

BONAVENTURE

De paupertate quoad mendicitatem

(*De perfectione evangelica*, q. 2 a. 2)

Translated from:

Bonaventure (1882–1902). *Opera omnia edita studio et cura PP. Collegii a S. Bonaventura*. 10 vols. Quaracchi: College of St Bonaventure, 5:134–155.¹

CONSEQUENTLY, there is a question of mendicancy, and it is asked whether begging for Christ is of christian perfection; and I call ‘begging’ seeking alms or living from daily alms.

It Seems That It Is Not the Case:

1. First, by the authority of the Psalms: *Fear the Lord, all ye his saints: for there is no want for those that fear him.* *Ps. 33:10* Therefore, being destitute (*inopem*) and fearing God do not coexist. (↪ [Ad 1](#))

2. Likewise, the Psalm: *I have not seen the just forsaken, nor his seed seeking bread.* *Ps. 36:25* Therefore, he who seeks bread is not just nor the seed of the just. (↪ [Ad 2](#))

3. Likewise, the Psalm: *Let his children be carried about vagabonds, and beg.* *Ps. 108:10* But nothing, which the Psalmist, speaking in the spirit of God, invokes as punishment, looks to evangelical perfection or perfect justice. Begging is of this kind; therefore, etc. (↪ [Ad 3](#))

4. Likewise, Ecclesiasticus 40: *My son, in thy lifetime be not indigent.* *Sir. 40:29*

1. As a change of pace, I have decided to provide references to English translations rather than Latin editions, and since my text is available online, I have provided references to translations that are available online wherever possible. Please note the following abbreviations:

CCEL Christian Classics Ethereal Library (<http://www.ccel.org>)

FA:ED Francis of Assisi: Early Document (Armstrong, Hellmann, and Short [1999–2002](#))

NPNF Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers (Schaff [1890–1900](#)); electronic versions are hosted at CCEL; the three numbers I cite refer to series number, volume number, and page number respectively.

for it is better to die than to want. Therefore, it is better to be dead than to be a beggar. /**134b**/ (↪ Ad 4)

Act. 20:35 5. Likewise, Acts 20: *More blessed is it to give than receive*. But giving alms does not make a man attain evangelical perfection. Therefore, much less does receiving alms. (↪ Ad 5)

Lk. 12:33 6. Likewise, Luke 12: *Sell what you possess*; the Gloss: that, having spurned all for God, you work by the labour of your hands afterwards whence you might live, or give alms. Living, then, from one's own labour and giving alms looks to evangelical perfection. Therefore, its opposite—namely, begging and living from another person's labour—is contrary to evangelical perfection. (↪ Ad 6)

1 Th. 4:12 7. Likewise, 1 Thessalonians 4: *Desire something of no one*; the Gloss: 'Desire /**135a**/ something of no one, much less ask or take'. If, therefore, asking or seeking (*petere*) is more than longing for (*appetere*), and the first is prohibited by the Apostle as illicit—namely, desiring or longing for what is another's—, then still more strongly [is] seeking [illicit]. (↪ Ad 7)

1 Th. 5:12 8. Likewise, 1 Thessalonians 5: *We ask you to recognize those who work among you and are ahead of you in the Lord*; the Gloss: 'Just as riches produce a neglect of salvation, so does need decline from justice when it desires to be sated'. But that which causes a declining from justice does not pertain to evangelical perfection; therefore, etc. (↪ Ad 8)

2 Th. 3:10 9. Likewise, 2 Thessalonians 3: *If someone does not wish to work, do not let him eat*; the Gloss: 'The Apostle wanted God's servants to work corporeally that they might have the wherewithal to live, and be not compelled by need to seek necessities'. But this is mendicancy; according to the Apostle, therefore, begging is not a characteristic of God's servants. (↪ Ad 9)

2 Th. 3:9 10. Likewise, on that verse in the same chapter 3, *that we give a form to you*, the Gloss: 'It is necessary for one given over to leisure, who frequently gathers at another's table to flatter the one feeding him'. But flattering is contrary to truth and perfection; therefore, etc.² (↪ Ad 10)

11. Likewise, in C. 12 q. 1 c. 16, *Videntes*, Pope Urban says that 'bishops ought to minister all necessities to everyone wishing to live a common life as they can do it better, so that no one be found to be needy amongst them'. And after: 'If there be someone who tries to revoke this [decree], now or in the future, let him now be struck by the said condemnation'. It is therefore

2. Flatter, that is, in a negative sense, as in servile and disingenuous flattery.

contrary to canonical sanctions that some living the common life in the Church [live] by being needy and begging. (↪ Ad 11)

12. Likewise, it is prohibited in D. 1 de cons. c. 9: that one consecrate a church unless it is endowed first. Therefore, if a church must not be consecrated unless those who minister in it have the wherewithal to be sustained, much /135b/ more strongly, then, should some religious order (*religio*) not be instituted without sustaining possession.³ (↪ Ad 12)

13. Likewise, it is prescribed (*inhibetur*) in civil law that able-bodied people should not beg: *The Law on Able-Bodied Begging*.⁴ But things should be more ordered in the Church than in the commonwealth. If, therefore, able-bodied beg is contrary to the correct guiding of the commonwealth, then it is much more contrary to the sublimity of evangelical perfection. (↪ Ad 13)

Likewise, this very point is shown by reason:

14. Likewise, begging is an indifferent work; but an indifferent can not become a work of perfection through the addition of an end, just as is manifestly clear in other works, like going to church and making alms; therefore, etc. (↪ Ad 14)

15. It is of perfection to serve freely and liberally, and to flee from the obligations of sinners. But he who receives alms obliges himself to intervening for the sins of others; if, therefore, an obligation of this kind is not consonant with perfection, therefore, etc. (↪ Ad 15)

16. Likewise, they are of this sort who beg by profession or do this because they are poor or because they are preachers. If because they are poor, all poor who beg, therefore, are perfect—which is contrary to Augustine in his book *On the Work of Monks*, which reprimands mendicant monks and those wishing to do nothing. If because they are preachers, then no one of them ought to beg who does not preach, the contrary of which we see every day. (↪ Ad 16)

17. Likewise, preaching is something spiritual; but he who gives a

3. By ‘possession’ (*possessio*), Bonaventure likely had in mind the Roman law meaning of the word. *Possessio* is not quite the same as full ownership (*proprietas*) over something—Dig.41.2.12.1: ‘Ownership has nothing in common with possession: and for this reason, an interdict “uti possidetis” [which would protect the actual possessor against the claim] is not denied to one who has begun to make a claim [in court] for the thing, because he who has made the claim does not seem to have renounced it—though it can mature into full ownership over time.’

4. Cod.11.25(26).1

spiritual thing and receives a temporal thing [in return] is similar to Giezi, who received money from Naaman on the pretext of spiritual benefit offered to him earlier. But this is damnable; therefore, it is damnable for a preacher to beg; therefore it is not of evangelical perfection. (↪ Ad 17)

¹ Th. 5:22 18. Likewise, it is a characteristic of the perfect to abstain *from every type of evil*; but this is a type of evil, that preachers seek temporal things, for in this they are similar to pseudo-preachers. Therefore, etc. /136a/ (↪ Ad 18)

19. Likewise, people of this kind either have the authority for preaching, or they do not. If they do not have it, then they do evilly by preaching; therefore, they merit nothing. If they do have it: But those who have the authority can seek [alms] authoritatively (*potestative*). Therefore, such people injure the authority of the perfection of the Gospel by begging; therefore, they are not perfect in this, but impious. (↪ Ad 19)

20. Likewise, it is safer and more perfect to follow wiser and more prudent men; but the most prudent men in religious affairs were Basil, Benedict, Augustine, Jerome, Gregory, Hilary, and Paul. But such people relinquished all their things in such a way that they possessed common goods; nor is it read that they begged. Therefore, that mode of begging recently introduced by Dominic and Francis seems to be superstitious and vain, since it seems to place the foolish experience and spirit of two poor men before the great wisdom and sublimity of the preceding saints and doctors. (↪ Ad 20)

On the Contrary:

Mt. 10:9 Resp. 1. Matthew 10: *Do not desire to possess gold, or silver, or money in your belts, nor a staff on the road, nor two tunics, nor sandals*; the Gloss: ‘They should carry neither the storeroom nor the necessities themselves; nothing beyond the garment by which one can be content’.

Mk. 6:8 Resp. 2. Likewise, Mark 6: *He commanded them to not take anything on the rod, neither bread nor bronze in the belt*. And so, he commanded them this either as prelates or as perfect men. If as prelates, then prelates would still have been bound to this—which is clearly false. Thus he commanded them this as perfect men. But perfection is proposed to be generally /136b/ imitated by all, for it is said *Let him take who can take*. Therefore, living in this way looks to evangelical perfection.⁵

Mt. 19:12

5. According to a note to this objection, another MS reads: ‘This command [Mk. 6.8]

Resp. 3. Luke 9: *You shall take nothing on the road, neither staff,* Lk. 9:3 *nor purse, nor bread, nor coin*; the Gloss: ‘Not carrying a staff is to be non-solicitous about the things which are necessary for sustaining a man, for these things are owed to the preachers’. If, therefore, the Lord convinced the apostles, whom he sent to preach amongst the unfaithful, of this: to exclude solicitude regarding the necessary sustainment, then it is much more of perfection to be unconcerned about these kinds of things when preaching the Gospel to the faithful, content instead with the food and clothing given to them.

Resp. 4. Luke 9: *Whosoever shall take up a child in my name*; the Lk. 9:48 interlinear gloss: ‘a poor [child]’; and the other gloss: ‘He who receives an imitator of Christ, receives Christ’. Therefore, when a poor person imitating Christ is supported, Christ is supported. If, therefore, it is of evangelical perfection to be poor and an imitator of Christ, it is of evangelical perfection is to want to be supported as so poor a person. If, then, this one seeks by begging, he does not withdraw from evangelical perfection.

Resp. 5. Luke 10: *Do not wish to carry a sack or a purse*; the Gloss: Lk. 10:4 ‘Faith in God ought to be so great in the preacher that, even if he does not foresee it, he know most surely that the wages of the present life will not lacking to him, in order to not preach less of eternal things while his mind is occupied with temporal concerns’. And so one does [this]—that one not foresee temporals for one’s self, but wait for it to be given to him by others (since he will necessarily have them)—for a more expedient preaching of the truth. Therefore, such a mode of living is consonant with truth and evangelical perfection.

Resp. 6. Likewise, Luke 16: *Make friends for yourselves from the riches* Lk. 16:9 *of iniquity so that, when you have failed, they receive you in the eternal tabernacle*; the Gloss: ‘Not any poor person soever, but those who can receive them in the eternal tabernacle’. But such ones are the *poor* /**137a**/ *in spirit whose is the kingdom of heaven*. Therefore it is according to a Mt. 5:3 divine counsel that alms be given to such poor people and that they be supported by them. But what is consonant with a divine counsel does not

given to the apostles, either was given as prelates or as perfect men. Not as prelates, for, if it were so, the prelates ought to have done this; therefore, since they do not do this, it was not given to the apostles as prelates, and thus it was given to them as perfect men. Therefore, any perfect man can do this. But by this precept a seeking of wages (*petitio sumtuum*) is conceded; therefore it is of perfection to seek wages; this is to beg; therefore, etc.’

oppose evangelical perfection. Therefore, etc.

Resp. 7. Likewise, Jerome, *Against Vigilantius*, treating of the same verse, says:⁶ ‘Can those poor, whose flagrant lust dominates among the dirt and the filth of the body, can they who possess neither present nor future things possess the eternal tabernacle? For it is not the poor without qualification, but the poor in spirit are called blessed; of whom it is written, *Ps. 40:1* *Blessed is he who understands about the poor and needy; the Lord will free him, on an evil day.* In supporting the poor of the common people, there is no need of understanding, but of alms; for the holy poor, there is need of the blessedness of understanding, so that you give to the one who is ashamed to receive; and when he has received, he grieves, reaping carnal things and sowing spiritual things.’

