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For the Catholic Church, God's Revelation is found in Sacred Tradition, understood as God's Revealed Word handed down by the Living Teaching Authority established by Christ in the Church. That includes both Written Tradition (Scripture) and Unwritten Tradition received from Christ and handed down Orally by the Apostles and their Successors. The Church founded by Christ on Peter, and only that Church, has been Empowered by Christ to 'Interpret' His Teaching Authoritatively in His Name.

Scripture is *Inspired*; *Inspiration* really means that God Himself is the Chief Author of the Scriptures. He uses a Human Agent, in so marvelous a way that the Human writes what the Holy Spirit wants him to write, does so without Error, yet the Human Writer is Free, and keeps his own Style of Language. It is only because God is *Transcendent* that He can do this - insure Freedom from Error, while leaving the Human Free. To say He is Transcendent means that He is above and beyond all our Human Classifications and Categories.

Matthew writes his gospel account to give us the view of Jesus as the King. He records Jesus' authority in calling the disciples: "Follow me" (Matthew 4:19), and he also records more than any of the others about Jesus' teaching concerning God's kingdom and heavenly rule.

Considered one of the most important Catholic theologians and Bible commentators, Cornelius à Lapide's, S.J. writings on the Bible, created a Scripture Commentary so complete and scholarly that it was practically the universal commentary in use by Catholics for over 400 years. Fr. Lapide's most excellent commentaries have been widely known for successfully combining piety and practicality. Written during the time of the Counter Reformation, it includes plenty of apologetics. His vast knowledge is only equaled by his piety and holiness.

### **Continuation of Matthew 19: 16-28**

**Verse 16-** *And behold one, &c.* S. Jerome thinks that this *one* was the lawyer of whom Luke speaks (x. 25), and so that he came with the intention of tempting Christ. S. Chrysostom's opinion is preferable, that it was a different person, and that he came with a sincere intention of asking how he could become like a little child, according to Christ's precept, and so become a partaker of everlasting life. Wherefore he is the same person who is spoken of in Luke xviii 18. This becomes plain by a comparison of the two passages, especially ver. 22, where it is said that when he had heard Christ's doctrine concerning perfection, *If thou wilt be perfect go and sell what thou hast, and give to the poor*, he went away sorrowful because he was rich. But this is evidence that he had asked these things of Christ from a sincere desire of salvation.

*Good Master:* This is a common Hebrew form of salutation by which persons sought the good will of a doctor or prophet. As though they said, "Rabbi, I know that thou art good, both as a man, and as a doctor and a prophet, who teachest us those things

will be resolved by an examination of the works of each. For in another view, the unbelieving also will appear and be judged in the Day of Judgment, and be awarded greater or less punishment in hell, according to their demerits. This is allowed by all, and is plain from Joel iii. 2, and Matthew xxv. 32.

those who are worthy, and excluding the unworthy.

*Tropologically, Auctor Imperfecti*, by this session and judicial power understands that there is promised to those who leave all things and follow Christ a dominion of hearts, so that they may rule over the hearts and minds of men, and place in them the throne and kingdom of Christ where they may sit, and rule like kings, and make all things therein obedient to the law of Christ. Wherefore Apostles and Apostolic men, leaving all things, as monks and religious have done, being inflamed with the love of God, have converted the world, as Jerome Platus shows (*lib. 2, de bono stat. Relig. c. 30*). For says *Auctor Imperfecti*, “all who receive Christ into themselves by believing in and perfectly following Him, are the thrones of His majesty.” And, “whosoever shall receive the word of Peter becomes the throne of Peter, and Peter sits in him.”

*Judging the twelve tribes*, not only by comparison with the wicked, as SS. Jerome and Chrysostom, Euthymius, and *Auctor Imperfecti* explain, as the Queen of the South and the Ninevites are said to be about to condemn the Jews in the day of judgment, that is to say, by their example, because they repented at the preaching of Jonah, whereas the Jews would not repent at the preaching of Christ. Nor yet even merely by approbation of the sentence of Christ in which manner all the saints shall judge: but much more honourably and gloriously, as it were nobles and princes of the heavenly kingdom, sitting upon their own thrones as assessors with Christ, as cardinals with the pope. They shall in truth judge, and pass the same sentence as Christ by which they shall assign the just to heaven, the unjust to hell, rebuking and reprovng those who despised their doctrine and the example of their holy life, and praising those who cherished and honoured both.

*Twelve tribes of Israel*: understand not the twelve tribes of Israel only, as some expound, but likewise all nations. Where observe, twelve tribes are spoken of, although the tribe of Joseph, being divided into two—Ephraim and Manasseh—whom Jacob adopted as his own sons, and made them equal in the rights of succession and inheritance with them (and according to this computation the tribe of Levi would not be the twelfth but the thirteenth); yet if we look at the origin of the tribes from the Patriarchs, the sons of Jacob, there were but twelve.

