

**ON THE EDICT OF ALEXANDER
OR
ON THE THREE PROCESSIONS
BY
RICHARD OF ST. VICTOR**

TRANSLATION AND INTRODUCTION BY
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INTRODUCTION:

The contribution of Richard of St. Victor (d 1173) to spiritual theology has been highly appreciated, especially in the late Middle Ages, and in recent decades has come more fully into the light. He was not reluctant to break new ground and offer striking new images and insights into spiritual experience, his own and that of those in his care within the Abbey of St. Victor in Paris. Typically he is very attentive in his spiritual works to the various stages or degrees of a person's spiritual journey. He was an innovator, but did not always link together the paths he had opened up. The task of presenting an integrated view of his works, whether in their developmental sequence or in the integration of their content, is a daunting one. Many of his texts, written in a creative style proper to the 12th century Renaissance, have been translated into English.

He is perhaps best known in the English-speaking world through a work in the Classics of Western Spirituality series, which contains *The Book of the Patriarchs (Benjamin minor)*, *The Mystical Ark (Benjamin major)*, and *Book Three of the Trinity*.¹ The two Benjamin works focus on contemplation, preparation for it and its progression through its different stages. More recently we have available a new translation of Richard's *Four Degrees of Violent Love (FDVL)* in a volume edited by Hugh Feiss.² This shorter work is perhaps less well known today, but was quite popular in the late Middle Ages, and deserves wide dissemination and scrutiny. One of its distinguishing marks is the movement from the classical three degrees of spiritual progression to four degrees. Another work which speaks about various stages in one's spiritual journey is *On the Extermination of Evil and the Promotion of Good*, a fairly lengthy treatise not yet

¹ Richard of St. Victor, *The Book of the Patriarchs, The Mystical Ark, Book Three of the Trinity*, introduction and translation by Grover A. Zinn (Mahwah: Paulist Press, 1979).

² Hugh Feiss (editor), *On Love: A Selection of Works of Hugh, Adam, Achard, Richard, and Godfrey of St. Victor*, (Hyde Park: New City Press, 2012). The translation of *On the Four Degrees of Violent Love* is by Andrew Kraebel. There is an earlier partial translation of this work by Clare Kirchberger.

translated into English.³ It uses the journey of the chosen people from Egypt to the promised land as a model for one's spiritual journey, with the passage through the Red Sea corresponding to initial conversion or justification in Pauline terms, and the crossing of the Jordan corresponding to final salvation.

On the Three Processions (O3P), (also known as *The Edict of Alexander*), presented here in an English translation based on the critical edition prepared by Jean Châtillon,⁴ is another work in which Richard offers a teaching on the spiritual journey. The events that structure *O3P* are different liturgical processions occurring within the monastic life of the Abbey of St. Victor, which are related to the three classical stages of spiritual progression. Purgation begins with fear, regret for past sins committed, but then leads to an active, loving life of good works to make up for the good one has not done in the past. Sanctification begins with increase in perfection, but such increase needs to be accompanied by perseverance if it is to be ultimately fruitful. Union begins with a more imperfect contemplation through sensible things and continues with a more perfect contemplation which allows the genuinely contemplative a glimpse of God without such mediation.

What is different in this presentation of the three stages is that union does not end with contemplation, but goes beyond to prophecy. Not all are called to be prophets but those who are share with others the knowledge they have received in contemplation. In this added function there is an intimation of the development of the fourth degree in *FDVL*.⁵ The priest members of the abbey of St. Victor were canons regular and not monks. Like monks they were bound to pray the office, but unlike monks, they did not withdraw from the world in order to seek their perfection, but rather sought perfection in order to re-engage the world with their ministry. Indeed this abbey was noted for its succession of great scholars and teachers. Already in the writings of Achard of St. Victor, a predecessor of Richard, we find the position that contemplation should lead to compassionate action on behalf of one's neighbour.⁶ Indeed

³ The key text is Ps 114:5: "Why is it, O sea, that you fled? O Jordan, that you turned back?" This text alludes to two miracles which begin and end the long journey of the chosen people from being slaves in Egypt to enjoying the Promised Land. Between these events the chosen people make a long journey through the desert. Both of these events are miracles having to do with water. In their flight out of Egypt, the waters of the Red Sea parted so they could leave behind their pursuers and carry on their journey. But at the end of their journey the Jordan river stopped its course so that they could get through to the promised land. The first event corresponds to justification in Pauline terms, the second to salvation, and what lies in between is the lengthy journey of sanctification which has its ups and downs, its meanderings and delays.

⁴ Jean Châtillon et William Joseph Tulloch, *Sermons et opuscules spirituels inédits*, Texte latin, introd. et notes de Jean Châtillon et William-Joseph Tulloch; traduction française de Joseph Barthélemy, Volume 1, (Turnhout: Desclée de Brouwer 1951)

⁵ This could be used as an argument in favour of *FDVL* being a later work than *O3P*.

⁶ Cf. H. Feiss, ed., *op. cit.*, pp. 81 -83.

Aquinas in the next century follows the same line of thought when articulating what is characteristic of the Dominican religious life which he had embraced. The fruits of contemplation are to be handed on to others, and it is good to abstain from contemplation in order to serve God in the salvation of their neighbours. (*De Virtutibus*, q.2, a.11, ad 6).

The following quote from the beginning of the third sermon offers a thematic summary of Richard’s teaching “The entire progress of the rational soul consists in three elements: to obtain true and full purity, justice, and joy of heart. The first stage leads to purity, the second to sanctity, the third to felicity. In the first the soul is purified from vice, in the second endowed with merit, in the third enriched with reward; it is purified in the first, sanctified in the second, glorified in the third.” Building on this quote, the basic structural relationships within the work are presented in the following table:

| <u>First Procession</u> : Purification | <u>Second Procession</u> : Palm Sunday | <u>Third Procession</u> : Ascension |
|--|---|--|
| we are to become <u>Jews</u> Judaea = confession | we are to become <u>Hebrews</u> Hebrew = transient, or emigration begun | we are to become <u>Galileans</u> Galilee = emigration accomplished, or revelation |
| foolish Jews: to confess sin without any attempt at disculpation | false Hebrews: to be truly virtuous yet to call oneself a sinner | wicked Galileans: to be unyielding to and intolerant of evildoers |
| confession of sins | active life: progress in virtues | contemplative life: contemplation of eternal truths |
| we process from the house to the temple | we process from the village to the citadel | we process from earth to heaven |
| from an impure to a pure conscience | from an insecure to a secure conscience | from a miserable to a happy conscience |
| lamps: examination of conscience in both manifest and hidden areas | flowers and palms: eager beginnings of progress and perseverance to the end | crosses and banners: mortification of the flesh and elevation/alienation of the spirit |
| turtle dove and dove | foal and donkey | cymbals and trumpets |
| from much impurity to great purity | from great imperfection to great perfection | from excessive misery to overflowing happiness |
| purification of sin | tending towards perfection | perfection |
| movement with possibility of turning back | emigration undertaken | emigration achieved no possible turning back |

Three contributions of this work to tradition stand out. First the three degrees are not monoliths: Richard develops their inner complexity and gradations. We find in them a repeated pattern of two’s: turtledove and dove, foal and donkey, banners and crosses, cymbals and

trumpets, flowers and palms, cymbals and trumpets.⁷ A second contribution is that he relates the three degrees to events in the life of Christ: the purification of Mary, (coincident with the presentation of Jesus in the temple), Jesus' triumphal procession into Jerusalem, his ascension. A third is a clear connection between the three degrees and the three moments of the dynamic of grace in Paul: justification/purification; sanctification; glorification.⁸

There follow notes on each of the four sermons which comprise this work.

