

“The manuscript tradition of *The Life of Christ (Vita Christi)* is extremely complex, and Walsh, while basing his translation on the edition, has gone beyond in providing critical apparatus that will be of significant use to scholars, as well as making the text available for students and all interested in the theology, spirituality, and religious life of the later Middle Ages. His introduction expertly places Ludolph’s work in the textual tradition and is itself a contribution to scholarship. Simply put, this is an amazing achievement!”

— Eric Leland Saak
Professor of History
Indiana University

“Modern readers will find Ludolph’s work fanciful. This is much here for meditation, and each section concludes with a prayer. *The Life of Christ* is not for the gullible, but it can be recommended for *lectio* and spiritual reading.”

— Sr. Sarah Schwartzberg, OSB, *Spirit & Life*

“This translation—the first into English—of *The Life of Jesus Christ* by Ludolph of Saxony will be welcomed both by scholars in various fields and by practicing Christians. It is at the same time an encyclopedia of biblical, patristic, and medieval learning and a compendium of late medieval spirituality, stressing the importance of meditation in the life of individual believers. It draws on an astonishing number of sources and sheds light on many aspects of the doctrinal and institutional history of the Church down to the fourteenth century.”

— Giles Constable

“This translation will hopefully stimulate further work on the late medieval manuscript tradition of the text, its circulation, use and readership. It will prove an invaluable tool for scholars researching the late medieval engagement with the humanity of Christ, while simultaneously catering for general readers and religious practitioners interested in learning more about a traditional and influential imaginative meditational practice.”

— Christiania Whitehead
Professor of Middle English Literature
University of Warwick

CISTERCIAN STUDIES SERIES: TWO HUNDRED EIGHTY-TWO

The Life of Jesus Christ

PART ONE

Volume 2, Chapters 41–92

Ludolph of Saxony, Carthusian

Translated by
Milton T. Walsh



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Abbreviations for Works Cited

Unless further identification is needed, *Sermo* or *Hom* refers to a sermon or homily by an author, followed by its number. When the citation is from a biblical commentary, *Com* is followed by the biblical reference, e.g., *Com Matt 28:4*. Bracketed references in this list refer to modern critical editions of the works.

Citations given in italics in the text are from sources Ludolph uses without attribution. Biblical texts that may come from a Latin Diatesaron are given in bold print. The bold letter **R 1** etc. refers to section headings from L. M. Rigollot, *Vita Iesu Christi* (Paris: Palmé, 1865, 1870, 1878).

| | |
|------------|---|
| Allegoriae | Richard of Saint Victor (?), <i>Allegoriae in vetus et novum testamentum (Liber exceptionum)</i> |
| Amoris | <i>Stimulus amoris maior</i> ; this is a fourteenth-century expansion of the <i>Stimulus amoris minor</i> written in the late thirteenth century by James of Milan; the material cited by Ludolph is not in the earlier version; in A. C. Peltier, <i>S. Bonaventurae, Opera Omnia</i> , vol. 12 (Paris: Vives, 1868) |
| Aquaeductu | Bernard, <i>Sermo in Nativitate Beatae Mariae, "De aquaeductu"</i> [SB 5] |
| Brev in Ps | PsJerome, <i>Breviarium in Psalmos</i> |
| Bruno | Bruno of Segni/Asti (biblical commentaries, homilies) |

- Burchard Burchard of Mount Sion, *Descriptio terrae sanctae; Burchard of Mount Sion*, trans. Aubrey Stewart (London: Palestine Pilgrims' Text Society, 1896)
- CA Thomas Aquinas, *Catena aurea*
- Caillau Aug Caillau, *Augustini operum* (Paris, 1836)
- Caillau Chrys Caillau, *Chrysostomi opera omnia* (Paris: Mellier, 1842)
- Chromatius Chromatius of Aquileia, *Tractatus in evangelium S. Matthaei* [CL 9A]
- CL Corpus Christianorum Latinorum
- CM Corpus Christianorum, Continuatio Mediaevalis
- Cognitione PsBernard, *Meditationes piissimae de cognitione humanis conditione*
- Compunctione Chrysostom, *De compunctione cordis*
- Conf Augustine, *Confessiones* [CL 27]
- Cons Boethius, *De consolatione philosophiae* [CL 94]
- Cratandri *Tomus Operum Ioannis Chrysostomi* (Basel: Andrew Cratandri, 1523)
- Creat PsIsidore (7th c. Irish), *De ordine creaturarum* (Monografias de la Universidad de Santiago de Compostela #10, 1972)
- CS Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum
- CSP Corpus Scriptorum Latinorum Paravianum
- Cumm Cummianus, *Commentarius in Evangelium secundum Marcum*
- David David of Augsburg, *De exterioris et interioris hominis compositione* (Quaracchi, 1899)
- De civ Dei Augustine, *De civitate Dei* [CL 47–48]
- De cons Augustine, *De consensu evangelistarum* [CS 43]

| | |
|------------------------|--|
| De doc | Augustine, <i>De doctrina Christiana</i> [CL 32] |
| De exc | Eadmer, <i>De excellentia Virginis Mariae</i> |
| De inst | Aelred, <i>De institutione inclusarum</i> [CM 1] |
| De iudicio | <i>De iudicio et compunctione</i> ; S. Ephraem Syri, <i>Opera Omnia</i> (Venice: Gerardi, 1755) |
| De laud | Arnold of Bonneval, <i>De laudibus Beatae Virginis Mariae</i> |
| De moribus | Bernard, <i>De moribus et officio Episcoporum</i> (Ep 42) [SB 7] |
| De Trin | Augustine, <i>De Trinitate</i> [CL 50–50A] |
| De Vitry | Jacques de Vitry, <i>Historia Hierosolymitana; The History of Jerusalem</i> , trans. Aubrey Stewart (London: Palestine Pilgrims' Text Society, 1896) |
| Dial | Gregory the Great, <i>Dialogues</i> |
| Dialogus | PsAnselm, <i>Dialogus Beatae Mariae et Anselmi de passione Domini</i> |
| Drogo | Drogo of Ostia, <i>Sermo de sacramento dominicae passionis</i> |
| Durandus | William Durandus, <i>Rationale divinatorum officiorum</i> [CM 140] |
| Elmer | Elmer of Canterbury, <i>De humanae conditionis</i> |
| Eluc | Honorius of Autun, <i>Elucidarium sive dialogus de Summa totius Christianae theologiae</i> |
| En Mark, Luke, John | Theophylact, <i>In quatuor Evangelia enarrationes</i> |
| En Ps | Augustine, <i>Enarrationes in Psalmos</i> [CL 38–40] |
| Ep | Epistle |
| Ep John | Augustine, <i>In Ioannis Epistulam ad Parthos tractatus</i> |

| | |
|------------|--|
| Erasmus | Erasmus, <i>Origenis adamantii operum pars secunda</i> (Basel, 1545) |
| Étaix | <i>Opus imperfectum</i> , chapters not found in Migne: Raymond Étaix, <i>Revue bénédictine</i> 84 (1974) |
| Ety | Isidore, <i>Etymologiae</i> |
| Exp Acta | Theophylact, <i>Expositio in Acta Apostolorum</i> |
| Exp Luke | Ambrose, <i>Expositio Evangelii secundam Lucam</i> [CL 14] |
| Exp Or Dom | Jordan of Quedlinburg, <i>Expositio Orationis Dominice</i> [Eric Leland Saak, <i>Catechesis in the Later Middle Ages I: The Exposition of the Lord's Prayer of Jordan of Quedlinburg</i> , OESA (d. 1380) (Leiden: Brill, 2014)] |
| 40 hom | Gregory the Great, <i>XL homiliarium in Evangelia</i> [CL 41] |
| Fratres | PsAugustine (early 14 th c), <i>Ad fratres in eremo</i> |
| Fronton | Chrysostom, <i>Opera Omnia</i> (Paris: Fronton du Duc, 1687) |
| Gaufrid | Gaufrid of Clairvaux, <i>Declamationes de colloquio Simonis cum Iesu</i> |
| GCS | <i>Die Griechischen Christlichen Schriftsteller</i> |
| Gennadius | Gennadius of Marseille, <i>Liber de Ecclesiasticis Dogmatibus</i> |
| Gorran | Nicholas of Gorran, <i>Enarratio in Quatuor Evangelia et Epistolas B. Pauli</i> (Lyon: Annisonios, 1692) |
| Grimlaicus | Grimlaicus, <i>Regula solitariorum</i> |
| Guigo | Guigo de Ponte, <i>De contemplatione</i> |
| Habitat | Bernard, <i>In Psalmum 90, "Qui habitat," Sermones</i> 17 [SB 4] |
| Haymo | Haymo of Auxerre, <i>Homiliarum sive concionum ad plebem in Evangelia de tempore et sanctis</i> (Migne wrongly attributes to Haymo of Halberstadt) |

