177 Ingratitude (*Ingratitudo*)

According to Bernard in some *Sermon*,[[1]](#endnote-1) nothing so displeases in the sons of grace nor so obstructs the path of grace as ingratitude. Wherefore Seneca, book 3, *De beneficiis,[[2]](#endnote-2)* he is ungrateful who denies he has accepted a benefit which he has received. He is ungrateful who pretends to have accepted any. Wherefore 4 Kings 18[:32]: Ezechias pretended to render thanks to God after the victory obtained from the king of the Assyrians.

Therefore, immediately one is unwell up to death. And the ungrateful one is he who does not give back, but the most ungrateful one is he who has forgotten. Wherefore also that “chief butler” was considered most ungrateful who “when things prospered with him, forgot Joseph his interpreter,” Gen. 40[:23]. When the hen has an abundance as happens in autumn, she seems to forget the old woman who fed her in the winter. Master James of Vitry in his book, *De mirabilibus orientis,[[3]](#endnote-3)* narrates that the wolf naturally is hostile to the pelican and her chicks. When she is absent, he climbs the tree and kills the chicks which the parent discovering on her return wounds herself in the side and thus with her blood brings the chicks back to life. From which one debilitated by God because for a great time he cannot help, then the chicks who are grateful for the parental help, others do not care wherefore he considers them ungrateful and throws them from the nest. Likewise, Gen. 9[:25], Noah by cursing the ungrateful son Cham threw him out; the other two in line he cherished thus unto the end of time. Christ threw out the ungrateful ones, Matt. 25[:41], saying, Go cursed ones into the fire. Against those forgetting their benefits it is said, Heb. 13[:16]: “Do not forget to do good, and to impart,” Extra. *De donationibus* c. the last.[[4]](#endnote-4)

Wherefore Peter of Blois says *Super Job*,[[5]](#endnote-5) that ingratitude is your dry winds drying the dew of friendship and the flow of grace; it is the dispersion of virtues, the destruction of benefits, and in the driving out of merits.

1. Bernard, Dominica VI Post Pentecosten, *Sermo II. De septem misericordiis,* 1 (PL 183.339): Dico ego vobis, charissimi, quoniam pro meo sapere nihil ita displicet Deo, praesertimin filiis gratiae, in hominibus conversionis, quemadmodum ingratitudo. Vias enim obstruit gratiae, et ubi fuerit illa, jam gratia accessum non invenit, locum non habet. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. Seneca, *De Beneficiis* 3.3 (LCL 310:126-127): Multa sunt genera ingratorum, ut furum, ut homicidarum, quorum una culpa est, ceterum in partibus varietas magna. Ingratus est, qui beneficium accepisse se negat, quod accepit; ingratus est, qui dissimulat. [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. James of Vitry, Sermon 2.14 in Christoph T. Maier, ed., *Crusade Propaganda and Ideology: Model Sermons for the Preaching of the Cross,* (Cambridge: University press, 2003) pp. 110-111: Ipse quidem similis factus est pellicano solitudinis qui proprios pullos occidit, quia contra ipsum erigunt rostra sua, sed postmodum sanguinem proprium super pullos mortuos stillat et sic illos vivificat.

He is like the pelican of the desert that kills its own offspring because they raise their beaks at it, but afterwards spills its own blood over its dead offspring and thus revives them.

The description of the pelican goes back to Isidore of Seville, *Etymologiae* 12.7.26 [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. Decretales, X.3.24.10: Propter eius ingratitudinem, in quem liberalitas est collata, donatoris persona de rigore iuris eam potuit revocare: si forte in ipsum impias manus iniecerit, aut sibi atroces iniurias, seu grave rerum suarum damnum vel vitae periculum inferre praesumpserit; quod tamen ad donatoris, qui hoc tacuit, non extenditur successores. [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
5. Peter of Blois (Gaufridus Lincolniensis), *Epistola 62. Ad Magistrum R. Blondum.* (PL 207:185):Ingratitudo enim est ventus urens et siccans fontem liberalitatis,rorem amicitiae, fluenta gratiae. [↑](#endnote-ref-5)