Notes on Sermon One: Who is the great Alexander whose edict went forth? Richard tells us it is not the great conqueror of ancient times. There is certainly an allusion to Pope Alexander III, who intervened in the affairs of the Abbey of St. Victor because of Abbot Ernisius' tolerance of abuses. Richard, at the time prior of the monastery, suffered under this regime. In this sermon he took the opportunity to praise Alexander's role, and he links Alexander with a call to progress in the spiritual life addressed to the members of the religious community. At that point it becomes clear that the great Alexander is the Lord himself, who invites us to spiritual perfection.⁹ The three classical stages of beginner, proficient, and perfect were linked with Jews, Hebrews, and Galileans because of the etymology put forward by St. Jerome in his *De Nominibus Hebraicis*. Classical scriptural references enable Richard to develop the paradoxical theme that beginners are to be foolish rather than wise in the sense that they are to present themselves to God with all their sins, without any dissimulation; the proficient are to be false in the sense that in spite of their real merits they are to consider themselves unprofitable servants. Richard pushes the parallelism further by advocating that the perfect are to be wicked, but the wickedness he refers to is their unrelenting opposition to evildoers, a stance which is permissible to them only because they are perfect. In sermon 4 he tells us that the perfect fall in three categories: the speculative, the contemplative, and the prophetic. His basic point in sermon 1 has to do not with the perfect as such but with those who, belonging to the category of prophets, exercise the office of leadership. They are to be ruthless in stamping out offences against God. That is what presumably Ernisius was not willing or able to do as abbot. The main scriptural reference seems to be a proverb from the Book of Sirach (42:14) which paradoxically claims that the iniquity of a man is better than the good deeds of a woman. In this section Richard pursues an extended contrast between the masculine and the feminine, with the apparent presupposition that only men have access to the highest realms of spiritual

⁷ Lamps do not have a second member, but in his development of the significance of the lamps in the purification procession Richard manages to maintain the pattern of two's.

⁸ This connection of degrees to mysteries in the life of Christ continues, although not in the precise pattern devised by Richard. Ignatius Loyola, for instance, associates his second week with the mysteries of the public ministry of Christ, his third with the passion and death, and his fourth with the resurrection and subsequent apparitions.

⁹ Cf. G.S.M. Walker, "Richard of St. Victor: an Early Scottish Theologian?" in *Scottish Journal of Theology*, 11, 1958, pp. 37-52.

development. Thus at this point, and this may be quite understandable, Richard's preoccupation with leadership in his monastery takes over from his serene exposition of progress in the spiritual life and leads him into questionable areas of thought.

Notes on Sermon Two: The first sermon ended on a note which plunged us back into the daily concerns of the Abbey of St. Victor. We heard about the desired characteristics of Jews, Hebrews, and Galileans, which stand for persons in the three stages of spiritual life, beginners, proficient, and perfect. In this sermon we hear about the typical progression of persons in the three stages, and to develop his theme Richard alludes to three major processions in use within the liturgical observances of his day: that of the Feast of Purification and of Palm Sunday (still extant) and that of the Feast of Ascension. He builds his exposé around the major scripture texts which these processions enact, referring to the persons who carry out these processions (Jews, Hebrews, Galileans), where they go (from house to temple, from village to citadel, from earth to heaven) who is present (the Christ-child and the young mother, the elders Anna and Simeon in the first, the disciples and a large crowd in the second, men of Galilee and angels in the third); what they carry (lights in the first, flowers and palms in the second, crosses and banners in the third); what draws their attention in the story (a turtledove and a dove in the first, a foal and a donkey in the second, cymbals and trumpets in the third). Using a tropological interpretation, he links these three processions to the three stages of spiritual progress, and to the Jews, Hebrews, and Galileans he spoke about in the first sermon.

Notes on Sermon Three: This sermon begins with a brief summary in which the progression depicted by the three processions is put in terms redolent of the dynamic of grace found in the main epistles of Paul. Richard then begins to develop part of what is delineated briefly in the second paragraph of sermon two, and in this way offers a greater differentiation and richness to his account of the three processions. In the first part of sermon three Richard deals with the first set of items which are required in each of these processions: lamps in the first, flowers and palms in the second, crosses and banners in the third. He finishes with a reflection on the different types of people which participate in these processions. The items are in pairs, except for the first procession, which calls for lamps. But the process of purification which the first procession symbolizes is twofold: one must be seen to observe the precepts of the law in such a way as to avoid giving occasion of false suspicions, but then one must find all hidden traces of sinfulness within. The lamps are required for this second purification. Flowers and palms in the second procession refer to our progression in the path of goodness, and our perseverance in it. In the third procession crosses refer to the mortification of the flesh, and banners to a movement which is an elevation of the spirit from the human to the superterrestrial to the divine. The human spirit is not only elevated above itself, but also alienated from itself. Richard finally comes back to the participants in the three processions: the weak in the first and the strong in the third, with a mixture of the two in the second. What is particular here is his development, which begins from the Ascension account, of three types of perfection: speculative, contemplative, and prophetic. The prophets bring back what they have experienced and heard to others.

Notes on Sermon Four: Richard completes the task undertaken in sermon three to reflect on the significance of the various implements used in the three processions. Again he proceeds by twos, dealing with the turtledove and the dove in the first, the donkey and the foal in the second, the cymbal and the trumpet in the third. Again he uses this device to reflect on the inner differentiation which occur in the three stages. The turtledove and the dove respectively reflect our need for the compunction of fear which washes away our past sins and the compunction of love which makes us eager to do good. The donkey and the colt symbolize two stances between which we are to alternate: the donkey the humility which we must have in our own eyes and those of God, the foal the subsequent willingness to undergo humiliation in the eyes of others. The cymbal refers to jubilation and the trumpet to admiration, and it is at this point that Richard's development is more ample. Jubilation might strike us in different ways, but it is the same basic sweetness that inebriates us. Admiration refers to the dilation, the broadening which accompanies contemplation. But here Richard evokes the two sides of the paschal mystery: there is the sadness, struggle, temptation, but followed by joy, peaceful integration of all the powers of the human being.

Richard of St. Victor is situated in a long line of spiritual authors, and has influenced, directly or indirectly, explicitly or implicitly, the Western spiritual authors that follow him. For an account of this progression, which includes St. Ignatius Loyola whose Spiritual Exercises entail not three but four weeks, you may go to [http://www.jesuits.ca/orientations/stages in the spiritual journey.pdf](http://www.jesuits.ca/orientations/stages%20in%20the%20spiritual%20journey.pdf)

TRANSLATION

1 SERMON ONE

1.1 An edict went out from the great Alexander, who wanted it to be known in the whole world.¹⁰ I am not speaking of that Alexander which history books refer to, but of someone greater than he, greater because better, better because holier.¹¹ For the first Alexander was able to get to the ends of the earth,¹² but it is incomparably greater for one through his merits to occupy the heights of heaven. This the second Alexander was able to do, such that he can truthfully say "Our commonwealth is in heaven."¹³ Yes, something greater than Alexander is here.¹⁴ The first one was able to conquer the territories of nations and their tyrants, making

¹⁰ Lk 1:1.

¹¹ The contrast appears to be between Alexander the Great and Pope Alexander III

¹² Cf. 1 Macc. 1:4.

¹³ Phil. 3:20.

¹⁴ Mt. 12:41; Lk. 11:32.

them tributaries to him,¹⁵ through the second one and the forces sworn to him, the kingdom of heaven suffers violence; indeed the violent take it by force.¹⁶ Yes, something greater than Alexander is here. Finally the first one was able to exterminate the kings of the earth, but having killed their bodies he could do nothing to their souls;¹⁷ yet concerning our Alexander we are told that all he binds on earth will be bound in heaven.¹⁸ Yes, something greater than Alexander is here. Here we have the Alexander who is destined for the falling and the rising of many and as a sign that will be opposed.¹⁹ Here we have the Alexander to whom the Lord doubtlessly said: “Your detractors will come towards you and adore your footprints.”²⁰ See how glorious is the one whom the tribes and the languages serve;²¹ the kings will adore him, all peoples will give him service.²²

1.2 And so it is from this great Alexander that the edict came forth, that whoever wants to obtain his grace, should become a Jew, a Hebrew, or a Galilean. But let the one who wants to possess the fulness of grace become not any Jew but a foolish one; not any Hebrew but a false one; not any Galilean but a wicked one. His spirit took pleasure in these three: the foolish Jew, the false Hebrew, and the wicked Galilean.

1.3 Our Alexander indeed knows one able to say “Be holy because I am holy.”²³ Thus he wants you to all become saints and thus to congregate in Judaea, because Judaea has become the sanctuary²⁴ of the One who says “It is for your sakes that I sanctify myself”.²⁵ Thus all those among us who want to be holy ought to come to Judaea. As you know, Judaea means confession,²⁶ and scripture tells us that all is washed in confession.²⁷ So let the one who wants to have a holy and pure conscience come to Judaea. He who aspires to the purity of true sanctification must come to confession. Confession makes one a Jew, purifies one, renders one

¹⁵ I Macc. 1:5.

¹⁶ Mt. 11:12.

¹⁷ Lk 12:4.

¹⁸ Mt. 16:19.

¹⁹ Lk. 2:34.

²⁰ Is. 60:14.

²¹ Dan 7:14.

²² Ps. 72:11.

²³ Lev. 11:44.

²⁴ Ps. 114:2.

²⁵ Jn 17:19.

²⁶ Jerome, *De nominibus hebraicis*, P.L. XXIII, 825.

