110 Riches or A Rich Man (*Diuicie uel Diues*)

In Eccle. 5[:9] it is said, “He that loves riches shall reap no fruit from them.” The reason is because he who loves, serves, and does not disperse, and consequently, does not bear fruit. For just as manure spread bears fruit, but heaped up becomes disgusting, so it is with riches. Wherefore, Paul compares riches to dung, Philip. 3[:8]: “I count all things to be … but as dung.”

Romulus killed his brother Remus so that he alone might have the Roman riches, just as it is evident in *De civitate*, book 15, c. 5.[[1]](#endnote-1) And Gen. 13[:6] on account of riches Abraham and Lot could not inhabit together. On account of which Seneca says[[2]](#endnote-2) men live the most quietly if these two pronouns, mine and yours, are tolerated from the middle. Wherefore, Chrysostom, *Homilia* 12,[[3]](#endnote-3) riches are not ours, but God’s who made us their dispersers, not lords. For he gives them to whomever he wishes, and he takes them from whomever he wishes. That is properly ours which is in our power to have or not to have. Again, *Homilia* 5,[[4]](#endnote-4) God can give you riches, but riches cannot give God to you. Wherefore, the Apostle, 1 Tim. 6[:17]: “Charge the rich of this world not to be high-minded, nor to trust in the uncertainty of riches, but in the living God, (who gives us abundantly all things to enjoy),” which Augustine explains, *De verbis Domini*, sermon 5,[[5]](#endnote-5) riches generate nothing just like pride. Every fruit, every wood, has a worm at one time or another, but the worm of riches is pride.

Wherefore, it follows well, don’t hope in the uncertainty of riches. How many were rich yesterday and poor today. Therefore, the Apostle [1 Tim. 6:18] commanded that rich men be in “good works” by distributing to the poor their superfluous things than their necessary things to the poor. Thus, it is in nature necessities for another, just as it is said in *De animalibus*, book 15, c. 8.[[6]](#endnote-6) Wherefore, Augustine, *Epistola,[[7]](#endnote-7)* I do not know how earthly superfluities acquired hold us more narrowly than things coveted. But I feed the wretched poor with precious things, but what are these when they are distributed? Are they not embarrassed? The rich man hungers, the poor man hungers; the poor man seeks to be satisfied, the rich man seeks to be satisfied. The satisfaction is equal in both, but hunger makes it so that the base things taste better in the poor man than the precious things in the rich man.[[8]](#endnote-8) Wherefore Bede says,[[9]](#endnote-9) it is familiar, that the human heart is loosened by riches and delights, but troubles and poverty have to be recollected to one. Wherefore, it is said about riches, Eccle. 5[:19]: “For he shall not much remember the days of his life, because God entertains his heart with delight.” Again, in the same place [5:11]: “Sleep is sweet to a laboring man, whether he eats little or much.”

¶ However, satiety is not for the rich. For it is said that Aristotle,[[10]](#endnote-10) reprehending the cupidity of Alexander, said, Either you are God or man. If God, you ought to rather help others than carry them off. If you are man, think on your mortality and all the earthly things you will lose. Therefore, the Psal. [61:11] said, “Trust not in iniquity, and covet not robberies: if riches abound, set not your heart upon them.”

¶ There is no danger in riches, if the heart is not united, just as there is no danger to a bird to fly over a corpse, if there is danger it is to settle on the corpse and be captured by a snare. If it is to God by man, if the heart attaches to riches. Of such kind was that rich man, Luke 12[:16]: “The land of a certain rich man brought forth plenty of fruits,” etc., up to “whose shall those things be which you have provided,” as if saying, not yours. Upon which place Chrysostom says,[[11]](#endnote-11) this man was not condemned because he had abundant fields, nor because he was rich, but because he wanted to store up treasure for himself alone. Wherefore, if is clearly true what Paul says, [1] Tim. 6[:9]: “They that will become rich, fall into temptation, and into the snare of the devil.”

¶ However, the reason why the heart ought not to be entangled with riches is, according to Augustine, *Sermo Domini in monte,* second chapter,[[12]](#endnote-12) just as higher nature becomes soiled when it is entwined to the lower, but it is evident concerning gold applied to lead, so the holy soul to the image of God becomes soiled when it is entangled to earthly riches. Wherefore, Augustine, in *Epistola ad Bonefacium*,[[13]](#endnote-13) if riches are absent, they should not be sought through evil works; if they are present, they ought to be served through good works in heaven. If riches approach the manly soul, manly and Christian, he does not exult; if they recede, they ought not to shatter. Wherefore, the Apostle [1] Tim. last chapter [6:7]: “Charge the rich of this world not to be high-minded.” Do well, give easily, and store up treasure for yourself on a good foundation.