| | |
|-------------|---|
| Henry | Henry of Friemar, <i>Explanatio passionis dominicae</i> ; https://digital.library.villanova.edu/Item/vudl:234049 |
| Hiez | Gregory the Great, <i>Homiliae in Hiezechihalem prophetam</i> [CL 142] |
| Hist AA | Peter Comestor, <i>Historia libri Actuum Apostolorum</i> |
| Hist ev | Peter Comestor, <i>Historia evangelica</i> |
| Hist sch | Peter Comestor, <i>Historia scholastica</i> |
| Hom Acta | Chrysostom, <i>Homiliae in Acta Apostolorum</i> |
| Hom ev | Bede, <i>Homiliarium evangelii</i> [CL 122] |
| Hom John | Chrysostom, <i>Homiliae in Ioannem</i> |
| Hom Matt | Chrysostom, <i>Homiliae in Mattheum</i> |
| Homiliarius | Paul the Deacon, <i>Homiliarius doctorum</i> |
| Hugh | Hugh of Ripelin, <i>Compendium theologiae veritatis</i> ; in A. C. Peltier, <i>S. Bonaventurae, Opera Omnia</i> , vol. 8 (Paris: Vives, 1866). The work is also attributed to Albert the Great and appears in vol. 34 of his col- lected works edited by Borgnet (Paris: Vives, 1895) |
| Int nom | Jerome, <i>Liber interpretationis Hebraicorum nominum</i> [CL 72] |
| Jordan | Jordan of Quedlinburg, <i>Opus Postillarum et sermones de tempore</i> (Strassburg: Hussner, 1483); sermons 189– 254 are also known as <i>Meditationes de Passione Christi</i> |
| Laon | Anselm of Laon (?), <i>Enarrationes in Evangelium Matthaei</i> |
| Laudibus | Bernard, <i>De laudibus virginis matris super verbi Evangelii: "Missus est angelus Gabriel"</i> ; <i>homiliae quatuor</i> [SB 4] |
| Legenda | Jacobus de Voragine, <i>Legenda Aurea</i> |
| Lib de pas | PsBernard, <i>Liber de passione Christi</i> |

| | |
|---------------|--|
| Lib specialis | Mechtild of Hackborn, <i>Liber specialis gratiae</i> |
| Lombard | Peter Lombard, <i>Liber sententiarum</i> |
| Lucilium | Seneca, <i>Ad Lucilium epistolae morales</i> |
| LV | Bonaventure, <i>Lignum Vitae</i> |
| Lyra | Nicholas of Lyra, <i>Postillae perpetuae in universam S. Scripturam; Biblia Sacra, cum Glossa Ordinariam, primum quidem a Strabo Fuldensi Monacho Benedictino Collecta, Tomus Quintus</i> (Antwerp: Keerbergium, 1517) |
| Mai | Mai, <i>Novae Patrum Bibliothecae</i> (Rome: Sacri Consilii, 1852) |
| Manipulus | Thomas of Ireland, <i>Manipulus florum</i> |
| Manuale | John of Fécamp, <i>Manuale</i> |
| Martin Braga | Martin of Braga, <i>Formula vitae honestae</i> |
| Massa | Michael de Massa, <i>Vita Christi</i> (Bayerische Staats Bibliothek: http://bildsuche.digitale-sammlungen.de/index.html?c=viewer&lv=1&bandnummer=bsb00082134&pimage=00082134&suchbegriff=&l=en) |
| Med | Anselm and others, <i>Meditationes</i> [Schmitt, <i>S. Anselmi opera</i> , vol. 3 (Edinburgh: Nelson, 1946)] |
| Med red | Anselm, <i>Meditatio redemptionis humanae</i> [Schmitt, <i>S. Anselmi opera</i> , vol. 3 (Edinburgh: Nelson, 1946)] |
| mor | moral: the Postilla of Nicholas of Lyra often presents moral interpretations in a separate category |
| Mor | Gregory the Great, <i>Moralium libri sive expositione in librum Iob</i> [CL 143–43b] |
| Moribus | PsSeneca, <i>De Moribus</i> |
| MVC | John de Caulibus, <i>Meditationes Vitae Christi</i> [CM 153] |
| Ogerius | Ogerius of Locedio, <i>Tractatus in Laudibus sanctae Dei genetricis</i> ; De Vries: <i>De Mariaklachten</i> (Zwolle: Tjeenk Willink, 1964) |

| | |
|---------------------|---|
| Opus Dan | Jordan of Quedlinburg, <i>Sermones de Sanctis in Opus sermonum patris Iordani Augustiniani</i> (Paris: Hichman, 1521) |
| Opus imperf | PsChrysostom, <i>Opus imperfectum in Matthaem</i> |
| Orat | Gregory Nazianzen, <i>Orationes</i> |
| Orthodoxa | John Damascene, <i>De fide orthodoxa</i> |
| Pelagius, Ad Dem | Pelagius? Prosper?, <i>Ad Demetriadem</i> |
| Peniteas | William of Montibus, <i>Peniteas cito</i> [Joseph Goering, <i>William de Montibus: the Schools and the Literature of Pastoral Care</i> (Toronto: PIMS, 1992)] |
| Peraldus | William Peraldus, sermons. These were mistakenly attributed to William of Auvergne, and are found in: <i>Guilielmi Alverni, Opera omnia</i> (Paris: D. Thierry, 1674) |
| PG | Migne, <i>Patrologia Graeca</i> (Paris, 1856) |
| PL | Migne, <i>Patrologia Latina</i> (Paris, 1844) |
| Posteriorum | Richard of Saint Victor, <i>Posteriorum Excerptium</i> |
| Prosper | Prosper of Aquitaine, <i>Sententiae ex Augustino delibatae</i> |
| Quaest 83 | Augustine, <i>De diversis quaestionibus LXXXIII</i> [CL 44A] |
| Quaest Ev | Augustine, <i>Quaestionum Evangeliorum libri duo</i> [CL 44B] |
| Quatuor | Eadmer, <i>De quatuor virtutibus Beatae Virginis Mariae</i> |
| Quis dabit | PsBernard (Ogerius?), <i>Meditacio de lamentacione beate virginis</i> ; text in Thomas Bestul, <i>Texts of the Passion: Latin Devotional Literature and Medieval Society</i> (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1996) |

| | |
|---------------|---|
| Radbertus | Paschasius Radbertus, <i>Ep 9 Ad Paulam et Eustochium, de Assumptione</i> [CM 56C] |
| Reg past | Gregory the Great, <i>Regulae Pastoralis</i> |
| Roland | <i>Chrysostomi opera</i> (Paris: Guilielmum Roland, 1546; Venice: Pezzana, 1703) |
| SB | Sancti Bernardi Opera (Rome: Publicationes Cistercienses, 1957–1963) |
| SC | Bernard, <i>Sermones super Cantica Canticorum</i> [SB 1–2] |
| Sedulius | Sedulius, <i>Carmen paschale</i> |
| Selecta | Origen, <i>Selecta in Psalmos</i> |
| Sent | Isidore, <i>Sententiae</i> |
| Septem diei | PsBede (13 th c.), <i>De meditatione passionis per septem diei</i> |
| Sermone monte | Augustine, <i>De sermone Domini in monte</i> [CL 35] |
| SHS | <i>Speculum humanae salvationis</i> (Lutz and Perdrizet, <i>Speculum humanae salvationis</i> , Mulhouse, 1907–1909) |
| Spiritu | PsAugustine, <i>De spiritu et anima</i> (12 th -c. compilation of various authors) |
| St Cher | Hugh of Saint Cher, <i>Postillae in sacram scripturam, Tomus sextus</i> |
| Stim | Eckbert of Schönau, <i>Stimulis Amoris</i> |
| Suso | Henry Suso, <i>Horologium sapientiae</i> |
| Super unum | Peter Cantor, <i>Super unum ex quatuor</i> |
| Synonyma | Isidore of Seville, <i>Synonyma de lamentatione animae peccatricis</i> |
| Syrus | Publilius Syrus, <i>Sentences</i> |
| Tr John | Augustine, <i>In Evangelium Ioannis tractatus</i> [CL 36] |
| VC | Ludolph, <i>Vita Christi</i> |

| | |
|---------------|--|
| Vera et falsa | PsAugustine (11 th c.), <i>De vera et falsa poenitentia</i> |
| Voragine | Rudolphus Clutius, ed., Jacobus de Voragine, <i>Sermones Aurei in Omnes Totius Anni; Sermones de Tempore in omnes Dominicas</i> (Augsburg and Cracow: Bartl, 1760) |
| Vor Quad | Rudolphus Clutius, ed., Jacobus de Voragine, <i>Sermones Aurei in Omnes Quadragesimae Dominicas et ferias</i> (Augsburg and Cracow: Bartl, 1760) |
| Werner | Werner of Saint Blase, <i>Liber Deflorationum</i> |
| Zachary | Zachary of Besançon, <i>In unum ex quatuor</i> |

CHAPTER 41

Jesus Heals a Leper

(Matt 8:1-4; Mark 1:40-45; Luke 5:12-16)

*Having delivered the Gospel law on the mountain, the Lord proceeded to confirm it with miracles; a good teacher proves his doctrine with deeds. *And when he had come down from the mountain* at the end of his sermon, *great multitudes followed him*;* to edify them, and in answer to their earnest pleas, he was moved to perform a miracle. Jerome says, "After his preaching and teaching, an opportunity for signs presents itself. In this way, the words he has just spoken are confirmed among his hearers by means of miraculous powers."* And Chrysostom: "After his sermon, he proceeds to miracles, to give authority to what he has said; he who was wondrous in his words was also wondrous in his deeds."* And Theophylact: "He mingled action with teaching, for if he had not done miracles his doctrine would not be believed. You should work after teaching, so that your word will not be fruitless in yourself."*

In a mystical sense, Christ *came down from the mountain* of divine excellence in humility into the valley of humanity, remaining what he was and becoming what he was not. He indeed descended from the mountain when he *emptied himself, taking the form of a servant*.* After his descent, *great multitudes followed him*; if God had not descended, we could not ascend by following him. It is a great glory and dignity for a human being to follow this Lord.