2 Co. 8:14 Resp. 8. Likewise, 2 Corinthians 8: *Your abundance fills their want, so that their abundance is a supplement to your want*; the Gloss: ‘Your abundance of terrestrial things fills their want, so that, in turn, the abundance of the spiritual merits of those who are free for divine things is a supplement to your want’. If, therefore, this looks to the perfection of the Lord’s body (*dominici corporis*), which the members share amongst themselves *in regard to giving and receiving*, then he acts for the perfection of the Church and Gospel, that the just poor seek and receive sustenance from the mundane rich and imperfect.

[*A possible objection answered:*] If you should say that they are able to receive, but not to ask, this is nothing, since the mundane rich are able to ask for the orations of spiritual men for the sake of alleviating the want of their own merits. Therefore, vice versa, the spiritual poor can seek corporal alms for the sustenance of their bodies. /137b/

Likewise, this is shown by the example of Christ:

Ps. 39:18 Resp. 9. The Psalm: *I am a beggar and poor*; the Gloss: ‘Christ says this about himself: I am a beggar in the form of a servant. He is a beggar who seeks from another; he is poor who does not have enough for himself’. But it is agreed that this is not understood about Christ as far as spiritual gifts or goods are concerned, since he embraced (*comprehensor*) every grace, and full of them. Therefore, it is understood with respect to temporal goods; therefore, he was poor with respect to them, and sought them from others.

Ps. 108:17 Resp. 10. The Psalm: *He persecuted the needy man and the beggar*;

6. Jerome, *Against Vigilantius* 14 (NPNF, 2.6.422–23).

the Gloss: ‘Namely, Christ. To persecute the poor is purely savagery, but sometimes others suffer in this way for riches and honours’. Therefore, either Christ is said to be a beggar because he begged from the Father, or because he begged from man. If because he begged from the Father, then all men are beggars, both the rich and the poor; therefore, following Christ in this way would not be the highest savagery. If he begged from men, we have the proposition; therefore, etc.

Resp. 11. Mark 11: *Having searched everywhere, he went out into Bethany*; the Gloss: ‘If someone should support him with a hospice, for he was of such poverty and so favoured by none that he found no hospice in so large a city.’ But it is agreed that if he had wished to rent a hospice, he would have found one to rent. Therefore, he looked about as a poor little man and a beggar.

Resp. 12. Likewise, Luke 19: *Zachaeus, descend quickly, for today I must stay in your home*; the Gloss: ‘He invited himself, uninvited’. But to invite another to [do] this, that he receive him in his hospice, is nothing else than to beg and seek. Therefore, etc.

Resp. 13. Likewise, John 4: *Give me drink*; Augustine, on the original, in his fifteenth homily on John:⁷ ‘In everything which Christ did as a man, he was offering an example to those who were to believe in him’. /**138a**/ And after:⁸ ‘He sought to drink and promised to drink, he needs like one about to receive, and promised as one about to be sated’. But it is agreed that he did not need spiritual drink, for he promised them.

But you will object that the Gloss sort of (*quasi*) has the contrary, which says: ‘Although Jesus could drink following his fatigue, he nevertheless did not demand this drink’. But this is understood: that, principally, he did not seek the drink, lest the Gloss contradict this fact.

Resp. 14. Jerome to Rusticus:⁹ ‘What is more worthless than a Samaritan woman? Yet she did not only believe the Messiah, whom she recognized at the fountain, but even with the apostles buying food, she restored the he who was hungry, and sustained he who was tired’. Therefore, it seems that Christ was corporally sustained by the Samaritan.

Resp. 15. Likewise, as the gospel history narrates, Christ, invited by the Pharisees, ate with them: either, therefore, like a lord, or like a poor

7. Augustine, *Tractates on the Gospel according to St. John* 15.2 (NPNF, 1.7.100).

8. Augustine, *Lectures or Tractates* 15.12 (NPNF, 1.7.102).

9. Jerome, *Epistle* 125.1 (NPNF, 2.6.244).

man. If as a lord, then he did not give an example of poverty; if as a poor man, but this is to beg. Therefore, etc.

Likewise, there is the example of saints for this:

Heb. 11:37 Resp. 16. In Hebrews 11, it is said in praise of the saints: *They, being needy, went about in sheepskin, in goatskin, etc.*; but going about in such a way is to beg; therefore, etc.

1 Kgs. 17:4 Resp. 17. Likewise, there is the example of Elias, in 1 Kings 17, on which Augustine [wrote] in a certain sermon:¹⁰ ‘Did God fail to feed his servant Elias? Will they fail him, the men [who] minister the birds? Therefore, God shows that, when and where he wishes, he can feed his servants; and yet he made him be needy so that a religious widow could feed him.’

Resp. 18. Likewise, there is the example of the disciples of John the Baptist for this, of whom it is said in his legend,¹¹ that, selling everything which they had, /**138b**/ they gave to the needy; and after it is added that they were tempted for they saw that they were needy in one cloak, but that their servants were rich and resplendent.

Resp. 19. Likewise, the example of Paul’s disciples; hence Chrysostom *On the praises of Paul*:¹² ‘Paul did not possess money, for he testifies to this: *Right to this hour, he said, we both hunger and thirst; we are naked and struck with firsts and we are unstable.* And what money, I say, since he often indeed did not have the needed food, nor some robe to wear.’ And he continues:¹³ ‘Many of the disciples were also poor, unskilled, and free of all learning, living in hunger and need, of low birth’, etc. Therefore the disciples of Paul were beggars.

Resp. 20. Likewise, there is the example of blessed Benedict for this, of whom it is read in the second book of the *Dialogues* that he was in a cave for three years, doing absolutely no work, but Romanus, a monk, gave him bread.¹⁴ And it is agreed that Benedict did not sin in this.

Resp. 21. Likewise, the example of St Alexius, who was a man of awesome sanctity, and in whose legend it was read that he was the son of

10. Augustine, *Sermons* 11.2 (Rotelle 1990, 294); Bonaventure’s text is a little different from modern editions.

11. Pseudo-Abdias, *De historia certaminis Apostolorum libri X* 5.62.

12. Chrysostom, *Homily* 4, *De laudibus Pauli* (PG 50.491).

13. Chrysostom, *Homily* 4, *De laudibus Pauli* (PG 50.491).

14. Gregory the Great, *Dialogues* 2.1 (CCEL).

an exceedingly rich Roman; having spurned his patrimony, he went through the world begging.

Resp. 22. Likewise, the example of St Dominic,¹⁵ He cursed in his own death all who would try to bring their possessions into his order. Therefore he wished that they would live from alms, according to the way he himself lived.

Resp. 23. Likewise, there is example of St Francis for this.¹⁶ He not only begged and counselled people to beg, but even confirmed his mendicancy with miracles. Just as was clear to sailors whom he nourished with the remainder of his own food and liberated the sated. And through the rule he had confirmed by the Pope, in which it says that ‘let the brothers go forth confidently for alms, in poverty and /**139a**/ humility, as servants for the Lord’, etc.¹⁷

Resp. 24. Likewise, Gregory, in his *Morals on Job*,¹⁸ on *I have counted my laborious nights*, ‘the elect serve the Creator of things; and often they were limited by a want of things; they cleaved to God through love, and yet they lacked the supports of the present life’. To lack the supplies of the present life, therefore, belongs to the perfection of the saints.

Resp. 25. Likewise, Jerome in his *Forty-First Letter* to a certain hospitable man:¹⁹ ‘A great many of the holy are sustained by you throughout the island of Dalmatia; but you would do better if you would live as a holy man among holy men’. Therefore, it is better to live from alms than to give them.

Likewise, this is shown by reason:

Resp. 26. The quality of a habit is the same as its act.²⁰ But the act of one entirely poor person, insofar as he is poor, is to be needy and to beg. Therefore if it is good to be poor, to beg for Christ is laudable and perfect.

Resp. 27. Likewise, to beg is not prohibited by the law of nature, nor the law of Scripture, nor the law of grace. But what is not prohibited, through the imposition of obedience, is made laudable and meritorious—especially if it is difficult and onerous.²¹ Therefore, if some have to beg by profession,

15. Cf. *Annales Ordinis Praedicatorum* 2.24.

16. Bonaventure, *The Major Legend of Saint Francis* 9.5 (FA:ED 2.601).

17. Francis, *The Later Rule*, 6.2 (FA:ED 1.103).

18. Gregory, *Morals in Job* 8.8.15 (Marriott 1844, 1.426)

19. Jerome, *Epistle* 118.5 (NPNF, 2.6.223).

20. See Bonaventure 1882–1902, 2.760, n. 6 and 3.388, n. 2.

21. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* 2.3.1105a10 (Barnes 1995, 1745).

even though they do this from obedience, it will be laudable and perfect for them.

Resp. 28. Likewise, the Church imposes temporal mendicancy, or even perpetual mendicancy as a punishment of making amends (*satisfactionis*). But it would not impose this if it were not satisfactory (*satisfactorium*). But he who voluntarily obliges himself to the work of making amends acts perfectly. Therefore he who vows to beg for Christ always behaves perfectly and laudably in this.

Resp. 29. Likewise, contempt of self is of perfection; and a greater contempt is of greater perfection. But he who begs for Christ despises and abases himself to the greatest degree. Therefore such a person behaves most perfectly.

Resp. 30. Likewise, voluntary poverty is more pleasing to God than involuntary poverty. Now, begging that proceeds from the latter is more pleasing to God. But the first is able to be laudable and meritorious. Therefore the second can be by that much more.

Resp. 31. Likewise, he who serves some lord deserves to be sustained by him. But he who renounces everything and fulfils /**139b**/ the counsels serves the greatest Lord. Therefore, such a person merits to be sustained by the Lord to the greatest degree; therefore, also by the servants of the Lord. If, then, he is a voluntary poor, by the very fact that he is such, he seeks justly if he seeks alms.

Resp. 32. Likewise, he who gives greater things can receive less. But a poor man praying expends spiritual mercy. Therefore, he can receive corporeal alms even more so.

Resp. 33. Likewise, one preaching from authority can receive wages authoritatively (*sumtus potestative*). Therefore one preaching from sub-authority and commission or commendation can ask supplicatively.

Resp. 34. He who serves another justly is sustained by him. Therefore, those who serve the universal Church are justly sustained by the whole world. Therefore if there are some, who serve the Christian people by travelling about through the world, in both word and deed, they are rightly able to ask for sustenance from it.

Resp. 35. If it is licit to receive a greater thing, it is even more so licit to receive a lesser thing. But for the religious poor who renounced individual goods (*propriis*) it is licit to receive the greatest possessions. Therefore, much more strongly it is licit for them to receive daily sustenance. Otherwise

it seems monstrous to say that it would be licit to receive one hundred marks of gold, but not receive one hundred loaves of bread.

If you should say that it is licit to receive, but not licit to ask, this is utterly nothing.²²

- [1.] Since asking for is ordered to receiving and it is on account of it. And just as giving is more than promising, so is receiving more than asking. But it is consistent that whatever is licit to give is licit to promise; therefore whatever is licit to receive is licit to ask for.
- [2.] If a friend asks a gift of his friend, he acts contrary to no law, neither the first in asking, nor the second in giving, nor again the first in receiving. But the law of charity and divine love is more communicative than the social law. Therefore, if someone asks something be given him from the love of God, he offends in no way, nor does he recede from perfection in some way.
- [3.] It is, undoubtedly, licit to ask for something in the giving of which the condition of the one giving is made better. But he who gives something for God *lends to the Lord* and he transforms a temporal thing to an eternal one, and he trains himself for a work of the most noble virtue, namely piety. Therefore, if these things happen to one who gives because of the request of another, the pauper who asks for alms does so chiefly according to the law of charity. Therefore, he recedes from perfection in no way. /140a/ *Pr. 19:17*

Conclusion:

Mendicancy, which is done for the sake of imitating Christ or evangelizing for Christ, or for both reasons, is not be condemned, but is rather of evangelical perfection.