Wherefore, Augustine, in the book *Sentencia Prosperi*,[[14]](#endnote-14) whoever is tied fast by the love of earthly things does not possess them but is possessed by them. In a time of tempest, however much more one loves his merchandise, so much the more he is in peril because then he should separate himself from them by throwing them into the sea, and thus often one is endangered, so it is with the rich man if he retains too many riches he perishes with them. However, if he spreads them to the poor he will be saved.

Wherefore, Augustine, *Epistola* 81,[[15]](#endnote-15) which is to Nebridium, says that an intelligible number grows in infinity, however it does not grow less into infinity, because it is not permitted to resolve beyond a unity; but on the other hand, concerning a sensible number because that can grow less into infinity. Therefore, perhaps, the wise philosophers have placed their riches in intelligible things, their penury in sensible things. For what is more wretched than to be able to become always less and less? What is richer than to grow? Wherefore, Gregory, *[Homilia in Ezechielem],* 18,[[16]](#endnote-16) spiritual riches paid out grow, earthly riches paid out depart. Seneca, *Epistula,* 56, he is truly great who is poor amidst riches.[[17]](#endnote-17)

And Augustine,[[18]](#endnote-18) what good does it do the thief if he is led through protracted flowers to his hanging? And what good does it do the rich man if he is drawn through the flowers of temporal things to hell? Therefore, note that present riches are not truly riches because they desert a man in his greatest need, namely, in death. Rather, they spoil a man from the true riches which are virtues and graces, [1 Tim. 6:9]: “They that will become rich, fall into temptation.” However, truly in these riches the possession is not to be blamed, but the cupidity and the abuse.

¶ Again, riches make one to have a great name in his own circle, as if it were sought who is better or greater in the city, it would be responded concerning those richer in lands, although he is the worst among the dead. Again, riches are the cause of receding from God, Deut. 32[:15]: “The beloved grew fat and kicked.”

¶ For many think that because of their merits they have riches and God withdraws from them because he expects this, Psal. [73:21]: “The poor and needy shall praise your name.” It is read concerning a certain matron who gave to a soldier whom she loved chastely one falcon nobly reared. So intent was the soldier about the falcon that the he neglected the matron. Which being evident, the matron at a certain time beheaded the falcon and thus the soldier returned to his first love. So, it is concerning God the giver and concerning us, Jer. [5:7]: “I fed them to the full, and they committed adultery,” and they forgot me. Thus, it was figurally, Gen. [40:23]: “The chief butler, when things prospered with him, forgot his interpreter.” The figure for this, Dan. 4[:19, 30], concerning Nabuchodonosor who on account of his opulence believed he was equal to God. Wherefore also he was turned into a beast, but after his restitution he acknowledged God, Psal. [82:17]: “Fill their faces with shame; and they shall seek your name, O Lord.”

¶ Again, of riches, some are temporal, some spiritual, some celestial. The first are of fortune, the second are of grace, the third are of glory. The first are gathered in a money box, the second in constancy, the third in the heavenly court. The first of necessity are left behind, according to that of Psal. [48:11]: “They shall leave their riches to strangers.” The example of the dog following two men on the road. Therefore, here they would be divided, because they were of little value to those understanding their nature, [Psal. 72:12]: “Behold these are sinners; and yet abounding in the world they have obtained riches.”

Second, because they are perilous to those acquiring, just as thorns are not collected without harm, nor mud without defiling, so neither are riches collected without fraud, lying, and the like, Prov. 28[:22]: “A man, that makes haste to be rich.” Luke 12[:21], and 16[:19], and Eccli. 11[:10]: “If you are rich, you shall not be free from sin.”

Third, because they are harmful to those possessing, just as flesh is harmful to bones, for this reason a bone is gnawed by dogs. Fruits are harmful to trees, for this reason they are pressed down by boys. Thus, the rich suffer attacks of thieves, oppressions of princes, exactions of beadles, Eccle. 6[:1-2]: “There is also another evil, which I have seen under the sun … a man to whom God hath given riches, and substance,” and it follows, “yet God does not give him power to eat thereof.”

Fourth, because they are sterile to the lovers, just as a heap of wheat is uselessly loved which is not dispersed nor sown, Eccle. 5[:9]: “He that loves riches shall reap no fruit from them.”

Second, spiritual riches, namely, of graces and virtues, according to the will either they are acquired, or they are lost, Jer. 17[:11]: “He who has gathered riches, and not by right.”

