” (*renuntiare omnibus*) and “abandoning all things” (*relinquere omnia*): because renouncing convenes for all who so licitly use mundane things that they possess so that they tend in mind to eternal things; abandoning, however, is only of the perfect, who postpone all temporalities and desire solely eternal things.’ But he who entirely renounces everything, in common and personally, that one especially postpones everything. Therefore, etc.

Likewise, this very thing is shown in the example of Christ:

7. Concerning this [point], Mt. 8.20: *Foxes have dens and the birds of the sky have nests*—on which verse Chrysostom says: ‘Why do you expect to gather money following me? Do you not see that such a lodging as for birds is not mine?’ Therefore Christ had absolutely nothing. Therefore, etc.
8. Likewise, on that verse of Mt. 18.26, *Go to the sea...*, the Gloss: ‘The Lord was of such poverty that he did not have [anything] whence he might pay taxes; indeed, Judas held the common goods (*communia*) in the purse, but he [Christ] thought it wicked to assume the things of the poor into his own uses, giving that very example to us.’ If, therefore, Christ was of such poverty that he could not pay a *denarius*, it is clear that he was in the highest poverty.
9. Likewise, Lk. 9.58: *Foxes have dens*; says the Gloss: ‘I am of such poverty that I have not even a guest room, nor may I use my house.’ Therefore, etc.
10. Likewise, Jn. 14.30: *The prince of this world came and he did not have anything in me.* /**126a**/ The Gloss: ‘The Lord did not wish to have what might be lost; he arrived a poor man that the devil not take what might be stolen.’ Therefore, as all temporal things may be lost, he had nothing temporal.

11. Likewise, 2 Co. 8.9: *You know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, since he was made needy on your account, although he was rich that his want, etc.* Therefore he who renounces in such a way that he be needy conforms more to Christ.
12. Likewise, on that same verse which follows (2 Co. 8.10): *I give in this counsel*—Augustine¹ on the original [writes], ‘*He was made needy so much that he did not have what foxes had; and I give counsel in this, it is understood that we mimic his poverty.*’ But he who renounces everything imitates his poverty. Therefore, etc.
13. Likewise, on that verse of Jam. 2.5, *Does not God choose the poor?*—the Gloss: ‘*He chose poor parents, by whose kindness he might be brought up (quorum educaretur officio).*’ But the highest indigence was a characteristic of the parents of Christ, according to that of Lk. 2.7: *She swaddled him in rags and lay him to rest in a manger.* Therefore Christ not only loved poverty in himself, but even in others.
14. Likewise, Christ was especially imitable with respect to the state that he had on the cross, according to that verse of 1 Pt. 2.21: *Christ suffered for us, leaving an example, so that we might follow his footsteps.* But he was completely naked on the cross; whence Jerome to Hedibia:² ‘*You wish to be perfect and stand in the first summit of dignity: do what the Apostles did: sell everything that you have and give to the poor and follow the Saviour; and may you follow the naked and sole cross with naked and sole virtue.*’ Therefore, etc.

Likewise, this very thing is seen in the Testimonies of the Saints.

15. Ambrose on Lk. 9.5:³ ‘*How one who evangelizes the kingdom of God ought to be is designated in the evangelical precepts so that [he be] without staff, satchel, shoes, bread, or money—that is, not requiring the supports of secular help, and he reckon himself guarding in the faith, that the less he requires those things, the more he reckon himself to be able to be sufficient.*’ Therefore, if this is attested for the perfection /**126b**/ of a preacher of evangelical perfection, so that he seek no secular help altogether (and this is to be in the highest poverty), it is clear, etc.

1. Haymo (also attributed to Remigius Rhemensis), *Expositio in 2 Corinthians* 8.9–10 — edd.

2. Jerome, *Epistolae* 120(150).1.

3. in VI Expos. 65 — edd.

16. Likewise, [Ambrose], in the book *On Duties* 2.4.15: ‘Riches present no help towards the happy life. The Lord clearly demonstrates this in Gospel, saying: *Blessed are the poor in spirit*, etc. And so, it is most clearly proved that poverty, hunger, grief, which are reputed evils, are not only not an impediment to the happy life, but are even a help. Thus, therefore, not only are the external goods of the body not a help to the happy life, but are even a hindrance (*dispendio*).’ But it is perfect to relinquish what is not a help but a hindrance. Therefore, etc.
17. Likewise, Jerome to the monk Heliodorus:⁴ ‘I do not wish that you call to mind former needs; the desert loves the naked. I do not wish difficulty of an ancient sojourn to deter you. You, who believes in Christ, believe also his words: *Seek first the kingdom of God, and these things will be added to you* (Mt. 6.33). A satchel ought not by taken up by you, nor a staff. He is sufficiently rich who is poor with Christ.’ Therefore all can be abandoned, with hope placed solely in Christ.
18. Likewise, Jerome on that verse of Mt. 6.25, *Is not the soul more than food?*, ‘No one doubts in the promises of Truth; let man be what he ought to be, and soon all will be added to him, on whose account all things are done.’ Therefore he who relinquishes all on Christ’s account, trusting in His promises, acts according to perfect faith. But he does this most potently who reserves absolutely nothing for himself, neither in common nor individually₁. Therefore, etc.
19. Likewise, Augustine treating of that verse of Mt. 6.26, *Behold the birds of the sky*, ‘The holy are deservedly compared to the birds since they seek heaven, and since already they are so removed from the world that already they do nothing on earth, they work nothing, but they pass their time now in the contemplation on heaven alone.’ If, therefore, this is the highest life, then, all things having been spurned, to establish all hope of one’s life in God is of perfect virtue. /127a/
20. Likewise, Augustine, *On Good Marriage* 8.8: ‘They do well who administer necessities to Christ and his disciples from their own resources; but they do better who send away all resources so that they might more expediently follow the very same Lord.’ But by how much more one sends away, by that much more he is more expedient: therefore he is that much more praiseworthy.
21. Likewise, in *On Ecclesiastical Teachings* 38(71): ‘It is good to expend