Response:

To understand the aforesaid, it must be noted that begging happens in a threefold way. The first mode is from the necessity of nature. And this mode occurs when someone begs not only because they are poor, but also

22. Note that the standard edition keeps this objection as part of number 35, while the next to form 36 and 37. I have put the three together, however, to help foreground the point that these are all solutions to this ‘secondary’ objection.

because he has an infirmity, debility, or both. Now, this mode is wretched and tolerable, but becomes meritorious and laudable through good patience—
Lk. 16:20 just as it is read in Luke 16 about Lazarus, that *there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, who lay at the doors of a rich man, full of ulcers*; and it
Lk. 16:22 is added later, that *the beggar was dead and carried by the angels into the*
Lk. 16:22 *breast of Abraham*. About the rich man, however, it is said that *he was buried in hell*. From which, it is gathered that mendicancy, even coming from necessity, is a occasion leading to the way of eternal salvation. According to which, Gregory says,²³ that evils which oppress us here compel us to go to God.

The second mode of begging is from the viciousness of a fault. And this occurs when someone begs for the sake of fostering leisure, or for accumulating profit, or both. And this, I say, is a reproachable mode for all people begging in this way. Of whom Ambrose says in his book *On Duties*:²⁴ ‘The able-bodied come for the sake of a petition, they come having no cause except that of wandering, and they want to pilfer the subsidies of the poor, they despoil [them of] the wage; and not content with little, they seek greater things, trying to gain the approval of the petition by the condition of their clothing, seeking (*licitantes*) increases of profit by a dissimulation of their origins.’ Now although he deservedly ought to be reproached in all things, he is still to be blamed chiefly among those who have the appearance of sanctity. Of whom, Augustine says in his book *On the Work of Monks*:²⁵ ‘It is not at all appropriate that, in the life where senators become men of labour, the labourers become men of leisure; and where they arrive, having abandoned their finer things, those who were lords of estates, become there dainty rustics.’ And he adds afterwards to reproach their otium and gain:
 /140b/ ‘The most crafty enemy has scattered many hypocrites under the habit of monks, going about the provinces, nowhere sent, nowhere fixed, standing nowhere, sitting nowhere; some offer the limbs of the martyrs for
Mt. 23:5 sale (if even of martyrs); others *enlarge their fringes and phylacteries*; others lie that they have heard that their parents or family-members are alive in this region or that, and that they are on their way to them; and all seek, all demand either the costs of their lucrative need or the price of their pretended sanctity.’

23. 2 *Homilies on the Gospel*, homil. 36.

24. Ambrose, *On Duties* 2.16.76 (NPNF 2.10.55).

25. Augustine, *On the Work of Monks* 25.33 (NPNF 1.3.519).

Against such people Augustine inveighed much in his book *On the Work of Monks* because of this: that they not only fostered sloth (*pigritiam*) for themselves by begging, but even, advise others [to foster it] by preaching—badly understanding the Gospel, where it seems to suggest that men must not work, just as is the case with birds. And they expound the Apostle worse where he advises the brothers to work, saying that that [verse] must be understood about spiritual, not corporeal, labour. And because they deceived themselves and others, Augustine therefore censures them and shows the opposite in a number of ways throughout the whole book *On the Work of Monks*, which is wholly against those people who approve of this [second mode of begging](#) ([↖ 12](#)). Hence he says about such people:²⁶ ‘Those who were preaching sloth as the keeper of the Gospel, are accusers of mercy as its transgressor. Would that they who wish to be idle in their hands were altogether idle in their tongues! For if they were to propose not only slothful examples to them, but even mute ones, they would not invite so many to their imitation. Now, however, they recite the Gospel of Christ against the Apostle of Christ. For their works of sloth are so amazing that they wish to impede the Gospel which the Apostle commanded and did so that the Gospel not be impeded.’

cf. Mt. 6:25–28

2 Ti. 3:10

The third mode of begging is from the supererogation of justice; and this is when someone begs for the sake of imitating Christ, for evangelizing Christ, or for both modes.

[1] For imitating Christ, I say, so far as concerns the contempt of one’s self, affection for neighbour, and worship of God. For we must chiefly imitate Christ in these three things; [and] he does this indeed who voluntarily begs for the name of Christ in order to vilify and humiliate himself, to edify his neighbour and provoke him to piety, and to be ready (*vacet*) for God with a free mind, /**141a**/ all secular concerns having been laid aside. And, concerning such people, Augustine [wrote] in a certain fortieth sermon:²⁷

In that time, how much did God commend the works of mercy, he made his saints be needy (*egere*), so that, when they were made friends of God, ‘they would receive from the mammon of iniquity’. and they, who have the riches of the world, would give alms generously to their friends ‘in the eternal tabernacle’? That is, so that, since they are pious servants of God, while they are continuously free for God, they are sometimes wanting; [and] so that those who have the riches of the world give alms generously. And in

Lk. 16:9

26. Augustine, *On the Work of Monks* 22.26–27 (NPNF 1.3.516–17).

27. Augustine, *Sermones* 11 (alias 19 inter 50 homilias n. 1).

what way they make them partakers in terrestrial substance, so they will merit to have a part with them in eternal life.

From which quotation it appears that such a kind of mendicancy is laudable that is done for imitating Christ.

[2] Similarly those things that are done for evangelizing Christ, for he offers a path to the Gospel by reason of him [a] *that* it is preached, [b] *by whom* it is preached, and [c] *to whom* it is preached. By reason of him that it is preached, for we preach a contempt for the world; which is more efficaciously advised by word and deed than by word alone. It is also preached by many, if the ones preaching live from the Gospel than if they are compelled to live from their own wages and labour. It is also more efficaciously received by many as long as the ones receiving the teachings (*documenta*) give beneficial sustenance generously. This is what John Chrysostom says in his thirty-second *Homily on Matthew*:²⁸ ‘It is clear that it was necessary that disciples be fed by those to whom they preached, so that they neither think great things against those who were taught, like those who offer everything and receive nothing from them, nor, on the other hand, that they be cut off, despised by them. Next, so that they not say, “you order us to live as mendicants”, and they be ashamed of this, he shows this to be a debt, both calling them labourers and designating what is given as pay. For, do not think because the labour is in words that the benefit that comes from you is small. In fact, this one has many labours, and whatever they who are taught may give, they do not offer as generous givers, but as ones who render retribution.’ Therefore, when someone begs for the sake of imitating and evangelizing Christ according to the prescribed mode, he not only does not sin, but even fulfills perfect justice. First, because sustenance is very due a poor just man imitating Christ; second, because it is owed more to a poor evangelical man evangelizing Christ; third, because it is chiefly /**141b**/ owed to a thankful poor man, humbly receiving and humbly beseeching his due for grace—naturally, since one free from all things makes himself a servant of all.

Ps. 103:14 And this is what Augustine says on that verse of the Psalms, *Producing*
 Ps. 103:14 *hay for the mules*:²⁹ ‘*Bringing forth hay*, he says; that is, temporal things;
 1 Co. 9:14 *for the mules*, that is, for preachers, like *let them live from the Gospel who*
announce the Gospel; and *grass*, that is, temporal things; *for the servitude of*

28. John Chrysostom, *Homilies* 32.7 (NPNF, 1.1.210).

29. Found in the *Glossa ordinaria*, but originally from Augustine, *Explanations of the Psalms* 104.18 (=103 in the Vulgate) (NPNF 1.8.513).

mankind, that is for the preachers, the slaves of mankind for Christ. Hence the Apostle, *Because I was free from all things, I made myself the slave of all.* ^{1 Co. 9:19} This is servitude from charity, which makes those aiming to be useful for the brothers, who are the slaves of mankind for Christ, humble. These ones are the *mules* to whom the *grasses* are given as pay because they are servants. Of whom it is said, *You shall not muzzle an oxen while it threshes*; and, *the labourer is worthy of his pay.* ^{Dt. 25:4} For temporal things are owed to preachers, for ^{Lk. 10:7} they generously give spiritual things. Hence the Apostle, *If we have sowed* ^{1 Co. 9:11} *spiritual things for you, it is no great thing if we reap your carnal things*; for whom it is said, *Blessed is he*, who is preoccupied with the word of the ^{Ps. 40:1} one about to ask, *who understands about the needy and poor man.* For you should not deal with the threshing oxen like a transient mendicant. For you give to him, that is, the mendicant, because it is read: *Give to everyone who* ^{Lk. 6:30} *seeks*; you ought to give even to the one who does not seek. See, therefore, that he not judge you (that is, show you to be damnable) if the soldier of Christ be so needy that he seeks. For just as it is said of him who seeks you out, *Give to everyone who seeks*, so it is said of the preacher, whom you ought to seek out: “Let the alms sweat in your hand until you find a just man to whom you might give it.” Therefore, give to everyone who seeks, whoever he may be; recognizing in the one to whom you would give, but, by that much more, give to the servant of God, the soldier of Christ—even if he does not seek.’ From these words it is therefore clearly apparent that it is not a vice or a fault in the preacher and evangelizer of Christ, but rather a mark of evangelical perfection. Hence the reasons, authorities, and examples that are adduced for this part ought to be conceded.

For if someone should wish to attack and refute that every mode of begging in the servants of Christ, he will seem to attack not only the Order of the Poor (*ordinem pauperum*), but even the highest Pontiff, who approved this mode of living; not even only him, but even this great union of the saints, who begged: namely, Francis, Dominic, /**142a**/ Alexius, Benedict, and that cadre of apostles and prophets; and even the Lord Jesus Christ ^{cf. 1 Kgs. 19:20} himself, whom scripture does not fear to call ‘poor’ and ‘mendicant’, even though our faith says and thinks greater things about him: namely that he was for our sake not only poor and a mendicant as an example for us, but, in order to give an example of perfectly despising the world, he was even laid bare and vilified to the extreme type of abjection.

Finally, above all these evils, the universal status of the Church seems to be subverted. For if it is illicit for the poor of Christ to receive the

sustenance of life through the reception of alms, it is much more strongly illicit to receive the amplitude and multitude of possessions and great revenues. For who is so absurd as to say that that it is licit for someone to receive a talent of gold, but not a crust of bread? But if this is true, since the possessions of the churches, both among the religious having ownership and among the secular clerics, are held through the reception of alms voluntarily and freely given, then the status of all the churches will seem to be subverted: if [that is] receiving alms or living from alms—either in great quantity or small—be judged illicit; unless, perhaps, someone would say that receiving is licit, but seeking is not. But this would seem an amazing thing that someone could [do this] in that which is greater, and not in that which is lesser: ³⁰ [3] that some monastery can receive one hundred thousand marks in revenues from some prince, and one little poor man cannot supplicatingly beseech an alleviation of his need; [4] that someone can seek from a friend on the basis of friendship, and a Christian cannot seek from a Christian on the basis of charity; [5] that someone can seek certain things useful for the security and abundance of some rich monastery, and a voluntarily poor man cannot seek sustenance for life; [6] that some scholar can licitly beg for the love of advancing in the knowledge of science, which puffs one up, so that he arrive in the end to temporal riches, and a poor religious cannot seek for the love of advancing in charity and humility, which edifies one, so that he arrive in the end to eternal life; and the other similar [examples], which seem very absurd.

