126 Purchase or To Buy (*Empcio uel emere*)

Man needs a double purchase, passive and active, as namely he is bought, and he buys. For he was bound in the prison of limbo, nor could he make satisfaction until Christ redeemed him.

¶ About which business some things are to be considered. First is the love of the buyer, about which Isai. 63[:9]: “In his love, and in his mercy he redeemed us, and he carried” us. This obliges us to love him. Truly there is no pagan who did so much for me so that I would love him. [1] John 4[:19]: “Let us therefore love him, because he first has loved us.” But there are many men, such as the thief, who do not love the one redeeming him, 2 Pet. 2[:1]: “They deny the Lord who bought them,” perhaps in deed, “bringing upon themselves swift destruction.” Wherefore Gregory says in his *Homilia*,[[1]](#endnote-1) thence toward God man assumed more scandal. Wherefore he had to become a greater debtor.

Second, the price of the purchase ought to be considered, because it is the blood of Christ, 1 Pet. 1[:18-19]: “You were not redeemed with corruptible things as gold or silver, from your vain conversation … but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb unspotted.” But also this obliges us to obey him totally, 1 Cor. 6[:19-20]: “Know you not, that your members are the temple of the Holy Ghost … and you are not your own? For you are bought with a great price.” Wherefore Cassiodorus,[[2]](#endnote-2) it was truly a great mercy of God by which he imposed the form of the world upon the Lord; so that he may eat bread, thirst for the fountain, deprived of virtue, die in his life? The redeemer was sold so that the redeemed may be redeemed.

Third, the necessity of the purchase must be considered. For no one can make satisfaction for himself, much less for others similarly bound, Psal. [48:16]: “God will redeem my soul from the hand of hell, when he shall receive me,” that is, when he received my nature in which he suffered. Therefore, Psal. [102:2]: “Bless the Lord, O my soul, and never forget all he has done for you.” But also this obligates one to avoid sin. The dog struck by the stick fears the stick, 1 Cor. 7[:23]: “You are bought with a price; be not made the bond slaves of men,” that is, of human sins.

Therefore, man is thus redeemed passively; he ought to buy three things actively, which are the goods of glory, of grace, and of fortune, that is, heavenly things, spiritual things, and temporal things. They are in sustenance, spiritual in merit, celestial in reward.

First, therefore to be purchased and sought are the goods of glory and this for a triple cause. First, because by the hereditary law they are owed to us; man is ugly, when they see his heredity exposed to sale if he does not redeem it, Jer. 37[:7]: “Buy my field, which is in Anathoth,” which is interpreted as glorification, “for it is your right to buy it, being akin.” But many are they who wish to have a field, but do not wish to marry Ruth [4:4],[[3]](#endnote-3) who is interpreted as defect or poverty.

Second, the goods of glory ought to be bought because they are all beautiful and desirable to be possessed there, just as a vine is bought on account of the beauty of the vine, Matt. 13[:44]: “The kingdom of heaven is like unto a treasure hidden in a field. Which a man having found, he goes,” for faith and for good opinion, “and for joy thereof sells all that he has,” for voluntary poverty, “and buys that field.” Prov. 31[:16]: “She has considered a field, and bought it.” She considered it because there grew bright lilies, that is purity of virgins, fragrant violets, that is, the humility of confessors, blushing roses, that is, the patience of martyrs, an unfailing fountain, that is, the teachings of the apostles, an arboretum giving joy, that is the truth of the prophets, the fruitful olive, that is, the mercy of the patriarchs, the chatter of souls, that is, the content of the angels. In this field is found a treasure, which is the gold of deity, the silver of humanity, the precious stones, which are the gifts of the body and the soul among the saints.

Third, the goods of glory are to be bought, because they are purchased by a modest price, because by faith operating through love. Thus one buys wheat in its time when the price is less. Thus, in a way the kingdom of heaven is of a modest price, according to that of Gregory, in his *Homilia*,[[4]](#endnote-4) nothing is cheaper when it is bought, nothing is dearer when it is possessed. Isai. 55[:1]: “Come, buy wine and milk without money, and without any price,” that is, the delight of the deity and humanity.