*R 1

*Matt 8:1

*Com Matt 8:2;
PL 26:50D;
CL 77:48

*Opus imperf 21
approx; PG 56:748

*En Mark 1:35-39;
PG 123:507C

*Phil 2:7

According to Augustine, Christ cleansed the leper in the first place to make it clear that the New Testament had been given on the Mount and that the grace of the Gospel was superior to the law, which could only exclude the leper, not cure him.¹* There seems to be a contradiction here, because Matthew says *when he had come down from the mountain*, but Luke says *when he was in a certain city*.* The Gloss answers this by suggesting that there was an interval between Jesus' coming down the mountain and his entering the city, and that was when he healed the leper. Matthew has the miracle in its proper place, but Luke says *when he was in a certain city*, that is, Capernaum, because this was nearby, just a mile and a half to the east.*

*attr. to Bede,
Gorran Matt 8:4

*Luke 5:12

*Gloss Luke 7:1;
PL 114:268A

The Leper Approaches and Jesus Heals Him

*R 2

*A certain leper came, not so much with bodily steps as with heartfelt faith, and, *kneeling down and falling on his face, adored him* with humility of body and *besought him* with prayer of his mouth.* God refuses nothing when these three things are found together—faith, humility, and prayer. He *fell on his face* as one who was lowly, not hiding his sores, but publicizing them and making them known. This is why he deserved to be heard and made clean. You should humble yourself also so that you will be heard and deserve to be cleansed. Ambrose comments, “He fell on his face because it is a mark of humility that we should blush for the stains upon our life. But shame did not restrain his confession: he showed the wound and begged for the remedy.”*

*Matt 8:2;
Mark 1:44;
Luke 5:12

*Exp Luke 5.2;
PL 15:1636B;
CL 14:135–36
‡Matt 8:2

And he adored him, saying: “Lord, through whom all things were made, if you will, you can make me clean.”‡

¹ Augustine speaks of the law as able to command but unable to cure in Tr John 3.14 (PL 35:1402; CL 36:26).

Your will is efficacious, and your works obey your will." He did not say, "Cleanse me," but he attributed the power and the right to him to cure by his divine will. It was if he had said, "You can do what you will because you are omnipotent." Hence, Titus of Bostra suggests, "Let us learn from the words of the leper not to seek a cure for our bodily infirmities, but to commend our whole selves to the will of God, who knows what is best and disposes all things by his judgment."* The leper deserved to be healed because he trusted in Christ's divine power and authority and showed him faith and devotion.

*CA,
Luke 5:12-16

*And Jesus was moved to merciful compassion: *stretching forth his hand* (an act of generosity to oppose the greedy), he *touched him* (an act of humility to oppose the proud), *saying, "I will"* (an act of piety to oppose the cruel); *he made clean** (an act of power to oppose the incredulous)."*

*R 3

*Matt 8:3

*St Cher,
Luke 12:13 approx

Let us pause here to recall that we read in Scripture of five ways that physical leprosy was cured. First, by washing, as clearly was the case with Naaman; this signifies the shedding of tears.* Second, by showing, as we see with the ten lepers who were cleansed as they went to show themselves to the priests; this signifies confession.* Third, by separation, as with Miriam, the sister of Moses; this signifies excommunication, which should be administered only for medicinal purposes, like a cautery.* Fourth, by inclusion, as with Moses' hand: leprosy appeared when he pulled his hand out of the cloak at his bosom, but when he put it back in he was cured.* Thus many who were spiritual lepers in the world are cleansed by entering the cloister. Fifth, by touch, as here, when the hand of Christ touched the leper and cleansed him.*

*2 Kgs 5:1-14

*Luke 17:11-19

*Num 12:10-14

*Exod 4:6-7

*Voragine,
Sermo 2,
2nd Sunday
after Octave of
Epiphany, p. 38

Note that there are three very powerful touches of God: a wholly bodily touch, a wholly spiritual touch, and a touch that is partly spiritual and partly bodily. In an entirely bodily touch, both the one who touches

and the one touched have bodies; this touch was very powerful in Christ's case, for he healed every kind of illness in this way, as is described many times in the gospels. In the touch that is both spiritual and bodily, the agent is spiritual while the recipient is either body or spirit. This is the touch of tribulation, and it is also very effective: it can constrain the hardness of sinners, check the concupiscence of the flesh, and demonstrate the patience of the just. In a purely spiritual touch, both the one touching and the one touched are spirit; this is the touch of interior inspiration, and it is also very powerful.*

**Voragine, Sermo 2, 2nd Sunday after Octave of Epiphany, p. 38*

The effect of this touch is sevenfold, according to the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit. First, inspiration, or conceiving good practices; this pertains to the gift of the fear of the Lord, from which the spirit of salvation is conceived. Second, the remission of sins by grace, and this can be connected with the gift of piety, as we read in the book of Daniel, *Redeem your sins with alms*.* Third, instruction that is useful or necessary for salvation; this is associated with the gift of knowledge, which teaches right living. Fourth, the strength to act well and undertake arduous tasks; this concerns the gift of counsel, which addresses itself especially to what is beyond the call of duty. Fifth, comfort in tribulation, by which the soul is strengthened to endure adversity; this is given by the gift of fortitude, which is particularly helpful in time of trial. Sixth, an increase of goodwill and love of God; this is the fruit of the gift of understanding,* which teaches us to comprehend, that is, read inwardly,* God's blessings, and in this way the soul is inflamed and burns with love of him. Seventh, a disregard for earthly things and contemplation of those of heaven; this pertains to the gift of wisdom, which concerns itself with eternal realities and so enables us to understand the things that are above rather than those on earth.

*Dan 4:24

**intellectus
intus legere

*Matt 8:3

And forthwith his leprosy was cleansed.* The deed followed immediately upon the Lord's desire and com-

mand. According to Cyril, even the word *forthwith* is too slow to express the speed with which the deed was done.* While this act certainly demonstrated the Lord's great power, it also bore witness to his humility. The law decreed that those with leprosy were to be banished from the camp, and the scribes and Pharisees could barely deign to look at lepers, but Christ did not refrain from touching the man. He did this not only because of the hidden mystery of the event, but also to give us an example of humility and compassion: we should spurn no one, avoid no one, regardless of their sickness or sores.*

*Chrysogonus,
Hom Matt 25.2;
PG 57/58:329

Again, he *touched him* in order to be beyond the law, not under it.† The law forbade anyone to touch a leper, but Christ showed that he is the law's Lord, not its slave; he walked the path of the law, but he also went beyond the Law to heal those who could not be healed by the law's remedies. Again, leprosy was ordinarily spread by contact, but the disease fled at the Lord's touch: his hand did not become unclean with leprosy, but the leper's body was cleansed by the touch of his hand. The law forbade people from touching a leper so that they would not catch the disease: the prohibition was to prevent not the healing of the leper, but the infection of the other person. However, someone who can heal leprosy is in no danger of contracting it; so although Christ broke the letter of the law, he did not violate its intent. The law would not prevent someone from touching a leper if that touch would cure him, just as Elijah and Elisha did not violate the prohibition about touching a corpse when they raised the dead to life.*

*Haymo, Hom 19;
PL 118:138BC
approx

†Zachary 2.45;
PL 186:171C

Although the Lord could have healed the leper with a mere word, he touched him with his hand, because Christ's humanity was, as it were, the instrument of his divinity. Just as a craftsman works with tools, so Christ's divine power sometimes operated through his humanity to demonstrate that it was joined to his divine nature.*