If, therefore, all these are not small but great inconsistencies, it ought to be maintained that it is licit for the poor to be sustained from someone else's alms, at least according to the [third mode of begging](#) ([↗ 13](#)) explained above. /**142b**/

Response to the Objections:

Ps. 33:10 [Ad 1.](#) To that which was first objected to the contrary—that *there is no want to them that fear God*—it ought to be said there is a twofold want, namely, corporeal and spiritual. That verse, however, is understood to be about not any sort of want, but of spiritual want. And that this be true *Ps. 33:11* appears through that which immediately follows: *The rich grow needy and hungry*. It is agreed that that is not understood of the need of material

30. Cf. VI 5.12. regulae iuris 53: 'Cui licet quod est plus licet utique quod est minus.'

riches; therefore it remains that it is understood of a want of spiritual things, which, though it exists among the rich, it is nevertheless not among those who fear God, for *fear is the beginning of wisdom*—about which it is said in Wisdom 7, *All good things have come to me equally with her*, etc. Ps. 110:10
Wis. 7:11

Ad 2. To that which is objected about the Psalm—*I have not seen the just forsaken*—it ought to be said that bread is twofold, namely corporeal and spiritual. That verse is not understood to be of corporeal, but spiritual bread. And that that be true is apparent through the Gloss in the same place, *Nor is his seed seeking bread*; the Gloss: ‘spiritual, that is to lack the bread of the word of God, for the word of God is always with him’. And the words (*littera*) can be construed in such a way that it is understood ‘I have not seen the just forsaken, nor have I seen his seed, who seeks the bread, forsaken’,³¹ for, according to what is said on that verse of the last chapter of Hebrews, *I shall never leave you, nor abandon you*, the Gloss: *He. 13:5* ‘He was abandoned who perished from hunger’. The prophet wished to say, therefore, that he sees neither the just man nor his seed dead of hunger; and this does not call one back from poverty, but rather invites.

Ad 3. To that which is objected—that mendicancy is an evil which the Psalmist, speaking in the spirit of God, curses—it ought to be said that there is voluntary mendicancy and compelled mendicancy, which is [borne] with grumbling (*murmure*) and impatience. The first is meritorious; the second is discreditable and distressing (*demeritoria et afflictiva*). The Psalm is understood to be about the second, not the first. And that this be true is apparent through the text, for it is said, *Let those who waver be transferred and cast out*; and all these things seem to harmonize in the compelling and violence. cf. Ps. 108:10

Ad 4. To that which is objected about Ecclesiasticus—*My son, in thy lifetime, be not indigent*—it ought to be said that according to the distinction mentioned previously the verse should be understood to be about spiritual indigence with respect to grace, not about corporeal indigence with respect to the sustenance of nature. And that this be true is apparent through the Gloss. *Be not indigent*; the Gloss says, ‘in virtues and good customs’.

/143a/

Ad 5. To that which is objected—that it is more blessed to give more

31. Bonaventure’s revised quotation adds the final two words—viz, *Non vidi iustum derelictum, nec semen eius quaerens panem vidi derelictum*. This can be translated a number of ways, but the ensuing discussion makes it clear which sense is intended.

than to receive—it ought to be said that this is true when the reception of alms comes from the necessity of nature; not, however, when it comes from a supererogation of justice (according to the distinction made in the principal solution). And that this be true is apparent through that which is said in the book *On Ecclesiastical Teachings*: ‘It is good to spend on the poor resources with dispensation; but better to give once for the intention of following the Lord, and, freed from solicitude, be needy with Christ.’ Augustine says the very same thing in his book *On Good Marriage*, just as it was adduced in the preceding question.³²

Lk. 12:13 **Ad 6.** To that which is objected about the Gloss to Luke 12—that, with all things spurned for God, they ought to work by the labour of their hands—it ought to be said that this is a counsel as concerns the first, that it is said: *Sell what you possess*; as concerns the second, however, it is only of a counsel about living well, which does not oblige even perfect men, especially those who can be occupied with greater goods. And that this be true is apparent through the same Gloss, when it adds: ‘Whence you might live or give alms’. For it is certain that those who once gave all for God, are hardly bound to giving further alms. And for that reason the Gloss does not say that it is of the essence and substance of the counsel, but it is rather according to living well, according to the state and condition of some people, who are more suitable for working manually than for doing something more difficult. For if it were otherwise said that it was of the essence of a counsel of perfection, then no one would have fulfilled that counsel except for those who worked manually; and by this we would not have judged, apart from *cf. 1 Cor. 9:6* Paul and Barnabas, the other apostles and many others of the most perfect saints—whom we do not read to have laboured manually—to have been perfect.

If it does not impede greater goods, it is certainly true that manual labour is consonant with evangelical perfection. Hence the Gloss on that *Jn. 21:3* verse *I go to fish*: ‘It must be known that they were not prohibited to seek victuals by their own licit skills with the integrity of the apostolate preserved, since they had nothing from which they might live; and thus God provided the necessities /**143b**/ he promised to them.’

But that this labour is not suitable for those occupied with greater things is clear because then the apostles would scarcely be free for preaching. Hence

32. See p. 4 of my translation of the previous question.

Chrysostom:³³ ‘Simon came to fish; for neither was Christ always with him, nor had the spirit been given, nor had anything been entrusted to them at that time, and, having nothing to do, they exercised their craft.’ And therefore it is not maintained from this that the perfect are bound to work manually, unless perhaps they do not have spiritual, and better, exercise.

Moreover, be it that a perfect man were held to work with his hands; from this fact, nevertheless, it cannot be inferred that he cannot humbly seek alms at the right place and time for the humiliation of his self and the edification of others.

Ad 7. To that which is objected from the Gloss to 1 Thessalonians 4—that something should not be desired nor sought of anyone—it ought to be said that someone can seek a thing from someone in two ways: either out of a desire for a thing of another, or out of a desire for the salvation of another. The first the Apostle prohibits as evil and prohibited in the Law, where it is said, *You shall not desire a thing of your neighbour’s*; the second, however, is not prohibited for the law of charity grants this, a law which holds that one be cared for with mutual benefits and makes the burden of another be supported by another. For what is as absurd as that we believe that the Apostle denied that no one should seek from another, neither a benefit nor help, nor a solace of mercy and fraternal piety? And that this be true is apparent through what the Apostle says in Philippians 4 about himself thanking them for the received benefit. *I do not seek a gift but I require the fruit abounding in your reason*. For according to what Augustine expounds in *Confessions*,³⁴ one seeks a gift who especially delights in a received thing, [while] one requires the fruit who delights in the salvation of another. This is the sense of Augustine’s words, though the words are changed.

Ad 8. To that which is objected from the Gloss to 1 Thessalonians—that need makes one turn away from justice—it ought to be said that just as riches are not at fault, but the desire for riches is, so need is not at fault, but the impatience of need is. One who has this turns away from justice while he /**144a**/ goes after money by fleeing from need; he who follows after this turns away from justice easily: *For those who wish to become rich fall into temptations, and into the Devil’s snare, and many harmful desires*. And just as such need is evil, so also ought mendicancy deriving from such need

33. Chrysostom, *Homilies on John* 87.2 (NPNF, 1.14.328).

34. Augustine, *Confessions* 13.26.39 (O’Donnell 1992, 1.200).

be condemned.

However, when penury is more pleasing than abundance, and man despises an abundance of terrestrial things out of a love for poverty, such a person does not have the opportunity of turning away from justice because of that sort of need; and such is the poverty and mendicancy that looks to evangelical perfection.

And that this response be correct is clear through the same Gloss in which it is said that ‘need, as long as it desires to be sated, turns from justice’. For he is a needy person who desires to be sated;³⁵ he is needy who does not love poverty but fullness, not penury but abundance. And such a person is an evangelical and heavenly pauper who begs from a supererogation of justice;³⁶ but he rather a greedy and terrestrial person who begs from the viciousness of a fault, according to the [response maintained before](#) (\hookrightarrow 12).

2 Th. 3:10 **Ad 9.** To that which is objected about the Gloss to 2 Thessalonians 3—that the Apostles wants the servants of God to labour bodily, etc.—it ought to be said that the *wishing* is either not the wishing of a precept but of an admonition, or, if it is the wishing of a precept, it does not extend to all people, but only to those who wish to be needy; or, if it extends to those who wish to be needy for Christ, it only extends to those who cannot do greater things. And it is not reasoned from this that the life of the poor is evil, who eat and do not work with their hands if they are occupied with better and more salubrious exercises.

2 Th. 3:10 And that this be true is clear: For if that verse, *He who does not wish to work, do not let him eat*, were a precept without exceptions (*simpliciter*), then everyone would be in an evil state who do not, when they can, seek their victual with their own hands. And this would be to damn the whole world. Again, that it does not extend to the voluntary and perfect poor, is clear from the Gloss, which says, ‘so that they are not compelled by need to seek necessities’. For such people do not beg like those compelled by necessity, but like those lead by a love of perfection. Finally, that the precept does not extend except to those who are not occupied with greater things is apparent from that text of 2 Thessalonians 3, *We have heard that some among you walk about disorderly, doing nothing, but acting curiously; now /144b/ we denounce those who are of this sort, that working in silence they*

35. Reading, according to the apparatus, ‘Egenus est qui cupit saturari. Est.’

36. Omitting the ‘non’ in this clause, which cannot be the point Bonaventure wanted to make.

eat their own bread.

And that this be true is clear through Ambrose, who speaks on that verse of Luke 9.60, *Send the dead to bury their dead*, thus:³⁷

The Lord teaches that lesser goods are to be passed by for the benefit of greater ones. For it is greater to rouse the souls of the dead by preaching than to hide a dead body in the earth.

Hence the apostles even say in Acts 6, *It is not fair that we abandon the word of God and minister to the tables.* Act. 6:2 It is also apparent through Jerome in his prologue to Job, speaking thus:

Were I to weave a basket with rushes, or tie together the leaves of date tree (*palmarum folia*) so that I eat my bread by the sweat of my own brow and manage the work of the stomach with an anxious (*sollicita*) mind, no one would complain, no one would find fault. Now, however, because I wish, according to the sentence of the Saviour, *produce* (*operari*) *food that does not perish* and purge the ancient path of divine volumes of thorns and brushwood, a double error is attached to me: a corrector of scriptures, I am called a forger, and said not to remove errors, but to sow them. Jn. 6:27

This is also apparent through blessed Augustine in his book *On the Work of Monks*,³⁸ where he says that those who, ‘have something in this world, with which they may easily sustain that life without doing any work that those converted to the Lord given over to the needy, so that they are held or compelled to manual labour, and not for purpose of seeking their own victual.’ And further on below he rendered the reason that those who sustained the poor can and ought to be sustained from the alms for the poor. For he speaks thus:³⁹ ‘There is one commonwealth for all Christians; and for that reason, each one expends necessities upon Christians no matter where they are; and from wherever he receives what is necessary for him, he receives from the goods of Christ.’ If, then, according to Ambrose greater goods are not to be omitted on account of lesser ones; and according to Jerome, the goods of preaching and instruction are greater than those of manual labour; and according to Augustine they are not bound to works of this kind who were delicate rich men, it is clearly apparent that those intent on preaching and the works of spiritual mercy are not constrained to works of this sort; but they can and ought be sustained from alms. And this is what Augustine writes (*praemittit*) in that same book (21.24) before these

37. Ambrose, *Expos. in Luc.* 7.34.

38. Augustine, *On the Work of Monks* 21.25 (NPNF 1.3.516).

39. Augustine, *On the Work of Monks* 25.33 (NPNF 1.3.519).

words, /145a/ that they have a power of this sort if ‘they are evangelists, if ministers of the altar, if dispensers of the sacraments’. For it by doing corporeal works someone merits his sustainment, how much more strongly does he merit it by fulfilling spiritual works, which are deservedly preferred to corporeal works.