¶ Therefore, these riches are to be gathered because they are fruitful for four things. First to the revelation of other miseries, just as a fountain makes the earth abundant, the sun gives light to the air, 1 Cor. 1[:5]: “That in all things you are made rich in him,” etc. Wis. 8[:5]: “If riches be desired [what is richer] than wisdom.”

Second, for redemption of the soul itself, just as a security is given back at the payment of money, so the soul from sin by the riches of penance, Prov. 13[:8]: “The ransom of a man’s life are his riches.”

Third, for the avoidance of eternal punishment, so the sailor by navigating prudently avoids the peril in the crash of a four-horse team, Isai. 33[:6]: “Riches of salvation, wisdom and knowledge.”

Fourth for the inheritance of future glory, James 2[:5]: “Has not God chosen the poor in this world?”

Third are the heavenly riches which once possessed will never perish. Therefore, they are to be sought for because they are glorious on account of four aforesaid goods having their contraries. For, security without care, Prov. 18[:11]: “The substance of the rich man is the city of his strength.” Second, perpetuity without an end, [Psal. 111:3]: “Glory and wealth shall be in his house.” Third, satiety without failing, [Psal. 36:3]: “You shall be fed with its riches.” Fourth, joyfulness without affliction, Prov. 8[:18]: “With me are riches and glory.”

¶ Again, temporal riches are not to be coveted. First, because they are delusionary and not true, but empty and insufficient, Apo. 3[:17], you are rich “because … I am rich, and made wealthy, and have need of nothing: and know not, that you are wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked,” to which turpitude appears, blind because he does not see himself. Is he not blind, to whom therefore the mark (*marca*) is offered, to be chosen on one part, and a half-penny (*obolus*) from the other part, if he chooses the half-penny? So, the rich man who having neglected an eternal heredity, chooses a temporal. Wherefore, Jerome, in an *Epistola*,[[19]](#endnote-19) it is impossible that one would enjoy good things in the present and the future, so that here he might fill the belly and there the mind, so that he might transition from delights to delights, so that in heaven and on earth he may appear glorious.

¶ Note here that so the riches deceive the rich man, just as the mirror the tiger,[[20]](#endnote-20) which first plays with shadows and the divided images, after the mirror has been broken, as they appear to be. So, the rich sleep in their dream and find nothing in the morning.

Second, because riches are transitory, because although they may appear great, they do not last. Therefore, those hoping in them cry out in the end, as that of Wis. 5[:8-9]: “What has pride profited us? and the boasting of riches,” and if follows, “All those things are passed away like a shadow.”

¶ Note when one follows a shadow, it flees. So, it is concerning temporal things, Eccli. 34[:2]: “Like to him that catches at a shadow, and follows after the wind, so also the man that gives heed to lying visions.” Lies are temporal things, because just as a shadow and wind they cannot be retained. And note here that a shadow grows toward night, thus riches toward death.

¶ The example of the rich man, Luke 12[:19]: “Soul, you have much goods laid up,” etc.

Again, third because riches are obligatory. For by that one sins, merchandise is sought, a toll not from an empty man. So many things are sought from a rich man which are not sought from a poor man, such as alms, entertainments, borrowings, sureties.

¶ And note here that one going about riches and friends is not a true lord, but one who contemns them, Deut. 11[:24]: “Every place, that your foot shall tread upon, shall be yours.” Example of the Pharisee and the Publican, Luke 18[:10].

¶ Again, because temporal goods are an affliction, Eccle. 5[:11]: “The fullness of the rich will not suffer him to sleep.” By how much more one is enriched, so much the more is he afflicted.

Again, spiritual riches are preferred to temporal because they are easier for acquiring, more secure for possessing, stronger for being on guard.

Concerning the first, because they are acquired through petition, Rom. 10[:12]: “The same Lord is rich unto all that call upon him.” But it is not so concerning temporal things, Eccli. 11[:10]: “If you pursue after you shall not overtake.”

Concerning the second, they are more secure because no one can take them from their possessor unwillingly, Job 5[:26]: “Thou shalt enter into the grave in abundance,” etc. But it is not so concerning temporalities, because Job 27[:19]: “The rich man when he shall sleep shall take away nothing with him.” Wherefore also riches of the world are just like the riches of one sleeping and dreaming, who while he sleeps seems to himself to be rich but having awakened, he finds nothing.