4. Jerome, *Epistolae* 14(1).1.

resources on the poor with dispensation; better to give once for the intention of following the Lord; and it is the absolute good to be from anxiety (*a sollicitudine*) with Christ.’ Therefore he, who discharges more and is absolved from the anxiety of the world, follows Christ more perfectly. Therefore, etc.

22. Likewise, Gregory, in his eighth *Homily* of the second part of Ezekiel: ⁵ ‘When someone dedicates one of his own things to God, and does not dedicate another, it is a sacrifice; but when he dedicates to God Omnipotent everything he has, everything on which he lives, everything he understands, it is a holocaust.’ ⁶ For those who reserve nothing for themselves, but immolate for God Omnipotent sense, life, tongue, and substance (which they perceive), what are they offering if not a holocaust?’ Hence he said a little while before that one offers a holocaust who ‘decided to allot all those things which he solely (*apud semetipsum*) possessed to the indigent; to reserve nothing for himself; and to entrust his life to the sole, supernal, helmsman.’ But he does this most potently who so distributes that he reserves nothing for himself, neither in common nor individually₁. Therefore, etc.
23. Likewise, John Chrysostom in the book, *That No One Is Injured except by One’s Self*: ⁷ ‘Did penury of corporal things injure the apostles? Did they not pass their time in hunger, thirst, and nudity; and because of these things, were they not considered famous and more magnificent, and obtain huge courage in God through this?’ Therefore, *that* poverty is more praiseworthy in which there is greater penury of things.
24. Likewise, Bernard to Henry, archbishop of Senones: ⁸ ‘Happy is he who retains for himself nothing from anyone; he has not a den, as do foxes, nor a nest like the birds, not a purse as in the way Judas did, nor buildings, just as Mary did not have a place in the inn, /127b/ having imitated him perfectly who had not a place where he might recline his head.’ But he who completely sends away all things, in retaining absolutely nothing for himself—neither in common nor individually₁—does this best of all. Therefore, etc.

5. Gregory the Great, *Homilies* 2.8.16.

6. A *holocaustum* is a type of burnt offering—in other words, also a type of ‘sacrifice’; cf. the use of ‘altar of holocaust’ in Ex. 40.7 and Lev. 4.7. Obviously, Bonaventure is implying that a holocaust is better than a (mere) sacrifice.

7. Num. 4 (ed. Maurin. Tom. 3, pag. 448) — edd.

8. Bernard, *Epistolae* 42.3.11 (or: *Tractatus de moribus et officio episocporum*).

25. Likewise, Prosper praises Paul and Hilary on this point, because they gave away all their resources to the poor, although they dispensed ecclesiastical goods afterwards by reason of episcopal duty—just as it is maintained in *Causa* 12 q. 1, *Expedit*,⁹ where it says: ‘At length, St Paul gave away his huge estates, which had been his, to the poor.’ And below: ‘What about St Hilarius? Did he not abandon all his things to the poor, or give away all his sold things to the poor?’ These things are praised and are laudable since they despised all their goods for Christ and gave them to the poor; but they do this best who neither in common nor individually₁ retain anything for themselves. Therefore, such people approach closest to the pinnacle of evangelical perfection.

Likewise, this very thing is shown by reason.

26. The city is twofold, namely of God and of the devil, Jerusalem and Babylon, which are opposed in themselves and in their foundations. But the foundation of Babylon, as Augustine says, is cupidity.¹⁰ Therefore, however much one recedes from cupidity, by that much he recedes from the devilish city. But this very thing, in which one who utterly renounces—both in effect and affect—all things in common and individually₁, is poverty, which is especially far removed from avarice. Therefore, etc.
27. Likewise, riches are an incentive to cupidity since it is difficult to have them and not love them;¹¹ but by how much one more removes himself from an incentive to sin, by that much he acts more perfectly. But one does this who renounces everything in common and individually₁. Therefore, etc.
28. Likewise, there is a threefold counsel of poverty, obedience, and chastity. But by however much one obeys generally and universally, by that much he acts more perfectly.¹² And similarly concerning the counsel of chastity. Therefore, by an equal reason it will be true concerning the counsel of poverty.