Observe 2. These twelve tribes were formerly the elect and faithful people of God, yea, the Church of God, even in the time of Christ. Yea this was the kingdom of Israel promised to Messiah. Whence the nations who believed in Christ were, as it were, grafted into this Church and people of the Jews, and as it were endowed with its rights of citizenship, so that they were no longer Gentiles but *Jews* that is, *confessing and believing*, and *Israelites, i.e.*, having *power with God*, as the Apostle teaches (Romans ii. 29). Hence too S. John (Apoc. xxi. 13.), says that he saw the names of the twelve tribes of Israel inscribed on the gates of the heavenly Jerusalem. All Christians, therefore, of all nations are divided and distributed among the twelve tribes of Israel, in such manner that some are reckoned to belong to the tribe of Judah, others to the tribe of Joseph, others to the tribe of Levi, and so on, according to the diversity of their virtues and professions. To Judah pertain magistrates, kings and princes. To Joseph pertain virgins, the chaste and celibates. For such a one was Joseph before his elevation. To Levi, pertain priests and deacons, and religious.

Note 3. Unbelieving nations do not properly pertain to the twelve tribes of Israel, who are the faithful. Wherefore by this omission of the unbelievers it is tacitly intimated that they will not be judged in the Day of Judgment; “for he that believeth not is judged already” (John iii. 18). This must be understood of the judgment of a doubtful issue, for in this way only will believers be judged. For of them there can be doubt whether they will be saved or damned, which doubt

which are indeed good, and which lead to happiness. Tell me therefore what special good thing shall I do, that I may obtain the chief good in Heaven?” He plays upon the word *good*.

**Ver. 17.** *He said unto Him, &c.* The Vulgate translator read in the Greek, *τί με ἔρωτᾷ περὶ ἀγαθοῦ*; This was S. Augustine’s reading, and that which S. Jerome followed in his commentary. *Why askest thou me concerning good?* The present reading is that given in the text. Origen gives both readings. He subjoins the reason, saying—

*One is good, God: viz.*, in His nature and essence. Humbly does Christ refer this praise of His goodness to God, that He may teach us to do the same. For this man had not perfect faith concerning Christ, nor did he believe Him to be God. To this faith Christ desired to raise him by chiding him as it were. As though He had said, “If thou callest Me good, believe that I am God: for no one is good of himself save God.” So S. Jerome, Theophylact, Euthymius.

Moreover *good* means the same as perfect, and the perfection of a thing is its goodness. That God is perfect, S. Denis proves in many ways (*de Divin. Nomin. c. 10*.) In God there is infinite perfection both of nature and wisdom, of power, holiness and virtue. There is therefore in Him the highest goodness, natural, moral and supernatural. Wherefore He is the Fountain of all good, in whom all the excellences of all creatures are gathered together, and infinitely more than there are in the creatures. Wherefore in God there is in an eminent degree the beauty of gold, the splendour of jewels, the savour of delicacies, the harmony of music, the pleasantness of gardens, and whatsoever there is lovely, pleasant and delicious in the creatures. Hence it is from God that honey derives its sweetness, the sun its radiance, the stars their light, the heavens their glory, angels their wisdom, men their virtue, animals their sensations, plants their life, and all other things whatsoever they have of good: yea it is to the bounty of God that they as mendicants owe their very existence, as a drop out of the ocean. In God therefore is all good, and that in a perfect and infinite degree. In God is the allurement of all love, the consummation of all desire, the satisfying of all appetite. Why then, O wretched man, dost thou wander about among these poor created goods, and with all art not satisfied? Seek good in Him in whom is all good. Love and desire God. He alone can fully satisfy thy appetite and thy thirst: in this life through grace, but how much more in the life to come through glory: yea by Himself. For in heaven God manifests Himself that He may be beheld by the blessed as the chief good, that they may taste Him and enjoy Him.

**Verse 17 (Continued) - If thou will enter, &c.** Calvin foolishly, if not impiously, imagines that Christ is here addressing the young man ironically, because he trusted in the works of the Law; inasmuch as there is no road to Heaven through the keeping of the commandments, since it is impossible for men; but by faith. There are here as many errors and heresies, yea

blasphemies, as there are words. It is diametrically opposed to what Christ declares, and is subversive of it. Hence it is plain that Calvin was not led by the Spirit of Christ but of Antichrist. See among Catholics, Maldonatus, who writes with the express object of refuting Calvin and the Protestants. Let us go on to speak of what will be of more use to the orthodox. Christ here teaches that not faith alone justifies and saves, but that good works are also required, by which in fulfilling the law, we may obtain the prize of eternal life, which has been promised by God to those who fulfill the law. Calvin urges—At least Christ by the commandments of God here excludes the precepts and traditions of the Church, of Pontiffs and Prelates. I reply they are included in the fifth commandment, “Honour thy father and thy mother.” For Prelates are spiritual fathers.

**Verse 18.** *He said unto Him, &c. As thyself; Syriac, as thy soul.* I have expounded these commandments in Deut. v. 6. Christ in this place only propounded the precepts of the second table having reference to our neighbour, because in them are included the precepts of the first table concerning God. For the love of God produces love of our neighbour. For we love him for the sake of God. Wherefore the love of our neighbour flows from love of God. Again it is more difficult to love our neighbour than to love God. For who is there who does not love God, especially among religious people, such as this youth was?