²⁷ Perhaps a reference to I Jn. 1:9.

holy. “Confess your sins to each other and pray for each other that you may be saved”,²⁸ and you are Jews and holy as Alexander wants you all to be.

1.4 This makes clear to us why our Alexander loves Jews so much. Still he loves Hebrews more fully and perfectly than Jews. He wants us to share a characteristic of the Apostle so that we too might be glorified with him, when he says “They are Hebrews; so am I.”²⁹ ‘Hebrew’ comes from passage, for ‘Hebrew’ means transient. Those of us who, in accord with the great Alexander’s desire, want to become Hebrews of good hope must always be in a state of passage, and, forgetting what lies behind strain forward to what lies ahead.³⁰ He does not want us to have a lasting city here, but to look for the city that is to come,³¹ wandering from nation to nation, from one kingdom to another people.³² Let us then pass from the desires of the flesh to those of the spirit, overturn the reign of the vices, and walk in the virtues. To become perfect it is not enough for you to be a Jew: in addition you must be a Hebrew. To pass from evil to good is to become a Hebrew; to continually pass from the good to the better is to remain a Hebrew.

1.5 You easily see that to be perfect it is not sufficient to be a Jew unless one also shows oneself to be a Hebrew. But if from being a Jew you have become a Hebrew, there remains for you a third step: from being a Hebrew you also become a Galilean. The one who wishes to obtain the fulness of the great Alexander’s favour must attain this degree of conversion, this state, which are ultimate and supreme. Galilean comes from Galilee, and Galilee connotes full emigration, or revelation. Just as passing makes the Hebrew, emigrating makes the Galilean. It is one thing to journey, another to emigrate. Those who journey do not always change or abandon the place where they live. What is emigration but to change where one lives? He, the chief of our militia and the prince of the kings of the earth, wants us to migrate, to the point of being able to truly profess and affirm with him: “Our citizenship is in heaven.”³³ You too, if it is your will, be diligent, migrate to the mountain like the sparrow, and you will be a Galilean as Alexander desires you to be. When sparrows migrate to the mountain, they go up by beating their wings. Therefore see to it: it may be right for you to take the wings of contemplation, if you want to become a Galilean. So migrate from active to contemplative life, so that for you emigration be achieved, and your abode might be in Galilee.

1.6 Let me tell you even more clearly where our glorious chief wants you to fix the place of

²⁸ Jas. 5:16.

²⁹ 2 Cor. 11:22.

³⁰ Phil. 3:13.

³¹ Heb. 13:14.

³² Ps. 105:13.

³³ Phil. 3:20.

your abode, to what he wants you to cling with all your heart, all your soul, all your spirit:³⁴ it is to those goods that which no one, apart from a revelation from God, can know, as the Apostle tells us: "What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the human heart conceived, etc."³⁵ If you intimately cling to these goods, you too will be a Galilean, and with those like you, you can truly say: "God has revealed those things to us through his spirit"³⁶ As we have said, Galilee means revelation, and the one who cleaves to the light of divine revelation is considered to inhabit Galilee and becomes a Galilean. Through the grace of revelation those deserve to be Galileans who have heard the Lord say to them "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father in heaven."³⁷ Indeed it is to Galilee that the angel beckons the very same Peter, that through a divine revelation he might know the glory of the resurrection: "But go, tell his disciples and Peter that he is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see him."³⁸ And so Peter emigrates to Galilee, in order to receive the grace of divine revelation. As you see, revelation follows emigration, and emigration accompanies revelation. When emigration and revelation come together, they make one a Galilean. Active life makes us Hebrews, contemplative life Galileans. To sum up: one becomes a Jew by confessing one's sins, a Hebrew by progress in the virtues, a Galilean by the contemplation of what is eternal. Yes, such a family, such a synagogue of Jews, Hebrews, and Galileans, is the delight and the glory of our Alexander.

1.7 Yet he glories not in any Jew, but in a foolish one. If any among you who are truly Jews think that you are wise, you should become fools so that you may become wise,³⁹ and pleasing to the one who has enlisted you.⁴⁰ For your master and Lord of the Jews knows some who are ready and disposed at every hour and every moment to busy themselves with evil deeds, to seek excuses for their sins.⁴¹ For us to do this is what that wise man hates and detests. He does not want us to act with cunning in our confession, but with simplicity and openness to expose our disgrace. Did not that Jew act with cunning who said: "The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit from the tree, and I ate."⁴² He did not deny his fault, but indirectly, at it were, he turned it back to the Creator. The Lord ridiculed this prudence of the flesh, punished it with his reprimand, when he countered with these menacing words: "By the sweat

³⁴ Mt. 22:37.

³⁵ I Cor. 2:9.

³⁶ I Cor. 2:10.

³⁷ Mt. 16:17.

³⁸ Mk. 16:7.

³⁹ I Cor. 3:18.

⁴⁰ 2 Ti. 2:4.

⁴¹ Ps. 141:4.

⁴² Gen. 3:12.

of your face you shall eat bread until you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken.”⁴³ Indeed the evils which this Jew could have diminished through his foolish simplicity, he multiplied through his carnal prudence. To the contrary, that other one, who pretended to be mad in the presence of Achish, escaped from the danger of death.⁴⁴ What appears to be more foolish, more inconsiderate, than to accuse oneself of crime before one’s judge, and to agree to one’s condemnation? But what are the rulers of the Church but judges of souls? Indeed our Alexander wants us to be so foolish that we know how to hide through shame or excuse through cunning nothing of what makes us blush.

1.8 However -- and this might astound you even more -- that which he loves in Jews, he absolutely detests in Hebrews and Galileans. He wants no foolishness in the progress of virtues and the contemplation of the truth. For he has not destroyed the one who has said: “Do not meddle in matters that are beyond you, and do not be inquisitive about the many works of God. For more than you can understand has been shown you. Their conceit has led many astray, and wrong opinion has impaired their judgment.”⁴⁵ This judgement concerns Galileans and each and every contemplative. But if up till now you have been a Hebrew, struggling from the good towards the better, you are told: “Do the good well” and “Do everything with counsel, and you will never regret it.”⁴⁶ Thus it is right for the one seeking zeal for virtue or truth not to suffer from the vice of imprudence, and for both Hebrews and Galileans never to act inconsiderately.

1.9 But you will perhaps wonder about the conduct of Alexander towards his dear Hebrews: he does not want them to be foolish, but he does want them to become false. For if you are real Hebrews, without any doubt he wants you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last.⁴⁷ Nonetheless, if you really want to please him, when you have done everything, say that you are worthless slaves.⁴⁸ But be attentive to this: if you bear much fruit, how can you be worthless? Or how can you be worthless and bear much fruit? Who, except those out of their minds, would say that the precepts of the Lord are altogether fruitless, and without utility? Our Alexander wants each one of us who is a Hebrew to fulfill all the precepts of the Lord, and in spite of this to assert that which appears to be false. If you are a true Hebrew and strive to emulate the virtuous, he wants you to excel all others in the agility of your efforts, but without any duplicity to believe in your heart and profess with your mouth⁴⁹ that you are below all. If I

⁴³ Gen. 3:19.

⁴⁴ The reference is to David who, fleeing from Saul, came to Achish king of Gath. Cf. I Sam. 21:10-15.

⁴⁵ Sir. 3:21-24. The text available to Richard gave these verses as 24-26 and is slightly different.

⁴⁶ *De erud. hum. int.* I 15, P.L. CXCVI c. 1255.

⁴⁷ Jn. 15:16.

⁴⁸ Lk. 17:10.

⁴⁹ Rom. 10:10.

am not mistaken, the one who toiled more than all others yet judged himself the least among them wanted to be seen as such a Hebrew, when he said: "I am the least of the apostles, unfit to be called an apostle."⁵⁰

1.10 You see what kind of lying or falsehood the promoter of virtues and of truth wants in his Hebrews. You who hear this are may be already astonished, but to astonish you even more, what he accepts and loves in Hebrews, as stated above, he wants to keep away from Jews and Galileans. As has been said, Jews are to confess their sins and Galileans to contemplate truth. In the pure and simple confession of our evil deeds, we must not feign and hide anything: not feign what is false, nor hide what is true. Likewise all suspicion of falsehood must be removed from contemplation of truth. "For what fellowship is there between light and darkness",⁵¹ between the light of truth and the darkness of falsehood? So, as we have asserted above, he loves falsehood, but only in Hebrews, just as he loves folly only in Jews.

