

QUESTION 40

Christ's Manner of Life

Having considered the things pertaining to Christ's entry into the world, i.e. to His beginnings, we next have to consider the things pertaining to His progress through life. First, we will consider His manner of living (question 40); second, His temptation (question 41); third, His teaching (question 42); and fourth, His miracles (questions 43-45).

On the first topic there are four questions: (1) Should Christ have led a solitary life, or was it fitting for Him to live among men? (2) Should He have led an austere life with respect to food and drink and clothing, or was it fitting for Him to live an ordinary life like others? (3) Should He have lived a lowly life in this world, or was it fitting for Him to live with riches and honor? (4) Was it fitting for Him to live in accord with the Law?

Article 1

Was it fitting for Christ to live among men, or should He have led a solitary life instead?

It seems that it was not fitting for Christ to live among men, but instead He should have led a solitary life (*Christus non debuerit inter homines conversari, sed solitariam agere vitam*):

Objection 1: By His manner of life Christ had to show Himself to be not only a man but also God. But it is not fitting for God to live among men; for Daniel 2:11 says, "... except for the gods, whose manner of living is not among men," and in *Politics* 1 the Philosopher says, "He who lives a solitary life is either a beast," viz., if he does this because of his fierceness, "or a god," viz., if he does it for the sake of contemplating the truth. Therefore, it seems that it was not fitting for Christ to live among men.

Objection 2: When Christ lived in His mortal flesh, it was fitting for Him to lead the most perfect sort of life. But as was established in the Second Part (*ST* 2-2, q. 182, aa. 1-2), the most perfect life is the contemplative life, and solitude belongs to the contemplative life most of all—this according to Hosea 2:14 ("I will lead her into the wilderness (*in solitudinem*) and I will speak to her heart"). Therefore, it seems that it was fitting for Christ to lead a solitary life.

Objection 3: It was fitting for Christ's manner of life to be uniform, since, in His case, what is best should always have been evident. But Christ sometimes avoided the crowds and sought out lonely places; hence, in *Super Matthaem* Remigius says, "We read that our Lord had three places of refuge: the boat, the mountain, and the desert. And to one or another of these He found His way whenever He was pressed in upon by the crowds." Therefore, He should have lived a solitary life all the time.

But contrary to this: Baruch 3:38 says, "Afterwards He was seen on the earth and lived among men."

I respond: It was fitting for Christ's way of life to be such that it fit in with the purpose of the Incarnation, i.e., the purpose for which He came into the world.

Now He came into the world, first of all, in order to make the truth manifest, as He Himself asserts in John 18:37: "For this was I born and for this I came into the world, to give testimony to the truth." And so it was fitting for Him not to hide Himself away by leading a solitary life, but to proceed into the public sphere (*procedere in publicum*) and to preach openly (*publice praedicando*). Hence, in Luke 4:42-43 He says to those who wished to detain Him, "It is necessary for me to preach the gospel to the others, since this is why I was sent."

Second, He came in order to liberate men from sin—this according to 1 Timothy 1:15 ("Christ Jesus came into this world to save sinners"). And this is why, as Chrysostom puts it, "Even though Christ could have, by remaining in the same place, attracted everyone to Himself to hear His preaching, He

nonetheless did not do this, giving us instead an example, so that we might go out and seek after those who are perishing, in the way that a shepherd goes after his lost sheep and a physician pays a visit to a sick individual.”

Third, He came in order that, as Romans 5:2 says, “through Him we might have access to God.” And so it was appropriate for Him to give men the confidence to approach Him by living familiarly among them. Hence, Matthew 9:10 says, “It came to pass, as He was sitting in the house, that, behold, many publicans and sinners came and sat down with Jesus and His disciples.” In commenting on this passage, Jerome says, “They had seen the publican, who had been converted from his sins to something better, find an opportunity for repentance, and because of this they themselves likewise did not despair of salvation.”

Reply to objection 1: Christ wanted to make His divine nature manifest through His human nature. And so by living among men, which is proper to a man, He made manifest to everyone His divine nature by preaching and working miracles and by living blamelessly and righteously among men.