**Verse 20-** *The young man saith, &c. From my youth; Syriac and Arabic, from my childhood—*meaning, from a child I have been brought up in God’s law, and been prevented by His grace. I have carefully kept all God’s commandments. *What lack I yet?* i.e., of goodness: that I may become perfected therein, *and have eternal life?* Not in any fashion, as all have it who keep the commandments, but surely and securely, and in large measure; in the chief and perfect degree of happiness and glory. For Thou, O Christ, as the Master of Heavenly virtue seemest to deliver a higher doctrine concerning it than our Scribes. Tell me therefore what it is? For I covet salvation and perfection. S. Jerome thinks that this young man told a falsehood, for if he had loved his neighbour as himself, he would have sold all his goods, and given to the poor. But this argument is not absolutely convincing. For to love one’s neighbour as oneself is of precept: but to give all one’s goods to the poor is of counsel. And Christ, as Mark says, beholding him, loved him, and gave him this advice concerning bestowing all his goods upon the poor, that he might go on to perfection.

**Verse 21-** *Jesus saith unto him, &c.* This is not an evangelical precept, but a counsel. Whence He saith, *if thou wilt.* This is to say, I do not command, but I advise. Mark adds (x. 21), *Then Jesus beholding him, loved him, and said unto him, One thing thou lackest: go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor.* S. Anthony, hearing these words of Christ read at Mass, left all things, and so followed Christ, says S. Athanasius in his life. S. Prosper of Regium, who was afterwards a bishop, did the same, in the time of S. Leo, as is recorded in his Life in Surius. June. 25.

Deservedly therefore S. Bernard says (*in Declaman. sub initium.*), “These are the words which in all the world have persuaded men to a contempt of the world, and to

Apostles, but in such a manner as to address their followers. For they who have equal labour with Apostles, will deserve equal honour with them. Christ therefore promises these judicial seats to those who leave all things, and follow Him in preaching the Gospel. This is what religious do, especially such as devote themselves to win souls. Whence S. Bernard says (*Serm. de Ingratitud.*): We have all made profession of the Apostolic life. Hence Nazianzen (*Orat. in Julian.* 1) shows that it is the privilege of monks to sit on thrones. S. Augustine (*in Ps.* 87) proves this. “For if there were to be twelve thrones only, Paul, the thirteenth Apostle, would have no throne; and he would not be able to judge who said, nevertheless, that he should judge not men only, but even angels. Not only, then, those twelve, and the Apostle Paul, but as many as shall judge pertain to the twelve thrones, on account of the general signification.” And S. Bernard says (*Serm. de S. Benedict.*): “Altogether just is the retribution that they who here for Christ’s sake have forsaken the glory of human majesty, should there be glorified by Christ and sit with Him in an especial manner as judges. But let no one think that only the twelve Apostles (for instead of Judas, who transgressed, Matthias was chosen) shall at that time be judges, for as neither are there twelve tribes only of Israel to be judged, for otherwise the tribe of Levi, which was the thirteenth, would be unjudged; and Paul—who was the thirteenth Apostle—would, perchance, be deprived of judging; whereas he says himself: ‘Know ye not that we shall judge angels?’ We must understand, therefore, that all who, after the example of the Apostles, have left all things and followed Christ, shall come as judges with Him, even as all men shall be judged: for because by the number twelve, in Scripture, totality is often understood; by the twelve thrones of the Apostles the entire number of all who judge, and by the twelve tribes of Israel the entire number of those who are to be judged is shown.” S. Thomas demonstrates the same thing at length (*Trad. cont. retrahent. a Relig. caps.* 6 & 7), where he teaches that this *session* is promised to evangelical poverty. And he proves from hence how sublime and pleasing to God this poverty is, forasmuch as it excels other virtues, and merits this lofty judicial power. S. Gregory gives the reason (*Moral.* 26, 20), when, interpreting that passage in Job. xxxvi.—*He hath given judgment for the poor*—he says: “The more they were despised in this world through their great humility, so much the more, when they receive their thrones, do they grow in the height of power.”

Wherefore deservedly does S. Bernard, admiring this their excellency, exclaim (*Serm.* 8, in *Ps. Qui habitat*), “O grace of friendship, O summit of honour, O privilege of confidence, O prerogative of perfect security! For what is so much to be feared? What is so full of anxiety and vehement solicitude as the thought of standing to be judged at that awful tribunal, and to wait for the sentence as yet doubtful, from so strict a judge?” And after a little, he says, “Happy indeed the position, which in that supreme clashing of the elements, in that tremendous examination of deserts, in that so great scrutiny of judging, can make them not secure only but glorious.” Moreover this glorious judicial session before the whole world, yea of the whole world, is promised by Christ to all those, who leaving all things, follow by means of perfect imitation, Christ who was poor, as poor, and spread His Gospel, and His kingdom.

