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Sufficere, “It is Enough”:

Avarice vs. Simplicity and Detachment in the *Rule of Saint Benedict*

by

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Description of the Project:

This paper is an exegesis of selected chapters of the Rule of St. Benedict, specifically chapters thirty-three, thirty-four, fifty-four, fifty-five, and fifty-eight, to examine issues of monastic poverty, private vs. common ownership, avarice, simplicity, detachment, and related issues.

This paper may not be duplicated.

Signature of Student Writer

Date

Sufficere, “It is Enough”:
Avarice vs. Simplicity and Detachment in the *Rule of Saint Benedict*

“Above all, this evil practice must be uprooted and removed from the monastery” (*RB 1980*, 33:1)¹. So begins chapter 33 of the *Rule of St. Benedict*. Benedict is writing about private ownership, and seldom in the *Rule of St. Benedict* do we see the use of language as strong as in chapter 33 when Benedict legislates on this issue. Chapter 33 flows into chapter 34, which discusses how goods are to be distributed in the monastery. These two chapters come almost at the midpoint of the *Rule of St. Benedict*, in a series of legislative chapters covering sundry topics from the sleeping arrangements of the monks in chapter 22, to the daily manual labor in chapter 48, and many issues of community life and discipline in between. Benedict’s task in this mid-section of the Rule is to lay out practical guidelines for successfully navigating community life. But these middle chapters of the Rule are not solely “nuts and bolts.” The deeper thread that runs through them is the creation of an environment where the monk can be enabled to seek God, free from many other concerns. Along with 33 and 34, Benedict also touches on monastic poverty, private vs. common ownership, and related issues, in chapters 54, 55, and 58, respectively. This essay will examine these chapters, and what I see as the issues at stake and underlying all of Benedict’s legislation on these matters: avarice vs. simplicity and detachment for the monk.

Starting just previous to chapters 33 and 34 then, we can see a natural progression into the main topics of these two key chapters. Chapter 32 discusses how the goods of the monastery

¹ Timothy Fry, et al. eds. *RB 1980: The Rule of St. Benedict in Latin and English with Notes*. (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1981) All subsequent citations to The Rule of Benedict in this essay will be from this edition, unless otherwise noted.

(tools, clothing, etc.) are to be used, inventoried, and maintained. The opening salvo of chapter 33, quoted above, might be more jarring were it not that chapter 32 ends with a rebuke to those who would treat the monastery's belongings carelessly. Ending that chapter on a sobering note, we then receive the words that "this evil practice must be uprooted." Verses two and three continue and clarify: "We mean that without an order from the abbot, **no one may presume to give, receive or retain anything as his own, nothing at all—not a book, writing tablets or stylus—in short, not a single item**" (*RB* 33:2, 3). The bold emphasis is mine and seems entirely appropriate to the tone of this somewhat uncharacteristically stern admonition on the part of Benedict.

In verse four, Benedict drops a hint of the origin of, and motivation for, such an absolute prohibition of private ownership. That the monks do not own anything is completely consonant with, and flows from, the fact that they have not "the free disposal even of their own bodies and wills" (*RB* 33:4). Terrence Kardong says that this verse represents "thoroughgoing Cassianic individual asceticism" (Kardong, p. 275)². Indeed, in a reading of Cassian's *Conference* 2:3, where Cassian stresses to the monk "that he is in fact not his own master and has no power over himself,"³ we find this and other wording so close to Benedict's that one cannot but see a Cassianic influence upon Benedict with respect to this issue.

It may be helpful to note at this juncture that this theme of complete self-surrender is echoed in chapter 58 in the context of the monk's profession in community. In chapter 58, right at the beginning of his life as a monk, the monk should be "well aware that from that day he will

² Terrence G. Kardong, *Benedict's Rule: A Translation and Commentary*. (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1996) All subsequent citations from Kardong in this essay will be from this edition.

³ John Cassian. *The Conferences*. trans. Boniface Ramsey. Ancient Christian Writers (vol. 57). (New York: Paulist Press, 1997) All subsequent citations from Cassian's *Conferences* in this essay will be from this edition.

not have even his own body at his disposal” (*RB* 58:25). Chapter 58 concerns the procedure for receiving brothers into the community and the vow ceremony at reception. It is worth noting in the context of this discussion that from the outset of profession, complete dispossession of all personal property is mandated by Benedict. “If he has any possessions, he should either give them to the poor beforehand, or make a formal donation of them to the monastery, without keeping back a single thing for himself.” (*RB* 58:24). And again in verse twenty-six: “Then and there in the oratory, he is to be stripped of everything of his own that he is wearing and clothed in what belongs to the monastery” (*RB* 58:26). It would seem here that along with all else that is involved in the dispossession (much of which will be discussed below), a part of what is going on is an issue of identity. The new and radical identity of the monk as one who comes to seek God requires for Benedict an absolutely complete break with the entire past. Much identity can be posited in possessions and property. The new identification requires the dispossession.