*Chrysostom, Opus
imperf 21 approx;
PG 56:749

*Lyra Matt 8:2

*R 4

The Lord instructed the man not to tell anyone about the miracle that had occurred, nor to boast that he had been cured. He did this to give us an example, and to teach us not to love honors and display; far from announcing our good works, we should keep quiet about them. We should shun not only monetary gain, but also human praise and vainglory: in a word, not involve our left hand in the works we do with our right. Chrysostom says,

*St. Chrysostom,
Luce 5:14

He ordered the man to tell no one what happened, teaching us by this injunction to steer clear of the breath of praise and the pomp of display. He certainly was aware that the man would not keep silent but would proclaim such a great blessing everywhere, but he did what he could to avoid publicity about what he had done. It is true that on another occasion he instructed the cured demoniac to make known what had happened to him, but there he was instructing him to be grateful, so he was not contradicting himself.* He did not instruct those who had been healed to praise him, but to give glory to God. Through the leper, he teaches us to renounce boasting and vainglory; through the man freed from a legion of devils, he warns us not to be ungrateful, but to thank God, to extol him for his benefits, and always to reserve our praise to God alone for his wonders. He does this because people tend to be mindful of God when they are sick, but once they recover they become very slack in the attention they pay him. So he bids us remember God continually, whether we are sick or healthy, and he tells the man he has cured, "Give glory to God."*

*Mark 5:19

*Hom Matt 25.2;
PG 57/58:329;
Latin Anianus

Let us consider here that an order can be given as a warning, as a test, or as a command to be obeyed. The first kind does not forbid an act that is indeed very good, but the vainglory that corrupts even our good and honorable deeds; that is the kind of order here. In

the second case, God does not desire the act but seeks to reveal a virtue hidden within the person to whom the order is given, a virtue useful for the individual and for others. This is exemplified by the commandment given to Abraham to sacrifice his son; hence God said to him, "*Now I know, that is, I have made you and others know, that you fear God.*"* In the third case, God desires the act itself, as is evident from the whole twentieth chapter of Exodus, dealing with the Ten Commandments.*

*Gen 22:12

*Albert, *Com*
Mark 1:44 approx

Or he may have instructed the man not to tell anyone for the greater advantage of others who would believe in him freely; for it is better to believe voluntarily rather than for the hope of receiving benefits. Or he may have instructed the man not to tell anyone until he had fulfilled the requirements of the law; it was necessary to await the judgment of the priests, who according to the law had the responsibility to make a ruling regarding leprosy. Chrysostom writes, "He does not forbid him from speaking about this at any time, but he is not to say anything before he has shown himself to the priests. For if he were to tell anyone else first and the priests came to hear of it, in their hostility and hatred for Christ they would expel the man from the people as a leper, since they had not given him a clean bill of health."*

*Opus imperf 21;
PG 56:749-50;
Latin differs
‡R 5

‡Jesus humbly sent the man to the priests, who were commissioned to examine cases of leprosy, and told him to make the sacrifice stipulated by the law. He sent him, first, because although the man had been cleansed, he had not been certified as clean; according to the law, he could not be restored to the life of the community until he had been declared clean by the priests and had offered a gift to the Lord for his cleansing.* The priests were the ones who decided that the man was to be separated from the community, and he could not be re-admitted without their judgment. Second, he did this out of humility: by deferring to

*Lyra *Matt 8:3*

the priests, Christ would demonstrate that he did not want to steal their honor and renown; rather, he gave them due deference.* Third, to show that although they often laid the accusation against him, he was not a transgressor of the law, for he *had not come to destroy, but to fulfil*.* He walked in the way of the law but went beyond the law to heal.* Fourth, so that they would realize that the man had not been cured through the customs and ordinances of the law but by the working of God's grace beyond the law, and that Christ had more power than the law and the priests, who could recognize leprosy but could not cure it.*

Furthermore, to move the hearts of the priests to believe (and to remove any excuse should they choose not to), he wanted the man to make the customary offering *for a testimony unto them*.* This testimony would go against them if, having seen the miracle, they did not believe; it would be a testimony for them, a witness to their salvation, if they did believe. In other words, they would be saved if they saw that the leper had been cleansed and believed in the one who had cured him, and the testimony would be the cause of their salvation as believers. But they would have no excuse for their lack of faith if they saw and did not believe, and then the testimony would be their sentence of condemnation as unbelievers.*

By sending the man to the priests he also wanted to teach and demonstrate that sinners (symbolized by the leper) are required to show themselves to the priest in confession and receive their penance even if they have been cleansed of the leprosy of sin by contrition. The Lord made this leper clean by his touch and afterwards ordered him to show himself to the priests and offer sacrifice. Similarly, sinners are moved to contrition by God's touch, they show themselves to the priest by going to confession, and then they offer sacrifice by performing their penance. Lazy people wait for the priest to come and seek them out—but

*Gloss Matt 8:3
approx;
PL 114:113A

*Matt 5:17

*Zachary 2.45;
PL 186:171D

*Gloss Matt 8:4
approx;
PL 114:113A

*Matt 8:4

*Jerome, Com
Matt 8:4 approx;
PL 26:51B;
CL 77:48–49

*St Cher, Matt 8:3

you, go to the priest and show him the leprosy of your soul by the confession of your lips.

A good confession has four qualities. First, it should be voluntary. This is why the Lord says *go*: not be led, be dragged, be coerced, like those who finally go to confession because they are in torments of affliction or afraid of death. Second, it should be a full self-revelation. Hence he says *show*: make known what you have done, what you have said, and what you have thought. He does not say “hide by offering excuses or mitigating explanations, or deceiving, or mumbling, or not fully reciting your sins and their relevant circumstances.” Third, it should be plain and unadulterated. The Lord says *yourself*: that is, reveal yourself and not others. This is a corrective for those who relate other people’s sins or reveal the identities of those with whom they themselves have sinned. Fourth, it should be properly done. Hence the Lord says *to the priests*: confession should not be made to just anyone, but only to priests, because they wield the key of wisdom and authority.*

*based on St Cher,
Matt 8:3

Spiritual Meanings

In a typical sense, the leper represents the human race, infected by the leprosy of original sin and prone for this reason to commit various sins. Since it is a contagious disease, leprosy can signify original sin, which is passed on through carnal generation. Those touched by Christ’s hand are cleansed, for we are purified in baptism through his power. We must show ourselves by serving God faithfully, and make our offering by continually praising him. Bede says, “As a type, the leper represents the human race, languishing with sins full of leprosy, *for all have sinned and need the glory of God.*” By the stretching out of his hand, that is, by the incarnate Word of God assuming a human

*R 6

*Lyra Mark 1:40
mor

*Rom 3:23

nature, we can be cleansed from a variety of errors and offer our bodies for cleansing as a living sacrifice for God."* The Lord does not refuse to perform the same miracle daily by grace: he truly cleanses a leper every time he justifies a sinner.

*Com Mark 1:44;
PL 92:145B;
CL 120:451–52

***R 7**

In a moral sense, the leper can also represent the individual sinner for several reasons. First, because leprosy is a contagious disease, and it is dangerous to come into contact with lepers; similarly, sinners are contagious and their infection causes others to commit sin, and so it is dangerous to keep company with them. Second, because leprosy is a virulent disease that infects the entire body, but sin is even more dangerous and should be greatly feared and avoided, because it infects and corrupts both body and soul. Third, because leprosy is a detestable and foul-smelling disease; sinners are detestable and foul-smelling to God and the angels. Fourth, because lepers are cut off from the community and forced to dwell apart from others; sinners are cut off from God's grace, the communion of the faithful, the church, and all good things—here, as regards merit, and hereafter as regards fellowship, location, and reward. Fifth, because leprosy produces blotches of different colors on the skin; sin assumes various hues in the mind. The leprous soul is soiled by pride, anger, avarice, sloth, gluttony, envy, or lust. The bodily swelling can represent pride; the burning sensation, anger; the thirst, avarice; the lethargy, sloth; the itching, gluttony; the putrefaction, envy; the foul-smelling breath, lust.

*based on St Cher,
Luke 5:12, and
Gorran Matt 8:2

If you detect these symptoms in yourself, hasten to Jesus as to a physician! Do not despair, but repent sincerely and desire to be made clean. In company with the trusting leper in the gospel, fall on your face with humility and shame, blush for the stains on your life. Do not let embarrassment prevent your confession: show your sores, and with tears own yourself to be a sinner. Seek a remedy for the wounds that have been

detected; implore the Lord's mercy with a contrite heart; beg for healing. Humble yourself and ask God to touch you and cure you with his grace. Admit that you are unclean and that Christ has the power to cleanse you; in his presence, join that leper and call out to him, saying, *Lord, if you will, you can make me clean!*

If you do this you can be assured of mercy and need not despair of receiving pardon; the gentle Lord rejects no one who comes to him, but opens wide the bosom of his mercy to all. There is no need to spend many years in doing penance, for he looks for *a contrite and humbled heart*,* and in his mercy he frees from sin those who sincerely repent. Such is the hand of divine mercy that is stretched out: by its powerful touch all offenses are wiped away. The Lord reaches out that hand when he imparts the assistance of divine mercy, and the remission of sins immediately follows. Nevertheless, the church's reconciliation cannot be gained without the judgment of the priest.

