

## THIRD PART, QUESTION 40

### Of Christ's Manner of Life (In Four Articles)

Having considered those things which relate to Christ's entrance into the world, or to His beginning, it remains for us to consider those that relate to the process of His life. And we must consider (1) His manner of life; (2) His temptation; (3) His doctrine; (4) His miracles.

Concerning the first there are four points of inquiry:

- (1) Whether Christ should have led a solitary life, or have associated with men?
- (2) Whether He should have led an austere life as regards food, drink, and clothing? Or should He have conformed Himself to others in these respects?
- (3) Whether He should have adopted a lowly state of life, or one of wealth and honor?
- (4) Whether He should have lived in conformity with the Law?

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#### Whether Christ should have associated with men, or led a solitary life?

IIIa q. 40 a. 1

**Objection 1.** It would seem that Christ should not have associated with men, but should have led a solitary life. For it behooved Christ to show by His manner of life not only that He was man, but also that He was God. But it is not becoming that God should associate with men, for it is written (Dan. 2:11): "Except the gods, whose conversation is not with men"; and the Philosopher says (Polit. i) that he who lives alone is "either a beast"—that is, if he do this from being wild—"or a god," if his motive be the contemplation of truth. Therefore it seems that it was not becoming for Christ to associate with men.

**Objection 2.** Further, while He lived in mortal flesh, it behooved Christ to lead a most perfect life. But the most perfect is the contemplative life, as we have stated in the IIa IIae, q. 182, Aa. 1,2. Now, solitude is most suitable to the contemplative life; according to Osee 2:14: "I will lead her into the wilderness, and I will speak to her heart." Therefore it seems that Christ should have led a solitary life.

**Objection 3.** Further, Christ's manner of life should have been uniform: because it should always have given evidence of that which is best. But at times Christ avoided the crowd and sought lonely places: hence Remigius\*, commenting on Matthew, says: "We read that our Lord had three places of refuge: the ship, the mountain, the desert; to one or other of which He betook Himself whenever he was harassed by the crowd." Therefore He ought always to have led a solitary life.

**On the contrary,** It is written (Baruch 3:38): "Afterwards He was seen upon earth and conversed with men."

**I answer that,** Christ's manner of life had to be in keeping with the end of His Incarnation, by reason of which He came into the world. Now He came into the world, first, that He might publish the truth. thus He says Himself (Jn. 18:37): "For this was I born, and for this came I into the world, that I should give testimony to the truth." Hence it was fitting not that He

should hide Himself by leading a solitary life, but that He should appear openly and preach in public. Wherefore (Lk. 4:42,43) He says to those who wished to stay Him: "To other cities also I must preach the kingdom of God: for therefore am I sent."

Secondly, He came in order to free men from sin; according to 1 Tim. 1:15: "Christ Jesus came into this world to save sinners." And hence, as Chrysostom says, "although Christ might, while staying in the same place, have drawn all men to Himself, to hear His preaching, yet He did not do so; thus giving us the example to go about and seek those who perish, like the shepherd in his search of the lost sheep, and the physician in his attendance on the sick."

Thirdly, He came that by Him "we might have access to God," as it is written (Rom. 5:2). And thus it was fitting that He should give men confidence in approaching Him by associating familiarly with them. Wherefore it is written (Mat. 9:10): "It came to pass as He was sitting... in the house, behold, many publicans and sinners came, and sat down with Jesus and His disciples." On which Jerome comments as follows: "They had seen the publican who had been converted from a sinful to a better life: and consequently they did not despair of their own salvation."

**Reply to Objection 1.** Christ wished to make His Godhead known through His human nature. And therefore, since it is proper to man to do so, He associated with men, at the same time manifesting His Godhead to all, by preaching and working miracles, and by leading among men a blameless and righteous life.

