337 To Follow (*Sequi*)

There are many differences between the following of men and the following of dogs pursuing a beast. Because a man only follows by tracks. Therefore, he often loses what he follows, especially if he goes across over a rock or through water, but the dog follows by the smell which neither the water, rock, nor thorns take away. So many follow Christ in exterior occupation humming the Psalms and other suffrages, but they smell no odor of sweetness. Therefore, often through the rock of avarice, through the water of lust, through the thorns of worldly adversity they lose Christ, Lam. 3[:54]: “Waters have flowed over my head.” And Luke 8[:13]: “These have no roots; for they believe for a while, and in time of temptation, they fall away.”

But on the other hand, it was concerning the apostles and concerning apostolic men inspired by God, Can. 1[:3]: “To the odor of your ointments.” We run and thus those following are not impeded from following through darkness, because in Rom. 8[:12] it is said, “He that follows me, walks not in darkness, but shall have the light of life.” Just as those lights which are more proper to the sun, more participate from the light. So those who more properly follow Christ, therefore Eccli. 23[:38]: “It is great glory to follow the Lord.” And Jacob trembling in his journey to return said, Gen. 33[:14]: “May it please my lord to go before his servant: and I will follow softly after him.” Although a dog does not immediately apprehend his prey, however he does not give up, but always he follows and, in the end, catches it. Therefore, Apostle said, Philip. 3[:12]: “I follow after, if I may by any means apprehend.” And note that for following any absent prey three things help: knowledge of the object without seeing it, impression of the foot, and diffusion of the mouth.

¶ Concerning the first, if a matter is not known nor seen, therefore it is not to be followed unless by another who is taught to know. Wherefore Gregory in *Homilia* upon that of [Luke 18:43]:[[1]](#endnote-1) “Immediately he saw and followed him.” He saw and followed; he does the good which he understands. However, he saw and did not follow, who understood the good, but disdained to do the good. But he saw him or knew him. Wherefore it is read in the *Vitae patrum*,[[2]](#endnote-2) that when he saw some religious return to the world, he asked how he could not be scandalized. The old man responded thus it is concerning the religious, just like concerning dogs running to the prey. Some see it and follow it indefatigably until they apprehend it. Some do not see it and they only follow the pack, and when they are fatigued, they go back. So, it is to the purpose, John 6[:2]: “A great multitude followed him, because they saw the miracles which he did.” And Mark 10[:52]: “He saw and followed him in the way.”

¶ Concerning the second, it is evident that a footprint helps the one following. Wherefore also Daniel caught the priests of Baal by their footprints, Dan. 14[:19]. So, we ought to follow Christ by his footprints. For he fixed here his footprints in worldly poverty, humility, and other virtues, in which he showed us the way by which we must follow him, 1 Pet. 2[:21]: “Unto this are you called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving you an example that you should follow his steps.” [Job 23:11]: “My foot has followed his steps, I have kept his way, and have not declined from it.”

¶ Concerning the third, it is read concerning onagrus,[[3]](#endnote-3) the wild ass, that when his mate has been lost, he finds her by this method. He ascends a mountain, opens his nostrils to every part, and by the odor which he attracts finds his mate by following the odor, Jer. 2[:24]: “A wild ass accustomed to the wilderness, snuffed up the wind of his love.” So, by the odor of devotion we ought to follow the lost Christ. By this method the disciples of Christ, “left all, and followed him,” Matt. 4[:22]. And Luke 5[:11]. And John 1[:37]. Wherefore Jerome, *Epistola* 36,[[4]](#endnote-4) each people have their leaders whom they follow, thus the Roman have Camillus and Fabricius. The Philosophers have Pythagoras, Plato, and Socrates. The poets have Homer and Virgil. However, we have Christ and the apostles to be imitated.

Again, Jerome, *Epistola* 72,[[5]](#endnote-5) no art is learned without a master. Even mute animals, wild flocks, follow their leaders in a learned order. But there are many who say they wish to follow God, but thus they differ because they never begin nor consequently ever attain, not paying attention to that of Matt. 8[:21-22]. When someone said to Christ, “Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father. Jesus said to him: Follow me, and let the dead bury their dead.” Augustine, *Super Psalmum* 36[:23],[[6]](#endnote-6) says when you follow the way of Christ, do not promise yourself prosperous things. For Christ walked through hard ways, but he promised great things. Do not attend for what you go, but where you will go. If we err from the track of Christ, we perish. Therefore, the prophet said, 3 Kings 18[:21]: “If the Lord be God, follow him.” Wherefore Augustine, 3 *Confessiones*, c. 8,[[7]](#endnote-7) there may be someone who has been called by you and has heeded your will. Let him not laugh me to scorn one healed by that physician, from whom he was offered aid that he not fall ill, or rather that he had only a lesser ill.

Again, note that four things impede one from following Christ, namely, temporal riches, carnal delights, relatives, and hurdles of proud words. But these four resist a fourfold consideration, namely, worldly vanity which becomes transitory. For this makes us follow quickly, Act. 12[:7, 9]: “Arise quickly. And going out, he followed him.” And Matt. 4[:20]: “And they immediately leaving” their own vileness which thus superficially. For this makes one follow humbly, Isai. 51[:1]: “Give ear to me, you that follow that which is just, and you that seek the Lord: look unto the rock whence you are hewn.”