Returning then to chapter 33 we see that the self-recognition of the monk’s complete surrender of his person and all that is entailed therein flows into the attitude of complete dependence that we see in verse five. The monks are to look to the abbot for supply of all their needs. Again there is a stress that the monk is not allowed even a single item which has not first been approved for his use by the abbot. This verse appears to put a weighty responsibility upon the abbot, and gives us a preview of the theme which will be developed in chapter 34. Verse six then appeals to scriptural authority, to the model of the early church community at Jerusalem in which there was no private ownership in the community, but all possessions were held in common. Benedict quotes Acts 4:32: “All things should be the common possession of all...so that no one presumes to call anything his own” (*RB* 33: 6). There is an important balance that is being maintained by Benedict here. The subsuming of all private interest—and private

possessions would be a major indicator of such—in the common life (in which all possessions are common) may be seen as something of a balance to any individual pursuit of ascetic aims. The chapter ends in verses seven and eight with warnings to anyone caught in violation. “If he does not amend” he will “be subjected to punishment” (*RB* 33:8). It is important to note in verse seven that Benedict again calls private ownership of anything “this most evil practice.”

Having in no uncertain terms established the utmost seriousness of the matter of the evil of private ownership in chapter 33, Benedict turns his attention to how the goods of the monastery should be distributed in chapter 34. He begins with another appeal to Acts, this time to 4:35: “Distribution was made to each one as he had need” (*RB* 34:1). And then, amidst the otherwise seldom seen sternness that seems to be manifested by Benedict on this issue, we see a very characteristic Benedictine theme inserted, that of thoughtful consideration of one’s fellow monks, and particularly of their human weaknesses. In verse two, Benedict wants to make sure it is understood that the distribution of each according to *need*, is not in any way favoritism—“God forbid,” he says—rather, it is “consideration for weaknesses (*RB* 34:2). Here Benedict may be referring to a monk needing more for reasons of poor health, or conditions and circumstances that may not fit into what may traditionally be considered a “weakness” may also be in view here. For example, there may be differences in the needs of individual monks based upon differences of occupation. So the “weaknesses” Benedict is speaking of are not moral weaknesses...*necessarily*. But they could become so if a monk allows the fact of his greater neediness to become a point at which his own personal poverty and simplicity is compromised and weakened.

In any case, these differences in the distribution of goods are not to become a stumbling point in the community. In verse three he admonishes the less needy community members to be

thankful and essentially not to think much about the matter. In verse four, he counsels the weaker members to humility at their weakness, and cautions them against any self-importance at their receiving more than others, and in verse five, explains that “In this way all the members will be at peace.” Finally verses six and seven bring up another matter which Benedict regards with strong distaste and cautions, another “evil” in community life, grumbling. Benedict sees neither reason nor justification for grumbling in any circumstance, but especially in the context of the distribution of goods in the monastery, and this “evil” must be severely disciplined at the first sign of its appearance (*RB* 34:6, 7).

St. Augustine’s *Praeceptum*, which circulated most widely in a feminine version as his *Epistle* 211, clearly seems to have been a key source for Benedict’s prescriptions in chapter 34. One of Augustine’s major themes in his “ascetical” writings is that “those of you who have been admitted to the monastery...gathered in one community...dwell together in unity in the house and...have ‘one heart and soul’ toward God” (*Praec.* 1.2).⁴ To this end, Augustine directs the monk: “Do not call anything your own; possess everything in common. Your superior ought to provide each of you with food and clothing” (*Praec.* 1.3). It is in the matter of differences in weakness and need, and how this will impact the distribution of goods in the community where we can see the most direct influence of Augustine upon Benedict. In the *Praeceptum*, Augustine instructs that the distribution of goods cannot and will not be “on an equal basis to all, because all do not enjoy the same health.” Instead, the distribution will be “to each one in proportion to his need” (*Praec.* 1.3). Just as Benedict would later, Augustine relies here upon Acts 4:32, 35. Augustine challenges the monastics up front, cautioning that anyone who wishes to enter the monastery must be willing for any possession that they bring with them to the monastery to

⁴ Augustine *Praeceptum*. trans. George Lawless. *Augustine of Hippo and his Monastic Rule*. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987) All subsequent citations from Augustine in this essay will be from this edition.

become common property. We can see the inspiration for Benedict's chapter 58, with its strong emphasis on total dispossession upon entry to the monastery.

The prohibition of private ownership shows up again in the *Rule of St. Benedict* in chapter 55, a chapter primarily about the clothing that the brothers will wear. After a rather thorough discussion of the types and items of clothing for the monks, including provisions made for seasonal climate changes, Benedict mentions the bedding of the monks in verse fifteen of the chapter. Just as in the previous discussion of clothing, the monks will receive what they *need* in the way of bedding. It is in this context then that Benedict returns to private ownership in verse sixteen. Once again the bold emphasis is mine:

The beds are to be inspected frequently by the abbot, lest private possessions be found there. **A monk discovered with anything not given him by the abbot must be subjected to very severe punishment. In order that this vice of private ownership may be completely uprooted**, the abbot is to provide all things necessary.... (*RB* 55:16-18).