**Reply to Objection 2.** As stated in the IIa IIae, q. 182, a. 1; IIa IIae, q. 188, a. 6, the contemplative life is, absolutely speaking, more perfect than the active life, because the latter is taken up with bodily actions: yet that form of active life in which a man, by preaching and teaching, delivers to others the fruits of his contemplation, is more perfect than the life that stops at contemplation, because such a life is built on an abundance

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\* Cf. Catena Aurea, Matth. 5:1

of contemplation, and consequently such was the life chosen by Christ.

**Reply to Objection 3.** Christ's action is our instruction. And therefore, in order to teach preachers that they ought not to be for ever before the public, our Lord withdrew Himself sometimes from the crowd. We are told of three reasons for His doing this. First, for the rest of the body: hence (Mk. 6:31) it is stated that our Lord said to His disciples: "Come apart into a desert place, and rest a little. For there were many coming and going: and they had not so much as time to eat." But sometimes it was for the sake of prayer; thus it is written (Lk. 6:12):

"It came to pass in those days, that He went out into a mountain to pray; and He passed the whole night in the prayer of God." On this Ambrose remarks that "by His example He instructs us in the precepts of virtue." And sometimes He did so in order to teach us to avoid the favor of men. Wherefore Chrysostom, commenting on Mat. 5:1, Jesus, "seeing the multitude, went up into a mountain," says: "By sitting not in the city and in the market-place, but on a mountain and in a place of solitude, He taught us to do nothing for show, and to withdraw from the crowd, especially when we have to discourse of needful things."

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**Whether it was becoming that Christ should lead an austere life in this world?**

IIIa q. 40 a. 2

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**Objection 1.** It would seem that it was becoming that Christ should lead an austere life in this world. For Christ preached the perfection of life much more than John did. But John led an austere life in order that he might persuade men by his example to embrace a perfect life; for it is written (Mat. 3:4) that "the same John had his garment of camel's hair and a leathern girdle about his loins: and his meat was locusts and wild honey"; on which Chrysostom comments as follows (Hom. x): "It was a marvelous and strange thing to behold such austerity in a human frame: which thing also particularly attracted the Jews." Therefore it seems that an austere life was much more becoming to Christ.

**Objection 2.** Further, abstinence is ordained to continency; for it is written (Osee 4:10): "They shall eat and shall not be filled; they have committed fornication, and have not ceased." But Christ both observed continency in Himself and proposed it to be observed by others when He said (Mat. 19:12): "There are eunuchs who have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven: he that can take it let him take it." Therefore it seems that Christ should have observed an austere life both in Himself and in His disciples.

**Objection 3.** Further, it seems absurd for a man to begin a stricter form of life and to return to an easier life: for one might quote to his discredit that which is written, Lk. 14:30: "This man began to build, and was not able to finish." Now Christ began a very strict life after His baptism, remaining in the desert and fasting for "forty days and forty nights." Therefore it seems unbecoming that, after leading such a strict life, He should return to the common manner of living.

**On the contrary,** It is written (Mat. 11:19): "The Son of Man came eating and drinking."

**I answer that,** As stated above (a. 1), it was in keeping with the end of the Incarnation that Christ should not lead a solitary life, but should associate with men. Now it is most fitting that he who associates with others should conform to their manner of living; according to the words of the Apostle (1 Cor. 9:22): "I became all things to all men." And therefore it was most fitting that Christ should conform to others in the matter

of eating and drinking. Hence Augustine says (Contra Faust. xvi) that "John is described as 'neither eating nor drinking,' because he did not take the same food as the Jews. Therefore, unless our Lord had taken it, it would not be said of Him, in contrast, 'eating and drinking.'"

**Reply to Objection 1.** In His manner of living our Lord gave an example of perfection as to all those things which of themselves relate to salvation. Now abstinence in eating and drinking does not of itself relate to salvation, according to Rom. 14:17: "The kingdom of God is not meat and drink." And Augustine (De Qq. Evang. ii, qu. 11) explains Mat. 11:19, "Wisdom is justified by her children," saying that this is because the holy apostles "understood that the kingdom of God does not consist in eating and drinking, but in suffering indigence with equanimity," for they are neither uplifted by affluence, nor distressed by want. Again (De Doctr. Christ. iii), he says that in all such things "it is not making use of them, but the wantonness of the user, that is sinful." Now both these lives are lawful and praiseworthy—namely, that a man withdraw from the society of other men and observe abstinence; and that he associate with other men and live like them. And therefore our Lord wished to give men an example of either kind of life.