*Ps 50:19

When you are thus cleansed from your sins, you should offer your gift to God, the sacrifice of praise. Laud him at all times, for we should be very grateful, always giving him thanks and doing all we can for others, thereby manifesting love for God and neighbor. We should not take any credit ourselves out of vainglory, but offer everything to God. God wills that we should receive all the merit due for our good works and that our neighbor should receive good example through them, but that the praise and glory be reserved to him.

There are three things that God reserves specifically to himself, and he does not want any creatures to have a share in them: glory, vengeance, and the power to judge. The vain and boastful appropriate his glory; the proud and the wrathful, who seek revenge for injuries done to them, seize his vengeance; and the rash and presumptuous, who want to judge the hidden motives of others, usurp his power of judgment.

The Leper Proclaims his Miraculous Cure

*R 8

*Theophylact,
En Mark 1:43–45
approx;
PG 123:510B
‡Mark 1:45

Titus says that someone who has received a benefit should be grateful and give thanks, although the benefactor does not require it. Therefore, although the Lord had instructed the cleansed leper to keep silent about his cure, *he, being gone out* and moving away, *began to publish and to blaze abroad the word*‡ about the Lord's words and deeds. News of the healing and Christ's teaching spread all the more quickly: people acquire fame and glory when they try to avoid them. As Bernard observes, the characteristic feature of worldly glory is that it flees those who chase after it and follows those who flee from it; in this it is like our shadow: we cannot catch it if we follow it, but if we run ahead, we cannot escape it.*

*Bonaventure,
De profectu 1.9

So the man assumed the office of evangelist and showed people that he had been cured inwardly and outwardly; the salvation of one person urged many to come to God. Because of the throng of people who sought healing or hastened to see a miracle, Jesus *could not openly go into the city** to pray. For this reason, he withdrew into the wilderness so that he could pray in private. He heals as God but prays as man.*

*Mark 1:45

*this sent Gloss
Luke 5:16;
PL 114:257A

Jesus Withdraws

*R 9

‡Mark 1:45

*And they flocked to him from all sides‡ to hear him teach and to be healed by him. The Lord fled from the noise and tumult and sought out a remote place to show us that he preferred a quiet and withdrawn life removed from mundane preoccupations. He turns aside from souls who are immersed in the distractions of this world, but he visits those who separate themselves from these things. He also shows us that preachers of the divine word should flee from the applause of the people and occasionally withdraw from the multitude to free themselves for prayer.

Jerome says, "What it means that he *could not openly go into the city, but was out in desert places,** is that Jesus does not manifest himself to all those people who go far and wide to receive human acclaim and do their own will, but to those who go with Peter out into the desert places. These were the sites where the Lord chose to pray and to refresh those who cease to be concerned about worldly delights and all their possessions, so that they are able to say, *O Lord, my portion.** The glory of the Lord is revealed to those who gather around him from all sides, coming to him from arduous mountains and easy plains, for nothing can separate them from the love of Christ."*

*Mark 1:45

*Ps 118:57

*Cumm

Mark 1:45;
PL 30:597CD

And Bede writes,

By performing miracles in the city and spending his nights in prayer on the mountain or in the desert, he teaches us lessons about the two ways of life, active and contemplative. We should not devote ourselves to contemplation so much that we neglect to care for our neighbor, nor should we be immoderately obligated to caring for our neighbor and neglect contemplation. Love of God should not hinder love of neighbor, nor should love of neighbor impede love of God. To pray on the mountain means to leave behind the anxieties of feeble thoughts and hasten with our whole mind to the eternal joys of heavenly contemplation. To withdraw into the desert to pray means to overcome inwardly the tumult of worldly desires and to seek a quiet refuge with the Lord within ourselves where, with every external distraction quieted, we can silently converse with him through our inner desires.*

*Com Luke 5:16;
PL 92:386BC;
CL 120:119

And, finally, Gregory: "Our Redeemer performs miracles in the cities during the day, and he devotes his nights to prayer on the mountain to teach all perfect preachers that they should neither abandon completely the active life from a love of meditation nor

wholly slight the joys of contemplation by an excess of work. Let them occupy themselves with pouring back to their neighbors by speaking what they quietly imbibe by contemplation.”*

*Mor 6.XXXVII.56;
PL 75:760D–61A;
CL 143:325–26

Although Mark and Luke say here that *he could not openly go into the city but was out in desert places*, this should not be understood as referring to the day when he healed the leper. That same day he entered the city of Capernaum, about two miles from the place where he cured the man, before many people heard of the miracle. This is why Matthew goes on to relate the account of the healing of the centurion’s servant.



Lord Jesus Christ, you came down from the mountain of your Father’s throne and the virginal womb to heal the leprosy of the human race. See, I who am a leper marred by stains of various sins adore you, Lord. If you wish, you can make me clean. Stretch forth the hand of tenderness and grace; touch both inwardly and outwardly this leper who calls out to you. Have mercy on me in my repentance and rule over the disease of sin. My God, my Mercy, who wills not the death of sinner but rather that he be converted and live, bring this to pass in me, a sinner, so that I do not die spiritually but am converted and live with you forever. Amen.

CHAPTER 91

**The Feeding of
the Four Thousand**

(Matt 15:29-39; Mark 8:1-10)

*Then, *going up into a mountain* in a deserted place, *Jesus sat there** to rest. *And there came to him great multitudes from various cities, towns, and villages, having with them the mute, the blind, the lame, the maimed, and many others afflicted by all manner of illnesses, and they laid them down at his feet,** expressing their devout faith in gesture as well as in word. Those blessed feet of Jesus! There sins are washed away: *Standing behind at his feet, she began to wash his feet.** There the sick are healed, as here. There holy doctrine is learned: *Sitting also at the Lord's feet, she heard his word.** There joy is rekindled: *They came up and took hold of his feet and adored him.**

And he healed them[†] with a mere word, for he who had created the whole world with a word could also heal with a word. So that the multitudes marvelled seeing the mute speak, the lame walk, the blind see: and they glorified the God of Israel.** According to Chrysostom, they marveled both at the number of people healed and the ease with which Jesus cured them.* The great number of miracles performed by Jesus is expressed here in a general way, for if they were described individually they would fill a large book. Indeed, as the evangelist John observes, if all that Christ did was written

***R 1**

*Matt 15:29

*Matt 15:30

*Luke 7:38

*Luke 10:39

*Matt 28:9;

Gorran Matt 15:30

†Matt 15:30

*Lyra Matt 15:30

*Matt 15:31

*Hom Matt 52.3;

PG 57/58:522

down, all the books in the world could not contain the record.*

*John 21:25

Of all those afflicted with illness, four in particular are mentioned here: *the mute, the blind, the lame, and the maimed*. We are spiritually mute when we lack good words, spiritually lame when we lack good works, blind when we lack true thoughts, and maimed when we lack good will.*

*Gorran Matt 15:31

Here we should note that according to Origen, in practice we are first weak in our will, then blind in our intellect, next lame in action, and finally mute in praising God.*

*cited in Gorran
Matt 15:30

In the gospel text, however, the afflictions are listed according to the magnitude of their impact. According to the Gloss, "The mute are those who do not praise God, the blind those who do not understand the way of life, the lame those who stray from the path of good works and do not walk rightly, the maimed those who are weak in performing good works."*

*CA, Matt 15:29–31, based on Laon
(PL 162:1390D)

He heals the mute when he loosens their tongue to sing their Creator's praise, he enlightens the blind when he fills the ignorant with knowledge of their salvation, he heals the lame when he guides their steps into the way of righteousness, and he strengthens the maimed when he prompts the lazy and indolent to do good works with vigor. The crowds marvel and glorify God when they praise God for the changes wrought by the right hand of the Most High.*

*see Ps 76:11; *Lyra*
Matt 15:31 *mor*

Rabanus Maurus writes,

Jesus went up onto the mountain to raise his hearers to meditate on heavenly, supernal matters. He sat down to show that rest should be sought only in heavenly things. While he is sitting on the mountain, that is, the height of heaven, the multitude of the faithful draw near to him with devout minds, bringing to him the mute, the blind, and others who are sick, and lay them at Jesus' feet, because they that confess their sins are brought to be healed by him alone. These he heals, causing the crowd to marvel and glorify the God of Israel:

when the faithful see those who have been spiritually sick richly endowed with all kinds of virtuous works, they praise God.*

*CA, Matt 15:29–31, based on Rabanus Com Matt 15:31 [PL 107:981D–82A; CM 174A:447–48]

