371 Vessel (*Vas*)

Note that the subdivision of a vessel is triple. For it is a certain spiritual vessel capable of divine grace and love, which is the soul. And it is a carnal vessel collected of filth, indignity, or honor, which is the whole man. Wherefore Augustine in the book *Sententiae* of Prosper,[[1]](#endnote-1) for this men are boiled out by the fire of affliction, so that the vessel of election may be emptied of wickedness and filled with grace. And in the third book of the *Dialogi*, c. 7,[[2]](#endnote-2) it is said how one seeing the lack of lodging found himself in a temple of Apollo. And the old man was marked by the sign of the cross, although he did not believe in the cross. He was searched by the demons congregated in that place, and they said, Here is an empty vessel yet it is signed.

Therefore, it is evident from many places how perilous it is to abuse the sacred vessel, as it is evident concerning Baltasar, Dan. 5[:2]. But since the heart of man is ordained that it be a vessel of grace, note what Augustine says, *Super canonica Joannis*,[[3]](#endnote-3) the second homily, you are a vessel, if you are still full, pour out what you have. Act. 9[:15] God says of Paul, “This man is to me a vessel of election.” For he was first a useless vessel and afterwards he was made “another vessel,” Jer. 18[:4]. And just as a vessel repaired sometimes is better than it was before, so sometimes it happens concerning a person. Because he will be “As a massy vessel of gold, adorned with every precious stone,” Eccli. 50[:10]. And Prov. 25[:4]: “Take away the rust from silver, and there shall come forth a most pure vessel.”

But note that however much the vessels are dedicated to higher and more sacred use, so much more are they golden, as is evident in the temple of Solomon that all his vessels were gold, 3 Kings 7[:48]. Lam. 4[:2]: “The noble sons of Sion, and they that were clothed with the best gold: how are they esteemed as earthen vessels, the work of the potter's hands.” Pure gold is true for the difference of false gold. Of which the difference is that however much more gold is pure the greater it is in sight, so much more does it shine, but false gold so much the worse. Therefore, where true vessels are saved, the false are broken, 2 Tim. 2[:20-21]: “In a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver, but also of wood and earth: and some indeed unto honor, but some unto dishonor. If any man therefore shall cleanse himself,” etc.

1. Augustine, cf. Prosper of Aquitane, *Sententiae ex Augustino* 204 (PL 45:1876): Ad hoc exagitantur homines tribulationibus, ut vasa electionis evacuentur nequitia, et impleantur gratia [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. Gregory, *Dialogorum* 3.7. (PL 77:232): Cumque Judaeus qui advenerat hoc vigilans cerneret, et magnae formidinis anxietate palpitaret, ab eodem spiritu qui cunctis illic obsequentibus praeerat jussum est ut requirerent quisnam esset ille qui jacere in templo eodem praesumpsisset. Quem maligni spiritus pergentes, et subtilius intuentes, crucis mysterio signatum viderunt, mirantesque dixerunt: Vae, vae, vas vacuum et signatum. [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. Augustine, *In Epistolam Joannis ad Parthos* 2.9 (PL 35:1994): Vas es, sed adhuc plenus es; funde quod habes, ut accipias quod non habes. [↑](#endnote-ref-3)