As to John, according to Chrysostom (Hom. xxxvii super Matth.), "he exhibited no more than his life and righteous conduct... but Christ had the testimony also of miracles. Leaving, therefore, John to be illustrious by his fasting, He Himself came the opposite way, both coming unto publicans' tables and eating and drinking."

**Reply to Objection 2.** Just as by abstinence other men acquire the power of self-restraint, so also Christ, in Himself and in those that are His, subdued the flesh by the power of His Godhead. Wherefore, as we read Mat. 9:14, the Pharisees and the disciples of John fasted, but not the disciples of Christ. On which Bede comments, saying that "John drank neither wine nor strong drink: because abstinence is meritorious where the nature is weak. But why should our Lord, whose right by nature it is to forgive sins, avoid those whom He could make holier than such as abstain?"

**Reply to Objection 3.** As Chrysostom says (Hom. xiii super Matth.), “that thou mightest learn how great a good is fasting, and how it is a shield against the devil, and that after baptism thou shouldst give thyself up, not to luxury, but to fasting—for this cause did He fast, not as needing it Himself, but as teaching us. . . And for this did He proceed no further than Moses and Elias, lest His assumption of our flesh might seem incredible.” The mystical meaning, as Gregory says (Hom. xvi in Evang.), is that by Christ’s example the number “forty” is observed in His fast, because the power of the “decalogue is fulfilled throughout the four books of the Holy Gospel: since ten multiplied by four amounts to forty.” Or, because “we live in this mortal body composed of the four elements, and by its lusts we transgress the commandments of the Lord, which are expressed in the decalogue.” Or, according to Augustine (QQ. lxxxiii, qu. 81): “To know the Creator and the creature is the entire teaching of wisdom. The Creator is the Trinity, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. Now the creature is partly invisible, as the soul, to which the number three may be ascribed, for we are commanded to love

God in three ways, ‘with our whole heart, our whole soul, and our whole mind’; and partly visible, as the body, to which the number four is applicable on account of its being subject to heat, moisture, cold, and dryness. Hence if we multiply ten, which may be referred to the entire moral code, by four, which number may be applied to the body, because it is the body that executes the law, the product is the number forty: in which,” consequently, “the time during which we sigh and grieve is shown forth.” And yet there was no inconsistency in Christ’s returning to the common manner of living, after fasting and (retiring into the) desert. For it is becoming to that kind of life, which we hold Christ to have embraced, wherein a man delivers to others the fruits of his contemplation, that he devote himself first of all to contemplation, and that he afterwards come down to the publicity of active life by associating with other men. Hence Bede says on Mk. 2:18: “Christ fasted, that thou mightest not disobey the commandment; He ate with sinners, that thou mightest discern His sanctity and acknowledge His power.”

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**Whether Christ should have led a life of poverty in this world?**

IIIa q. 40 a. 3

**Objection 1.** It would seem that Christ should not have led a life of poverty in this world. Because Christ should have embraced the most eligible form of life. But the most eligible form of life is that which is a mean between riches and poverty; for it is written (Prov. 30:8): “Give me neither beggary nor riches; give me only the necessities of life.” Therefore Christ should have led a life, not of poverty, but of moderation.

**Objection 2.** Further, external wealth is ordained to bodily use as to food and raiment. But Christ conformed His manner of life to those among whom He lived, in the matter of food and raiment. Therefore it seems that He should have observed the ordinary manner of life as to riches and poverty, and have avoided extreme poverty.

**Objection 3.** Further, Christ specially invited men to imitate His example of humility, according to Mat. 11:29: “Learn of Me, because I am meek and humble of heart.” But humility is most commendable in the rich; thus it is written (1 Tim. 6:11): “Charge the rich of this world not to be high-minded.” Therefore it seems that Christ should not have chosen a life of poverty.