1.11 But just as he loves the folly of Jews, and cherishes the falsehood of Hebrews, he delights in the iniquity of Galileans. For he knows, he well knows that "Better is the wickedness of a man than a woman who does good."⁵² Is it surprising that he should prefer that which he knows to be better? Please, let us compare the good deed of a woman to the wickedness of a man, to better show what deserves to be preferred. What is the woman doing good but the feminine spirit which easily forgives injuries to God; and the woman doing evil but the feminine spirit which vigorously avenges the injuries which others have done to it? By contrast, is not the benevolence of a masculine spirit to easily forget injuries done to it, and to ardently avenge injuries done to God? "If one person sins against another, God will mediate for him, but if someone sins against the Lord, who can make intercession?"⁵³ If we fail to immediately go along with what certain prelates decide, whether good or evil, or if we grumble, we see them adopt an attitude of lasting hostility and become absolutely implacable; regarding offences against God, they are not moved, not even a little; towards those who live shamefully they exercise no righteous zeal. Let that be for you the certain sign of an effeminate and womanish character, to see a man of this kind bear his own difficulties with difficulty or even with impatience, while easily overlooking or making little of the fault of those who make little of God.

1.12 At the school of Solomon, we have learnt that "because the sentence against an evil deed is not executed speedily, the human heart is fully set to do evil."⁵⁴ On the contrary,

⁵⁰ I Cor. 15:9.

⁵¹ II Cor. 6:14.

⁵² Sir 42:14.

⁵³ I Sam. 2:25.

⁵⁴ Eccl. 8:11.

“taking care will make great offenses cease.”⁵⁵ And so evils multiply because of feminine good will; because of masculine iniquity they are cut away. What is the kindness of the woman, if not easy and prompt forgiveness of evils done to God? And what is the iniquity of the man, if not the severity of a spirit which zealously avenges any belittling of God? The kindness of the woman, as if through compassion, does not bear that human sins be punished; the wickedness of the man, as if through indignation, does not suffer any of them to remain unpunished. But we know that no sin will remain unpunished, and we also know that the same act will not be judged twice. Thus sins not expiated here below are reserved to future judgement. And because each tree is known by its own fruit,⁵⁶ let us compare the fruits of feminine kindness and those of masculine iniquity. Through the former sins are multiplied and reserved; through the latter they are cut away, purged. “Better is the wickedness of a man than a woman who does good.”⁵⁷ Thus the Galilean man ought to be of such severity that in his presence no one dares presume anything illicit or disordered. His office is to tenaciously reprove the impudence of those who violate their duties, to strike them with vigour, and, like the prophet David, morning by morning to kill all the sinners of the earth.⁵⁸ With this kind of iniquity our Alexander joyfully identifies himself, because he himself is totally bent on cutting off from the city of the Lord all those who do evil.⁵⁹

1.13 Jews and Hebrews, however, he prefers to be favourable to their neighbours, rather than to be severe in this manner, for it is not appropriate for those whose conscience feels the sting of sin to reprove others in a stinging way; nor for those who are not yet perfect to denounce the imperfection of others. For this reason it is proper for Jews and Hebrews to forego hunting out iniquity of this sort until through a great experience of virtues, and above all through the teachings of revealing grace, they arrive at the grace of discretion, and, Jews and Hebrews that they were, they become Galileans. This is what we have said above of the great Alexander, whose spirit takes pleasure in these three: the foolish Jew, the false Hebrew, and the wicked Galilean.

2 SERMON TWO

2.1 We have heard about the qualities of those Alexander longs for. Let us also hear about what he wants them to do, or what kinds of offices he wants them to carry out. Each year, he orders all Jews to attend the feast of the Purification; all Hebrews the feast of Easter, popularly

⁵⁵ Eccl. 10:4. The NRSV has ‘calmness’ for ‘taking care’.

⁵⁶ Lk. 6:44.

⁵⁷ Sir. 42:14.

⁵⁸ Cf. Psa. 101:8.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

referred to as Easter in bloom⁶⁰; all Galileans the feast of the Ascension. For he is convinced that we will never worthily celebrate the feast of Purification without the office of Jews, no more than we can perform the Paschal solemnity with due honour without the office of Hebrews, nor that of the Ascension without the office of Galileans. Recall this passage of the gospel and note how the office of purification deserves to be attributed to Jews: “Now standing there were six stone water jars for the Jewish rites of purification.”⁶¹ Also remember the hymn of the universal church which is now sung throughout the earth: “The children of the Hebrews, carrying olive branches, went before the Lord.” Indeed in singing about what took place at that time this hymn makes no reference to the children of Jews or of Galileans, clearly leading us to understand, in my view, to which participants or celebrants we ought to assign this feast. As to the solemnity of the Ascension, the voice of the Angel points out to us its usual or rightful participants or celebrants in these words: “Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking up toward heaven? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven.”⁶² “From you”, the angel says. And so these are the officiants whom we are to assign to each of these celebrations.

2.2 As we know, these three feasts have this in common: they contain the major processions which we are accustomed to carry out, the ones renowned before all others among the many processions which we carry out at special times during the year or each week. The first finds its source in the parents of the child Jesus leading him to the Temple at the time of purification.⁶³ The second finds its source in Jesus going up from Bethany with his disciples to the citadel opposite them.⁶⁴ The third owes its institution to Jesus, having led his disciples to the mount of Olives, being elevated before their eyes.⁶⁵ The first of these processions led from a house to the temple, the second from a village to a citadel, the third from earth to heaven. In the first procession I see a child and a young girl in one place, and an old man and a widow in another.⁶⁶ In the second procession, looking one way I see the group of the disciples, looking another way a great crowd, of both sexes and different ages, who have come to the feast.⁶⁷ In the third procession, I find on one side men of Galilee and on the other angelic men -- for both

⁶⁰ The corresponding French expression is “Pâques fleuries”, which refers to Palm Sunday, which is the occasion for a procession.

⁶¹ Jn 2:6.

⁶² Act 1:11.

⁶³ Cf. Lk. 2:22-39.

⁶⁴ Cf. Mt: 21:1-2; Lk 19:29-30; Mk. 11:1-2. The Latin text to which Richard alludes has the word ‘castellum’; the NRSV says ‘village’. To highlight the contrast Richard builds on, we will use ‘citadel’ for ‘castellum’.

⁶⁵ Cf. Act. 1:9.

⁶⁶ Cf. Lk. 2:22-39. Richard is referring to Jesus and Mary, Simeon and Anne.

⁶⁷ Cf. Jn. 12:12-13.

are called men, both those who speak these words and those to whom they are spoken: “Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking up toward heaven?”⁶⁸ So the first procession is that of the weak, the last that of the strong, the second that of both mingling together. The first has to do with purification, the third with ascension, and let us refer the second to emigration: as you know the term ‘Pasch’ means passage, but not any passage: it only means that hasty passage in which one forgets what lies behind and strains forward to what lies ahead without intending to return, as takes place when one emigrates.⁶⁹ The great Alexander orders that all attend the purification procession with lanterns, the emigration procession with flowers and palms, the ascension procession with crosses and banners. According to his decree, the first requires a turtle dove and a dove, the second a colt and an ass, the third cymbals and trumpets.

2.3 I do not want to keep you in suspense any longer. I will briefly show you what processions your Alexander wants you to undertake. Be sure of this -- and I do not think you have any doubts about it -- that to constantly seek progress is to proceed in the right way, to carry out a procession both good and praiseworthy. The three processions stands for three degrees of progress. The first leads from great impurity to great purity, the second from great imperfection to great perfection, the third from exceeding misery to exceeding happiness. These are the processions which the promoter of virtues wants you to carry out diligently and accomplish fully.

2.4 He does not want those in filth to become filthier or remain in filth, but to leave their filth, to separate themselves from it, little by little progressing towards purity of mind and body, until at last they attain the fulness of purity. What is your view: Is not going up by gradual degrees towards purity, in a song of exultation and praise, to celebrate the Purification, to carry out the procession which befits this solemnity with appropriate honour? Surely you can see how a procession of this type deserves to be called a procession of purification.

2.5 If you, who hear or read this, whoever you are, have purified yourself of your sins and completely abandoned your filth, but have advanced in virtues little or not at all, you must strive towards gradual progress in merit, and tend to perfection in daily increments. But then is this not to begin and bring to its conclusion the procession we put in second place? If we grasp the goods of virtue in such an uninterrupted way that having seized them we never let go of them, if from the goods we have attained we always tend towards what is better, already we have carried out not just a transition but an emigration, and if with joy and exultation we engage in the effort already begun, we are in fact celebrating the solemnity of the emigration. Thus you can see how this second procession, this promotion of the virtues, is rightly called emigration. To sum up, the procession in which we tend from impurity to purity is that of purification, that in which we pass from imperfection to perfection is that of emigration:

⁶⁸ Act. 1:10-11.