The Lord's Compassion for the Crowd

*Because *there was great multitude* with Jesus *and they had nothing to eat, he called his disciples together** and spoke with them about what he was going to do. According to the Gloss, Christ first took away the debilities of their illnesses and afterward fed those who had been healed because sins must be removed and then the soul must be nourished with God's word.* The Lord wanted to call his disciples together and speak with them for several reasons: first, according to Jerome, as an example to teachers, so that they would not always refuse to consult with their students and disciples but would sometimes ask their advice; second, according to the same father, so that the disciples would understand the greatness of the sign; and third, to reveal the depth of his compassion, because he could no longer keep it within.*

*R 2

*Mark 8:1

*Laon, Matt 15:32; PL 162:1391A

And he said to them, *I have compassion on the multitudes.** Listen to those words of such tender love, erupting from the depths of his heart and reaching with their power the depths of our own! No one could have such compassion on us as our Creator, whose *tender mercies are over all his works.** He spoke these words to his apostles to move their spirits too to heart-felt mercy. According to the Gloss Jesus felt compassion as one who is truly human, and he nourished as one who is truly God.*

*Com Matt 15:32; PL 26:111C; CL 77:135 *Matt 15:32

*Ps 144:9

He went on to give two reasons for his compassion: length of time and need. *"Because they continue with me now three days, bringing their sick to me and awaiting a cure, and they have persevered with me, following me, listening to me, and seeing my miracles, and have nothing to eat,** nor have they given any thought

*Laon, Matt 15:32; PL 162:1391A

*Matt 15:32

to this, which it is why it is fitting that they be provided for.”*

*Corran
Matt 15:32

This indicates their great devotion: so strong was their desire to cling to him—listening to his gratifying teaching, contemplating his agreeable face, watching the miraculous works that made such an impression on them—that they were caught up out of themselves, as it were; they gave no thought to the lack of food and for three days had not returned to their own homes. They remained with Christ in a desolate place under the open sky with nothing to eat, but they did not feel the lack because they were with Jesus the Savior. Whatever food they had brought from home was long since eaten, and they were not able to obtain food in the wilderness. He did not perform the miracle on the first or second day, while they still had some provisions with them, so that the miracle would be more remarkable when their hampers were completely empty.*

*Lyra Matt 15:32
approx

He also said, “*And if I send them away fasting to their home, they will faint in the way from hunger and the exertion, for some of them came from afar off.*”* Food was essential to them; so great is the Creator’s power that, if he abandons a creature, that creature lacks everything. Their homes were far off, and perhaps even the day before they had had little to eat; Christ’s fame had spread far and wide, so many had come from a great distance.

*Mark 8:3

The Doubts of the Disciples

*R 3

*Mark 8:4

And his disciples answered him: “How can anyone fill them here with bread in the wilderness?” In other words, “This is a deserted place, far from town; it is not humanly possible to provide what they need.”* They spoke like this because their minds were feeble: they still did not understand, nor did they believe in his

*Lyra Matt 15:33

power in spite of his earlier miracles. *And he asked them: "How many loaves do you have?"** The Lord did not ask this out of ignorance, but so that when they answered, "Seven," and stated how few loaves there were, the impact of the miracle would be greater and become more renowned, and also to indicate the way he would provide in the circumstances.

*Mark 8:5

*They said: "Seven, and a few little fishes."** Seven loaves were like nothing given the size of the crowd, and the fish were few in number and tiny. This speaks to the sobriety and temperance of the disciples: they did not eat meat, but fish, and even these were very small and few in number. All of these things were said to underscore the magnitude of the miracle, for a huge crowd would be fed with such a small amount of food. And this would take place through the multiplication of the food in Christ's hands.*

*Matt 15:34

*Gorran
Matt 15:34 approx

Christ Multiplies the Loaves and Fishes with his Blessing

And he commanded the multitude to sit down upon the ground. The previous multiplication of the loaves took place around Passover, so there had been grass on the ground. This time there was no grass because, according to Origen and many others, this miracle took place in winter. In fact it occurred on the day of the Epiphany, when many other miracles were performed by the Lord.¹

*R 4

*Matt 15:35

And taking the seven loaves, giving thanks, he broke and gave them to his disciples to set before them. And they set

¹ Following Origen, Jerome delineates the differences between the two miracles, including the grass, although neither draws the conclusion that this latter miracle took place in winter (PL 26:112B). On the association of this miracle with Epiphany, see footnote 1 in part one, chap. 11.

- them before the people. And they had a few little fishes; and he blessed them and commanded them to be set before them.**
- *Mark 8:6-7 He took the loaves and fishes so that they could be multiplied by coming into contact with his blessed hands. He gave thanks to provide us with an example of gratitude, showing what differentiates us from the beasts; we know from whom we receive, and for what we should give thanks. As the apostle James says, *Every best gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights.** He blessed them so that by his blessing they would increase, and he broke them into small pieces to be shared among the many. But these days, one person strives to amass for himself everything that was divided up by Christ to give to the poor!* And he gave to his disciples, not so that they would keep the food to themselves, but to distribute it as ministers; and they gave to the people.*
- *Jas 1:17 *And they that ate, were four thousand men, beside children and women.* They all ate, and had their fill,‡* which is not surprising, because they had such a good Provider. *And they took up seven baskets full of what remained of the fragments** to give to the poor, which certainly indicates that they had eaten their fill. See how great a thing almsgiving is, for what was distributed and mutually shared grew abundantly, but what is hoarded rots and makes a person poor! *And he sent them away.**
- *this sent Albert, Com Mark 8:6
- *Gorran Matt 15:36 approx
- *Matt 15:38
- ‡Matt 15:37
- *Matt 15:37
- *Mark 8:9 Such was the sweetness of his discourse and so greatly were they held by their admiration of Christ's power that unless he had ordered them to leave, they would not have done so.

Spiritual Meanings

- *R 5 *In a mystical sense this miracle demonstrates that we cannot travel the road of this present life unless we are nourished by the food provided us by our Redeemer.* The people *continue with the Lord three days*
- *Bede, Com Mark 8:1; PL 92:205C; CL 120:527

because the grace of the Christian faith was given in the third age: the first age was before the law, the second was under the law, the third was under grace. And because the fourth age is still to come, in which we will enter the heavenly Jerusalem, he says that the multitude must be fed *lest they faint in the way*; in this life we are on the way that takes us to our homeland.* Lest the faithful faint on the way, pastors and teachers should feed them with the bread of the Eucharist and doctrine; in this way the sevenfold gift of the Holy Spirit will increase.*

*Aug, *Quaest* 83,
61.7; PL 40:52;
CL 44A:129–30

**Lyra Matt* 15:32
mor

And just as this crowd remained with the Lord so that he would heal the sick, if you want to be cured of your spiritual illnesses you should follow its example and stay with him for three days: the first is the sorrow of contrition, the second is the shame of confession, the third is the effort of satisfaction. This is the *triduum* to be spent in the desert, so that a sacrifice can be offered that is pleasing to God.* Or, according to the Gloss, the crowd continues with the Lord three days when the multitude of the faithful, turning from its sins by repentance, converts to goodness in action, words, and thoughts.*

*see Exod 5:3

*Gloss Mark 8:2;
PL 114:208D

These three days take different forms in various states of life: penitents, workers, contemplatives, pastors, and preachers. In penance there are the three stages of contrition, confession, and satisfaction; in contemplation we have meditation, reading, and prayer; for pastors there are discretion in the intellect, zeal in the affection, and justice in execution; and for preachers poverty, chastity, and obedience.* Some come from nearby, those who have maintained their baptismal innocence. Others come from a great distance: they have repented after many trials, because the more a person wanders, the longer the way is back to God.

*Gorran
Matt 15:32 *mor*
approx

The disciples believe that it is almost impossible for him to satisfy with bread those who are in solitary

*R 6

places. *And in moral sense this can be understood to mean that since the soul's bread consists in knowledge of the truth and love of the good, nothing can be found in the wilderness of the present world that feeds and satisfies the hungry soul. The bread of truth is mingled with much worldly wisdom and error, for *truths are decayed from among the children of men.** And again, the bread of the love of creatures contains much that is bitter. Augustine writes, "Souls shackled by the love of perishable things are miserable and are torn apart when they lose them."* Nor is this the bread of knowledge and love that can satisfy our soul.

*Ps 11:2

*Conf 4.6.11;
PL 32:697;
CL 27:45

Since the Lord knew that the disciples had only *seven loaves and a few small fishes*, he took them into his hands, showing that he was the Lord and Maker of loaves and all other things, *for in his hand are all the ends of the earth.** Then he *blessed them*, thereby imparting to them the power to be multiplied. And then he *broke them* when he wanted to give them to his disciples, indicating the opening of the sacramental order by which he would nourish the world. Again, he *broke them* to show that the multiplication was being performed by his power. He then *gave them to the disciples* so that they could serve them to the crowd, honoring the disciples and signifying that he was imparting the gifts of spiritual wisdom to the apostles, and that he wished through their ministry to distribute the food that sustains his church throughout the world.*

*Ps 94:4

*Bede, Com
Mark 8:6 approx;
PL 92:207AB;
CL 120:529–30
‡John 11:45

Their office is signified here in the distribution of the loaves, and elsewhere in freeing the dead, where Christ tells them, *Untie him and let him go,*[‡] and when they led the ass and her colt to him, *Untie them and bring them to me.** Their ministry is concerned with leading people to faith, untying the bonds of sin, and distributing spiritual food. He gave them loaves, because bread is the food that sustains life; he gave the fishes as a condiment for the food, thereby showing that good example should season the bread of God's word: deeds are more persuasive than words.