The expression therefore, *ye shall sit*, implies, 1. The security of those who are poor for the Gospel’s sake. 2. The privilege of judging. 3. Dignity and eminence above others. 4. The nearest place to Christ and most perfect union with Him. 5. A principality of grace, happiness and glory, that inasmuch as they are princes of the kingdom of heaven, they should have the right of judging, and of admitting into it

**Verse 27-** *Then answered Peter. Arabic, What then is nigh, that it may be to us? What? namely, of reward in Heaven, and glory in life eternal? Peter following Christ's counsel of poverty, which the young man had despised, becoming more zealous, animates the Apostles, because they were almost alone in following the counsel of poverty given by Christ. And that he might still further encourage them, he asks what, and how great reward of glory awaits himself and the other Apostles, who followed Christ in His poverty in preaching the good news of the kingdom of Heaven? Thus Peter would confirm his companions in their holy purpose.*

*We have left all. Our ships and our nets, by which we gained our livelihood. And although these were poor and small things, yet, as S. Gregory says (Hom. 5, in Evang.), "he has forsaken much, who has left the desire of having. By those who followed Christ as many things were left as could be desired by those who followed him not." For the poor in spirit, although he may be reckoned among the needy, yet in a sense is he rich, because all the things which he might have, hope for, or obtain, all his life long in the world, yea, the whole world, he forsakes for the love of Christ, that he may give up his whole heart to God. This is an heroic act of poverty, and therefore of charity and religion in which a man offers himself as a whole burnt offering to God: yea he himself becomes a living and perpetual burnt offering.*

Hear S. Augustine. (*In Psalm 104, Conc. 3.*) "Peter left not only what he had, but what he wished to have. For what poor person is there who is not puffed up by worldly hopes? Who does not daily desire to increase his possessions? That cupidity was cut off. Peter left the whole world, and Peter received the whole world. 'Having nothing, and yet possessing all things.'"

**Verse 28-** *Jesus said unto them, &c. In the regeneration, i.e., in baptism. For this is spiritual regeneration, in which, dying unto sin, we are born into spiritual and heavenly life. Thus S. Hilary explains, "Ye who have followed Me through the regeneration of baptism, shall sit with Me as judges of the twelve tribes of Israel." But all other commentators, passim, understand by regeneration, the general resurrection in the Day of Judgment. For this shall be the renovation of the body, and of the whole man as well as of the universe, and, as it were, their second birth to glory. Hence it is rightly called here and elsewhere Regeneration. Whence the Syriac renders, in the new world: the Arabic, in the generation to come. For then there shall be a new heaven and a new earth. (Isaiah lxxv. 17. Apoc. xxi. 1. 2 Peter iii. 13.)*

**Verse 28 (Continued)-** *When the Son of Man shall sit, &c. In the seat of His majesty (Vulg.); of His glory (Arabic). S. Chrysostom, Theophylact, and Euthymius understand by session, judicial power. For judges sit in order that they may adjudicate calmly and tranquilly, without perturbation or haste. This is true; but over and above this, sitting in this place signifies properly that Christ will sit in judgment, and with Him the Apostles and those like them, and that on thrones of cloud, splendid and majestic, but each according to his merit and dignity. Whence Sacred Scripture ordinarily attributes a seat and sitting to Christ in judgment. For sitting under such circumstances is common to all nations, and is the natural posture of judges. So Maldonatus. But Jansen and some others deny this, who say that the proper posture of the glorified body such as Christ has, is standing rather than sitting. But both postures are appropriate to the glorified body—viz., standing for fighting, and sitting for judgment.*

*Ye shall sit, &c. Richard Victor (Trad. de potest. judiciar.) and others think that these things were promised by Christ to the Apostles alone, because they were His first followers. As though He had said, "Each of you twelve shall have his throne in the judgment;" even Judas, says Chrysostom, if he persevere in his vocation. But others, with more probability, think that these promises were made also to the followers of the Apostles, such as religious, who leaving all things to preach the Gospel, come nearest to Christ and His Apostles. A definite number, then, is placed here for an indefinite one, viz., twelve for all. For Christ speaks to His twelve*

voluntary poverty. They are the words which fill the cloisters with monks, the deserts with anchorites. These, I say, are the words which spoil Egypt, and strip it of the best of its goods. This is the living and effectual word, converting souls, by the happy emulations of sanctity, and the faithful promise of truth. For Simon Peter saith unto Jesus—Lo we have left all things." Wherefore S. Jerome, by this saying of Christ, as by the sound of a trumpet constantly stirs up his own people, as well as all of us to a zeal for poverty. Whence (*Epist. 150, ad Hedib.*), he says, "Dost thou wish to be perfect, and to stand in the first rank of dignity? Then do what the Apostles did. Sell what thou hast, and give to the poor, and follow the Saviour; and follow the bare and only cross with virtue for thine only cloke." Still more clearly does the same S. Jerome speak (*Epist. 24, ad Julian.*), "And this I exhort, if thou wilt be perfect, if thou desirest the summit of Apostolic dignity, if to raise up the cross and follow Christ, if to take hold of the plough, and not to look back, if placed on the top of the house, thou despisest thine old garments, and wouldest escape the Egyptian woman, thy mistress, leaving the world's pallium. Whence also Elias, when he was hastening to the kingdom of Heaven is not able to go with his mantle, but leaves his unclean garments to the world (*mundo immunda vestimenta dimittit.*). But this, thou sayest is a question of Apostolic dignity, and of the man who wishes to be perfect. But why art thou unwilling to be perfect too? Why shouldst not thou who art first in the world, be first also in the family of Christ?" After a little he adds, "But if thou shalt give thyself to the Lord, and being perfect in Apostolic virtue, shalt begin to follow the Saviour, thou shalt then understand where thou art, and how in Christ's army thou boldest the last place."