9. C. 12 q. 1 c. 13.

10. Augustine, *Enn. in Ps.* 64.2.

11. Cf. Mt. 19.22 ff.; 1 Tim. 6.9, 17.

12. Bernard, *De praecepto et dispens.* 6 f.

[*A possible objection solved:*] If you should say that it is not the same since riches are from the necessity of life, /128a/ this is nothing, since many who have no property are [still] able to live.

29. Likewise, more perfect is poverty with which more perfect obedience is concomitant. But those who have property₁ in common are not able to be excluded from it through obedience, except by reason of sin; however, they who have absolutely nothing are held to obey anywhere in the world. If, therefore, evangelical perfection consists especially in perfect obedience, to renounce everything universally, reserving absolutely nothing, achieves the pinnacle (*ad culmen facit*) of evangelical perfection.
30. Likewise, contempt for the present age is laudable. This is true per se;¹³ therefore, greater contempt is more laudable, and the greatest contempt is most laudable. But he especially despises the present age who renounces everything in common and individually₁. Therefore he acts most perfectly.
31. Likewise, lofty poverty is praiseworthy; this is true per se; therefore loftier poverty is more praiseworthy, and the loftiest is the most praiseworthy. But what reserves no property for itself, neither in common nor individually₁, is of this sort. Therefore, etc.
32. Likewise, by however much the road is straighter, by that much its meddle is more conformed to the extremes. But the greatest poverty is both in the beginning and end of life;¹⁴ therefore, if everything is cast away in the middle, the way proceeds most straight. But by how much more the way is straighter, by that much more is it perfect. Therefore, the poorest way and life is most perfect.

On the Contrary:

1. In the twenty-seventh chapter of Ecclesiasticus 27.1: *Many fail on account of want*; but nothing that is a way of leading into error looks towards evangelical perfection. Therefore, etc. Likewise, Ecclesiastus 7.12: *Wisdom is more useful with riches*; the Gloss: ‘than by itself’. But riches do not make man perfect; therefore, by that much less do poverty

13. Cf. Ro. 12.2

14. Cf. 1 Tim. 6.7

and indigence. Likewise, Proverbs 30.8: *Do not give me riches and mendicancy*; and later: *Lest I steal compelled by need, and perjure the name of my God* (Prov. 30.9). But what Wisdom wisely rejects does nothing for evangelical perfection. Therefore, etc.

2. Likewise, Lk. 6.40: *All will be perfect if he be like his master*. But Christ had a purse, as John 12.6 makes clear, where it is said that /**128b**/ Judas stole the purse. Therefore, not wanting to have ownership in common does not seem to be perfection, but rather superstition, in which the disciple seems to prefer himself to the master.
[*An objection solved:*] If you say that he held a purse for others, on the contrary, Augustine says, and it is maintained in *Causa* 12 q. 1:¹⁵ ‘The Lord had a purse, preserving offerings from the faithful, and allotting them for their necessities and other indigents.’
3. Likewise, on that of 1 Tim. 6.8, *Having provisions*, etc., the Gloss: ‘Even if we will have brought nothing into this world, nonetheless not all these temporal things ought to be thrown aside’; therefore, he who throws aside the whole does so wrongly.
4. Likewise, 2 Co. 8.12: *If the will is ready according to what it has*; the Gloss: ‘Let it retain necessities, not giving beyond its abilities’. Therefore, he does wrongly who so dispenses that he reserve absolutely nothing for himself.
5. Likewise, he who tests God sins mortally.¹⁶ But he tests God who seeks the divine, having let pass the human refuge he has (*praetermisso*). But he who expects to be divinely sustained, having sent away the means by which he might be sustained, does this very thing. Therefore such a one acts against the Gospel.
6. Likewise, virtue is established around the mean.¹⁷ But to cast aside everything altogether is to turn away towards an extreme. Therefore, this is more of a vice than of a virtue or of evangelical perfection.
7. Likewise, just as to hold everything is always avarice, so to give away everything is always prodigality.¹⁸ But to hold everything is always a vice; the same goes, therefore, for giving everything away.
8. Likewise, he who withdraws the necessities of others sins mortally; but one is held to provide as much for himself as for another. Therefore, he

15. C. 12 q. 1 c. 17.

16. Cf. Dt. 6.16; Mt. 4.7.

17. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* 2.6.

18. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* 2.7.

- who sends away everything and reserves nothing for himself sins mortally, because he does so against evangelical perfection.
9. Likewise, he who exposes himself to the danger of being killed sins mortally. The same goes, therefore, for the one who exposes himself to the danger of famine. But such a person is he who sends away everything and reserves nothing for himself. Therefore, etc.
 10. Likewise, no one ought to reject completely what he seeks daily from God. But every day we ask in the Lord's prayer *Give us this day our daily bread* (Lk. 11.3). Therefore, he does wrongly who abandons the whole. /129a/

Conclusion:

To renounce everything, both in private and in common is not only of *sufficient* christian perfection, but even of *super-abundant* christian perfection.