⁶⁹ Cf. Phil. 3:13.

emigration knows no return, confirmed perfection no fall. A human being can fall from purity but not from perfection: those who have fallen by that very token are not perfect, since they lacked perseverance and true stability.

2.6 After the procession from impurity to purity and from imperfection to perfection, there only remains the one from misery to happiness. Indeed the third procession will not be lacking if the first and second went before. Would that all desire the first and the second as truly as they aspire to the third. But if you do not pass through the first two, no matter who you are, you take the third for granted, and in vain. On my view, this procession is not called that of the Ascension for nothing, since in it human beings are raised up falsehood to truth, from the transitory to the eternal, and this through vision, contemplation, taste, perception, possession, enjoyment, and other similar steps in progress.

2.7 In my opinion, one can easily show why, according to the decree of our Alexander, the first procession is assigned to Jews, the second to Hebrews, the third to Galileans. Listen to Scripture: “No one who conceals transgressions will prosper”⁷⁰ By contrast, in confession all is washed. What is being washed but being purified? Thus confession is for purification, confession is for justification. And what is the office of Jews if not to confess their sins? So clearly without their office the feast of Purification will never be worthily celebrated, if truly and indubitably purity of spirit and the gift of justification are not obtained without the bath of confession.

2.8 The office of Hebrews is to always be in transition, in transition from the good to the better. Without this transition, this kind of procession, in which one emigrates from imperfection to perfection, will never be conducted worthily. So we absolutely need the office of Hebrews, if it is our purpose to worthily carry out the Easter celebration and that which we call the feast of emigration. No one will be surprised that we assign the feast of emigration to Hebrews rather than to Galileans, for the meaning of the name and its interpretation seems to call for it.

2.9 To begin emigration is not the same as to continue in its pursuit. Even more distinctive is it to have already brought it to completion. Not any emigration typifies Galileans but only emigration accomplished; any emigration that is begun and not yet complete typifies Hebrews. Those who have already achieved emigration rather than being in the process of achieving it are Galileans; those who are achieving it rather than having already done so are Hebrews. Manifestly what characterizes Galileans, once they have carried out the emigration defined above, is to constantly enjoy divine revelations. What do we mean by Galileans if not people given over to the contemplation of eternal things? That solemnity in which we exult in eternal goods is never carried out worthily without contemplative people. The feast of the Ascension is

⁷⁰ Prov. 28:13.

quite wanting without the ministry of Galileans. It is as clear as day that no one can ever be happy without partaking in that good which “no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the human heart conceived”⁷¹, which no one knows apart from a divine revelation. Hence the word: “these things God has revealed to us through the Spirit”.⁷² Thus in the last procession divine revelation is needed. This revelation makes the Galilean, and without the contribution of Galileans that procession does not exist. What we have said makes it easy to appreciate the reason for the decree ordering all Jews to be present at the first of these processions, all Hebrews at the second, all Galileans at the third.

2.10 If we consider where the aforesaid processions began, we will find that the first went from the house into the temple, the second from the village to the citadel, the third from earth to heaven. The first went from the place of child-bearing all the way to the temple of God; What is one’s house if not a dwelling set aside for one’s own uses? What is a temple, if not a dwelling set aside for the service of God? If a conscience is pure, God willingly dwells within it, and, as I have said, sets it aside for God’s own uses. If a conscience is not pure, whose dwelling will we say it is if not that of a womanly (weak) spirit, one in true and undeniable need of purification? We must continue the first procession, that of purification, which normally and rightly begins with the cleansing of conscience, until we bring about full cleansing. The first procession begins with an impure and ends in a purified conscience.

2.11 The second procession, as we said, went from the village to the citadel. What is a village if not a vulnerable dwelling open to attack on all sides? This is the state of the fainthearted and timid conscience, which in all truth can sing: “Fear and trembling come upon me, and horror overwhelms me.”⁷³ By contrast, the citadel is a dwelling guarded and protected on all sides. This is the state of the sure conscience, as sure as is this saying: “For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.”⁷⁴ The second procession, progression in the virtues, begins with a fainthearted conscience and, to find its proper fulfilment, ends in a sure conscience.

2.12 As we have said, the last procession begins from earth but ends in heaven. Earth is a place of affliction and misery; heaven of joy and glory. As the apostle says, “this is our boast, the testimony of our conscience.”⁷⁵ Does the soul that congratulates itself and which is joyful because of the witness of its good conscience not seem to be like a paradise? Indeed, it is a

⁷¹ I Cor. 2:9.

⁷² I Cor. 2:10.

⁷³ Ps. 55:5.

⁷⁴ Rom 8:38-39.

⁷⁵ 2 Cor. 1:12.

conversation above this world, a truly heavenly one, to rejoice and glorify in the Lord at all times, according to the prophet's admonition: "Be glad in the Lord and rejoice, O righteous, and shout for joy, all you upright in heart."⁷⁶ A lowly and earthly dwelling is a perturbed and sad conscience. This is the state of soul from which the last procession begins and it advances to the continuous sweetness of spiritual joy. Thus the first procession makes us move forward from an impure to a pure conscience, the second from a timid to a secure one, the third from a sorrowful to a joyful one. This is the extent of what the leader of our militia desires for us, to solemnly carry out such processions.

2.13 I admit, dear lord, I admit, sweet friend, that I ought to have carried out what I resolved, promised, begun. But the one who did not hold to his promise prevented me from holding to my resolve. He, who, having plundered the Hebrew, equipped the Goliath of our day with arms to his own ruin, tore the word out of my heart, the pen out of my hand.⁷⁷

3 SERMON THREE

3.1 The entire progress of the rational soul consists in three elements: to obtain true and full purity, justice, and joy of heart. The first stage leads to purity, the second to sanctity, the third to felicity. In the first the soul is purified from vice, in the second endowed with merit, in the third enriched with reward; it is purified in the first, sanctified in the second, glorified in the third. This is the point of these three principal and excellent processions, of which the first occurs on the feast of the Purification of the blessed Mary, the second on the feast of the first Easter, the third at the Ascension of the Lord. The first takes place with lamps, the second with flowers and palms, the third with crosses and banners.

3.2 If I am not mistaken, two effects must be achieved to fulfill the solemnity of our purification: to purify our conscience and our reputation, our reputation on account of our neighbour, our conscience on account of God. So let us cleanse our conscience not only of manifest but also of hidden faults. "Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. For I know my transgressions"⁷⁸: this refers to manifest sins. "Clear me from hidden faults"⁷⁹: this refers to hidden sins. Our reputation must be cleansed from not only true but also false reproach. This is the maxim of the blessed Jerome: "Avoid whatever can be reasonably imagined as if it were reality."⁸⁰ Let us therefore cleanse our reputation not only of that evil which can be truly attributed to us but also from the evil which one can plausibly be

⁷⁶ Ps 32:11.

⁷⁷ This personal reference, which may be linked to the troubles of the Abbey of St. Victor, cannot be further identified.

⁷⁸ Ps 51:2.

⁷⁹ Ps 19:12.

⁸⁰ cf. Jerome, Ep 52 (PL 22, col. 532)

imagined as ours. Not only must we must erase the signs of false suspicions which have arisen but also do our best to prevent them from arising.

3.3 An example of false suspicion to be avoided is given to us in the purification of the Blessed Virgin Mary. As far as her own conscience was concerned, she had nothing needing purification: neither in conceiving nor in giving birth did she incur any contagious stain, whether of flesh or of spirit, and by that token she did not come under the precept of the law. Why then this legal observance undertaken by a virgin, or, if you will, why this purification, if there was absolutely nothing for this sacrament to purify? Could the mystery we are dealing with be one in name, an empty name, at that, and not in reality? Who could assert or presume to assert this? But if we take into consideration the reputation of the virgin rather than her conscience, we find the explanation we are seeking. All those who knew that she had given birth, but did not know that she did so without male seed and from the Holy Spirit, would have thought and called her a violator of the law, if she failed to observe purification having given birth to a child. So she cleansed from her reputation the sign of violation, by fulfilling the law that did not bind her, following the example of the one who came not to abolish the law but to fulfill it.⁸¹ According to her example, we will have to do or omit many things beyond our obligation, if we want to avoid or stifle false suspicion. And if our reputations are to be purified with such care from false suspicion, with how much greater care should they be purified from true? We must strive to maintain the purity of our reputation, but with even more ample and perfect effort to maintain the purity of our conscience.