Reply to objection 2: As was explained in the Second Part (*ST* 2-2, q. 182, a. 1 and q. 188, a. 6), a contemplative life is better, absolutely speaking, than an active life that is occupied with bodily works; however, an active life in which the individual, through preaching and teaching, hands on to others what has been contemplated is more perfect than a life that involves only contemplation (*est perfectior quam vita quae solum contemplatur*), since the former sort of life presupposes an abundance of contemplation. And that is why Christ chose to live such a life.

Reply to objection 3: “Christ’s action was our instruction” (*Instructio Sacerdotum* 6). And so, in order to give the example to preachers that they should not hand themselves over to the public sphere all the time, our Lord sometimes withdrew from the crowds. And we read that He did this for three reasons:

(a) Sometimes for the sake of *bodily rest*. Hence, Mark 6:31 reports that our Lord “said to His disciples, ‘Come away by yourselves into a deserted place, and rest for a little while.’ For there were many coming and going, and they did not have time to eat.”

(b) Sometimes for the sake of *praying*. Hence, Luke 6:12 says, “In those days, He went out to the mountain to pray, and He spent the whole night in prayer to God.” On this passage Ambrose says, “By His example He forms us in precepts of virtue.”

(c) Sometimes, on the other hand, in order to teach us to avoid human applause. Hence, in commenting on Matthew 5:1 (“Seeing the crowds Jesus went up the mountain”), Chrysostom says, “By staying not in the city and in the market-place, but instead on the mountain and in the wilderness, He taught us to do nothing for show, and to stay away from the crowds, especially when it is necessary to talk about the most important things.”

Article 2

Should Christ have led an austere life in this world?

It seems that Christ should have led an austere life in this world (*Christum decuerit austeram vitam ducere in hoc mundo*):

Objection 1: Christ preached perfection of life much more than John did. But John led an austere life in order to stimulate men by his example toward perfection of life. For Matthew 3:4 says, “John himself had a garment of camel’s hair and a leather girdle around his waist, and his food was locusts and wild honey.” In commenting on this passage Chrysostom says, “It was remarkable to see such endurance in a human body, and this attracted the Jews all the more.” Therefore, it seems that, *a fortiori*, austerity of life was fitting for Christ.

Objection 2: Abstinence is ordered toward continence; for Hosea 4:10 says, “Those who eat will not be satisfied, they have fornicated and have not stopped.” But Christ both observed continence within Himself and proposed that others observe it when He said in Matthew 19:12, “There are eunuchs who have made themselves eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven; he that can take it, let him take it.” Therefore, Christ, both in Himself and in His disciples, should have observed an austerity of life.

Objection 3: It seems laughable for an individual to begin with a more restricted life and then to turn back from it to a more lax life. For against him one can say what is found in Luke 14:30, “This man began to build and could not finish.” But Christ undertook an extremely restricted life after His baptism, remaining in the desert and fasting “for forty days and forty nights” (Matthew 4:1). Therefore, it seems incongruous for Him to have returned to ordinary life after such a great restrictiveness in His life.

But contrary to this: Matthew 11:19 says, “... the Son of Man came eating and drinking’.”

I respond: As has been explained (a. 1), it fit in with the purpose of the Incarnation that Christ should live among men and not lead a solitary life. But it is most appropriate for someone who lives among men to conform himself to them in his manner of living—this according to the Apostle in 1 Corinthians 9:22 (“I have become all things to all men”). And so it was most appropriate for Christ to behave like the others in the common way with respect to food and drink. Hence, in *Contra Faustum* Augustine says, “John is described as ‘neither eating nor drinking’ because he did not eat the same food that the Jews ate. Therefore, if our Lord were not eating [the same food that the Jews ate], he would not be described as ‘eating and drinking’ by way of contrast with John.”

Reply to objection 1: In His manner of living our Lord gave to everyone an example of perfection that in its own right pertained to salvation. But abstinence from food and drink does not in its own right pertain to salvation—this according to Romans 14:17 (“The kingdom of God is not food and drink”). And in *De Quaestionibus Evangeliorum* Augustine, in commenting on Matthew 11:19 (“Wisdom is justified by her children”), explains that it is because the holy apostles “understood that the kingdom of God does not consist in eating and drinking, but in suffering with equanimity,” that they were neither uplifted by abundance nor distressed by want. And in *De Doctrina Christiana* he says that in all such matters “what is sinful is not the partaking [of food and drink], but the excessive desire of the partaker (*sed libido utentis*).”