I therefore confess that it is true that if someone were so potent both in spirit and in body that he could work corporeally and nonetheless be free from spiritual exercises at the right time and place and for ecclesiastical benefit, by doing this he would act more perfectly. But who is fully suitable for this, since it is exerted with much labour, so that the truth be recognized, so that, once the truth is learned, it be loved, and so that the known and loved truth be proposed to others? For to do this it continual reading and prayer and meditation is necessary; he who wishes to focus carefully on these things can be less occupied with corporeal labour. And so corporeal labour is to be praised and advised, yet in such a way that the fervour or oration be not impeded, nor the fruit of preaching, nor regular observance.

[Ad 10.](#) To that which is objected about the Gloss—that the one coming to another’s table necessarily has to flatter—it ought to be said that the Gloss explains itself in this: that it says, ‘given to leisure’; in which it implies that he who frequents another’s table and begs for the sake of fostering idleness is prone to fawn and flatter. And why is it amazing if the one who loves leisure and favours his own belly, breaks out into a fawning word? But the evangelical poor, who comes to another’s table for the sake of evangelizing and imitating Christ, is not damned from this. For if such people were flatterers by this very thing, that they are poor men coming to another’s table, then, when Christ sent the apostles to preach the Gospel and to live from the wages of another’s table, he would have made his apostles flatterers rather than preachers. Christ himself, who was frequently invited and ate in the homes of the Pharisees,⁴⁰ would even have been the greatest flatterer of all. Hence, if we understand correctly, the vice of adulation is annexed to mundane riches rather than to evangelical and voluntary poor. Hence Chrysostom in the *Homilies on Matthew*,⁴¹ speaking about the rich, speaks thus: ‘It is necessary to flatter many, both princes and subjects, and to need many things, and to serve shamefully, and to be afraid, to suspect, and to be afraid of the eyes of those who mistrust, and to fear the mouths

40. Cf. the [fifteenth objection above](#) (↗ 7).

41. Chrysostom, *Homilies on Matthew* 90.3 (NPNF 1.10.513).

of the slanderers and concupiscences of others and of the avaricious. But poverty is not like this, but the complete opposite; it is a region not subject to thieves, /**145b**/ but fortified; a tranquil gate, and a wrestling-school and gymnasium for philosophy. Listen, whosoever poor you be of these people; but listen more whosoever desire to be rich. It is not evil to be poor, but not wishing to be poor; and do not think poverty to be an evil, and there will be no evil for you.’ And a little later:⁴² ‘For bring them not forward to me who find fault with poverty, but those who shine with it. Elias, nurtured with this, was seized by that blessed rapture; Eliseus shined with this, John with it, all the apostles shined with it; but Achab, Jezebel, Gehazi, Judas, Nero, and Caiaphas were condemned with avarice.’

Ad 11. To that which is objected from the decree of Urban, it ought to be said that there is a triple defect in the allegation of that decree. First, that that decree is for bishops, who ought to feed the poor, not for those who are needy. Hence, just like that law in Deuteronomy 15, *He will not be altogether indigent and mendicant among you*, Dt. 15:4 it is not given against the mendicancy of the poor but against the tenacity of the rich—which is clear through this, which is subjoined in the same chapter: *The poor will not fail in the land of your habitation; therefore I command you to open your hand to your needy and poor brother*—thus this law is given to rich (*abundantibus*) Dt. 15:11 bishops for the sustainment of the poor clerics, the sustainment of those especially who do not lack voluntarily, but were compelled so that they are not made undevoted concerning the divine service out of need.

The second defect is that that decree is adduced for proving that clerics should not have anything of their own, just as it appears in the end of the *capitulum*, where it is said, ‘It is clear to all that clerics are in no way allowed to have something of their own but if they were to have something, they will not be clerics’.⁴³ Hence the path of the poor is not precluded through this decree, who wish to have nothing of their own, but is opened rather.

The third defect is that, just as having ownership in common has been approved and confirmed by the authority of highest Pontiff, namely Urban, just as it appears here, so the mode of living in the highest poverty has been approved by the authority of the highest Pontiff, just as is clear from *On the Excesses of Prelates*, *Nimis prava*, etc.⁴⁴ Hence the decree of Pope

42. Chrysostom, *Homilies on Matthew* 90.4 (NPNF 1.10.514).

43. C. 12 q. 1 c. 17.

44. X 5.31.17.

Urban could not prejudice the authority of Innocent, Honorius, and Gregory, who approved that mode both in a common law (*iure*) and in private privileges, for ‘an equal does not have authority over an equal’;⁴⁵ and a prior constitution does not prejudice a later one, nor a common right (*ius*) a private one, nor a common law (*lex*) a privilege, but /146a/ rather the converse [is true].

Nor can an instability or contradiction be argued from that among the rectors of the Church that statutes can and ought to be changed at the right time and place, as is clear in the statute about the grades of relationship and many others, which were justly established from the beginning; and nonetheless other things have been introduced no less justly.

Ad 12. To that which was objected about the consecration of the Church, it ought to be said that there is also a triple defect in that decree. First, because that statute about the consecration of a not richly endowed Church was done for an alleviation of the bishops; in the second place for the spreading of the divine worship; and in the third, for a solace of the ministering clerics, who do not wish to voluntarily bind themselves to a vow of poverty. However, the contrary of these is found in the proposition. For both the bishops and the Church are burdened less by religious living off of alms than if they were provided with benefices and prebends. Second, because the worship of God would not be augmented but rather diminished if this mode of living were removed from the public. Third, because such voluntary poor more gladly serve God by begging than they would serve God for a great benefice, and they are more content with little alms than with great benefices and prebends.

Ad 13. To that which is objected about the law of able-bodied beggars, it ought to be said that there is likewise a triple defect in the allegation of this law. First, because that law was introduced against certain ones who were usurping the alms of the poor in a time of famine feigning inactivity (*inertiam*). Second, because such people were idle and offered no benefit to the state. Third, because such people, who could labour and at that time were occupied with nothing and wanted to become rich; they were prone to evil deeds and rapine. And therefore, in a just judgment, the leader (*rector*) of the state prevented such people from begging and punished them with the gravest punishment. But it is altogether different for religious poor, in whom there is found neither a feigning of inactivity, nor a love

⁴⁵. Cf. X 1.6.20; *gl. ord.* ad Dig. 36.1.13, § Tempestivum.

of leisure, nor the danger of rapine—and through this neither damage to the Church—but rather a love of perfect virtue. Therefore they are not prevented by human law, but rather predicted and recommended by divine law.

Ad 14. To that which is objected—that begging is an indifferent—it ought to be said that begging, considered in itself, is not of perfection unless with the universal renunciation of all things presupposed. This indeed is according to a divine counsel in which the Lord explained to the adolescent that if he would fulfil that counsel, he would arrive at the pinnacle of perfection by this very act. For he says, /**146b**/ *If you wish to be perfect, go and sell everything.* Mt. 19:21 He neither added, give it to me so that I put it in my purse and all things be common, but instead: *give to the poor*; nor did he subjoin, go for the purpose of gaining your nourishment through the labour of your hands, but rather, *come follow me*. On which, according to what the Gloss explains, a vocation for contemplating or imitating and evangelizing Christ is understood.

Ad 15. To that which is objected—that it is of perfection to gladly serve and to flee from obligations—it ought to be said that an obligation coming from the accusation of fault and the affect of perfect charity. The first obligation is to be avoided, but the second is to be accepted according to what is said in Romans 13, *May you owe something to no one except to love one another.* Ro. 13:8 For the Lord prizes the friendship of spiritual men, which comes from the *mammon of iniquity*; and it looks to the perfection of the mystic body of Christ, which the members mutually share *according to the reason of the giving and the receiving* so that shared need can be satisfied in turn. Lk. 16:9 Php. 4:15

Ad 16. To that which is objected—that those who beg by profession either do this because they are poor or because they are preachers—it ought to be said that they do this because they are the poor of Christ, imitators and evangelizers. For because they imitate Christ through the observance of a regular discipline in which they are free for the divine praises, orations, vigils, and other regular disciplines; and they cultivate God and resist the enemy and protect and defend those things that are weak and undefended in the camps of the Church.

Again, because they announce the word of truth, they likewise praise God and resist the enemy, and they edify and inform their audience. And therefore, since these works of theirs are very useful and necessary for the Church, no one doubts that they merit their own sustenance; and therefore

they do not do this illicitly if they seek humbly and supplicatingly. For, just as the eye does a very necessary operation for the hand by seeing, so it is that the hand cannot reproach (*improperare*) or say to the eye, *I do not need your works*. But its work is rather useful for the whole body, and thus it deserves to be sustained, like the hands, feet, and other members, which are exposed to labour. Not absurdly, then, it can and ought to be understood in the same way for the other members of the Church—if someone should wish to examine the work and vigilance of those eyes with a pious eye of their own.

Ad 17. To that which is objected—that such people are imitators of Giezi, who ministered spiritual goods for temporal ones—the Gloss sufficiently responds to this /147a/ on that verse of 1 Corinthians 9, *dispensation is accredited to me*: ‘We ought not evangelize for this reason: that we may eat; but to eat for this reason: that we may evangelize; that food is not good because it is sought after, but it is necessary because it is added that this may be fulfilled: *Seek first the kingdom of God and his justice, and all things will be added to you.*’ Hence if someone were to establish an end to the temporal thing by preaching the word of God, he would without doubt be a perverse individual, for he would make an end of the path; and he would be similar the Giezi and Balaam, who loved the wages of iniquity, and to the other pseudo-prophets, who *taught for a wage and prophesied for gifts*. If, however, they sought sustenance as a path ordained for the purpose of preaching the Gospel, then they walk rightly and imitate the apostles; and they do not recede from the path of truth in some way. Hence on that verse of Luke 10, *Eating and drinking what they had with them; for the worker is worthy of his wage*, the Gloss: ‘Note that two wages are due one work of preaching: one on the road, which sustains us in our labour; the other in our own country, which rewards us with resurrection.’

Ad 18. To that which is objected—that it is a characteristic of the perfect to abstain from the appearance of evil—it ought to be said that the appearance is evil as long as a man can rationally suspect evil (all circumstances that [can] occur having been considered). But if someone rightly attends to this sort of thing, the ones preaching in such a way do not have the appearance of pseudo-preachers. For pseudo-preachers are designated by the opposite of true preachers. True preachers, however, are named of those whose preaching has authority, truth, and utility. False preachers, therefore, are those who have the contrary of these, either entirely (*simpliciter*) or in part.

But if we wish to attend rightly to preachers of the modern orders, they have these three things in themselves: [1] authority indeed, for they have been sent by the highest Pontiff and other prelates, who are lords of the harvest; [2] truth, as is clear, because they preach faith and good morals according to the Law of the Gospel; and [3] utility, for they call many from the state of sin to the state of grace or penitence. And therefore they have an incomparably greater appearance and likeness, if someone should look with a pious eye for the true preachers rather than the pseudo—though it can scarcely be in so great a number that some /147b/ do not love the purse with Judas and deviate from the correct path. For if the Lord did not grant this to the twelve apostles, whom he personally chose, that they be entirely good, why is it amazing if he does not grant this to the other congregations? Yet on this account good men are not to be condemned with the evil, just as the evil are not to be condemned with the just, though they be mixed with the good.

Ad 19. To that which is objected—that either they have authority or they do not have it—it ought to be said that they have authority, that is, a double authority: either by first institution, or by commission or recommendation (*demandatione*). Or, to use another phrase, either by an imposed office, or by a granted privilege. The first is a principal and authoritative authority, and it looks to the apostles, the seventy,⁴⁶ and their successors, who are the bishops and other curates, as the Gloss says to Luke 10.1. The second authority is less principal and can be called ‘sub-authority’ not absurdly, and befits those who were sent as disciples by the apostles, just as Paul sent his disciples to diverse places; and chiefly befits he who exists in the place of Peter, leader (*principis*) of the apostles, or rather in the place of Christ, who is the Lord of the entire harvest, on which account he is said to have a fullness of power. Therefore, just as receiving wages authoritatively befits first those having principal authority; as in the Gloss to 2 Timothy 2, *it is fitting that the worker of the field receive the first-fruits*, the Gloss says there: ‘to take from himself necessities from those in whom he soldiers for God, and whom he works (*exercet*) as a cultivator of the vine, or whom he feeds as a flock, is not mendicancy, but a power’; so receiving supplicatively befits those whom sub-principal authority befits. This type of receiving the Holy Spirit disposed for the utility of the Church so that they not only edify by the word of preaching, but equally by the word and example of humility.