3.4 As I think, this is where we need a lamp, this is where we need much prudence, if we are to bring about the full purgation of our interior, even of that which is most intimate to ourselves. We seek a lamp where we see little or nothing. We light a lamp when we need to find something in the most secret and obscure parts of our quarters. To manifest the secrets of darkness and the counsels of our hearts, to cleanse and purify them, we need the lamp of deep investigation, and rightly so. Be fully aware, be firmly convinced, that without the lamps of perspicacity and deep knowledge, never will the feast of Purification be worthily celebrated. So during the entire time of purification, light bearers are invited to hold their lamps so as to diligently seek out and investigate not only their manifest but also their occult acts of dishonour, to declare them, accuse them, tearfully condemn them and eradicate them in the bath of confession, purify themselves inwardly and outwardly by fulfilling the office of Jews, and thus bring to a worthy conclusion the solemnity of the purification.

3.5 Enough said about the lamps: let us now turn our attention to the flowers and the palms. The former we need in the feast of purification and the latter two in the feast of sanctification or transmigration. We know that each year trees first produce flowers, then leaves, and finally fruit. Likewise we know that fruits find in flowers both their origin and their

⁸¹ Cf. Mt. 5:17.

growth. At blossom time trees are renewed, fruit begin their development. We are right to see flowers as depicting the renewal of progress together with the hope and expectation of eternal rewards. And so when in our good deeds we resolve to do even greater deeds, we are in effect beginning with flowers. We process with flowers, if we move towards the hope and certitude of eternal fruit out of our increasing progress.

3.6 The palm tree bears fruit only after a long time, when it is a hundred years old, but lasts many centuries. Thus the virtue of perseverance and longanimity, practised in the hope of future reward, is represented by the palm. You hear the psalms tell us about the brevity of our life: "The days of our life are seventy years, or perhaps eighty, if we are strong; even then their span is only toil and trouble".⁸² Thus since the time during which the palm tree is sterile exceeds the span of human life, it is right that the fruit of the palm symbolize the enjoyment of the reward which follows this life. You want to hear which fruit the persevering palm tree bears, or when it bears its fruit? As the Lord says, "the one who endures to the end will be saved."⁸³ Thus this tree bears the fruit of salvation. The fruit of human salvation does not belong to this but to the future life: "those who hate their life in this world will keep it for eternal life."⁸⁴ Since the number one hundred signifies future life, it is right that the fruit of human salvation be represented to us as coming from a hundred year old tree. Indeed those who persevere with longanimity in their good deeds carry palm branches in the palm of their hands. Flowers stand for the beginnings of our movement forward, palms for our perseverance in merit; flowers for eagerness in progress, palms for constancy in perseverance. I ask you to note how right it is to carry out with such flowers and palms the procession which, as we said before, leads from imperfection to perfection. Since none are so holy and perfect as to not be able to become holier and more perfect, we must with pious eagerness run from the degrees which we have already attained to those which we have not yet attained, to hasten always from what is good to what is better. Indeed it is proper for Hebrews to walk with flowers, to bloom again in the renewal of their lives, to ceaselessly tend towards progress, lest they fall into the perils of falling away, once they have lost their desire for moving forward. We must hold together our determination to progress and our constant desire to persevere, and that will be for us to walk in the procession with flowers and palms.

3.7 What is left for us is to discover the role of crosses and banners in the third procession. The flesh is nailed to the cross to be mortified; one holds a banner above, and the one who carries it lifts it up into space. So the cross represents mortification of the flesh, the banner elevation or alienation of the spirit: elevation in that the banner is held up high, alienation in that it is lifted up above its bearer. Human beings as it were lift up above themselves that which they carry when in tending towards superior and heavenly goods, they transcend the

⁸² Ps. 90:10.

⁸³ Mt. 10:22.

⁸⁴ Jn. 12:25.

modes and limits of human activity, and that human spirit transcends itself. In mortification the flesh withdraws from itself, in alienation the spirit disconnects from itself. In the former case our outer nature falls below itself, in the latter our inner nature is raised above itself. In the former we cease being what we were, in the latter we begin being what we were not. Indeed, “anyone united to the Lord becomes one spirit with him.”⁸⁵ In their own way both flesh and spirit lose themselves, and they in song say what their experience teaches them: “My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.”⁸⁶ Those who fall from themselves in this way, who go out of themselves in spirit and pass from a human to a superterrestrial estate, can sing to the Lord the gradual canticle: “The Lord has done great things for us.”⁸⁷

3.8 Admirable grandeur it is for a human being to surpass what is human! When you see spiritual persons pass not only from a human to a superterrestrial state, but, what is more amazing, from a superterrestrial to a divine state, know that God has glorified his holy ones. Indeed is not the one who is so to say deified also glorified? How can one worthily speak of this marvel, since the one who clings to God becomes one spirit with God. Indeed, when human beings stood in truth, before they descended lower than themselves, they stood above all creatures in this world by the dignity of their condition: as the Psalmist says “You have put all things under their feet”.⁸⁸ Human beings are reintegrated when they return to themselves, magnified when they transcend themselves, glorified when they pass into God. Therefore it is right for the flesh to be outwardly immolated, that the spirit within might be magnified, that the former be mortified outwardly that the latter be glorified inwardly. To the crosses we add banners, because out of flesh wasted away and mortified we move on to the heart made magnificent and glorious. In the other processions of which we have spoken, we have the custom of carrying crosses around because for the purification and sanctification of the heart one must mortify the flesh. But it is proper to this last procession to add banners to crosses. Indeed to move from the maceration and mortification of the flesh to the magnificence and grandeur of the heart is to solemnly celebrate the Ascension. And so we have told you, and you have heard. why the first procession takes place with lamps, the second with flowers and palms, and the third with crosses and banners.

3.9 As we have said, the first procession seems to be that of the weak, the last of the strong, the middle one of a mixed group. In the first you find here a child and a virgin who has given birth, there an old man and a widow. Show me one of the above who is not weak on account of age or sex? Who is more given to tears than a child, more timorous than a virgin? Old people tremble, and widows become faint with constant sorrow. Little children are given

⁸⁵ I Cor. 6:17.

⁸⁶ Ps. 73:26.

⁸⁷ Ps. 126:3.

⁸⁸ Ps 8:6.

over to grief, virgins to shyness, old people to trembling, widows to pain. The feast of Purification doubtlessly needs such participants, led by the memory of their sins to sorrow, fear, shame, desolation. It is for participants such as these to carry out the procession of Purification, to go around the altar, and in the tabernacle of the Lord to immolate a victim with loud cries.

3.10 Enough said about the first procession and its participants. Let us now consider the second one. To the second are admitted not only the children of the Hebrews, but adolescents and adults as well, in brief a crowd in which people of different types find themselves mingling. In children we find the beginnings of strength and discretion; in adolescents a progress in both, in maturity the perfection of both. Those who seek to attain the heights of holiness, to possess a secure conscience, to reach the citadel, must pass through these successive stages, always pressing on towards what lies ahead of them. Indeed it is true to say that people both great and little are found here, because the procession of the many who hasten from imperfection to perfection excludes no level of advancement.

3.11 In the last procession only the perfect are admitted. Who is found in the scriptural account but men? Those who look with wonder at the one who goes up are called men;⁸⁹ men also those who stood by him.⁹⁰ Scriptures also designate as a man the one who was ascending in the presence of onlookers and ministrants: indeed he was a man, a prophet mighty in deed and work before God and all the people.⁹¹ Thus as I survey the ministers of this solemnity I find them divided into three different grades. I see some who stand upon the earth and look up to heaven; I notice a man lifted up into heaven, taken up into a cloud, assumed into heaven; I set my eyes upon others who come down from the heights to announce divine things in the lowest places. The first of these different grades are the speculative, the second the contemplatives, the third the prophets.⁹²

3.12 By the speculative we mean those who perceive the truth of heavenly secrets only in a mirror, dimly⁹³: they would not be able to rise up to the understanding of spiritual things

⁸⁹ "Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking up toward heaven?" Acts 1:11.

⁹⁰ "While he was going and they were gazing up toward heaven, suddenly two men in white robes stood by them." Acts 1:10.

⁹¹ Lk. 24:19.

⁹² In his *Benjamin major* Richard develops the progression from speculation to contemplation, but the addition of prophecy as a third element is characteristic of this sermon. Like the fourth degree in his *Four Degrees...*, prophecy entails a downward, kenotic movement from the heights of contemplative ecstasy. In the first sermon Richard emphasises not the compassionate but the decisive side of love, speaking and acting resolutely against evil-doing. This may arise from the context of the first sermon, which comprised the abuses in the abbey which required firm correction.