**On the contrary,** It is written (Mat. 8:20): “The Son of Man hath not where to lay His head”: as though He were to say as Jerome observes: “Why desirest thou to follow Me for the sake of riches and worldly gain, since I am so poor that I have not even the smallest dwelling-place, and I am sheltered by a roof that is not Mine?” And on Mat. 17:26: “That we may not scandalize them, go to the sea,” Jerome says: “This incident, taken literally, affords edification to those who hear it when they are told that our Lord was so poor that He

had not the wherewithal to pay the tax for Himself and His apostles.”

**I answer that,** It was fitting for Christ to lead a life of poverty in this world. First, because this was in keeping with the duty of preaching, for which purpose He says that He came (Mk. 1:38): “Let us go into the neighboring towns and cities, that I may preach there also: for to this purpose am I come.” Now in order that the preachers of God’s word may be able to give all their time to preaching, they must be wholly free from care of worldly matters: which is impossible for those who are possessed of wealth. Wherefore the Lord Himself, when sending the apostles to preach, said to them (Mat. 10:9): “Do not possess gold nor silver.” And the apostles (Acts 6:2) say: “It is not reasonable that we should leave the word of God and serve tables.”

Secondly, because just as He took upon Himself the death of the body in order to bestow spiritual life on us, so did He bear bodily poverty, in order to enrich us spiritually, according to 2 Cor. 8:9: “You know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ: that . . . He became poor for our [Vulg.: ‘your’] sakes that through His poverty we [Vulg.: ‘you’] might be rich.”

Thirdly, lest if He were rich His preaching might be ascribed to cupidity. Wherefore Jerome says on Mat. 10:9, that if the disciples had been possessed of wealth, “they had seemed to preach for gain, not for the salvation of mankind.” And the same reason applies to Christ.

Fourthly, that the more lowly He seemed by reason of His poverty, the greater might the power of His Godhead be shown to be. Hence in a sermon of the Council

of Ephesus (P. iii, c. ix) we read: “He chose all that was poor and despicable, all that was of small account and hidden from the majority, that we might recognize His Godhead to have transformed the terrestrial sphere. For this reason did He choose a poor maid for His Mother, a poorer birthplace; for this reason did He live in want. Learn this from the manger.”

**Reply to Objection 1.** Those who wish to live virtuously need to avoid abundance of riches and beggary, in as far as these are occasions of sin: since abundance of riches is an occasion for being proud; and beggary is an occasion of thieving and lying, or even of perjury. But forasmuch as Christ was incapable of sin, He had not the same motive as Solomon for avoiding these things. Yet neither is every kind of beggary an occasion of theft and perjury, as Solomon seems to add (Prov. 30:8); but only that which is involuntary, in order to avoid which, a man is guilty of theft and perjury. But voluntary poverty is not open to this danger: and such was the poverty chosen by Christ.

**Reply to Objection 2.** A man may feed and clothe himself in conformity with others, not only by possessing riches, but also by receiving the necessaries of life from those who are rich. This is what happened in regard to Christ: for it is written (Lk. 8:2,3) that certain women followed Christ and “ministered unto Him of their substance.” For, as Jerome says on Mat. 27:55, “It was a Jewish custom, nor was it thought wrong for women, following the ancient tradition of their nation, out of their private means to provide their instructors with food and clothing. But as this might give scandal to the heathens, Paul says that he gave it up”: thus it was possible for them to be fed out of a common fund, but not to possess wealth, without their duty of preaching being hindered by anxiety.

**Reply to Objection 3.** Humility is not much to be praised in one who is poor of necessity. But in one who, like Christ, is poor willingly, poverty itself is a sign of very great humility.

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#### Whether Christ conformed His conduct to the Law?

IIIa q. 40 a. 4

**Objection 1.** It would seem that Christ did not conform His conduct to the Law. For the Law forbade any work whatsoever to be done on the Sabbath, since God “rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done.” But He healed a man on the Sabbath, and commanded him to take up his bed. Therefore it seems that He did not conform His conduct to the Law.