Observe: Christian perfection chiefly and primarily consists in charity; nevertheless it is placed by Christ in evangelical counsels, as it were means and instruments suitable for acquiring charity. (See S. Thomas, ii. 2 q. 184, art. 3.) This perfection all the religious aim at who renounce all their possessions, that naked they may follow a naked Christ. Yet do not all immediately at the beginning obtain this perfection, but they tend towards it by degrees; and by making continual progress, they at length arrive at it. Hence, wisely does Climacus (*Gradus 26*) make three grades of such persons—namely, beginners, those who are making progress, and the perfect. To beginners he delivers this alphabet, not of twenty-four letters, but of virtues. "The best elementary alphabet of all," he says, "is obedience, fasting, a hair shirt, ashes, tears, confession, silence, humility, vigils, fortitude, cold, fatigue, affliction, contempt, contrition, forgetfulness of injuries, brotherly love, gentleness, a simple and incurious faith, the neglect of the world, the affections kept free from all things, simplicity united with innocence, voluntary vileness." To such as are making progress he assigns these greater precepts of virtues. "The lot and the method of those who are progressing is victory over vain glory and anger, a good hope of salvation, quietness of mind, discretion, a firm and constant remembrance of the Last Judgment, mercy, hospitality, modest reproof, speech free from all

vicious affections.” Lastly, to the perfect he delivers these maxims of complete sanctity: “A heart free from all captivity, perfect love, a fount of humility, the mind’s departure from the vanities of the world, and going to Christ, a treasure of light and Divine prayer secure from robbers, abundance of divine illumination, desire of death, hatred of life, and flight from the body.” And then he adds that “a perfect man is so holy, and so pleasing to God, that he may be the ambassador, or the patron and advocate of the world, who is able (in a certain sense) to compel God; the colleague of angels, and is with them initiated into mysteries; a most profound depth of knowledge, a habitation of celestial mysteries, a keeper of the Divine arcana, the health of men, a god over devils, a master of vices, an emperor of the body.”

*Go, sell, &c.* You will ask, Why is poverty the appropriate way and instrument of evangelical perfection? Bonaventura answers (*in Apol. Pauperum*), because cupidity is the root of all evils. Cupidity, therefore, is the foundation of the city of Babylon. For of it are born ambition, gluttony, and the rest of the vices. This cupidity Christ cuts down by poverty, and takes away riches, honours, delights, which are the food and fuel of all vices. For delicacies make the mind effeminate, and to become women rather than men. A manly strength abhors delicacies. 2. Poverty begets humility, which is the foundation of sanctity. Whence S. Francis, says Bonaventura, being asked by his disciples what virtue would most commend us to Christ the Lord, and make us pleasing to Him, replied (according to his wont): Poverty; for it is the way of salvation, the fount of humility, the root of perfection, and from it there spring many fruits, although they be hidden and known to but few. 3. One who is poor in spirit, since he has no other cares, gives himself wholly up to gathering virtues, as a bee to gathering honey. Thus S. Anthony, being free from the desire of riches, had an insatiable desire of virtues; and so from one man he learned patience, from another abstinence, from another constancy, prayer, and so on. Hence the first poor religious were called *Ascetics*, that is, *exercisers*; because they were wholly occupied in taming anger, gluttony and other passions, and in the practice of arduous and heroic virtues. Whence some of them were accustomed to take food only once in two days, others only once in three. Others scarcely slept at all, like those who lived in the monastery of the *Acemetæ*—*i.e.*, of those who keep vigil without sleeping. 4. Because perfection consists in the love of God and our neighbour; and to this poverty directs us. For it puts an end to *meum* and *tuum*, from whence all the strifes and wars arise among neighbours, says S. Chrysostom. The same removes the mind away from all care and love of earthly things, and fixes it wholly upon God. For what the Apostle says concerning a married man (1 Cor. vii. 33), applies also to a rich man: “He that is married cares for the things of the world, how he may please his wife,” and is divided. For the rich man is divided. He divides his cares and his thoughts between God and Mammon. Poverty, therefore, makes a man superior to the world and the flesh, like an angel conversing with angels, breathing after Heaven. And such a one fulfils the words of the Apostle, “Seek those things which are above, not the things that are upon the earth,” that he may place his whole mind and love upon God, and may be made with Him, as it were, one spirit. Perfection, therefore, consisteth in this—that the mind be altogether abstracted from transitory things, and fixed on what is good and eternal; that is, on God, for which poverty affords an opportunity.

*Mystically.* Isaiah prophesied that *camels, i.e.*, rich men, laying aside by the grace of Christ the hump of their pride, would enter into the Church through *the eye of a needle, i.e.*, through the straits of humility and the evangelical law (1x. 6). “The company of camels shall cover thee, the dromedaries of Midian and Epha.” Hear S. Jerome, “Such was thy mother Paula of saintly memory, and thy brother, Pammachias, who through the eye of a needle, that is by the strait and narrow way which leadeth unto life, passed, and with their burdens leaving the broad way, which leads to Tartarus, carried whatever they had as the Lord’s gifts, according to the saying, “the ransom of a man are his riches,” for the things which are impossible with men are possible with God.”