*Matt 21:2

And the *disciples gave them to the people*. The loaves were multiplied by the creation of new matter being added to them, not by their becoming less solid, for then their mass would have become more subtle and thin than other bodies. Augustine says, "There is nothing more absurd than to say that something can increase and not become diluted without something being added to it."*

Let us then strive to receive the bread of divine wisdom that others set before us by their preaching, *lest we faint in the way* by our negligence and die of hunger. Converted sinners will perish on the road of this present life if they allow their consciences to go without the food of doctrine. We must feed on holy advice if we are not to be worn down by rigors of our pilgrim journey.*

*De Gen ad lit
10.26.45;
PL 34:428

*Bede, Com
Mark 8:2;
PL 92:206A;
CL 120:528

The Spiritual Symbolism of the Two Miracles

This miracle differs from the earlier multiplication of loaves and fishes in several respects. In the first miracle, there were five loaves and two fishes. The five loaves symbolize the teaching of the Old Testament recorded in the five books of Moses; the seven loaves here symbolize the teaching of the New Testament, which more fully reveals and bestows the sevenfold grace of the Holy Spirit. The loaves also suggest the seven beatitudes, the seven sacraments, and the seven virtues, four cardinal and three theological. The five loaves were of barley, while the seven are of wheat: the teaching of the New Testament is more delicious, sweet, and clear than that of the Old Testament.

*R 7

The two fishes on that occasion can be understood to signify the two persons who were anointed to feed the people,* the king and the priest. The few little fishes here can represent the saints, battered by the waves of this world: pulled from turbulent waters, they provide inner nourishment by the example of their lives.

*Allegoriae NT 3.6
(PL 175:806-7)
and Gorran
Matt 15:32 approx
*in the Old
Testament

Their patient endurance and death imparts a certain savor, seasoning as it were the bread of the New Testament, the Scripture that records their faith, life, and sufferings. They are called *little* because of their humility, and *few* because not many are perfect, although *the number of fools is infinite,** and *many are called but few chosen.**

*Ecc1 1:15

*Matt 20:15; *this sent Gorran*
Matt 15:32

On the former occasion the people sat on the grass, but here they sit on the bare ground: the Old Testament promised earthly rewards, while in the New Law we are taught to overcome and despise such things. Banqueters of the New Testament are commanded to crush underfoot all delights and riches, and even the flesh itself, which is grass. The firm ground of abiding hope has no grassy cushion of worldly longings.*

**Allegoriae NT 3.6*
(PL 175:806-7)
and Gorran
Matt 15:32
approx

In the former miracle there were five thousand men and five loaves, corresponding to the five earthly senses. Here there are four thousand men, signifying things spiritual: the fourfold perfection of the gospels or the four cardinal virtues by which spiritual people live in this life. They also symbolize Christ's followers, who come from the four corners of the world. In neither event were the women and children counted, because they were not numbered in the law, but Christ wants no one to go hungry—he desires to fill everyone with his grace.*

**Allegoriae NT 3.6*
(PL 175:806-7)
and Gorran
Matt 15:32
approx

On the former occasion the number of baskets equaled the number of disciples: there were twelve baskets of fragments and twelve apostles. In this instance there are seven loaves and seven baskets. Once the crowd had eaten its fill, the apostles collected what was left over and filled seven baskets. They did this for three reasons. First, for the sake of mystery: there are higher precepts and counsels that ordinary believers cannot observe and fulfill; their execution is properly carried out by spiritual people. The apostles lifted up and filled seven baskets, that is, the perfect who are illuminated by the sevenfold grace of the Spirit.

But we must keep in mind that the multitude was filled: even though they do not leave all things, they gain eternal life by heeding the commandments. Second, as an example, so that we will give to the poor what is superfluous or what we do not eat when we are fasting. Third, as an instruction, so that from this we would learn that temporal goods are multiplied for those who are merciful to the poor. This teaches us that the poor feed their benefactors more than their benefactors feed them, either obtaining for them spiritual goods or increasing temporal ones.

As we have just seen, this miracle differed in many ways from the previous multiplication of loaves and fishes. But they both took place on a mountain because, when properly understood, both Testaments teach us the heights of heavenly precepts and rewards; they harmoniously proclaim together Christ, the Mountain who looms over the highest peaks.*

**Rabanus,
Hom 121;
PL 110:376C*

The Spiritual Symbolism of the Multitude

*Now let us reflect on those whom the Lord deigns to feed and to whom he imparts the nourishment of grace. To be sure, they seek him in the wilderness and stay with him three days. This happens when the faithful believe in the Trinity; when they are contrite, confess their sins, and make satisfaction for them to the extent they can; and when they turn to God in thought, word, and deed. Waiting upon God's goodness, they do not withdraw from him even when temptation is at hand. God shows compassion to such as these, feeding them with seven loaves, the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit, lest they faint on the way of this world. The seven baskets of fragments signify the sevenfold endowment to be given after this life: to the soul, clear vision of God and the concomitant enjoyment and

***R 8**

possession; to the body, impassibility, agility, subtility, and brightness.^{2*}

**Lyra Mark 8:2 mor approx*

Ambrose comments,

The food of heavenly grace is bestowed, but observe to whom it is given. It is not given to the idle, to those who dwell in the city as if in the synagogue, or earthly dignity, but among those who seek Christ in the desert. Those who are not haughty are received by Christ.* Thus the Lord Jesus distributes the food. He wants to give to all and deny none, for he is the Steward of all. However, if you do not stretch out your hands to receive the food when he breaks the loaves to give them to his disciples you will faint on the way. Nor can you assign the blame to the one who is compassionate and distributes. He also gives to those who remain with him in the wilderness and do not leave him on the first, second, or third day. He does not want to send them away hungry; he does not want them to faint on the way. Do not grow faint from God's discipline or become fatigued when he rebukes you. Do not be wearied now, so that you will not be wearied later.*

*Exp Luke 6.69;
PL 15:1686BC;
CL 14:198

*Exp Luke 6.76–77;
PL 15:1688B;
CL 14:201

Think, too, about the worthless frugality of their table and despise worldly delights. Chrysostom writes, "Nothing is so inimical and destructive to the body as pleasure, nothing so destructive and corrosive. First it punishes the feet that carry us to those harmful revels; then it binds together the hands that serve up such provisions to the stomach. Many have also corrupted their mouth, eyes, and head."* Horace counsels, "Despise pleasure: pleasure bought by pain does harm."* Other pertinent points for meditation

*Hom Matt 44.5;
PG 57/58:471–72

*Ep 1.2.55

² Thomas discusses the three endowments of the soul in ST Suppl., q. 95, and of the glorified body in Suppl., q. 82–85. The final chapter of the VC deals with these endowments at some length.

can be taken from the earlier meditation on those fed with the five loaves.*

*part one,
chap. 67

The Spiritual Symbolism of the Seven Loaves and Two Fishes

*Again, the seven loaves can be understood to symbolize the seven stages of repentance. The first loaf is heartfelt amendment for past sins, the second is true and humble self-accusation, the third is continual indignation about past sins, the fourth is anxious concern not to commit them again, the fifth is a firm commitment to make progress in doing good, the sixth is the imitation of holy people, the seventh is doing penance for one's own sins and the sins of others. These are the *seven ears growing on one stalk*,* the seven steps of the ladder going up to heaven; by them the guilt for the seven capital sins is taken away, the seven-fold grace of the Spirit is poured out, and the seven virtues are acquired.*

*R 9

*Gen 41:22

*St Cher,
Matt 15:34 approx

These loaves are seasoned with a few small fish, at least two, symbolizing fear and love. The first fish is fear of the punishments of hell and is drawn out of the waters of the underworld.³ The second fish is the love and desire for eternal things and is captured in the river of Paradise. They are called small fishes: fear is small because it makes a person small and humble; love is small here by comparison with love in the age to come.*

*St Cher,
Matt 15:34 approx

These seven loaves in a mystical sense can also be understood to be the food with which the Lord nourishes the faithful in a way appropriate to their various states as beginners, proficient, and perfect:

³ Ancient Greek mythology identified five rivers in the underworld: *Styx* (hate), *Cocytus* (wailing), *Phlegethon* (flaming), *Lethe* (oblivion), and *Acheron* (pain).