Now both sorts of lives are licit and praiseworthy, viz., (a) that an individual observe abstinence while segregated from common association with men, and (b) that an individual lead a ordinary life while positioned within the society of others. And this is why our Lord gave examples of both sorts of life to men.

On the other hand, John, as Chrysostom explains in *Super Matthaem*, “exhibited no more than his life and his righteousness, whereas Christ had, in addition, the testimony of miracles. Therefore, leaving John to shine by his fasting, He Himself took the opposite way, going inside to the table of the publicans, both eating and drinking.”

Reply to objection 2: Just as other men acquire the virtue of being continent through abstinence, so, too, Christ restrained His flesh, both within Himself and in those who belonged to Him, through the power of His divine nature. Hence, as we read in Matthew 9:14, the Pharisees and the disciples of John fasted, but not the disciples of Christ. In commenting on this passage Bede says, “John drank neither wine nor strong drink, because abstinence adds merit for that which nature had no power to do. But why would our Lord, to whom it was natural to forgive sins, turn aside individuals whom He could render more pure than those who were abstaining?”

Reply to objection 3: As Chrysostom explains in *Super Matthaem*, “In order that you might learn (a) what a great good fasting is, and (b) the way in which fasting is a shield against the devil, and (c) that after baptism you have to give yourself over not to wantonness, but to fasting, He Himself fasted without

needing to, but instead teaching us ... And He did not go any further than Moses and Elijah in His fasting in order that the fact that He had assumed our flesh might not seem unbelievable.”

As for the mystical meaning (*secundum sacramentum*), Gregory says that the number *forty* is preserved by Christ’s example 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*.” Alternatively, because “we subsist in this mortal body composed of the four elements and through its will we act contrary to the Lord’s precepts, which were received in the *ten* commandments.” Alternatively, according to Augustine in *83 Quaestiones*, “Every teaching of wisdom is aimed at knowing the creator and the creature. The creator is the Trinity: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Now the creature is (a) partly invisible, i.e., the soul, to which the number *three* is attributed, since we are commanded to love God in three ways, ‘with our whole heart, our whole soul, and our whole mind’; and (b) partly visible, i.e. the body, to which the number *four* is assigned because of the hot, the wet, the cold, and the dry. Hence the number *ten*, which implies all learning, taken *four* times, i.e., multiplied by the number that is applied to the body because ministry is carried out through the body, makes *forty*.” And so “the time during which we sigh and grieve is filled out.”

However, it was not incongruous for Christ to return to the common way of live after His fast and after the desert. For it befits a life according to which an individual hands down to others what he has contemplated—which is the sort of life we claim that Christ assumed—that he should first of all make time for contemplation and that he should afterwards come down to the public sphere of action by living among other men. Hence, in *Super Marcum* Bede says, “Christ fasted in order that you might not disobey the commandment, and He ate with sinners in order that, discerning His grace, you might acknowledge His power.”

Article 3

Was it fitting for Christ to lead a life of poverty in this world?

It seems that it was not fitting for Christ to lead a life of poverty in this world (*Christus in hoc mundo non debuerit pauperem vitam ducere*):

Objection 1: Christ should have undertaken the most choiceworthy life. But the most choiceworthy life is one that lies in the middle between riches and poverty (*est mediocris inter divitias et paupertatem*); for Proverbs 30:8 says, “Give me neither destitution nor riches (*mendicitatem et divitias ne dederis mihi*); grant me only the necessities of life.” Therefore, it was fitting for Christ to lead a moderate life and not a life of poverty.

Objection 2: Exterior riches are ordered toward the use of the body with respect to food and clothes. But Christ lived a normal life as regards food and clothes, in accord with the manner of the others with whom He lived. Therefore, it seems that, likewise in the case of riches and poverty, it was fitting for him to observe the common way of living and not to adopt poverty (*et non uti maxima paupertate*).

Objection 3: Christ especially invited men to His model of humility—this according to Matthew 11:29 (“Learn from me, for I am meek and humble”). But humility is especially commended in those who are rich; for instance, 1 Timothy 6:17 says, “Tell the rich of this world not to be haughty (*non altum sapere*).” Therefore, it seems that it was not fitting for Christ to lead a life of poverty.