*Allegorical*, S. Augustine (*lib. 2, quæst. cap. 47*), and S. Gregory (*lib. 35, Moral 17*), by *camel* understood Christ and by *the needle*, His Passion. Thus, it is more easy that Christ should suffer for the lovers of the world, than for lovers of the world to be converted unto Christ. Hear S. Gregory, “A camel passed through the eye of a needle when our Redeemer entered through the straitness of His Passion, even unto the enduring of death. This Passion was like a needle, because it pricked His body with pain. But more easily could a camel pass through the eye of a needle than a rich man enter into the kingdom of heaven, because unless He had first shown unto us by His Passion the pattern of humility, by no means would our proud rigidity have bowed down.”

*Symbolically and Anagogically, Auctor Imperf.* (*apud. S. Chrysostom Hom. 33*) says, “The souls of the Gentiles are likened unto crooked *camels*, in which was the hump of idolatry, because the knowledge of God is the lifting up of the soul. But the *needle* is the Son of God, of which the first part is subtle according to the Divinity: but the rest is thicker according to the Incarnation. But the whole is straight, and hath no bending, through the wound of whose Passion the Gentiles entered into life. With this needle the garment of immortality hath been sewed. It is the very needle which has sewed the flesh to the spirit. This needle hath united the people of the Jews to the Gentiles. This needle hath brought about friendship between angels and men. It is easier then for the Gentiles to pass through the eye of the needle than for the rich Jews to enter into the kingdom of Heaven.”

**Ver. 25.** *When the disciples heard, &c.* Because there were few, and at that time scarcely any, who did not wish to be rich. For all were gasping after lucre, even as many gasp after it now. For as S. Augustine says upon this passage, “All who desire riches are counted among the rich.”

**Verse 26-** *But Jesus beheld.* Greek, ἐπιβλέψας. Jesus looking upon his disciples, regarding them with a benign countenance, calmed the timidity and anxiety of their minds. So Chrysostom. *With men:* it is impossible to a rich man by human strength to obtain salvation, for he is entangled in his riches. And this salvation is a supernatural blessing, which we cannot obtain without similar supernatural powers of grace. But to God all things are possible, because God is the Author and the Fountain both of nature and grace and glory, and He so provides that by grace we should easily and gravely overcome all the difficulties and hindrances of nature: and, which pertains to the subject now in hand, He brings it about that rich men are not corrupted by their riches, but use them well, yea, that not a few, forsaking them, are ambitious of, and follow the evangelical poverty of Christ. Thus did all the first Christians, who had all things common. (Acts iv. 32.)

others, *passim*. Whence note that it was a proverb among the Jews, when they wished to signify that a thing was impossible, to say, "A camel will more easily pass through a needle's eye, than such a thing will be." Whence the Talmudists use such a proverb even now, as Caninius testifies (*in nom. Hebr. N. Test.*). Similar proverbs, signifying that a thing is impossible, are the following: "More easily will a tortoise outstrip a hare." "A wolf might take a sheep to wife first." "A locust will bring forth an ox sooner." "A tortoise will vanquish an eagle." "The earth will take to itself wings." "Rivers will run up-hill." "More easily might you hide an elephant under your arm." "You will fly without wings first." "A beetle will more readily make honey." "The sky will fall first." "The sea will more easily produce vines." "Words will be wanting to a woman sooner." "More easily may you feed on wind."

Moreover, there is an hyperbole here. That is called impossible which is exceedingly difficult. Whence, that a rich man should be saved, which Christ here says is impossible, in the verse preceding He said was difficult. As S. Jerome observes, "Not impossibility is declared, but infrequency is shown." So too Jansen, Maldonatus, and others. Thus, in the twelfth verse, He said, *He that is able to receive it, let Him receive it*. It means, some cannot receive, *i.e.*, with difficulty receive the counsel of celibacy. And Jeremiah says (xiii. 23): "If the Ethiopian can change his skin, or the leopard his spots, so too may ye do good when ye have learnt evil." (Vulg.) And yet this might be done, though it would be difficult. So it is as impossible—that is to say, difficult—for a rich man to be saved, as it would be for a camel to go through the eye of a needle. And yet, speaking absolutely, such a thing could take place: if, for example, the camel were cut up into the minutest particles, each one of which was passed separately, though slowly and laboriously, through the needle's eye. Or if some needle were made great and thick, that it should be like a tower or a pyramid; for then its eye would be of sufficient size for a camel to pass through it whole. Lastly, Emanuel Sa, by *the eye of a needle*, understands what a needle has, or what a needle does, for it is possible to make with it by degrees an immense aperture.

Again, you may take *impossible* here in a strict sense. For that a rich man should be saved is impossible with men: but it is possible with God, as Christ says in verse 26. That is to say, it is impossible by natural strength, but by the power of the grace given by God it is possible. Just as that a camel should pass through the eye of a needle is possible by the power of God. That this is possible with God is plain from a similar case; namely from the quantity of the body of Christ, which in the Eucharist is wholly contained in a very small Host, yea in every particle of it. For if God is able to place the whole body of Christ in a particle of a consecrated Host, He is able also to make a camel pass through the eye of a needle.