Response:

It ought to be said that to renounce everything both in private and in common is not only of sufficient, but even of superabundant Christian perfection; as it were, the *principal counsel*, *fundamental principle*, and *sublime fundament* of evangelical perfection. Nature recommends the first, Scripture the second, and grace the third.

First, I say, is the *principal counsel*, since it offers the way to the others. For rich poverty disposes [us] to the mortification of the flesh and to the perfect abnegation of one's will, since nothing hinders him, neither house, nor place, nor any other thing.¹⁹ That very nature, whether instituted or fallen, particularly leads towards that path. For man is made naked, and had he stayed in that state, he would not have appropriated anything for himself. But fallen man is born naked and dies naked. And therefore, this is the most correct path: that, not declining from the extremes (as far as nature can bear), he approach poor and naked. And this is what is said in 1 Tim. 6.7: *We brought nothing into this world, without doubt, since nor can we bring anything out.* And from this he concludes: *Having nourishment and that by which we are covered—with these we are content.* But the

19. Cf. *Regula bullata* 6.1.

Apostle persuades us good and perfect from the teaching (*documento*) of nature that this is to be content with nothing more poorly or strictly than with simple victual and covering (*operimento*).

It is also the *fundamental principle*. For the Old Law differs from the New in this: that the former induces fear, the latter love; the former promises temporal things, the latter teaches [us] to despise temporal things.²⁰ If, therefore, the foundation of the perfection of the city of God consists principally in charity; and that especially is perfect, when all cupidity is excluded (since cupidity is the venom of charity). But he completely sends away this cupidity who completely leaves behind everything, both in fact (*re*) and by will: just as *the root of all evils is cupidity* (1 Tim. 6.10), so the root and principle of perfection is the highest poverty. Hence /129b/ Augustine in the book of *83 Questions*:²¹

The hope of acquiring and retaining temporal things is the venom of charity; nutrimentum eius imminutio cupiditatis, perfectio nulla cupiditas. The sign of its progress is the diminishment of fear, the sign of its perfection is no fear—since the root of all evils is cupidity, and perfect charity sends fear away.

Therefore, that poverty is most perfect which completely exterminates cupidity.

It is, nonetheless, the *sublime fundament*, for, since grace disposes us to a twofold life—namely the active and contemplative life. The active regulates downwards, but the contemplative stimulates upwards towards heaven. No spirit, however, is more suitable for this than one who is entirely unburdened from the burden of temporal things. And one who *has his whole treasure in heaven*,²² and whose *kingdom is not of this world*,²³ and who does not have his *city enduring here, but seeks the one to come*.²⁴ But he is such who perfectly renounces all terrestrial things; and therefore such a one already has the fundament of his building established *in excelsis*. Whence Augustine, in *On the Christian Struggle*:²⁵

20. Cf. 3 *Sent.* D. 40 qq. 1–2.

21. Augustine, *De diversis quaestionibus octoginta tribus* 36.1.

22. Mt. 19.21; cf. Mt. 6.20–21; Lk. 12.33–34.

23. Jn. 18.36.

24. He. 13.14.

25. Augustine, *De agone christiano* 13.14.

Since cognition and action make man happy; just as an error in cognition is to be avoided, so wickedness in action is to be avoided. Now, he errs if he thinks that he can know truth, since he still lives wickedly. Wickedness, moreover, is to delight in this world; and to consider those things that are born and pass away as great and to desire them; and to work for them, so that they are acquired; and to delight in them when they were abundant; and to fear that they might perish; and to become very sad when they perish.

Therefore, he is most suitable for the contemplation of (*contuitionem*) sublime things and is sublimely established there who is a most perfect despiser of all those things. He is such who lays his whole intention and all solicitude in the Lord²⁶—who has not even a single possession.

It is, therefore, of Christian perfection to possess, for Christ, nothing in this world, neither in common nor individually₂. Therefore, the Lord most expressly counselled this; therefore he showed the example in Himself; therefore the Holy Spirit advised this many times in the holy. For, as was shown, nature, Scripture, and grace counsels this sort of the most arduous poverty. The Lord Christ counsels it by instructing, living, and inspiring. /130a/ For what spirit other than that of God makes man despise present things and love heavenly things? For a diabolical spirit does not do this, nor does a worldly one, nor our own: since they always incline to a private good. Therefore the Holy Spirit does this.

And thus it is that, with the Holy Spirit speaking, the highest pontiff approved that way of life, as the decretal *Nimis prava* says *On the excesses of prelates*, that ‘the Apostolic See is known to have approved the order and rules of the brothers Preachers and Minors’.²⁷ Hence it is utterly illicit for anyone to think the contrary—as some such are seen to do foolishly, exposing themselves to dangers and tempting God. For it is spoken against such in the *Rule* of blessed Francis, in which poverty of this kind is confirmed: ‘Therefore absolutely no one may infringe on this page of our confirmation, or oppose it with daring temerity.’²⁸ Against such Augustine says in the

26. 1 Pt. 5.7; cf. Ps. 54.23.