46. That is, the disciples, who are variously described as seventy or seventy-two.

Mt. 11:29 Therefore, who has learned from Christ *to be meek and humble in heart*, I wonder, if he dares to condemn humility and humiliation as base.

Ad 20. To that which is objected—that it is safer and more perfect to follow more proven and wiser men—it ought to be said that according to the disposition of divine wisdom God disposes everything, and orders it to its times. Hence, just as in the early days of the Church he introduced potent men with both miracles and signs, just as /148a/ there were the apostles and their disciples, understanding the men in the middle times by the Scriptures and and living reasons,⁴⁷ so he introduced in the last days men voluntarily begging and poor in mundane things. And this indeed is rightly harmonizes so that idolatry and the portents of idols be destroyed through the first, heresy through the second, avarice, which reigns especially at the end of the world, through the third.

Yet nonetheless, because poverty is a foundation of evangelical perfection, and it itself is, as it were, its complement, it therefore flourished at the beginning of the Church; and it is fitting that it thrive around the final state of the Church. Hence, just as Jerome solved that question about the eating of meat in the thirty-fifth distinction, *Ab exordio*,⁴⁸ saying that in the early days before the flood there was not a custom of the eating of meat, and afterwards, after the flood, it was commonly granted, and afterwards at the advent of Christ abstinence from the eating of meat was laudable—hence he says there that ‘*omega* returns to *alpha*’—that is, the final state harmonizes with the first—so it can be understood consistently enough in the proposition. Yet, just as Jerome does not mean it about everyone abstaining from eating meat, but only as it concerns monks alone, so I do not think it ought to be understood about poverty except as it concerns the voluntary poor, who have renounced the world voluntarily.

I do not want, nonetheless, someone to argue from this as if I should say that *the day of the Lord draws near* already; nor that *I glorify and enlarge* my own *fringes*, wishing to be justified in the face of men; nor that I prefer modern men to ancient saints, because many weak and imperfect men can be found in a great and high state; nor [that] the spirit of poverty failed in times passed. Just like what Gregory says in the third book of

47. The text here, *et medio tempore viros intelligentes in Scripturis et rationibus vivis*, makes little sense. The editors emended *miris* (amazing, wonderful, strange, remarkable) to *vivis*, and noted that the edition of Alexander of Hales has *nimis abundantes* (abounding overmuch); as they conclude, ‘no reading is pleasing’.

48. D. 35 c. 2.

the *Dialogues* about a certain most holy man named Isaac, who was an especial lover of poverty. Hence he says about him:⁴⁹ ‘Though the disciples frequently suggested to him that he accept the possessions that were offered for the use of a monastery, he, a concerned guardian of his poverty, held to his steadfast purpose, saying: “a monk who seeks possession on earth is no monk”. Indeed, he so feared losing the security of his poverty, as avaricious men are accustomed to guard the riches they are going to lose. And so, his life grew famous there by his spirit of prophecy, and by all the other great miracles for the people who lived near and far.’ /148b/ From which it appears that his teaching is not be despised.

[Epilogue:]

This was also shown above by many examples, and could be shown by many more still. And if there were no examples the state of most excellent poverty is praiseworthy enough by itself, not only according to holy scripture, but even according to the teachings (*documenta*) of the saints, which recommend the voluntary state of poverty as special and perfect. Therefore, just as it is very absurd to find fault with the state of married rich men, it is more absurd to find fault with the state of clerics and religious who have possessions, so it seems most absurd if someone were found who wished to find fault with the state of the poor following the Lord Christ in the highest poverty and humblest mendicancy according to the counsel proposed and irreproachably promulgated by the mouth of Jesus Christ. Jerome defends the cause of these ones in the letter that he wrote *Against Vigilantium*:⁵⁰ ‘It was related to me’, he said, ‘that—against the authority of the apostle Paul, nay, rather of Peter, John, and James, who *gave their right hands of communication to Paul and Barnabas*, and commanded them *that they be mindful of the poor*—you forbid any relief to be sent to Jerusalem for the uses of the saints. Clearly, if I respond to these things, you will immediately bark that I am making my case: you who gave everything with such great generosity that, had you not come to Jerusalem and spent or used your money or that of your patrons, we all would have perished of hunger. I say this: that blessed Paul spoke and commanded in nearly all his letters, in the churches of the people *through one sabbath*, that is, the Lord’s day, that

Gal. 2:9

1 Cor. 16:2

Ps. 1:2?

49. Gregory the Great, *Dialogues* 3.14 (CCEL).

50. Jerome, *Against Vigilantium* 14 (NPNF 2.6.422).

all ought to bring together what are sent to Jerusalem as a relief of the saints. Can he not distribute what he had received from others in another part of the earth and into these churches, which, growing in his faith, he taught? But he desired to give to the holy poor, who, abandoning their resources for Christ, were converted to the service of the Lord with their whole heart. For it is too long, if, concerning his other letters, I should want to relate (*revolvere*) all passages, in which he does this (and urges with his entire soul), so that money is sent to the believers at Jerusalem and to the other holy places, not in avarice, but as relief, not /149a/ for the purpose of collecting riches, but for supporting corporal weakness, and turning away cold and starvation. This custom perseveres in Judea even until today, not only among us, but even among the Hebrews, so that they, who in *the law* of the Lord are halved, day and night, and have no part on the earth except only God, may be fostered by the ministers of the synagogues and of the whole world—precisely from equality, *not so that there be refreshment for some and tribulation for others*, but so that the *abundance* of some *support the need* of others.’ With these things having been seen, the response to the aforesaid [objections] is plain enough.



A Reply to Objections Made Afterwards

To the arguments already made, someone tried to oppose them in many different ways, wishing to refute some of these as *impertinent* (↯ 30), some as *false* (↯ 33), some as *inconsequential* (↯ 35),⁵¹ some as *dubious* (↯ 37), and many of them as *inimical to apostolic doctrine* (↯ 39). However, he did this by responding to a certain question not properly (*minus sufficienter*) collected afterwards in the schools (saving the grace of the recorder), just as it can be seen better in the aforementioned question.

[1] First he considers impertinent whatever we induce from the disciples of Christ sent out to preach because the authority of receiving necessities given to them came not from mendicancy, but from a power. But those

51. Bonaventure means ‘inconsequential’ in a logical sense: that, William believed objections of this sort do not (logically) follow from the premises or biblical pericopae.

who preach without authority are pseudo-prophets, and therefore in neither way—neither from authority, nor from mendicancy—ought they ask.

And if one should say that such were sent by the pope and bishops, he says that they ought to be fed by the bishops, according to that which is said in *Extra, On the Duty of Ordinary Judge, Inter cetera*.⁵² Therefore, the form was given to preachers from office and authority, but for a time, so that impediments are removed. And therefore the authorities both of the text and Glosses seem impertinent for this proposition in this case according to the one who seems to oppose the aforesaid question.

It is, however, easy to detect the sophistical appearance of this objection (*obviationis*) if one should understand the root of the power that exists in the apostles and prelates and messengers assigned by the apostles. For it is certain that this power was completely (*radicaliter*) in Christ, according to what the Apostle says in Galatians 1: that he was *Apostle through Jesus Christ*; and in John 20: *Just as the Father send me*, etc. But Christ gave the Apostles a two-fold power by sending them, namely that of preaching /149b/ and that of demanding their own sustenance. And it is agreed that these two powers are distinct, since although a bishop can demand once in a year his procurations in one place, he can still preach when he wishes. Therefore, the highest Pontiff, who holds the place of Christ on earth, can also give both, and he can separate the one from the other. Since, therefore, the highest Pontiff and prelates are not able to personally administer (*exercere*) everything that looks to them through themselves due to the people who are subject to them are spread out, the Holy Spirit ordained them in the directing of the Church, so that he himself might at some time send legates who would hold both powers. And again, lest parts of the Church are burdened, he ordained that bishops send people suitable for preaching and hearing confessions, over whom they made provision, *Extra, On the Duty of Ordinary Judge, Inter cetera*.⁵³ He also ordained that he himself, with his prelates, send skilled, voluntary poor, for whom neither bishops were bound to provide, lest they be burdened by a multitude of wages (*sumptu*), nor would they have the power for demanding procurations, on account of removing the burden of the subordinates. And thus those who humbly advance as poor men content with a small amount [of things], both taking up only necessities and humbly introducing (*insinuantes*) their

52. X 1.31.15.

53. X 1.31.15.

necessity when there is need to those who voluntarily are able and wish to support and relieve them, both without burden and with cheerfulness. Whence, just as the decretal *On the Duty of Ordinary Judge* emanated from the Apostolic See, so also did the confirmation of the order and rule of this mode of poor men preaching the truth: *Extra, On the Excesses of Prelates, Nimis prava*,⁵⁴ as was maintained above.

Neither was this done in prejudice, but rather in the support of parish priests; nor from this is the Church prostituted: if God provides the curates with help, so that they more perfectly watch over the souls entrusted to them, whose care they hold, [keeping them] uncorrupted from all corruption of sin, by means of spiritual men helping them, not as lords, or as those who have the care, but rather as servants through the charity of Christ.

Such sent men, therefore, since they preach in humility and poverty, they are like the apostolic men, not pseudo-prophets. But because they do not have the fullness of authority, which the prelates have (and the Apostles had), they are therefore to be numbered among the helpers of 1 Corinthians 12: *God placed the Apostles in the Church first, the prophets second, the doctors third, then the virtues, the helpers after that*, etc. The Gloss: ‘Helpers, that is, those who /150a/ bring help to their betters, as Titus to the Apostle, and archdeacons to bishops’. They can even be numbered among those whom the Pastor of the Church of God established to bear the help for others. And therefore I indeed spoke according to the custom of theological idiom—which say that subauthority exists in him who is sent—because they have subauthority, not *for absolving excuses in sins*, as it is imposed on me, but rather for understanding of the truth. The prescribed form is due to the Apostles, and can befit them.

For what was said, that it was temporal; since he does not have authority from scripture, it is proven with the ease with which it was condemned. Again, if the form was suitable in the primitive Church, why is it not similar in the later Church, especially as far as those who wish to imitate the Apostles in this form are concerned? For I do not say that the universal Church ought to be returned to poverty in all cases (as it was imputed to me by them) just as is apparent from my [above words](#) (↗ 28); but those who wish can imitate the perfection of the apostles and the height of poverty. Hence by the example of the apostles from the words of the Gospels recited in the Church, blessed Francis was incited to follow this mode of living, as

54. X 5.31.17.

is very clearly elucidated from his legend.⁵⁵

Since, therefore, this order was established over those words, they are not impertinent, but in every way pertinent, as much as the most stable foundations of this kind of living. Such ought to be supported, therefore, since they proceed as paupers in the name of Christ, as it is said in the canonical [letter] of John, that those who receive such people are *cooperators of truth*.^{3 Jn. 8-9:} Therefore those who oppose such people and do not receive them, or say that they are not to be received, are similar to Diotrophes, about whom the Gloss says that he was the heresiarch of that time—whose doctrine and sect is far from all Christians.