¶ Concerning the third, because they are stronger for being on guard, because in the last great assizes all the riches of the world will not avail one, Prov. 11[:4]: “Riches shall not profit in the day of revenge.” But riches of virtue then will avail for buying the kingdom of heaven and the free possessor, Prov. 120[:2]: “Treasures of wickedness shall profit nothing: but justice shall deliver from death.” And truly they say these riches are treasures of impiety because they fail in necessity, but eternal riches are added to spiritual riches because “to everyone that has shall be given, and he shall abound,” Matt. 25[:29].

1. Augustine, *De civitate Dei* 15.5 (PL 41:441): Sic enim condita est Roma, quando occisum Remum a fratre Romulo Romana testatur historia: nisi quod isti terrenae civitatis ambo cives erant. Ambo gloriam de Romanae reipublicae institutione quaerebant: sed ambo eam tantam, quantam, si unus esset, habere non poterant. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. Seneca, Cf. Publius Syrus, *Sententiae*: Quietissime viverent homines, si hec duo pronomina tollerentur de medio, meum et tuum. http://www.thelatinlibrary.com/syrus.html

   Cf. Anton E. Schönbach, IV. Abhandlung: “Sudien zur Erzählungsliteratur des Mittelalters,” in *Sitzungsberichte der Philosophisch-Historichen Klasse*, Akademie der Wissenschaften, Band 159 (Wien: In Kommission bei Alfred Hölder, 1908), p. 24 # 20a. [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. (Pseudo-)Chrysostom, *Opus imperfectum in Matthaeum* Homilia 12, ex cap. 5, 41-42 (PG 56:701): divitiae nostrae non sunt nostrae, sed Dei. Deus enim dispensatores non divitiarum voluit esse suarum, non dominos: et ideo cui voluerit, dat eas; et a quo voluerit, tollit: illud proprie nostrum est, quod in nostra est potestate habere, si volumus. [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. (Pseudo-)Chrysostom, *Opus imperfectum in Matthaeum* Homilia 5, ex cap. 4, 10 (PG 56: 661-71): quoniam divitias tibi Deus dare potest, divitiae autem tibi Deum dare non possunt. [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
5. Augustine, *De scripturis, Sermo* 61.9.10-11 (PL 38:412): Nihil enim est quod sic generent divitiae, quomodo superbiam. Omne pomum, omne granum, omne frumentum, omne lignum habet vermem suum. Et alius est vermis mali, alius pyri, [Col.0413] alius fabae, alius tritici. Vermis divitiarum superbia. … Neque sperare in incerto divitiarum. … Quam multi heri divites, hodie pauperes? [↑](#endnote-ref-5)
6. Aristotle, *History of Animals* 9.40, 624a2 (Barnes 1:971): and cells for the drones they build if a superabundance of honey should suggest their doing so. [↑](#endnote-ref-6)
7. Augustine, *Epistolae secundum ordinem temporum* 31.5 (PL 33:124): Nescio quo autem modo, cum superflua et terrena diliguntur, arctius adepta quam concupita constringunt. [↑](#endnote-ref-7)
8. Cf. Augustine, *Sermones de scripturis* 61.11.12 (PL 38:413-14): Quae sunt tua superflua, sint pauperibus necessaria. Sed ego, inquis, pretiosas epulas accipio, pretiosis cibis vescor. Pauper quid? Vilibus. Vilibus cibis vescitur pauper; ego, inquit, pretiosis. Interrogo vos, quando fueritis ambo satiati: Pretiosus cibus ad te intrat; quid fit, cum intraverit? Nonne si specularia in ventre haberemus, de omnibus cibis pretiosis erubesceremus, quibus saturatus es? Esurit pauper, esurit dives: saturari quaerit pauper, saturari quaerit dives. Saturatur pauper de vilibus cibis, saturatur dives de pretiosis cibis. [↑](#endnote-ref-8)
9. Bede, *In Esdram et Nehemiam … expositio* 1.2 (PL 91:823): Familiaris namque res est, humanum cor opibus ac libertate dissolvi, aerumnis vero ac paupertate ad semetipsum recolligi. [↑](#endnote-ref-9)
10. Aristotle, Cf. Innocent III, *De contempt Mundi sive De miseria conditionis humanae* 2.36 (PL 217:731-32): Porro, quidam philosophus volens arrogantiam cujusdam regis illudere, cum vidisset eum in throno regali sedere sublimem, prostratus in terram suppliciter adoravit, et confestim non invitatus, ascendens juxta regem consedit. Quod rex vehementer admirans, eo quod nosset eum esse philosophum, quare hoc egerit, exquisivit. Philosophus ergo respondit: «Aut Deus es, aut homo: si Deus, debui te adorare: si homo, bene potui juxta te sedere.» Rex autem responsionem convertens contra philosophum intulit: «Imo si homo sum, non debuisti me adorare: si Deus sum, non debuisti juxta me sedere.» Sapienter iste respondit, sed ille prudenter elusit. [↑](#endnote-ref-10)
11. Cf. (Pseudo-)Chrysostum, *Opus imperfectum in Mattheum* Homilia 34 ex cap. 20 (PG 56:817): Opera autem nostra sunt opera justitiae: non ut agros nostros colamus, et vineas: non ut divitias acquiramus, et congregemus honores: sed ut proximis prosimus. Et quamvis haec sine peccato facere possumus, tamen non sunt opera nostra, sed diaria nostra. [↑](#endnote-ref-11)
12. Augustine, *De sermone Domini in monte* 2.13.44 (PL 34:1289): Sordescit enim aliquid, cum inferiori miscetur naturae, quamvis in suo genere non sordidae; quia etiam de puro argento sordidatur aurum, si misceatur: ita et animus noster terrenorum cupiditate sordescit, quamvis ipsa terra in suo genere atque ordine munda sit. [↑](#endnote-ref-12)
13. Augustine, *Epistola* 189.7 (PL 33.856): Divitiae saeculares si desunt, non per mala opera quaerantur in mundo; si autem adsunt, per bona opera serventur in coelo. Animum virilem et christianum nec debent, si accedunt, extollere, nec debent frangere, si recedunt. [↑](#endnote-ref-13)
14. Augustine, in Prosper of Aquitane, *Sententiae* 197 (PL 45:1875): Nam qui terrenorum amore obstringitur, non possidet, sed possidetur. [↑](#endnote-ref-14)
15. Augustine, *Epistolae secundum ordinem temporum* 3.2 (PL 33:64): numerus ille intelligibilis infinite crescit, non tamen infinite minuitur, nam non eum licet ultra monadem resolvere; contra sensibilis (nam quid est aliud sensibilis numerus, nisi corporeorum vel corporum quantitas?) minui quidem infinite, sed infinite crescere nequeat. Et ideo fortasse merito philosophi in rebus intelligibilibus divitias ponunt, in sensibilibus egestatem. Quid enim aerumnosius quam minus atque minus semper posse fieri? Quid ditius, quam crescere quantum velis, ire quo velis, redire cum velis, quousque velis, et hoc multum amare quod minui non potest? [↑](#endnote-ref-15)
16. Gregory, *Homilia in Ezechielem* 2.6.2 (PL 76:999): spiritales divitiae erogatae proficiunt, terrenae autem divitiae aut erogantur et deficiunt, [↑](#endnote-ref-16)
17. Seneca, *Epistula* 20.10 (LCL 75:138): magnus ille, qui in divitiis pauper est.