⁹³ I Cor. 13:12.

except with the help of the image of bodily things. We call contemplative those whose face is unveiled⁹⁴ and who see truth naked, uncovered, without wrapping. The prophets are those who know the secrets of the divine counsel through a divine revelation and who make them known to men as God shows them the occasion. Thus the men of Galilee who stood on the earth, yet looked towards heaven, quite appropriately stand for the speculative: while through the image of visible things they strain towards the knowledge of invisible things, they cling to the earth through their imagination, but certainly intend divine things through their inquiry. The spirit of contemplatives, after the fashion of the Lord who ascends, is suspended above the earth in the void: unlike the speculative, they do not make use of visible beauty when they see invisible things, they do not find support in the help of corporeal images but rejoice solely in the pure and simple manifestation of the truth. Sometimes they are carried away beyond themselves in such a way that they altogether forget all earthly things and are taken away in alienation of spirit. At times it is as if they are taken into a cloud, detached from their sight of inferior things, cloaked over with forgetfulness and alienation, to such an extent that with the apostle they can say “whether in the body or out of the body I do not know; God knows”.⁹⁵ Finally when they are admitted to the secrets of heaven it is as if they were raised into heaven. Take being suspended above earth to mean elevation of the spirit to what is above; being seized by the cloud to mean alienation of spirit, and being assumed into heaven the revelation of eternal mysteries. And now to the angelic men, who announce to the men of Galilee divine truths, truths relating to the distant future. They represent quite appropriately the figure of prophetic men: “This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven”,⁹⁶ they say. What else does angel mean than messenger? And these highest spirits are entitled to this name because of their duty, for they often come to us with some message. This duty is common to both prophetic men and angels. The role of the prophet is to predict the future, reveal what is hidden, announce the decrees of the divine will to human beings. Thus it is right for these angels to point to the prophets, who deserve this name and this duty through their meritorious zeal. And so these are the celebrants, the ministers to whom the feast of the Ascension is reserved: men, whether speculative, contemplative, or prophetic. Among these men, I ask, which ones do you not judge to be great, to be perfect in comparison with the others? We were right to say that of these three processions, the first is of the weak, the second of the weak and the strong, and the third is of only of men who are strong and perfect.

4 SERMON FOUR

4.1 The first procession calls for the turtledove and the dove, the second the foal and the

⁹⁴ The Latin word for unveiled is ‘revelatam’, alluding to the revelation which is required for this level of spiritual insight.

⁹⁵ II Cor. 12:2.

⁹⁶ Acts 1:11.

donkey,⁹⁷ the third the cymbal and the trumpet. The turtledove and the dove, as we know, are more accustomed to groaning than to singing: indeed for them to groan is to sing. Thus in the dove and the turtledove you may discern two forms of the virtue of compunction. The turtledove loves solitude, the dove frequents society. The former travels alone, the latter usually flies in a flock. The former offers an image of fear, the latter one of love, since fear always seeks a hiding-place, while love engenders confidence, rests in the concord of souls and in reciprocal peace. The song of the turtledove points to the compunction of fear, that of the dove to the tears and sighs of love. Through the compunction of fear we wipe out the evil we have committed, through that of love we redeem the good we have neglected to do. In the former compunction we wash away our iniquity, in the latter our negligences. Fear trembles and wails because it dared to do that which it should have avoided for fear of gehenna; love sighs and weeps because it neglectfully omitted that which it ought to have achieved for the kingdom of heaven. In the tears of the former we wash away our sins, in those of the latter we make up for our delinquency; in those of the former we purify the filth of our iniquity, in those of the latter we sweep away the dust of our vanity and idleness. Thus the sacrifice of the turtledove has the power to expiate our malice, the holocaust of the dove to clean our negligence or our ignorance. I think that you should be able to appreciate, from what we have said, how effective these sacrifices and holocausts are in carrying out the solemn celebration of our purification. What we have said of the dove and of the turtledove shows necessary they are, especially in this procession which leads us from impurity to purity.

4.2 But we are no less in need of the foal and the donkey in the second procession. Among saddle animals, none is more vile and humble than the donkey. Humility leads people to debase themselves in their own eyes or else to lower themselves in the presence of others. Thus you find in the donkey an image of humility and in the foal an image of humiliation. Humility is the virtue by which human beings debase themselves in their own presence, interiorly, in the eyes of God; humiliation is the effect of that virtue which leads them to lower themselves exteriorly, in the eyes of their neighbour. It is one thing to be humble, another to act humbly; the former requires discipline of mind, the latter of body; the former pertains to humility, the latter to humiliation. Many lower themselves who are not truly humble; they have the foal but not the donkey. Many truly acknowledge their own weakness, but are ashamed to lower themselves exteriorly: they have the donkey but not her foal. Without humility there can be feigned humiliation; without it there cannot be true humiliation. From perfect humility humiliation is born, just as the foal is born of the donkey. By now, I think, you should be no longer wondering why the Lord had such animals brought to him and wanted to be mounted on them: "But this is the one to whom I will look, to the humble and contrite in spirit, who trembles at my word."⁹⁸

⁹⁷ The reference here is to Mt. 21:2. Matthew literalizes the poetic parallelism of the text of Zechariah 9:9, and has two animals involved in the triumphant procession of Jesus, a donkey and her foal.

⁹⁸ Is. 66:2.

4.3 Who mounts the donkey is not afraid of falling: indeed before a fall the heart becomes haughty.⁹⁹ It is not safe to ride a spirited and fierce horse, one frothing at the mouth, towards young Hebrews crying out Hurrah, Hurrah from all directions: the cheers of the crowd might lead the fierce horse to break the bridles of modesty and fall into a precipice. It is easy for humans to glory in their merits when acclaimed from all directions with the words “Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord”.¹⁰⁰ As soon as the human spirit indulges in vain glory, that other spirit, which rests only on the humble, departs. And what can we accomplish without that spirit which activates all in everyone?¹⁰¹ As the Lord says, “Apart from me, you can do nothing”.¹⁰² You who are dust and ashes, what can you boast of?¹⁰³ Without the cooperation of grace, your effort is certainly in vain. Let those who desire to progress from virtue to virtue and who undertake this procession seat themselves on a donkey, and let them not fall away from the grace of humility, lest they become weak on the road. Indeed “God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble.”¹⁰⁴ Without humility grace is not obtained, and without grace we can do nothing. So without humility neither do we acquire the virtues nor do we make use of them. Those who accumulate virtues without humility are like those who carry dust in the wind: that which they are seen to carry make them even more blind.

4.4 By being too assiduous in praising our donkey, we have almost forgotten her foal. Do you want to know how much we need the fruit of true humiliation is to us, or what that fruit is? “Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, so that he may exalt you in due time.”¹⁰⁵ The fruit of true humiliation is the glory of God’s gift of elevation: this is the goal of a journey that is truly long and arduous. This is the fruit of a highly toilsome and long-lasting labour. This goal, this fruit, we cannot attain unless we move forward on the foal, and possess the form of true humiliation, “For all who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted.”¹⁰⁶ Therefore it is good to always have both the donkey and her foal at hand; it is good to alternate between mounting the one and the other. Those who commit themselves to the practice of true inner humility in the sight of God get on the donkey; but those who manifest attention to the duties of true outer humiliation in the sight of their neighbour get on the foal. Both animals are always available to those who show themselves ready to take on this twofold practice. So when we have come upon the more level parts of our

⁹⁹ Cf. Prov. 16:18.

¹⁰⁰ Cf. Mt. 22:9; Mk 11:10; Jn. 12:13.

¹⁰¹ Cf. I Cor. 12:6.

¹⁰² Jn. 15:5.

¹⁰³ Cf. Sir 10:9.

¹⁰⁴ I Pet. 5:5; Jas. 4:6.

¹⁰⁵ I Pet. 5:6.

¹⁰⁶ Lk. 14:11.

road, seeking to serve our neighbour, let us move forward on the foal; but when we begin to climb towards that which is more difficult, let us seat ourselves on the donkey. In this way, seated on the one and then on the other in alternation, we will never falter in the arduous journey we have undertaken.