27. X 5.31.17. Bonaventure has incorporated the title of the thirty-first chapter of the *Liber extra*—itself a standard enough practice—in a way that is hard to render into normal-sounding English. A literal translation would read: ‘as says the decretal on the excesses of the prelates, *Nimis prava*, that...’.

28. Honorius III, *Solet annuere*—here from the concluding section of the bull (in which

tract *On Alms*:²⁹

Elias, with the birds ministering, is fed in solitude, and food was divinely presented to Daniel [who had been] thrown into the lair to be the prey of lions at the order of the king. And you fear that food might be lacking for one working and deserving well of the Lord? Even though he himself in the Gospel, to the reproach of those whose mind [is] doubtful and faith small, calls to witness and says: *Behold the birds of heaven, since they do not sow nor reap, nor congregate in barns, and your Father feeds them with heavenly things. Are you not greater than these?* (Mt. 6.26) God feeds the birds and diurnal aliments are offered to them, and [although] for them there is no sense of divine things, they lack neither food nor drink. And you think something will be lacking for the Christian, the servant of God, given over to good works, [and] dear to his Lord? Or do you think that he who feeds Christ will not be fed by Christ? Or terrestrial things will be lacking for them to whom celestial and divine things are allotted? Whence comes this incredulous thought? Whence comes this impious and sacrilegious meditation? Why make this false heart in the house of God? Why is he, who does not completely trust in Christ, named and called a Christian? The name Pharisee is more appropriate for you. For although he would dispute about alms in the Gospel, and faithfully and salubriously admonish us even so that we make for ourselves friends about terrestrial lucre by means of a provident operation, who would afterwards take us up into the eternal tabernacle. He adds after this Scripture, saying: *the Pharisees, who were avaricious, heard all these things, and they derided him* (Lk. 16.14). We now see certain such ones in the Church, whose foreclosed ears and blind hearts admit no light from the spiritual and salutary warnings. /130b/ Concerning these [ideas] one ought not wonder, because they despise servants in such things when we see that the Lord Himself was condemned by such people.

From these words it appears clearly that to universally renounce everything altogether for Christ should not be faulted, but rather praised as the pinnacle of evangelical perfection. Whence reasons, examples, and authorities should be conceded to that side. To the purpose of providing this most sufficiently, one sole authority, expressed from the mouth of Christ (counselling to dismiss everything) would be most sufficient—even if many sayings of the

the *Rule* of St Francis, the *Regula bullata*, was confirmed).

29. Cyprian, *De opere et eleemosynis* 11–12.

Gloss, expositors, and doctors seemed to be contrary. For, thus Augustine says to Paul, *On Seeing God*:³⁰

Attend to what you believe, and in those very things which are not seen, accommodate your faith to them; assess carefully the weight of authorities that must be examined. For you do not believe me in the way you do Ambrose; or if you think that the grounds for believing both of us equal, why will you not, in any way, compare us to the Gospel? Or will you treat our writings as equal to the canonical scriptures? Surely, if you sense a-right in judging, you will see by how far below we are distant from that authority—and, indeed, me even further. But as much as you may believe both of us, by no means may you compare either of us to that excellence.

Therefore, since divine authority says so so clearly, he should send everything away who wishes to ascend to evangelical perfection. It is manifest that that truth ought to be held so certainly that he is not able to obviate it without danger to the faith.

Solution of the Opposites:

Ad 1. To that one, therefore—that was first objected on the contrary concerning want, because it leads to sin, and concerning need, which makes one perjure—it ought to be said that destitution is twofold. One kind in voluntary; the other involuntary. Involuntary want induces a defect of the mind, it induces both a tendency and an occasion for sinning. On the other hand, voluntary want or poverty—this has sufficient support according to that verse in 2 Corinthians 6.10: *As if having nothing*, etc. And this disposes one towards perfect justice, since it makes the mind fitted for all good, just as, on the contrary, the root of all evils is avarice. And this is what Chrysostom says in his *Forty-Seventh Homily on Matthew*:³¹

If you wish to see a soul of one loving gold, just as you find clothes chewed away by ten thousand maggots, and having nothing sound, so you will find that soul perforated everywhere by worries, putrefied by sins, and full of avarice. But a soul of voluntary destitution is not such; but in fact /**131a**/ such a soul indeed shines like gold, or gleams like a pearl, or blossoms like

30. Augustine, *Epistolae* 147(112).16.39.

31. Chrysostom, *Homily on Matthew* 48.4.

a rose. There is no moth there, there is no thief there, there is no anxiety for the business of this world there, but, just like an Angel, so it deals. It is not subject to demons, it does not assist kings, but assists God; it does not campaign with men, but with angels; it does not have the earth as a treasure, but heaven; it does not need servants, but it has more servants as passions and thoughts which are dominated by kings. Why, therefore, is this better than a poor person? At length, the pavement has heaven. But if the pavement is such, devise a roof. But does it not have horses and a chariot? Why, then, are these necessary for him who ought to be carried over the cloud and *be with Christ* (Ph. 1.23)?

From these words it appears that in voluntary poverty there is a great sufficiency, a great nobility that makes one transcend all earthly things.