Appositely and elegantly says Francis Lucas, *a rich man* puffed up and swelling with his riches, on whose back great burdens of wealth are pressing is compared to *a camel*, and *the strait gate*, by which we must enter into life to the *eye of a needle*, that you may understand that those who abound in riches, and are swelling with pride and disdain in too great a degree to allow themselves to be reduced within those narrow bounds in which God confines His own people are meant. I have given many analogies between *a camel* and *a rich man* in Ecclus. xiii. 11.

By this similitude of *a camel* and *a needle* Christ signifies that his riches are not so much an advantage to a rich man, as an impediment to virtue, and the kingdom of heaven. Wisely therefore did He counsel the young man that he should give his wealth to the poor, and as a poor man follow Christ who was poor.

You will say, for this it is sufficient to leave all things in affection, which was what Abraham did, not in act. I answer with S. Jerome against Vigilantius. That is one grade of poverty, and a lower one. For the highest is to relinquish all things in reality, both because such a one gives all, that is to say both intention and its effect, as also because it is not possible wholly to relinquish a thing in intention, without carrying the intention into effect. For like a person lying in a bed, or sitting in a chair, if any one should secretly bind him to the chair he does not know that he is bound, until he gets up: so those who possess riches have their affection hidden, by which they are bound to them, and do not perceive it until they lose them or leave them. Thus S. Gregory records (*Epist. ante lib. Moral.*) how he was deceived by the world. "There was opened to me even then that I should seek for the eternal love, but persistent habit had prevailed so that I should not change my outward life."

*Go, sell what thou hast*. From hence the Pelagians taught that no rich man can be saved, unless he sell his property, and give to the poor, and become poor himself. S. Augustine writes against this view (*Epist. 89. ad Hilar.*), teaching that this is a counsel not a precept. Whence Pelagius was compelled to retract this error of his, as S. Augustine testifies (*Epist. ad Paulin.*).

There are three tracts which have been recently printed, bearing the name of Pope S. Sixtus. The first is concerning riches, in which the writer would prove from this passage that a believer cannot be saved unless he relinquish them, and become poor. The second is concerning works of faith, in which he teaches that they are necessary to salvation, but that they are works of free will, not of the grace of God. The third concerning chastity, that it is a work of free will, not the gift of God. From all this it is plain that the author of this work is not S. Sixtus, but some Pelagian, as the Louvain doctors and others have rightly perceived.

*Sell that thou hast, and give to the poor*: Mark and Luke add, *all things whatsoever thou hast*. By these words is refuted the error of Vigilantius and Calvin, who teach that it is better and more perfect to keep one's riches, and use them in moderation, and give to the poor according as opportunity serves, than to relinquish them all at once. S. Jerome confutes this error, (*lib. cont. Vigilant.*). For as S. Ambrose says, "It is better to give the tree with its fruit than to give the fruit only." Again, the ascetic, who gives part of his wealth to the poor, and keeps part for himself, is neither fish nor flesh: he neither renounces the world, nor is he a secular. He is a sort of amphibious animal. Whence S. Basil said to one who took up the religious life, but reserved certain things for himself, "Thou hast spoiled a senator, and not made a monk." Such a person does not wholly trust in God, but partly in God, and partly in the riches which he keeps for himself. Whence he is not really and entirely poor in spirit, nor does he free himself from the care, distraction and temptation, which are wont to accompany riches.

Wherefore S. Anthony commanded a certain person who wished to renounce the world after this sort, that he might reserve something for himself against a time of necessity, to place upon his naked body some pieces of flesh which he had bought. When he had done this, the dogs and birds, which came to snatch at the flesh,

lacerated his body all over. Then S. Anthony said, “Thus shall they who do not renounce all things be torn by the devils.” (See Rufinus, in *The Lives of the Fathers, lib. 3, n. 68.*) Wherefore S. Hilarion, as S. Jerome testifies in his Life, rejected money offered him to distribute among the poor by Orion, out of whom he had cast a legion of devils, and said, “To many the name of poverty is an occasion of covetousness: but mercy has no art. No one spends better than he who reserves nothing for himself.” For as S. Leo wisely says about a like matter (*Serm. 12, de Quadrages.*), “Through lawful use we pass on to immoderate excess, when from care of the health there creeps in the delectation of pleasure; and the desire of what is sufficient for nature does not satisfy.” S. Gregory gives the reason *à priori* (*Hom. 20, in Ezech.*), “When any one vows something that is his to God, and something does not vow, that is called *sacrifice*. But when a man vows all that he has, all that he lives, all that he knows, to Almighty God, then it is a *holocaust*. For there are some who as yet are retained in mind in this world, and who afford help to the poor from their possessions, and hasten to succour the oppressed. These in the good which they do, offer sacrifices, because of their actions they offer something to God, and keep something for themselves. And there are some who reserve nothing, for themselves, but immolate senses, life, tongue, and the substance which they have received to Almighty God. What do these do but offer a holocaust, yea rather are made a holocaust?”