But contrary to this: Matthew 8:20 says, “The Son of Man has no place to lay His head.” According to Jerome, this is as if to say: “Do you want to follow me for the sake of riches and worldly gain, when I am so poor that I do not have even the smallest dwelling-place and am sheltered by a roof

that is not my own?” And commenting on Matthew 17:26 (“In order that we might not scandalize them, go to the sea ...”), Jerome says, “Simply understood, it edifies the hearer when he hears that our Lord was so poor that He did not have the wherewithal to pay the tribute for Himself and the apostle.”

I respond: It was fitting for Christ to lead a life of poverty in this world:

First of all, this fit in with His role of preaching, which He said was the reason why He had come: “Let us go to the nearby villages and cities so that I might preach there. For it is for this that I have come” (Mark 1:38). Now preachers of the word of God have to devote their time entirely to preaching, having been completely freed of care over worldly matters. But those who possess riches cannot do this. Hence, our Lord Himself, when He is sending the apostles out to preach, tells them, “Do not take any gold or silver” (Matthew 10:9). And in Acts 6:2 the apostles themselves say, “It is not right for us abandon the word and serve at table.”

Second, because just as He took on bodily death in order to give us spiritual life, so He endured bodily poverty in order to give us spiritual riches—this according to 2 Corinthians 8:9 (“You know the gift of our Lord Jesus Christ ... that He became poor for our sake in order that by His poverty we might be rich”).

Third, lest, if He possessed riches, His preaching would be ascribed to an excessive desire for wealth (*ne, si divitias haberet, cupiditati eius predicatio ascriberetur*). Hence, in *Super Matthaeum* Jerome claims that if Christ’s disciples had possessed riches, “they would have seemed to be preaching for the sake of money and not for the sake of the salvation of men.” And the same line of reasoning would have been applied to the case of Christ.

Fourth, in order that the more abject He seemed because of His poverty, the more His divine nature’s great power might be shown. Hence, in a homily at the Council of Ephesus it says, “He chose all that was poor and despicable, all that was mediocre and hidden from the majority of men, in order that His divine nature might be acknowledged to have transformed the terrestrial sphere. It was for this reason that He chose a poor maiden as His mother, and that He chose a poorer district of the country, and that He was in need of money. And the manger shows you this.”

Reply to objection 1: It seems that an abundance of riches (*superabundantia divitiarum*) and abject poverty (*mendicitas*) should both be avoided by those who want to live in accord with virtue, since they are occasions of sin. For an abundance of riches is an occasion of becoming prideful, whereas abject poverty is an occasion of stealing and of lying, or even of committing perjury. However, since Christ was not capable of sinning, He did not have to avoid [abundant wealth and abject poverty] for the reasons given by Solomon [in Proverbs 30:7-9] to avoid them.

However, not every instance of abject poverty (*neque tamen quaelibet mendicitas*) is an occasion of stealing and committing perjury, as Solomon seems to imply in the same place; instead, only *involuntary* abject poverty (*sola illa quae est contra voluntati*) is such that a man steals and commits perjury to avoid it. By contrast, *voluntary* poverty does not pose such a danger, and this is the sort of poverty that Christ chose.

Reply to objection 2: An individual can lead a common life with respect to food and clothing not only by possessing wealth but also by receiving the necessities of life from wealthy individuals. The latter happened in the case of Christ; for Luke 8:2-3 reports that there were certain women “who ministered to Him out of their own means.” For as Jerome comments in *Contra Vigilantium*, “In accord with an ancient tradition of their nation, it was a Jewish custom—nor was it thought wrong—for women to provide their instructors with food and clothing out of their own resources. However, Paul notes that he had abandoned this practice because it could have caused scandal among the gentiles” [cf. 1 Corinthians 9:1-18]. So, then, there could have been common food—though not the possession of riches—without the sort of [worldly] worries that would have stood in the way of the obligation to preach.

Reply to objection 3: In someone who is poor involuntarily (*ex necessitate pauper est*), humility is not highly commended. By contrast, in someone who is poor voluntarily, as Christ was, the poverty is itself a mark of the greatest humility.

Article 4

Did Christ lead His life in accord with the Law?