**Objection 2.** Further, what Christ taught, that He also did, according to Acts 1:1: “Jesus began to do and to teach.” But He taught (Mat. 15:11) that “not” all “that which goeth into the mouth defileth a man”: and this is contrary to the precept of the Law, which declared that a man was made unclean by eating and touching certain animals, as stated Lev. 11. Therefore it seems that He did not conform His conduct to the Law.

**Objection 3.** Further, he who consents to anything is of the same mind as he who does it, according to Rom. 1:32: “Not only they that do them, but they also that consent to them that do them.” But Christ, by excusing His disciples, consented to their breaking the Law by plucking the ears of corn on the Sabbath; as is related Mat. 12:1-8. Therefore it seems that Christ did not conform His conduct to the Law.

**On the contrary,** It is written (Mat. 5:17): “Do not think that I am come to destroy the Law or the Prophets.” Commenting on these words, Chrysostom says: “He fulfilled the Law... in one way, by transgressing none of the precepts of the Law; secondly, by justifying us through faith, which the Law, in the letter, was unable to do.”

**I answer that,** Christ conformed His conduct in all things to the precepts of the Law. In token of this He wished even to be circumcised; for the circumcision is a kind of protestation of a man’s purpose of keeping the

Law, according to Gal. 5:3: “I testify to every man circumcising himself, that he is a debtor to do the whole Law.”

And Christ, indeed, wished to conform His conduct to the Law, first, to show His approval of the Old Law. Secondly, that by obeying the Law He might perfect it and bring it to an end in His own self, so as to show that it was ordained to Him. Thirdly, to deprive the Jews of an excuse for slandering Him. Fourthly, in order to deliver men from subjection to the Law, according to Gal. 4:4,5: “God sent His Son... made under the Law that He might redeem them who were under the Law.”

**Reply to Objection 1.** Our Lord excuses Himself from any transgression of the Law in this matter, for three reasons. First, the precept of the hallowing of the Sabbath forbids not Divine work, but human work: for though God ceased on the seventh day from the creation of new creatures, yet He ever works by keeping and governing His creatures. Now that Christ wrought miracles was a Divine work: hence He says (Jn. 5:17): “My Father worketh until now; and I work.”

Secondly, He excuses Himself on the ground that this precept does not forbid works which are needful for bodily health. Wherefore He says (Lk. 13:15): “Doth not every one of you on the Sabbath-day loose his ox or his ass from the manger, and lead them to water?” And farther on (Lk. 14:5): “Which of you shall have an ass or an ox fall into a pit, and will not immediately draw him out on the Sabbath-day?” Now it is manifest that the miraculous works done by Christ related to health of body and soul.

Thirdly, because this precept does not forbid works pertaining to the worship of God. Wherefore He says (Mat. 12:5): “Have ye not read in the Law that on the

Sabbath-days the priests in the Temple break the Sabbath, and are without blame?” And (Jn. 7:23) it is written that a man receives circumcision on the Sabbath-day. Now when Christ commanded the paralytic to carry his bed on the Sabbath-day, this pertained to the worship of God, i.e. to the praise of God’s power. And thus it is clear that He did not break the Sabbath: although the Jews threw this false accusation in His face, saying (Jn. 9:16): “This man is not of God, who keepeth not the Sabbath.”

**Reply to Objection 2.** By those words Christ wished to show that man is made unclean as to his soul, by the use of any sort of foods considered not in their nature, but only in some signification. And that

certain foods are in the Law called “unclean” is due to some signification; whence Augustine says (Contra Faust. vi): “If a question be raised about swine and lambs, both are clean by nature, since ‘all God’s creatures are good’; but by a certain signification lambs are clean and swine unclean.”

**Reply to Objection 3.** The disciples also, when, being hungry, they plucked the ears of corn on the Sabbath, are to be excused from transgressing the Law, since they were pressed by hunger: just as David did not transgress the Law when, through being compelled by hunger, he ate the loaves which it was not lawful for him to eat.