Third, attention of the social infidelity which is deception. For this makes one follow prudently, Jer. 17[:5, 16]: “Cursed be the man that trusts in man,” and it follows, “I am not troubled, following you for my pastor, and I have not desired the day of man, you know.”

Fourth, contemplation of the eternal joy which is consolatory, and this makes one follow perseveringly, Eccli. 23[:38]: “It is great glory to follow the Lord.” Peter did the contrary of these, Matt. 26[:58]: “Peter however followed him afar off.”

In truth however,[[8]](#endnote-8) Peter afterwards so hurried in following that he fell. Now at the lifting up in his crucifixion the feet were erect to the heaven. And Bartholomeus as more expeditious followed, he put off his skin lest he be burdened with superfluities. Laurence could not enter with the burden of fat and so left it on the grill. Francis left off the shoes of his feet as did others. Thus, the saints hurried running that they might catch Christ in heaven. Three things are accustomed to move man to following, namely, admiration of the prodigies, calling of his helpers, and affection of one desiring him. Concerning the first, John 6[:2]: “A great multitude followed him, because they saw the miracles which he did.” Those signs then were made anew for five thousand men from a few loaves, but greater signs he made daily feeding the whole world from a few grains, that is, however hardly anyone followed.

¶ Concerning the second, men more freely serve and follow a liberal and beneficent lord than another thrifty one. Wherefore Peter said to Jesus, Matt. [19:27]: “Behold we have left all things, and have followed you: what therefore shall [we have]?” etc.

¶ Concerning the third, it is evident from Peter the apostle because he loved Christ more than the others. Therefore, with the others lying hidden during the time of the passion, he himself followed from afar, Matt. 26[:58]: “And Peter followed him afar off.”

1. Gregory, *XL Homiliarum in Evangelia* 1.2.8 (PL 76:1085): Videt et sequitur, qui bonum quod intelligit operatur. Videt autem, sed non sequitur, [Col.1085B] qui bonum quidem intelligit, sed bona operari contemnit. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. *Vitae Patrum,* 7.35 (PL 73:901): Interrogatus est senex, quomodo oporteat vigilantem [Col.0901D] monachum non scandalizari, quando videt aliquos ad saeculum revertentes. Et respondit: Intueri debet monachus canes, qui venantur lepores; et sicut unus ex eis videns leporem insequitur, caeteri autem tantummodo canem videntes currentem, aliquandiu cum ipso currunt, postea vero lassantes post se revertuntur; [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. Cf. Bartholomeus Anglicus, *De proprietatibus rerum* 18.76 (1505, p. 466): Unde quando amore feruet et nescit vbi eius femina euagatur: rupem ascendit et paulis naribus ventum attrahit. Per cuius flatum vbi sit eius femina dijudicat et discernit. [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. Jerome, *Epistola* 58.5 (PL 22:583): Habet unumquodque propositum principes suos. Romani duces imitentur Camillos, Fabricios, Regulos, Scipiones. Philosophi proponant sibi Pythagoram, Socratem, Platonem, Aristotelem. Poetae aemulentur Homerum, Virgilium, Menandrum, Terentium. Historici, Thucydidem, Sallustium, Herodotum, Livium. Oratores, Lysiam. Graccos, Demosthenem, Tullium. Et ut ad nostra veniamus, Episcopi et Presbyteri habeant in exemplum Apostolos, et Apostolicos viros. [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
5. Jerome, *Epistola* 125.15 (PL 22:1080): Nulla ars absque magistro discitur. Etiam muta animalia, et ferarum greges, ductores sequuntur suos. In apibus principes sunt: grues unam sequuntur ordine litterato. [↑](#endnote-ref-5)
6. Augustine, *Enarrationes in Psalmos* 36.2.16 (PL 36:372): Jam cum sequeris viam Christi, non tibi saeculi prosperitates promittas. Per dura ambulavit, sed magna promisit. Sequere. Noli tantum attendere qua iturus, sed et quo venturus sis. [↑](#endnote-ref-6)
7. Augustine, *Confessiones* 2.7.15 (PL 32:681): Qui enim vocatus a te secutus est vocem tuam, et vitavit ea quae me de meipso recordantem et fatentem legit, non me derideat ab eo medico aegrum sanari, a quo sibi praestitum est ut non aegrotaret, vel potius ut minus aegrotaret. [↑](#endnote-ref-7)
8. Cf. *Fasciculus morum* 4.12 (p. 388): quem ergo si sequi volumus, oportet temporalia superlua deponere; unde Apostolus Ad Hebreos: “Deponentes omne pondus.” Revera sic fecit beatus Petrus. Nam tantum post Christum festinavit quod cecidit <*iambe leue*>, hoc est quod elevatus tandem erat in cruce sicut Christus, pedibus tamen erectis et capite submisso. Bartholomeus eciam volens currere velociter ideo, ne pannis superfluis impediretur, tunicam dimisit, hoc est, excoriatus pellem reliquit propriam. Laurencius eciam Christum attingere volens onus pinguedinis ne per illud impediretur a cursu super craticulam illud assari et consumi permisit. Franciscus [eciam] calciatus ne impediretur ipsis abjectis et nudis pedibus velociter cucurrit. Et sic similiter alii sancti, qui iam cursum certaminum consummaverunt et Christum in celo apprehenderunt. .... [↑](#endnote-ref-8)