Or it can be said in a different way that those things written in the time of the written law, which promised temporal, not eternal things, in which law poverty was despised. Hence Chrysostom in the *Eighteenth Homily on Epistle to the Hebrews*, treating of the aforesaid words: *Riches and poverty*, etc., says:³²

These things were said in the Old Testament, where many reasons for riches were maintained, where the greatest part of poverty was held in contempt: where the latter, namely poverty, was accursed; but where the former, namely riches, was a blessing. But now this is in no way the case. But if you wish to hear the preaching for poverty, Christ himself professed it and said: *But the Son of Man does not have a place where he might recline his head* (Mt. 8.20); and, again, he said to his disciples: *Do not possess gold* (Mt. 10.9).

From this quotation it appears that the authority is not contrary to those assuming voluntary poverty, for one was said at the time of the written law, but the other at the time of the law of grace. And the former was not said in the person of the perfect man, but rather in the person of the weak man, as is clear from the word of Chrysostom.

And the response to the first three authorities is clear through this.

Ad 2. To that which is objected—that Christ had a purse—it must be said that Christ had a purse due to (*de*) three causes:

³². Chrysostom, *Homilia super Epistolam ad Hebraeos* 18.2.

1. For he had a purse for other poor people, according to which Jerome says in the authority mentioned [above](#):³³ ‘Christ was of such great poverty’, etc.; and this did not remove the highest poverty. /**131b**/
2. He also had a purse for condescending to the weak, as it is said in the Gloss on that Psalm (103.14): *Producing hay for the beasts of burden*: ‘The Lord kept a purse, or had one for the use of those who were with him, their men, and the religious wives in attendance, who would administer him from their own substance, undertaking rather the persona of the infirm among these people. For he foresaw that many would be infirm and would ask for those things, when he undertook there their persona, when he said, *My soul is sad right up to death*’.

And concerning the above two [causes], that of John 12.6: *Those which were sent*, etc., the Gloss: ‘He whom the Angels minister has a purse for the expenses (*sumtus*) of the poor, condescending to the infirm’.

3. Also, he had a purse for a critical moment of necessity, as when he was crossing through the Samaritans; at which time he also permitted his disciples to have a purse, according to that of Luke 22.35: *When I sent you without purse and satchel*, etc.; the Gloss: ‘Not the same rule of living informs the disciples in a time of persecution as in a time of peace. Indeed, he commanded, ordering the sent disciples not to take anything on the road; that, namely, he who announces the Gospel live from the Gospel. But when the time (*articulo*) of death stands near, and the whole populace are persecuting the pastor and congregation at once, he decreed a fitting rule for that time, permitting that they take necessities for victual until, the insanity of the persecutors having ebbed, the time for evangelizing should return’.

From these glosses it is manifestly clear that the mode of having a purse for the Lord (*in Domino*) in no way diminishes poverty. For the Lord thus condescended to the weakness and necessity, so that the form and example of poverty (which he had especially come to show humankind) would nonetheless be preserved. According to which the Apostle says: *He was made needy for us, so that we would be rich by his poverty* (2 Cor. 8.9), namely by voluntarily imitating the highest poverty.

33. See objection 8 above, p. 2.

Ad 3. To that which is objected concerning the Gloss to 1 Tim. 6.8: *Having aliments, etc.*, where it is said that temporal goods ought not be cast away altogether, it must be said that one understands concerning a casting away of temporal goods as far as use, not as far as concerns lordship. For the use of temporal goods is necessary for human life, which is yet able to be held without lordship or ownership, as is clear in the poor, who have no ownership (*nihil proprietatis*).

And that this be understood is clear through that which /**132a**/ follows immediately in the Gloss, where it adds that *having aliments and protected by these, we are content with these things*, ‘he who strives for more (*ultra*) finds evil’. To be content with the use of a roof and aliment is the mode of perfect virtue. And so ought the Gloss be understood; nor is this opposed to the highest poverty. However, he who should wish to cast away temporal things such that he neither wishes to accept aliments nor have a roof does not work perfectly, but stupidly. And the Gloss wishes to indicate this.

Ad 4. To that which is objected concerning the gloss to 2 Cor. 8.12, *If the will is ready, etc.*, the Gloss: ‘to retain necessities’, it must be said that that gloss is truncated since it immediately continues: ‘this is not said but that this be better: namely, to give the whole; but he fears for the weak, whom he warned to give so that they not suffer need’. Thus, if inspected with a sane and correct eye, it appears that that Gloss does more for the opposite than for the proposition.

Ad 5. To that which is objected—that he who universally renounces everything so tempts God—it must be said that it is false. First on account of the divine promises, then on account of the many remedies which can be had, and, finally, on account of the examples by which we manifestly see that such poor people are sustained. From which it is manifestly inferred—if we are not obdurate—that such a mode of renouncing, having been divinely inspired, is not tempting God, but, renouncing in this way, one is securely supported by divine promises.³⁴ But he in fact tempts God who doubts the divine promises. On this account, Jerome [said] on that verse, *is not the soul more than meat?* (Mt. 6.25), ‘No one doubts in the promises of Truth; let man be what he ought to be and soon all things are added to him on account of whom all things are done’.