*R 10

*Sermo 1.4 Dom 6
 post Pent;
 PL 183:339AB;
 SB 5:208–9
 ‡Matt 4:4

THE LOAVES FOR BEGINNERS: Bernard proposes seven loaves for beginners in the monastery, who are at the initial stages of conversion. The first loaf is the word, in which is life for us: *not in bread alone does man live, but in every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.*[‡] Here we will pass over in silence the literal spoken words which we read about in connection with Moses, Abraham, and others, by which God spoke to them either himself, or through the ministry of angels, or in some other way. In our own day we can say that the word comes from the mouth of God in two ways. The first way is immediate: God speaks directly to the human heart, inspiring a person to do something; this is how God addresses worldly people and sinners, urging them to repent. The second way is mediate, through other people—be they pastors, preachers, teachers, or friends—who act as *referendarii*, as it were, by which God conveys his words to our ears.⁴ There is a third way God speaks to people, and especially to those in monasteries: the Scriptures, which are received in their entirety as the word of God, by whose inspiration they were written, and which feed those who read them with the bread of spiritual life.

The second loaf, according to Bernard, is obedience, which certainly complements the first: what good is it to hear the word of God if we do not want to be guided by it in our lives? The third loaf is meditation, which accompanies the preceding two very well: after we have committed the words of God to our heart and have decided to obey them, we should continually ponder them in order to know how to follow them in a way pleasing to God. The fourth loaf is the tears of those who pray, a bread that goes well with the others: when we reflect on the burden of our sins, the misery

⁴ In the Byzantine Court and later in the Roman Curia, a *referendarius* presented petitions to the emperor or pope.

of our present condition, the glory of eternal life, our own weakness, and God's goodness toward us, the flame of devotion is enkindled, the heart is melted by tears of compunction, and we have recourse to the protection of prayer.

The fifth loaf is the work of penitence, which is as essential to beginners as the other loaves already named: as Augustine teaches, it is not enough to change our behavior for the better and keep away from evil deeds unless we also make reparation to God for the evil we have done with penitential effort and sorrow.* The sixth loaf is pleasant social concord; this is described quite fittingly as bread, for it feeds and consoles those beginning to live a spiritual life together, be they in the broader communion of the church or in a religious community. The seventh loaf is the Eucharist; about this we have spoken sufficiently in various places.

*Sermo 151.5.12;
PL 39:1549

*THE LOAVES FOR THE PROFICIENT: Having considered the seven loaves of beginners, let us move on to taste the seven loaves given to those who are proficient. Here we must bear in mind that *it is not of him that wills, nor of him that runs, but of God that shows mercy*.* If we want to advance swiftly on the road of spiritual progress we must rely completely on divine mercy and always keep gratefully before our mind's eye the good things that God in his mercy has already done for us; then we can make good progress toward even better things. This is why Bernard reduced all the mercies accorded him by God to seven loaves, with which God in his compassion deigned to feed him.* We should eat these same loaves if we want to make progress in the spiritual life, so that we can say with the psalmist, *Let your tender mercies come to me, and I shall live*.*

*R 11

*Rom 9:16

*Sermo 2.3-5
Dom 6 post Pent;
PL 183:340C-41C;
SB 5:210-13

*Ps 118:77

According to Bernard the first loaf, or the first mercy, is our preservation from committing many sins into which we would fall if God had not protected us.

Bernard says that this loaf has three fragments: "I recall that I have been kept from sins in three ways: the occasion has been removed, I have been given strength to resist, or my desires have been healed."^{*} The second loaf is God's compassionate deferral of vengeance on the sinner, for he delays wounding and ponders forgiveness. And this loaf too has three fragments: the forbearance that God manifested, the predestination that he wanted to be fulfilled, and *his exceeding charity with which he loved us*.^{*} The third loaf is the mercy with which he turns us to repentance. Again, this has three fragments: God batters my heart, causing it to look upon the self-inflicted wounds of sin and feel the pain of those wounds; he frightens me by leading me to the gates of hell and showing the torments prepared for the wicked; and he provides comfort to my mind by giving hope.

*Sermo 3.1 6
Dom post Pent;
PL 183:341D; 2.1
SB 5:209

*Eph 2:4

The fourth loaf is the forgiveness of sins, by which God mercifully receives the sinner. Bernard says that this loaf has three fragments: "God has completely forgiven me and generously pardoned every wrong: first, he no longer condemns me to punishment; second, he does not shame me with reproaches; third, he does not love me less by imputing sin to me."^{*} The fifth loaf is abstinence from sinning, or the ability to resist and to amend my life so that I will not return to sin. Again, there are three fragments, because continence contends with three attackers: the flesh, the world, and the evil spirit. We cannot resist these with our own unaided strength, but, drawing courage from the divine mercy in this loaf, we have this strength in the Lord.

*Sermo 3.4 6
Dom post Pent;
PL 183:342C; 2.4
SB 5:210–11

The sixth loaf is the grace of gaining merit, by which God overlooks the imperfections in our works. According to Bernard, this grace depends on three things, which are, as it were, its three fragments: hatred for past sins, contempt for present goods, and longing for future goods.^{*} The seventh loaf is the hope of obtain-

*Sermo 3.6 Dom 6
post Pent;
PL 183:344B; 2.6
SB 5:213

ing, by which God gives to the unworthy, sinful person who has experienced so many good things from him the boldness to hope for heavenly blessings. Bernard speaks of the three fragments of this loaf: "I believe that all my hope consists in three things: the charity of adoption, the truth of his promise, and his power to accomplish."*

‡THE LOAVES FOR THE PERFECT: Having been refreshed by the two sets of seven loaves that Saint Bernard has distributed to beginners and proficients, let us hasten to taste seven more loaves set before us by the Holy Spirit, his seven gifts that nourish the souls of the perfect. Happy the soul that deserves to be satisfied with them! These gifts can rightly be described as loaves of bread because they delightfully restore the soul now and will fill it to repletion in the future. The first loaf is fear of the Lord, but this is *filial* fear, for servile fear is appropriate to beginners. This chaste fear makes us dread separation from God, and so we avoid evil because it is opposed to God. However, because it is also necessary to do good, a second loaf follows, the gift of piety. By this gift the Holy Spirit teaches us to do good for God's glory and the benefit of all our neighbors. This *godliness** is *profitable to all things*, for it flows from a heart loyal to God alone; *bodily exercise*, lacking this piety, is *profitable to little*.* The third loaf is the gift of knowledge, which goes well with the previous two. As Chrysostom says, none of us can fear evil unless we know it, nor can we do good if we are ignorant; the gift of knowledge enables us to judge rightly in earthly matters, recognizing which are harmful and which are helpful toward salvation.*

The fourth loaf is the gift of fortitude, which fittingly follows wisdom: once we know what should be avoided and what should be done, we need the gift of fortitude to do what we know should be done or avoided. The martyrs were richly endowed with this

*Sermo 3.6 Dom 6
post Pent;
PL 183:344C; 2.6
SB 5:213
‡R 12

*pietas

*1 Tim 4:8

*John of Salisbury,
Policraticus 3.1;
CM 118, p. 174

gift, for no torments could conquer them. The fifth loaf is the gift of counsel, by which we are guided as if by God's advice in matters where human reason is insufficient. Counsel rightly follows fortitude, for, according to Gregory, fortitude collapses if it is not propped up by counsel; the more strength it perceives itself to have, the more quickly it rushes to its ruin if it lacks moderation.* And he says elsewhere that the mind that dethrones counsel inwardly scatters itself outwardly in desires beyond counting.*

*Mor 1.XXXII.45;

PL 75:547C;

CL 143:49

*Mor 6.XVI.25;

PL 75:743B;

CL 143:302

The sixth loaf is the gift of understanding, which follows upon counsel and does two things in the soul: speculatively, it enlightens the intellect so it can sensibly comprehend the counsel of the Holy Spirit; practically, it purifies the affection so it can put this counsel into practice. The seventh loaf is the gift of wisdom, which follows upon understanding and all of the other gifts, for they are nothing without wisdom. Wisdom is knowledge of the sweetness of divine things gained through experience; this is why it is called *sapientia*, from *sapida Scientia*,* as it were.† By the gift of wisdom, we not only understand divine things; we also savor them.

*a relishing
knowledge

†this sent Exp Or

Dom 31.187–89;

ST Ia, q. 43, a. 5,

ad 2



Lord Jesus Christ, have compassion on the multitude of the beginners and the penitents, of the proficient and the just, of the perfect and the contemplatives. Give to those hoping for pardon a triduum of contrition, confession, and satisfaction; to those hoping for grace a triduum of victory over the world, the flesh, and the devil; of those hoping for glory a triduum of bodily, imaginative, and spiritual vision. Restore the first with discreet solicitude, prudence, indignation, fear, desire,

emulation, and mortification. Restore the second with the spirit of fear, piety, knowledge, fortitude, counsel, understanding, and wisdom. Restore the third with the three endowments of the soul and the four endowments of the body—by hope, to be sure, in the present, but a hope that will grow to fill seven baskets in future blessedness. Amen.