[2] Some he tries to refute as false. For he asserted it false that Christ sought anything as a mendicant. For even if he is called a beggar in the Psalms, he is called this in so far as he sought from the Father, or in so far as he assumed our infirmities. If he is said to have sought water from the Samaritans and hospice from Zachaeus,⁵⁶ this was not from mendicancy, but from authority or urbanity (*ex urbanitate*). And again, even if he had begged, /150b/ it ought not be taken to the [logical] consequence (*ad consequentiam trahendum non esset*).

He nevertheless says it is false that some mendicancy is voluntary, but rather that all mendicancy is unwilling and forced. It is easy to convict this objection of falsity, which thrusts falsehood upon truth, if one piously wishes to hear the truth. For that Christ was a beggar, both the prophetic texts and glosses testify; and that he sought as a beggar, just as it was alleged in the opposing in two glosses; similarly in the Psalm, *God attend to my assistance*, on the verse, *But I am needy and poor*, the Gloss says: ‘He assumed the words of God who said these very things about Himself in the preceeding Psalm, as if it were to say: Those who seek my soul are rich; but I am needy, that is seeking, and poor, that is insufficient for myself: since he has not mundane riches, and inside, here he is rich, he always solicits, desires, and receives’. According to this, it is agreed that Christ was needy and poor and seeking as a needy person, not only from the Father; for then all would be mendicants in this way, and none rich, even those who have wealth—which is against the Gloss. Moreover, Christ still sought from the

Ps. 69:6, 3

Ps. 69:2

Ps. 39:18

55. Cf. e.g., Thomas Celano, *The Life of Saint Francis* 1.9.21–22 (FA:ED 1:201–02); *The Legend of Three Comparions* 8.25–29 (FA:ED 2:84–86).

56. See objections 9–13 (↪6) above.

cf. Ro. 8:34; Heb. 7:25; Father, [as do] the angels seek and the holy embracers (*comprehensores*);
 1 Jn. 2:1 but nonetheless they are not called mendicants.

Therefore, from this testimony so expressed the text says this, the Gloss agrees, and no authority contradicts; hence shall we not confess that Christ sought as a beggar? For we confess that he was a virgin and lacked a wife, although the Scriptures make no mention of this. The Gospel also expresses that he sought both drink and hospice; and it is agreed that [he did this] not from political rule (*imperium*) and lordship (*dominium*) and authority, because then he would not have given the example of poverty. He would have even said it was false that he did not have where he might recline
 cf. Mt. 8:20; Lk. 9:58 his head since he had subordinates from whom he was able to demand procurations; and less justly he would have acted in this, that he preached in Jerusalem and was fed in Bethany, making fruits and preaching in one place and receiving benefit somewhere else.

But you will say that he sought from urbanity (*ex urbanitate*). But why did Christ accept poverty for the sake of teaching urbanity? Did he wish to become needy and poor on account of teaching human nobility (*curialities*)? Did /151a/ he call himself teacher of nobility and not rather a master of humility. *Learn from me*, he says in Matthew 11, *for I am soft and humble in heart*. Therefore, he sought out of humility because it was opportune for revealing his indigence, and through this that he was a poor beggar.
 Mt. 11:29

And it is agreed that he did not have this indigence if not because he wished it; nor did he seek except because he wished it: since he could turn stones into gold when he wished; just as his disciple John the Evangelist made the ones evangelizing and not wishing to beg and be needy, who were turned back, [and] who later preferred mendicancy and poverty to precious gems. And it is agreed through this that it is a characteristic of Christ and his followers to beg voluntarily; otherwise they were scarcely deserved in this mendicancy and poverty. For it is absurd to say that poverty and need are voluntary and the mendicancy proceeding from it is forced.

If, then, the mendicancy in Christ was from poverty, humility, and voluntary, why is it not to be taken to the consequence? Since He Himself says, *Learn from me, for I am soft and humble of heart*. Also, since he invited others wishing to come to the highest peak of perfection to follow
 Mt. 11:29 Himself through poverty of this kind. *Go*, He said, *and sell* etc.; and the
 Mt. 19:21 Apostle says in 2 Corinthians 8, *You know the grace of the our Lord, Jesus Christ*; and after, *I give counsel*; the Gloss: 'so that you imitate His poverty;
 2 Cor. 8:9
 2 Cor. 8:10 since that poverty is also perfect, which is commonly proposed and said to

all'. Let him take who is able to take: since Augustine says, 'In all things that Christ did as a man, He offered an example to the men who were about to believe in Him'.⁵⁷ Since Jerome says that even if He is not to be imitated in miracles, He is to be imitated by us in those things which he did humbly, since He was also the universal form of virtues in his actions. Hence the words of Augustine *On True Religion*:⁵⁸ 'No sin can be committed except when those things are sought which he avoided, or when what he bore are shunned. And so his whole life on earth through man, whom he deigned to take up, was an instruction in morals'.

Who then should dare to teach that it should not be taken to the consequence, if not he who dares to teach that imitation is not due Christ in the things which He humbly did? However, /151b/ if we say this, everything that is of sanctity, virtue, and perfection, and the Christian religion is confounded, subverted, and even destroyed, since by what reason it is said of this, by that same reason it could be said of the other examples of virtues. But let this be far from all Christian hearts.

[3] Nonetheless, he tries to refute some as inconsequential. For he says that it does not follow that although need is appropriate to the perfection of the saints, that, on account of this, [there is] also mendicancy, which sometimes accompanies need: for it can be similarly argued about the eating of sons, and about thefts and rapes, which frequently follow from need and poverty.

He calls it inconsequential that although blessed Benedict was perfect, that, on account of this, by receiving daily alms from that Roman, he did a work looking to perfection: for the perfect do many things which do not look to perfection, such as eating, going without,⁵⁹ and other similar things.

He calls it inconsequential that although to vilify oneself and humble oneself for Christ is good, that, on account of this, to humble oneself by begging is good: for to beg is not to humble oneself, but to take care of oneself. And again a whore vilifies herself by prostituting, and yet she does not please the Lord in this; nor is it a vilification in the same way by which someone vilifies himself by begging.

57. Augustine, *In Ioan. Evang.* 15.2.

58. Augustine, *On True Religion* 16.31–32 (Burleigh 1953, 28–29).

59. Reading 'egere' for 'egerere'.

However, it is easy for spiritual men to reject these foul instances, for he proposes foul examples and tries to befoul mendicancy as foul, false, and fictitious. For we find that Christian and perfect men in his legends are not praised for cruelty in the eating of men, or for cupidity in the taking of plunder (*in praedis agendis*), or from the discharging, fornicating, and things of a similar nature; but they are found to be praised and preached from this, that they had not victual nor clothes, nor did they wish to have as if rich, but rather they wished to beg humbly as paupers and despised, as is clear in the examples introduced above.

For this is against the order of nature: that the eating of sons should follow on need; this is against the order of customs and justice: that theft and rape should follow.

But that insinuation of his necessity on a neighbour and demanding /152a/ of help for the love of God, this is according to the order of charity and piety, both natural and even gratuitous and spiritual. For every law mandates that neighbour be cherished and relieved by neighbour. How, therefore, is it similar in this case (*de hoc*): that he perverts the order and is according to a perverse order, for that which becomes according to a right, just, good, charitable, and pious order? Therefore the Roman monk is praised since he procured for blessed Benedict according to the law of charity; and Benedict, who most humbly received. Nowhere, however, will you find him praised because he was needy and filthy (*stercorizabat*); for it is very abominable to introduce this into the debate (*in medium*) when discussing the praises of the saints.

However, the mendicant is praised, although he takes care of himself, not because he does this in any way whatsoever, but because he does this most humbly; hence just as to eat soberly is an act of virtue, although to eat is to take care of oneself, so also it should be understood in this proposition. Hence Chrysostom, in his *Fourth Homily on Matthew*, speaking about the holy boys who went to the palace of the king of Babylon, speaks so:⁶⁰ ‘And so those living holy and just, would have chosen ten thousand times to beg at home and acquire those goods that were in the temple. *For I chose*, he says, *to be an outcast in the house of my God rather than to live in the tabernacles of sinners*. And so, they would have chosen ten thousand times to be outcasts at home than rule in Babylon.’ Therefore in mendicancy there is humiliation and vilification of oneself received from God; otherwise

cf. Da. 3:12–13

Ps. 83:11

60. Chrysostom, *Homilies on Matthew* 4.18 (NPNF 1.10.30).

it ought not have been chosen by the holy boys; but it is chosen to the extent that it is by care of oneself with humility of oneself. Those, however, who take care of their flesh in desires and concupiscence, without doubt they are not praised, even if they seem to humble and vilify themselves, just as a whore, who prostitutes herself from the love of money, or passion for lust. But let this be far from the hearts of the faithful, so that the humiliation of spiritual men in mendicancy is similar to the vilification of a whore in her prostitution. For the members of Christ are not to be relieved so that they become members of a whore. Christ, however, said of Himself in the form ^{1 Co. 6:15} of a slave and ever for His members: *I am a mendicant and poor, the Lord, Ps. 39:18 however, is anxious for me.* Which is by no means to say, except to be a mendicant for Christ would please God to such an extent that he would make God carry the most special care for us, just as the father carried [it] for his sons; because to think of whores and whoring is far from Christian ears and minds. /152b/

[4] Nevertheless, he tries to refute some others as dubious. For to that which is said about blessed Alexius—that he begged—and about blessed Francis—that he confirmed this with miracles—, he responds: Prove them as dubious and uncertain; adding that even if miracles were performed it still would not be certain, for many evil men performed miracles concerning the secretly stolen bread.

He also says there is a doubt that the Roman Church approved mendicancy; for if it were to do this, it would be proven to err; and, and similarly if it were to impose it in the penalty of satisfaction, it would have erred. And he says this should not be believed in any way.

Yet this objection, which protects itself through a doubt must, without doubt, be resisted. For if what is read in the legend of St Alexius and blessed Francis be called back into doubt, then by an equal reason whatever is read in the legends of the saints comes into doubt. But it is dangerous to imitate or believe doubtful things; and through this the faith, devotion, and reverence—which is held for the saints—perishes, if the other things that are told about them be called back into doubt. Again, if the miracles that were performed are not efficacious for contributing to their sanctity, then the Church currently errs, which canonizes saints due to the testimony of the miracles, and inscribes them to the catalogue of saints. Finally, who ever heard that God multiplied bread secretly received from a thief for the

salvation of others? Yet we have heard that he augmented the bread many times over by means of a poor mendicant, which he had acquired by begging.

But if you should say that this was a special privilege, and was done with the familiar counsel of the Holy Spirit, how did he give this to others as a law and rule, in which he invited them to mendicancy, if it was inspired for him alone for him alone? If you say that [it came] from his own head, not through inspiration, how can he not damned who rashly invited [it] for a reprehensible act as to an act of custom and perfection? How, even, did the Roman See approve this with the consent of the cardinals.

But if you say that this must not be believed: that it imposes mendicancy on someone as a penalty, or that it approved it for the Rule and holy life, but that it imposes the mendicancy of travelling is considered about repentance, where it speaks about the priest, who reveals /**153a**/ confessions ‘that he is deposed, and at every time of his life he, the most ignorant man, advances through travelling’.⁶¹ But if he lived from honest labour, or from his own wages, he would not go about as a base man, but rather as honourable one. It remains, then, what he imposes: that he went about as a mendicant.