34. The verb here is *innititur*, which can mean both ‘supported by’ and ‘rely upon’; it would not be surprising if Bonaventure had both ideas in mind.

He who doubts this, therefore, like the sons of Israel, tempts God, who said: *Will God be able to prepare a meal in the desert?* (Ps. 77.20). Perfect men, however, should not be conformed to these people, but rather to the Apostles—concerning whom it is said /**132b**/ in 2 Corinthians 4.8: *We are in doubt, but not deserted*; the Gloss: ‘*We are in doubt*, i.e., we are so poor that necessities are lacking’; *but not deserted* by God altogether, since God feeds us’. And because that extended not only to the Apostles, but also to their imitators, it appears through that which is said in Hebrews 13.5: *Let your customs be without avarice, content with present things. For he said: I will not desert you, nor leave you behind.* There the Gloss: ‘The Lord Himself, omnipotent, said to Jesus Nave: *I will not desert you* without giving you necessities; *nor will I leave you behind*, he is left behind who would have died of hunger. But since this is not [the case], let man not be greedy. Joshua said this after the death of Moses; he also says this to all hoping in themselves, like Joshua. For he promises us these things, if we put our hope in Him—not for the tenacious or greedy, but for those hoping in Him. And since it could seem to them that that promise was only made for Joshua, the Apostle responds to this, saying that he will help us just as he helped him, as if he said: one cannot doubt the promises, since Jesus Christ, who yesterday (i.e., in the past) helped Joshua, and he himself helps us and other faithful today (i.e., in the present), he will also help us in the future in the ages (i.e., without limit)’.

Ad 6. To that which is objected—that virtue consists in the mean—it must be said that that is true as far as concerns those which are of necessity, such as is [the case] for munificence, but is false in things which are supererogatory, such as the counsel of poverty and chastity. For the perfection of such is attended to according to the perfect configuration to Christ and the mode of divine love, which is that God is loved above all, more than according to the superfluous and diminution with respect to an exterior object.

And that that is true, is clear in Ambrose, in *On Duties*, almost near the beginning, when he speaks so: ³⁵ ‘All obligation is either mediate (*medium*)

35. Ambrose, *De officiis* 1.11.36. Cf. Cicero, *De officiis* 1.3.8: ‘Atque etiam alia diuisio est officii. Nam et medium quoddam officium dicitur et perfectum. Perfectum officium rectum, opinor, uocemus, quoniam Graeci katorthoma, hoc autem commune officium kathekon uocant. Atque ea sic definiunt, ut rectum quod sit, id officium perfectum esse definiant; medium autem officium id esse dicunt, quod cur factum sit, ratio probabilis reddi possit.’

or perfect, which we can prove by the authority of Scriptures. /**133a**/ For we have in the Gospel: *If you wish to enter to life, preserve the mandates. Do not commit homicide, etc.* (Mt. 19.17). These are mediate obligations, for which something is lacking. *If you wish to be perfect, go and sell everything that you have, and give to the poor* (Mt. 19.21), and when he says that enemies ought to be loved and one ought to pray for those calumniating and persecuting us, if we wish to be perfect (Mt. 5.44). This is a perfect obligation, which the Greeks had called *catorthoma*, by which everything is corrected that was able to have some slip-ups (*lapsus*).³⁶

Munificence, therefore, which is attended to as a mediate obligation, preserves the mode in being munificent. But poverty of spirit, which is attended to as a perfect obligation, bestows the whole. Hence, in that book, in the tractate on liberality in *On Duties*:³⁷ ‘It is clear that there ought to be a mode of liberality, lest munificence, whose sobriety ought to be held onto, become useless.’ On which mode, he subjoins:³⁸

The mode of liberality ought to be held, so that because you do well, you are able to do it daily, lest you withdraw necessity because you will give way to excess. For Joseph was able to give the whole wealth of Egypt, to bring forth royal treasures, yet he did not wish to seem extravagant with another’s possessions (*de alieno*). He preferred to sell grain than to give to the hungry because, had he given to a few, he would have neglected many.

But this looks to the mediate obligation, according to which he himself says elsewhere, treating it in that same book,³⁹ the saying of the Apostle, *So that the refectory is not for others, it is difficult for you* (2 Cor. 8.10), ‘We notice therefore the means (*modum*) to the extent that way he comprehended the benevolence, liberality, means, fruit and personae; for he gave a counsel to the imperfect; for they could not bear the difficulties if not imperfect.’

But since it is not opposed to perfection to hold the means, if someone dispenses the goods of the Church; therefore, he subjoins:⁴⁰ ‘But if someone established in the priesthood or some other ministry does not want to burden the Church, let him confer not the whole of what he has, but let him

36. Κατορθῶμα (‘success’) can mean ‘that which is done rightly’, or ‘virtuous action’.

37. Ambrose, *De officiis* 2.16.76.

38. Ambrose, *De officiis* 2.16.78.

39. Ambrose, *De officiis* 1.30.151.

40. Ambrose, *De officiis* 1.30.149.

work with honesty as far as it fitting for his office; he seems not imperfect to me.’