It seems that Christ did not lead His life in accord with the Law (*Christus non fuerit conversatus secundum legem*):

Objection 1: The Law commanded that no work should be done on the Sabbath, just as “God rested on the seventh day from all the work that He had done” (Genesis 2:2). But Christ cured a man on the Sabbath and told him to pick up his mat (John 5:5). Therefore, it seems that He did not lead His life in accord with the Law.

Objection 2: Christ did the same things that He taught—this according to Acts 1:1 (“Jesus began to do and to teach”). But in Matthew 15:11 He taught that “what goes into the mouth does not defile a man”—which is contrary to a precept of the Law, which, as is clear from Leviticus 11, said that a man is rendered unclean by eating and touching certain animals. Therefore, it seems that He Himself did not live His life in accord with the Law.

Objection 3: The judgment of the one who acts seems to be the same as the judgment of the one who consents—this according to Romans 1:32 (“Not only those who do, but those who consent to those who do”). But Christ consented to His disciples by excusing them when they broke the Law by plucking the ears of grain on the Sabbath (Matthew 12:1-8). Therefore, it seems that Christ did not live His life in accord with the Law.

But contrary to this: Matthew 5:17 says, “Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets.” In explaining this passage Chrysostom says, “He fulfilled the Law, first of all, by not transgressing any of the precepts of the Law, and, second, by justifying us through faith, which the written Law (*lex per litteram*) was unable to do.”

I respond: Christ lived in accord with the precepts of the Law in everything. As a sign of this, He even wanted to be circumcised; for circumcision is a sort of formal declaration that the Law is to be fulfilled—this according to Galatians 5:3 (“I testify to every man who circumcises himself that he is bound to fulfill the whole Law”).

Now Christ wanted to live in accord with the Law, first of all, in order to show His approval of the Old Law; second, in order to consummate and terminate the Law by observing it Himself, thus showing that it had been ordered toward Him; third, in order to deprive the Jews of an occasion for making false accusations [against Him] (*ut Iudaeis occasionem calumniandi subtraheret*); and, fourth, in order to liberate men from the servitude of the Law—this according to Galatians 4:4-5 (“God sent His Son, born under the Law, in order to redeem those who were under the Law”).

Reply to objection 1: There are three ways in which our Lord excuses Himself from breaking the Law in this matter:

First of all, because it is not divine work, but human work, that is forbidden by the precept about keeping the Sabbath holy; for even though on the seventh day God stopped making creatures, He nonetheless is always operative in the conservation and governance of things. Now the fact that Christ worked miracles was part of His divine work. Hence, in John 5:17 He says, “My Father works even until now, and I work.”

Second, He excuses Himself by the fact that the precept in question does not prohibit works that are required for bodily health. Hence, in Luke 13:15 He asks, “Does not each of you on the Sabbath loose his ox or his ass from the manger and lead it to water?” And later, in Luke 14:5 He asks, “Which of you has an ass or an ox that falls into a pit, and you will not immediately draw him out on the Sabbath day?” But it is clear that the miraculous works that Jesus performed involved the health of the body and of the soul.

Third, because the precept in question does not prohibit works that pertain to the worship of God. Hence, in Matthew 12:5 He says, “Have you not read in the Law that on Sabbath days the priests in the temple violate the Sabbath and are without blame?” And John 7:23 says, “... a man receives circumcision on a Sabbath ...” But Christ’s telling the paralytic to carry his mat on the Sabbath pertained to the worship of God, i.e., to the praise of God’s power.

And so* it is clear that Christ did not break the Sabbath—even though the Jews objected to Him by saying, “This man is not from God, for he does not keep the Sabbath.”

Reply to objection 2: By these words Christ wanted to show that it is not because of the nature of a given food that a man is rendered unclean in his soul by eating it; instead, it is only because of a certain signification. But the fact that in the Law certain foods are called unclean is because of a certain signification. Hence, in *Contra Faustum* Augustine says, “If someone asks about pork and lamb, they are both clean by nature, since every creature of God is good; on the other hand, it is by a certain signification that lamb is clean and pork is unclean.”

Reply to objection 3: The disciples, when they hungrily desired the ears of grain on the Sabbath, are likewise excused from transgressing the Law because of the need imposed by hunger—just as David was not a transgressor of the Law when, because of the need imposed by hunger, he ate the loaves that he was not permitted to eat.