¶ The example of the dead who said that what they most lament as the dead is to have missed the time in which they could have easily bought life eternal.

Second, the goods of grace are to be purchased. Man needs a triple virtue, because by truth in the intellect, by love in the affections, and by constancy in the effects.

First, therefore to be purchased is truth which illuminates for understanding. As bright gems are purchased, Prov. 23[:23]: “Do not sell,” that is, cast off, “wisdom,” which is through divine revelation, “and instruction,” which is through human teaching, “and understanding,” which is through one’s own discovery. But, alas, “What does it avail a fool to have riches, seeing he cannot buy wisdom?” Prov. 17[:16].

Second, charity is to be purchased which pleases for acquiring, Apoc. 3[:18]: “I counsel you to buy gold,” that is, charity as far as valor, “fire,” as far as fervor, “tried,” as far as effect, “that you may be made rich;” through an abundance of merits, “and may be clothed in white garments,” through honest conversation, “and that the shame of thy nakedness may not appear,” in the general judgment. For just as gold excels other metals in value, weight, ornament, rarity, ductility, and incorruptibility, so charity excels other virtues in value, weight, ornament, rarity, ductility, and incorruptibility. So charity excels the virtues in value, because the spirit gives life; in weight, because ultimately it connects to the end; ornament, because it informs the virtues; rarity, because it dwells in few; ductility, because it sustains all things; incorruptibility, because it never fails and remains in glory.

Third, constancy is to be purchased, because it fortifies for persevering. So, the traveler buys a durable horse. The three Marys bought spices, which preserve from decay and signify constancy, so that coming they might anoint Jesus. For perseverance by God anoints Jesus, so that the one who perseveres up to the end will be saved here.

Third, the goods of fortune for sustaining mercy are to be purchased, because this is necessity, John 4[:8]: “His disciples were gone into the city to buy meats.” Gen. 42[:2]: “Go down, and buy us,” do not take, “necessaries,” not superfluities.

Second, for making alms, and this is of merits, John 6[:5]]: “Whence shall we buy bread, that these may eat?” But to buy for retaining through avarice is iniquitous, Matt. 21[:12] and Luke [19:45]: “He began to cast out them that sold therein, and them that bought” from the temple, certainly to buy for business on account of multiplication is perilous. First, because it hinders from the good. The foreign traveler does not but burdensome victuals for himself, of such a kind are temporal things, Luke 13[:18]: “I have bought a farm,” that is, for the substance of earth, “and I must needs go out and see it.” This merchant was foolish, for it is worse to have to see than to buy.

Second, because it impels him to evil. The wise merchant does not buy knowingly what is damnable, Eccli. 27[:2]: “In the midst of selling and buying, sin shall stick fast,” And Prov. 20[:14]: “It is nothing, it is nothing, says every buyer.” In commercial dealings it is difficult to avoid sin. Third, because in the end it fails, Ezech. 7[:12]: “Let not the buyer rejoice: nor the seller mourn.” Isai. 24[:2]: “As with the buyer, so with the seller.” The rich feaster after death cannot have a drop, [Luke. 16:22].

1. Gregory, *Homilia in Evangelia* 6.1 (PL 76:1096): et inde contra eum homo scandalum sumpsit, unde etiam plus debitor fieri debuit. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. Cassiodorus, *Expositio in Psalmum* 50:2 (PL 70:359): et pro nobis formam servi mundi Domino imposuerit; ut ipse panis esuriret, fons vitae sitiret, virtus infirmaretur, omnipotens vita moreretur? Quae denique major misericordia, quam propter nos creari Creatorem, servire Dominatorem, vendi Redemptorem, humiliari Exaltatorem, occidi Vivificatorem? Haec erat illa magna misericordia Domini, [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. Cf. *Glossa ordinaria* Ruth 1:4 (PL 113:533): Ruth. Videns vel festinans, vel deficiens interpretatur: [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. Gregory, *Homilia in Evangelia* 1.5.3 (PL 76:1094): Pensate igitur, fratres, quid vilius cum emitur, quid charius cum possidetur. [↑](#endnote-ref-4)