From these points, therefore, it is inferred that although to hold the mean (*medium*) is of virtue according to the common state and mediate obligation, yet it is of evangelical perfection to abandon the whole. Nonetheless, if something were held in common so that it be dispensed, this does not make one imperfect. Nor does one say to abandon the whole universally is excess, since this looks to perfect obligation, as is clear from /**133b**/ what was said, and from this that Ambrose wrote earlier in the preceding chapter, where he speaks thus:⁴¹

Moreover, the Lord does not wish wealth to be produced simultaneously, but to be dispensed, except perchance, when Eliseus killed his oxen and fed the poor from what he had, so that no domestic care was held, but with all things having been left behind, he give himself to the prophetic discipline (cf. 1 Kgs. 19.21).

If therefore, all things are left behind for the prophetic discipline, [it can be done] for evangelical perfection much more strongly.

Ad 7. To that which is objected—that to disperse everything is prodigality—it must be said that when everything is dispersed for vanity, then it is prodigality, but not when they are given away for utility. And so it is the case concerning evangelical poverty, since, as it is said in Mark 10.30, The Lord shall restore hundredfold with tribulations in the present and in the future, He shall restore eternal life. It is, however, different concerning the universal retention of everything. For that does not happen for spiritual utility, but more for terrestrial cupidity. Therefore, it is not similar from this or the other cause (*hinc et inde*).

Ad 8. To that which is objected concerning he who withdraws necessities of another, etc., it must be said that this is not similar: for he who withdraws necessities of another does violence and leads him into involuntary poverty; but he who withdraws from himself does so voluntarily and leads himself into voluntary poverty. And through this, just as that argument—involuntary poverty is not praiseworthy, therefore neither is voluntary poverty—is not valid, so the aforesaid reasoning is not compelling.

41. Ambrose, *De officiis* 1.30.149.

There is also another defect in that argument. For it proceeds through a false supposition (*per suppositionem falsi*) because universally renouncing everything does not altogether withdraw necessities from one's self, since he entrusts himself to the control of divine providence and he abandons many modes of living and seeking necessities for himself.

Ad 9. To that which is objected—that he exposes himself to the danger of starvation—it must be said that it is false, as is entirely clear from the afore-said and manifestly inferred from all past times. For never and nowhere is it read that someone wishing to serve God in poverty perished from starvation due to the absence of food. And this is what Augustine said in a certain tract *On Dominical Prayer*:⁴²

For nor can daily food be lacking for the just, since it was written: *The Lord shall not kill the soul of the just* (Pr. 10.3); and again: *I was junior, /134a/ and indeed I grew old, and I did not see the just left derelict* (Ps. 36.25); and again: For those seeking the kingdom of God and His justice, he promised that everything would be appointed (cf. Mt. 6.33); and since everything is already God's, the one who has God shall lack nothing, if he does not lack God. Thus was food divinely procured for Daniel when shut in the lion's den at the order of the King (Da. 14.30), and the man of God was fed among the hungry beasts. Thus also was Elias nourished in exile by ravens ministering and birds apportioning food (1 Kgs. 17.6). O how the cruelty of human malice should be detested! The beasts spared, the birds fed, and men lie in ambush and rage.

From these points it is manifestly inferred that it is not a danger, but a refuge, to totally dedicate one's self to cultivating God, all things have been spurned. /134b/

Ad 10. To that which is objected last—that we ask our daily bread in the Lord's Prayer—it must be said that does more for the opposite than the proposition. For from the fact that we ask daily our daily bread, and we do not ask for what we have, it is clear that it is of evangelical perfection to be content with daily victual. Since that is not able to appear perfection in the hearts of the avaricious, the Lord induces this not only by means of the counsels of the wise, but also by the examples of nature, and the prophecies of grace, so that in this way, at least through that threefold testimony of

^{42.} Cyprian, *De oratione dominica* 21.

poverty, the counsel is firmly proved as the highest and stable foundation of all evangelical perfection.

A Note on Translation

Although Bonaventure's Latin is not particularly hard to translate, I have thought it worthwhile to include a list of the words I have used to translate certain key poverty-related terms. In a few places I have also added or omitted an 'and' where the English expects it. On other occasions I have added 'words' or 'expression' to phrases like 'ex quo' where the context and sense make it clear that something like this is understood. Finally, in many cases have silently not translated the emphatic pronouns (*ipse, ipsa, ipsum*) where a simple 'the' will do.

<i>dominium</i>	lordship
<i>egere</i>	be needy
<i>egenus</i>	needy
<i>egestas</i>	need
<i>indigentia</i>	indigence
<i>inopia</i>	want
<i>in privato</i>	personally
<i>in speciali</i>	individually ₁
<i>largitas</i>	munificence
<i>possessio</i>	(proprietary) possession
<i>penuria</i>	penury
<i>proprietas</i>	ownership
<i>proprium</i>	property ₁ ; individually ₂
<i>sollicitudo</i>	solicitude (anxious) care; concern