*To the poor:* Christ does not say, Give to your relations, or rich friends, as Remigius observes. For this is an act of natural love, by which you do not cast away your riches, but deliver them to those who belong to you, to be kept. Wherefore in this way you do not leave the world, but rather immerse yourself further in it. You must make an exception, when your relations according to their position are in need of your riches; for then, they are reckoned poor in their own station. But *give to the poor*, from whom you expect nothing in return, but from God only. Therefore this is a pure act of charity and poverty, and renunciation of wealth. Origen adds, he who gives his goods to the poor is assisted by their prayers.

*And thou shall have treasure, &c.* By the word *treasure*, says Chrysostom, “the abundance and the permanence of the recompense are shown.” And S. Hilary says, “By the casting away of earthly riches heavenly wealth is purchased.” Beautifully does S. Augustine observe (*Serm. 28, de Verb. Apost.*), “Great is the happiness of Christians, to whom it is given, to make poverty the price of the kingdom of Heaven. Let not thy poverty displease thee. Nothing richer can be found than it is. Would you know how wealthy it is? It purchases Heaven. By what treasures could be conferred what we see granted to poverty? That a rich man should come to the kingdom of Heaven with his possessions may not be: but he may get there by despising them.” Sell clay therefore, and buy Heaven: give a penny and procure a treasure.

*And come follow Me:* journeying in poverty, and preaching the kingdom of God. “For many,” says S. Jerome, “even when they leave their riches do not follow the Lord. Neither does this suffice for perfection, unless after despising riches, they follow the Saviour; that is, leave evil and do good. For the world is more easily set at nought than the will. Therefore do the words follow, *Come and follow Me*. Again, *Follow Me* implies the union of an active with a contemplative life. There is a threefold sort of holy life. The first and lowest is the active life. The second is the contemplative. The third and most perfect is the union of action with contemplation, that what we derive from God by contemplation, we should afterwards teach to others. This was the life which Christ and His Apostles led. S. Ambrose gives the reason in his explanation of the title of the 39th Psalm. “Christ,” he says, “is the end of all things, which with

a pious mind, we ask for. For whether you seek for wisdom, or study virtue, or truth, or the way of justice, or the resurrection, in all things you must follow Christ, who is the Power and the Wisdom of God: who is Truth, the Way, Justice, Resurrection. After whom therefore do you strive, but the perfection of all things, and the sum of virtues? And therefore He saith to thee, *Come, follow Me*, i.e., that thou mayest deserve to arrive at the consummation of virtues. Therefore he who follows Christ ought to imitate Him as closely as he can; to meditate upon His precepts, and the Divine examples of His deeds.”

Observe that in this chapter Christ gives three chief evangelical counsels, viz., of celibacy and continence, ver. 12: of poverty, when He says, *Sell that thou hast*, ver. 21: of obedience, when He says, *Follow Me*, i.e., obey Me and My command. imitate My obedience even unto death.

**Ver. 22.** *When the young man heard, &c.* Wisely says S. Augustine (*Epist. 43. ad Paulin.*), “I know not how it is that when superfluous earthly things are loved, the more acquired the more they bind. Wherefore did that young man depart in sorrow, except because he had great riches? For it is one thing to be unwilling to incorporate with yourself what you have not; it is another thing to tear away what has been incorporated. The former may be repudiated as something not belonging to you: divesting yourself of the latter is like cutting off your limbs.” In the Gospel according to the Hebrews which Origen cites, there is here a considerable addition. It is as follows. “Another of the rich men said unto Him, Master, what good thing shall I do that I may live? He saith unto him, Man, keep the Law and the Prophets. He answered Him, I have done this. He said unto him, Go and sell all that thou possessest, and divide amongst the poor, and come, follow Me. But the rich man began to scratch his head, and it pleased him not. And the Lord said unto him, How sayest thou, I have kept the Law and the Prophets? For it is written in the Law, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself, and lo, many of thy brethren, the sons of Abraham, are clothed in filthy garments, and perish of hunger, and thy house is full of many good things, and there goeth not out of it anything whatsoever unto them. And He turned and said unto His disciple Simon, who was sitting by Him,—Simon, son of Jonah, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of Heaven.”

**Verse 24.** *And again I say unto you, &c.* The Arabic is, *the entering of a camel into a needle's eye is more easy. And again*, the Gr. *πάγιν δέ*, i.e., *but again*. Christ, in giving this addition, as it were corrects what he has just said: “I have said that it is a difficult thing for a rich man to be saved, now I add something more, that it is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter heaven.” By *rich man*, Remigius understands one who trusts in riches, who places all his hope in them, which is what many rich men do. More simply you may take it to mean any rich person.

You will ask, What is the meaning of *camel* in this passage, and how could it pass through a needle's eye? Some, with Theophylact, understand in Greek a sailor's cable, which is *κάμηλος*, a camel. Some, with the *Gloss*, understand a gate of Jerusalem; which, because it was very low, was called the camel, because it was necessary for him who entered through it to stoop down and bend like a camel.

But I say that the tall and hump-backed animal, which is commonly called a camel, is here meant. So the Syriac, Arabic, Origen, SS. Hilary, Jerome, Chrysostom, and