4.5 So much for the foal and the donkey; now we must move on to the cymbal and the trumpet. It is a fact beyond doubt that the Ascension is never celebrated with appropriate solemnity without these instruments. Thus let all come to this final feast with clanging cymbals, with cymbals of jubilation,¹⁰⁷ let all move forward while sounding the trumpet of admiration. Unless I am mistaken, the cymbal of jubilation and the trumpet of admiration are the instruments which the feast of the Ascension require. I would lie if I were to deny agreement between that view and the phrase sung by the Psalmist: “God has gone up with a shout, the Lord with the sound of a trumpet.”¹⁰⁸ No matter how often or where it is struck, the cymbal always gives the same sound. In this case we find multiple percussion and simple resonance. This is indeed how the human spirit, touched in many ways by the true inner good, rejoices in one and the same happiness. The same thing is expressed in a symbolic way when our mouth jubilates; The jubilus of the heart differs from the jubilus of the mouth.¹⁰⁹ The former is in our will, the latter in our shouts; the former in our affection, the latter in our modulation. When we jubilate with our mouth, we voice one and the same syllable on multiple notes. Thus the jubilation of our mouth is both simple and multiple, but in different ways: the melody that delights our ear is multiform, but uniform is the syllable which it modulates. Here we have an experience of what we read about manna, that it provides all pleasure and suits every taste,¹¹⁰ for, adapting itself to the desire of each, it converts itself into what each wants. Thus it was uniform in some respects and multiform in others: one in its substance, many in its effects.

4.6 I expect that you will note how all these components converge, make present the same mystery, vehicle the same truth. In the resonance of the cymbal, as we have said, the melody is simple, and the percussion multiple; in the jubilus of our heart the inpouring of sweetness is simple and the delectation is multiple; in the jubilus of our lips the syllable is one, but the dancing around it is manifold; in the bread from heaven there is but one course but with many delights. The obvious conclusion of all these examples is that, though there is but one

¹⁰⁷ Cf. Ps. 150:5: “Praise him with clanging cymbals; praise him with loud clashing cymbals!” The term “jubilation” is suggested by the Latin version available to Richard, and is used in other writings as well.

¹⁰⁸ Ps. 47:5.

¹⁰⁹ The term “jubilus” refers to the practice in Gregorian chant, notably cultivated at the Abbey of St. Victor, of expressing one’s joy by singing the final syllable of the alleluia on a succession of notes. This common feature of Gregorian chant is known in more generic terms as melisma. It is studied with reference to the Abbey of St. Victor by Margot Fassler, *Gothic Song: Victorine Sequence and Augustinian Reform in the 12th Century*, Cambridge, Cambridge Univ. Press, 1993.

¹¹⁰ Wis. 16:20.

sweetness in the intimate and true good, there is in it a delectation which takes on all forms. This sweetness is uniform in nature, multiform as we participate in it: what is simple in substance potentially takes on all forms. That intimate and true sweetness, pouring itself into the inmost secret of the heart, turns happiness of heart into jubilation; not able to contain its immensity within itself, it projects itself outwardly through manifest sighs. As Gregory says: "Without doubt jubilus takes place when an ineffable joy is conceived by the spirit, a joy it can neither hide nor reveal through words, but a joy it manifests through certain movements, though it is not marked by any distinctive characteristics of its own. Thus it happens that often the jubilus of the heart breaks out into the jubilus of loud shouts."¹¹¹

4.7 We have said that in the jubilus of the lips the same syllable is sounded on many notes. But one syllable does not constitute discourse: it is but the beginning of speech. Song too pertains to joy. Those who only repeat the first syllable of a word without saying the whole word, repeating it on many notes, are simply showing that they want to speak, but cannot, so great is their joy. We know that the inebriated are most eager to speak, but when they are filled with too much wine, they cannot fully pronounce their words. What else do those bent only on jubilating reveal if not that they are inebriated with an intimate sweetness? Measure if you can the violence of this particular inebriation, which takes away the resources of speech to such an extent that we can hardly begin a word. Outward behaviour expresses inner feeling. Thus we are mystically taught by jubilating lips what to think about the jubilating heart. "Happy are the people who know the festal shout:"¹¹² please note what the author of this phrase feels about the cymbal of jubilation and wants us to feel about it. Indeed we have stated that the last procession is nothing else than a progression towards beatitude. What else is the feast of the Ascension but the raising of the mind towards intimate and true joy? I think that you are now able to rightly appreciate how important for this feast is this kind of instrument, which according to the Psalmist makes the people happy.

4.8 But to the trumpet of admiration we must join the cymbal of jubilation. Admiration dilates the spirit, makes it more ample and capacious. If you do not believe me, listen to one you do not dare contradict: "Then you shall see and be radiant; your heart shall thrill and be enlarged, because the abundance of the sea shall be brought to you, the wealth of the nations shall come to you."¹¹³ The water of the sea is very bitter and in this way betokens sadness and bitterness of heart. The sea is changed when all bitterness is taken away, when sadness turns into joy, bitterness into sweetness. As the Gospel says: "So you have pain now...but your pain will turn into joy."¹¹⁴ We know that the more people are afflicted by the Lord and driven to sadness, the more they are consoled. According to the number of sorrows which precede will

¹¹¹ Gregory, *Moral. in Job.*, XXIV, 6 (PL 76, 292)

¹¹² Ps. 89:15.

¹¹³ Is. 60.5.

¹¹⁴ Jn. 16:22 and 16:20.

subsequent joys accumulate: “When the cares of my heart are many, your consolations cheer my soul.”¹¹⁵ It is when the joys of recompense abound in proportion to our many sorrows that the abundance of the sea is brought to us. The nations refer to the faithless, who strive against the faithful: the nations come against us as long as they are against us, but they come to us when they act in our favour. What do we mean by the nations which oppose the faithful if not our perverse affections rebellious to the virtues? Your affections come against you when they are disordered, they come to you when they are ordered. They come against you as long as the flesh lusts against the spirit, the spirit against the flesh;¹¹⁶ they come to you when it is the spirit that lusts and the flesh that acquiesces, as Scripture says: “my soul thirsts for you; my flesh faints for you”.¹¹⁷ The call of the nations comes to you when deliberation and affection are in harmony, as are wisdom and concupiscence, counsel and desire; when affection covets what deliberation determines, when concupiscence is attracted by what wisdom dictates, when desire thirsts for what counsel discerns. Doubtlessly what comes is not, as I would put it, the call of the nations but the fortitude of the nations, when your affections begin to be just as vehement towards good as they were towards evil. It often happens that after the experience of sweetness, the tasting of intimate suavity, human affection is more ardent towards good than it was before towards evil, that it finds much more abundant delight in the Lord than it did before in worldly things. What else does this word of David suggest: “my heart and my flesh sing for joy to the living God.”¹¹⁸ When the sea has turned away, the strength of the nations rushes in. When bitterness of heart is taken away, affection is ordered; when true sweetness is poured in, affection is renewed. Upon the inebriation brought by true sweetness there follows the ardour and the order of interior love. In the words of the Song, the King “...brought me to the banqueting house, and his intention toward me was love.”¹¹⁹ Only spiritual sweetness can quench the unquenchable desire of the human heart.

4.9 Thus as soon as the plenitude of the nations begins to enter into the joy of their Lord and to be boundlessly drunk on the wine that rejoices human hearts, the contradiction of warring thoughts and affections ceases, and the spirit is composed in the highest and the most tranquil peace. This is when the discord of flesh and spirit is put to sleep, the spirit begins to learn through the happy teaching of experience what is that peace that surpasses all understanding.¹²⁰ Which of these benefits is not great, not admirable? In the words of the

¹¹⁵ Ps. 94:19.

¹¹⁶ Cf. Gal. 5:17.

¹¹⁷ Ps. 63:1.

¹¹⁸ Ps. 84:2.

¹¹⁹ S. of S. 2:4. The version quoted by Richard is more clearly linked to his text: “He brought me to the wine cellar and gave order to love within me.”

¹²⁰ Cf. Phil. 4:7.

Prophet, “your heart shall thrill and be enlarged”¹²¹ Why be surprised if this sweetness, which satiates and inebriates all desires, is the subject of admiration? Why be surprised if this peace, which surpasses all understanding, is the subject of admiration? It is right for the heart to admire, for the heart to be enlarged, it is right that the more it admires the more it is enlarged. The more the spirit is enlarged, the greater its capacity to receive, and the greater its capacity the more abundantly is it saturated and generously inebriated. The greater the inebriation the greater the joy; and the greater the joy the more copious the admiration. Joy and admiration bring reciprocal increase to each other. Excessive joy frees the spirit for a dance of jubilation; and it happens that from jubilation the spirit is awakened to admiration, and from admiration to new jubilation.

4.10 You have now heard about the cymbal and the trumpet. and you sufficiently understand what purpose these instruments play in the celebration of our ascension. You now know the role of the turtledove and the dove in the first procession, of the foal and the donkey in the second, of the cymbal and the trumpet in the third.

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¹²¹ Is. 60:5.