91 To Collect (*Colligere*)

Man ought to collect some determinations for himself, some for his neighbor, and some for God. As far as himself he ought to collect two things. First, his sins for confessing, just as the maid collects dregs in the house for throwing out, Num. 19[:9]: “A man that is clean shall gather up the ashes of the cow,” that is, of conscience, “and shall pour them forth without the camp” But in Jer. 7[:18] it is said, “The children gather wood,” that is, they who seek the occasion of sinning, “and the fathers kindle the fire,” that is, they who consent to the sin, “and the women knead the dough, to make cakes,” that is, they who commit the sin.

Second, man ought to collect good works for meriting, just as a bee collects flowers for making honey, a stonecutter stones for building, Eccle. 3[:5]: “A time to scatter stones, and a time to gather.” But, in Matt. 6[:16] it is said, “Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles,” that is good works from evil desires.

Second, man ought to collect determinations for his neighbor in two ways, namely, first, worldly goods for paying out, just as the stomach collects food for distributing to members according to what they need. Just as the farmer collects seed for sowing, John 6[:12]: “Gather up the fragments that remain, lest they be lost.” And [1] Cor. 16[:1]: “Now concerning the collections that are made for the saints,” that is, in the use of the saints, “as I have given order, so do you also.” But, alas, those greedy ones who collect straw for putting in the mud, as it was said in Exod. 5[:12]. A man ought to collect the poor for sheltering just as the hen does her pullets, Matt. 25[:35], I was poor “and you took me in.”

¶ But, alas, “the chief priests gathered a council” against Jesus, John 11[:47].

Third, man ought to collect the good affections in God, so that he may rest in him. Just as a man collects his members on a bed, Gen. 49[:32]: “Jacob drew up his feet upon the bed.” But in Luke 11[:23] it is said, “He that gathers not with me, scatters.”

¶ Again, man ought to gather the merits of works so that afterwards he may possess them, just as an ant[[1]](#endnote-1) collects grain in summer, so that afterwards he may enjoy, Psal. [103:28]: “What you give to them they shall gather up.” Out of Exod. 16[:4]: “Let the people go forth, and gather what is sufficient.” But, alas, because more is observed by man, that of Jer. 40[:10]: “Gather the vintage, and the harvest, and the oil, and lay it up in your vessels.” After these collections the last follows which will be for enjoying eternal joys, just as flowers are collected into a garland, fruit into food, Can. 6[:1], the church triumphant says, “My beloved is gone down into his garden,” that he may collect lilies, but, alas, because it is said in Matt. 13[:30]: “Gather up first the cockle, and bind it into bundles to burn.”

1. Isidore, *Etymologiae* 12.3.9): Formica dicta, eo quod ferat micas farris, cujus solertia multa.  Providet enim in futurum, et praeparat aestate quod hieme comedat. In messe autem elegit triticum, hordeum non tangit. Dum pluit ei super frumentum, totum ejicit. Dicuntur in Aethiopia esse formicae ad canis formam, quae arenas aureas pedibus eruunt, quas custodiunt ne quis auferat, captantesque ad necem persequuntur.

The ant has its name (*formica*) because it carries bits (*ferat micas*) of grain. It prepares in the summer the food it will need in the winter; at harvest time it picks wheat but not barley. If rain wets its grain it puts it out to dry. It is said that in Ethiopia there are ants shaped like dogs which dig up grains of gold with their feet; they guard this gold so no one can steal it. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)