    and he is truly great who is poor amidst riches. [↑](#endnote-ref-17)
18. Augustine, cf. Anthony of Padua, *Dominica II post octavam Epiphaniae Exordium.* Sermo contra divites et sapientes huius mundi.1: O miseri! Quid prodest latroni si per virens pratum ducatur ad suspendium? Quid contulit diviti epulatori purpura et byssus, cum post paululum in inferno fuit sepultus? <http://www.documentacatholicaomnia.eu/03d/1195-1231,_Antonius_Patavinus,_Sermo_057_Dominica_II_Post_Octavam_Epiphaniae,_LT.pdf> [↑](#endnote-ref-18)
19. Jerome, *Epistola* 118.6 (PL 22:965): Difficile, imo impossibile est ut et praesentibus quis et futuris fruatur bonis: ut et hic ventrem, et ibi mentem impleat; ut de deliciis transeat ad delicias; ut in utroque saeculo primus sit; ut et in coelo et in terra appareat gloriosus. [↑](#endnote-ref-19)
20. cf. Bartholomaeus Anglicus, *De proprietatibus rerum* 18.102 (1505, p. 477): Qui autem omnes catulos deferre cupit, specula magna in itinere derelinquit, que mater inseuens in via inuenit et in eis se intuens, de sua imagine filios esse crfedit. circa autem suam umbram illic detenta et circa filiorum extractionem de vitro occupata dat raptori spacium fugiendi et sic per vmbram decipitur ne raptorem pro catulorum liberatione vlterius persequatur.

    he that will bear away the whelps, leaveth in the way great mirrors, and the mother followeth and findeth the mirrors in the way, and looketh on them and seeth her own shadow and image therein, and weeneth that she seeth her children therein, and is long occupied therefore to deliver her children out of the glass, and so the hunter hath time and space for to scape, and so she is beguiled with her own shadow, and she followeth no farther after the hunter to deliver her children. [↑](#endnote-ref-20)