But what he endorses for a *Rule* is clear through the text alleged above, *On the Excesses of Prelates, Nimis prava*, where it is said that ‘the Apostolic See is known to have approved the order and rule of the brothers Preachers and Minors’.⁶² It is also clear through blessed Francis’ *Rule*, approved and confirmed by the lord Honorius, where it is said that the brothers ‘should go forth confidently for alms’. But if he erred by approving this—and it is agreed that he had approved and confirmed this; and it is also agreed that the universal Church accepts the orders and states throughout the whole world—it ought to be concluded, therefore, (according to the dictum of this one man) that the whole universal Church has erred and been deceived; and that all those who found and approved of that erroneous state are damned. But it is a most horrible and incredible thing that God would permit his holy people and so great a multitude of wise men, who preceded these times, to err so universally. But who here is so wise and so just that he dares to judge everyone but himself deceived and reprobate? This wisdom, which demonstrates everyone’s foolishness, is remarkable; as is the justice that condemns the rest. But if this—to wish to judge the Apostolic See, which is

61. D. 6 De poen. c. 2.

62. X 5.31.17. Cf. De abrenuntiatione (*De perf. ev. q. 2 a. 1 co.*), p. 11 (of my translation); the reference to *Nimis prava* (ad 11) (↖ 23); and the reference to St Francis above (↖ 9).

judged by God alone, and to find fault with his judgment and sentence, and to thrust so many saints back into hell and into the abyss of damnation—is not wisdom but rather temerity, then let these things be far from faithful and christian hearts.

[5] He also tries to refute many things, indeed nearly all of them, as inimical to apostolic doctrine, because he says that begging was prohibited by the Apostle as evil and only conceded in an emergency (*in casu*).

He even says that I had lied and defended a false thing against Scripture and the Apostle, and defend—in this thing which he says—that I had said that to work in manual labour is not commanded. He says, therefore, that begging is not indifferent, but evil; and, for that reason, it can by no means become good due to the addition of circumstance; rather, what is more, he asserts that it is simoniacal among preachers. /153b/

But it is easy to notice that the foundation of his position, frequently repeated, is ruinous to everything that is built on top (*superaedificatur*). For if begging is prohibited, and to beg is to sin, then to be a beggar is to be a sinner. Therefore, since Christ says that he is a beggar (rather the Prophet in the persona of Christ), then Christ confesses that he is a sinner—which to say or believe is no small scandal or sin.

Again, if to beg is to sin, then mendicancy or begging is a sin. But on that verse of 2 Corinthians 8, *that by his need you are rich*, the Gloss says: ^{2 Co. 8:9} ‘No one despises himself, the poor man in the cell, rich in conscience, sleeps more securely on earth than the man rich in gold sleeps in his purple. Do not grow frightened to approach him in your mendicancy, therefore, he who is dressed in our poverty; where he has made himself poor he has enriched us all.’ Therefore, mendicancy disposes, not withdraws [us] from the divine approach; it is agreed, therefore, that it is not a sin.

Further: Chrysostom says at the end of the *Sixty-ninth Homily on Matthew* that, ‘begging offends God in nothing; but stealing and pillaging offends God and man’.⁶³ This is also clear through the authority of Chrysostom alleged earlier in the *Fourth Homily on Matthew*.⁶⁴ It is not prohibited by the Apostle, therefore, nor is it found anywhere else that the Apostle prohibited this, but that he rather had recommended it to his co-apostles. For, in 1 Corinthians 16 he preached and ensured that what was collected

63. Chrysostom, *Homilies on Matthew* 69.4 (NPNF 2.6.422).

64. See above, 36n60.

from the saints become the poor's, who were in Jerusalem—like alms freely expended for them. And he says in Galatians 2 that, *Peter and James gave their right hand of fellowship to me and Barnabas, so that we, among the gentiles, and they among the circumcised, that we be so mindful of the poor*; the Gloss: '*of the poor*, who placed the price of the things they sold at the feet of the apostles, *we be mindful*, by making the collected things [available] for their need'. If, then, the Apostle was not simoniacal in this, that he sought the collected things, and send his disciples for this, so that they sought alms from those to whom they sowed spiritual things for the sake of the poor who were in Jerusalem; if the highest Pontiff established poor orders to sow spiritual things, and to live from the alms—free, sought, or voluntarily offered—of those whom they edified by word and example; then this is not in discord with the Apostle in any way at all: it rather is in harmony since it, /154a/ just as he has as much power, and more, in governing and managing the members of the Church.

But you might object that the Apostle commanded corporal labour in the text, and that the glosses seem to say that he does this against mendicancy. But the response to this is plain: Be it that the Apostle commanded this sort of manual labour—which, as is clear in my words, I never denied; but that he did not command this universally to the servants of Christ (except in the constraint of necessity in which case a licit way of having victual is not clear except through manual labour)—but he commanded this for specific people, according to what is clear from the text: *We have heard that some among you go about unquietly, doing nothing, but meddling curiously. But let us declare to those who are of this sort, and implore in the Lord Jesus Christ that, working in silence, they eat their own bread.* And a little before, *We declare that you withdraw*, etc.; the Gloss: 'Here he begins warning about the curious and the idle so that they be corrected'. It is clear, therefore, from the sequence of texts and from the Gloss that that command extends to the curious and the idle.

Similarly, 1 Thessalonians 4: *We ask you, brothers, that you give work, that you be quiet, and work with our hands, as we have commanded you*; the Gloss: '*Work* that it help you be quiet. For that command comes from idleness.' From this it is also clear that he says this for the goal of avoiding idleness and removing laziness, which is the refuse of desires and the kindling of sins. Hence Ephesians 4: *Let him no longer steal who was stealing; but let him labour more by working with his hands*, etc.

From this it is clear that labour is not commanded for everyone. And,

by this, mendicancy is not forbidden, except that which comes from idleness and cupidity—according to what the texts and glosses suggest.

But you might object from Augustine, *On the Work of Monks*, who spoke to monks who, not themselves idle, were occupied with and focused on spiritual exercises; and he says to them that they are bound to these sorts of work.

The response to this is clear, if the conclusion near the end is attended to do by which it confounds the position of those who repudiate corporal labour, in which they think wickedly at that spot of the text:⁶⁵ ‘Why do they, having left behind either an ample or any sort of opulent goods, wish to live among the poor of Christ, if they are able in body, and free from ecclesiastical occupations? Yet, if /154b/ they work also with their hands, they act more mercifully than when they divided all their things among the needy. But if they do not wish to do so, who dare compel them? However, if they who pass their life by the labour of the body outside of that holy fellowship do not work, then let them not eat.’

And so it is clear who are bound—namely the hale and able-bodied—and who are free from ecclesiastical occupations, and who passed their life in the world from the labour of the body—and there were many such among those monks, and there were many in the beginning of the religion of the Friars Minor; and for that reason they ought to be limited to labouring. Now, however, in comparison with others there are only the fewest of such people. And therefore it is not against the Apostle if it is granted to such people to beg simply, especially since such an act is not very desirable, enjoyable, or honourable, but rather full of great worthlessness and wretchedness: to which the heart of no able-bodied man could be inclined except in the hope of an eternal reward, the love of Christ, and the desire of advancing with the help of the grace of the Holy Spirit—without which I scarcely believe a rich man could be inclined to the inconvenience (*incommodum*) of so great an abjection.

Nor do such people burden the people of the Lord and the Church, if the clerics in the world had remained in their prebendial benefices: especially if they seek nothing beyond necessities, for they expend much more, and eat from the alms of the poor. And then, when they intend little on spiritual works, the way of salvation is not also precluded among riches. And so God forbid that it be now precluded in so great a strictness of poverty.

65. Augustine, *On the Work of Monks* 25.33 (NPNF 1.3.519).

[Epilogue:]

So that we recollect the rest in summary, from the things already said in this question on poverty, it is apparent that: just as begging among the debilitated and weak poor is a necessity of nature, [and] among the idle and avaricious able-bodied it is a fault of sin, so, among the voluntary poor, the despisers of self, the imitators of Christ, and preachers of the Gospel, it is an act consonant with, not opposed to, evangelical perfection—for this reason: [1] that to renounce universally, appropriating for one's self no one thing, is counselled by the Lord as perfect; [2] to receive alms is granted to the just poor as licit, and inimical to evangelical perfection in nothing; [3] to humbly seek alms even if not prohibited to the voluntary poor as an evil; [4] to pass one's life from the profit of one's own labour is not enjoined for all able-bodied poor as a necessarily constrictive precept. /155a/

If someone therefore attacks the universal renunciation of temporal things, he attacks the poor, crucified Christ; he attacks the society of the apostles, *Mt. 19:27* saying, *Behold we have left everything behind*; he attacks even the Holy Spirit, who inspired and suggested this in the hearts of the perfect; and he *Ps. 9:10* attacks God Himself, Father of all things, who is the *refuge of the poor*; he attacks, finally, the kingdom of heaven, the whole universe, whose lord is *Mt. 5:3* granted to the poor, with the Lord saying, *Blessed are the poor in spirit*. And for that reason it is necessary to fight against this sort of irrational *cf. Wis. 5:21* man of the whole world.

But he who attacks the reception of alms, attacks Christ also, who *Lk. 7:36* accepted a stipend from the women serving and inviting him: Luke 7; and he attacks the society of the apostles, who accepted the alms themselves, *Act. 4:34-35* which was placed at their feet: Acts 4; and attacks the state of monks, who were established on alms; and attacks the entirety of the clerics—for even they live from alms, which were collected voluntarily for the churches of Christ—and, consequently, the general state of the poor, which state, nevertheless, divine scriptures indicate was especially pleasing to God.

But he who attacks a humble petition of alms against those who are needy and can licitly accept them, attacks Christ, who humbly sought lodging, who even confesses that he is a beggar; and he attacks Paul, who sought that the collected things become the holy poor's (and this by Peter's will); he attacks the chain of charity, which makes it be shared in the reason of the giving and the received; and he attacks the duty of humanity, through which the needy exposes his need, lest it be inhumane to him, and he excite

another, who can and wishes to be humane and pious to his neighbour; and in this no one is offended in this, no one prejudiced, nothing desired inordinately, nothing taken away unduly: in these especially, who do not seek a gift but the fruit.

But he who attacks the idleness, cupidity, /**155b**/ carnality, and superfluity among the other Christians, and especially the religious, acts well and rightly—if he yet proceeds according to the correct order.

But he who universally imposes the burden of profitable labour upon all able-bodied men, from which they ought to be sustained, he amplifies excessively the precept of the Apostle, and weighs down too much the yoke of servitude on the servants of Christ, and hinders the spiritual men from their spiritual occupations and labours to the danger of the salvation of souls—as long as he makes them more solicitous about feeding their dying (*morituris*) bodies than about acquiring the souls of their neighbours for the Lord. But if it happen, the mint (*mentha*) be decimated, and the cumin, and judgment and mercy be left, which are the weightier things of the Law , *cf. Mt. 23:23* corporal mercy is preferred to spiritual; and, by this, the body is preferred to the spirit, private advantage to common benefit, which consists especially in the edification of the people of Christ, in alms, in the texts and counsels of souls, for which God sent those last orders through the highest Pontiff and his prelates.

If someone says to these things that they were not sent, he clearly resists the truth, since express testimonies are had for this, both in the rule, and in the privilege, and in the institution and approbation of this double order.⁶⁶

But if someone says that they ought not be sent, he detracts from evangelical perfection. For who is more suitable for this than he who has vowed evangelical poverty? If someone says that they cannot be sent by the pope and the bishops, he derogates from apostolic authority and the power of the keys among the prelates, and the fulness of power in the highest Pontiff, who, [as] scripture asserts, realizes (*sentit*) the faith, testifies to the laws, establishes irrefutable reasons, as the one and highest head and unique and chief hierarch in whom exists the state of the whole Church Militant, and who obtains the place of Christ. And for this reason every knee ought to be bent to him, those of the princes, the prelates, the clerics,

66. The reference is to both *Nimis prava* (X 5.31.17), and to Pope Honorius III's approval of the Franciscan *Rule*, the so-called *Regula bullata*, in *Solet annuere*; cf. also *The Later Rule*, chapters 9 and 12 (FA:ED 1.104–06).

the laymen, and the religious on earth, according to the image of Christ in heaven, to whom *bends every knee of celestial, terrestrial, and infernal creatures*. Amen.

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