Then again in chapter 55, Acts chapter four and the early church community at Jerusalem are referenced, with the emphasis that distribution of goods is made according to *need*. Also again, “the weaknesses of the needy” (*RB* 55:21) are taken into account.

A remark should be made here about Benedict's strength of language both in 33:1 and in 55:18. The same Latin phrase is used in both places, *radicitus amputandum* (or *amputetur* in 55:18). It is translated into English as “completely uprooted” in *RB 1980*, and “torn up by the roots” by Kardong. Though strong, these do not seem to quite capture the violence of the expression. Indeed, Kardong says the Latin phrase expresses “a violent idea” (Kardong, p. 274). A violent image is indeed what comes to mind when one recognizes that *amputandum* is the source of the English word “amputate.” It seems perfectly in keeping with the tone of this

phrase—and not overly colloquial—to suggest that Benedict wants private ownership in the monastery *amputated*.

The question readily arises as to why Benedict would be so adamantly and sternly prohibitive of *any* private ownership, even to the point of stressing ‘not a single item’ (*RB* 33:3). This seems extreme to today’s reader. We may resonate with a communal life, an emphasis on voluntary poverty and simplicity, and even a common purse, but why does *any* private ownership of *anything* need to be completely rooted out? A footnote in the *RB 1980* says that the reason is because “it is a manifestation of one’s own will and an act of disobedience” (*RB 1980*, pp. 230, 231). The complete surrender of the body and will, the entire person, of the monk mentioned in verse four of chapter 33 would seem to figure in at this point, as well as the agreement to dispossession upon entry found in chapter 58. Inasmuch as the ownership of something, anything, to oneself impairs the obedience and surrender of the monk, it must be eradicated. Terrence Kardong, in his translation of and commentary on the Rule, cites the three reasons given by Georg Holzherr: “(1) a remedy for the spirit of autonomy; (2) trust in the fatherly care of the abbot; (3) example of the primitive church in acts” (Kardong, p. 274). Undoubtedly, all three of these are operative in chapters 33 and 34 of the Rule, but Kardong’s opinion is that “the first reason is the heart of *RB* 33” (Kardong, p. 274). It is the spirit of autonomy, of self-sufficiency, that Benedict is really attacking in his prohibition of private ownership.

Kardong’s opinion is certainly in keeping with what one finds in looking closely at the influence of John Cassian with regard to Benedict’s thought. In his *Institute* seven, on the spirit of avarice, Cassian also speaks of the evil of private ownership, and it may well be that Benedict has taken his cues on the matter from Cassian. Reading Cassian’s *Institute* seven, especially 7.21 and 7.27, gives one a context for understanding the seeming extremity of the policy concerning

private ownership, which the brevity of Benedict does not give. Of course, Benedict's purpose in the chapter was not a treatise on the spiritual dimensions of the legislation, but simply to legislate. It should be noted however that there is always a spiritual rationale to be found behind Benedict's legislations.

Cassian writes specifically of the possession of money, and does not place so much of a direct and complete prohibition as he does an admonition that such things should not even be entering one's mind: "not only should the possession of money be beware of but even the desire itself should be utterly cast out of one's mind" (Cassian, *Inst.* 7.21)⁵. Cassian's concern here is the vice of avarice, that insatiable desire to hoard. Avarice is a sin because ultimately it posits one's trust and dependence upon oneself, and not in God. This is a key understanding with which it might be helpful to view chapter's 33 and 34 of the *Rule of St. Benedict*. Avarice undermines community precisely because it fosters a spirit of autonomy. A spirit of autonomy militates against the mutual care and concern for one's fellow monastics. Avarice also contributes to complaint and bitterness toward the community. These are all major themes of Benedict, appearing at various points throughout the Rule.

It may be helpful for a better understanding to examine some of the wording in the original Latin that Benedict has used, particularly the words *praesumat* and *habere*, in verses two and three respectively. Kardong remarks upon Benedict's use of the word *praesumat* ("presume." Kardong, p. 274): "that anyone should presume to give or receive anything without the abbot's permission" (Kardong's translation, p. 273). Kardong says the term always has a pejorative meaning and here it is offensive because "it involves usurpation of the abbot's role by an unauthorized monk" (Kardong, p.274). The presumption to keep something to oneself or to

⁵ John Cassian. *The Institutes*. trans. Boniface Ramsey. Ancient Christian Writers (vol. 58). (New York: Paulist Press, 2000) This and all other citations from Cassian's *Institutes* in this essay will be from this edition.

dispose of goods as one wills without the express consent of the abbot is a violation of monastic obedience, and undercuts the community. Benedict again stresses this in verse six, again using *praesumat*, and quoting Acts 4:32: “All things should be the common possession of all, as it is written, so that no one *presumes* to call anything his own” (*RB* 33:6).

The caution against any attitude of presumption recurs elsewhere in the Rule. In chapter 38, “No one should presume (*praesumat*) to ask a question about the reading or about anything else, lest occasion be given [to the devil]” (*RB* 38:8). In chapter 43, a monk making amends for tardiness at prayer or at table may not “presume (*praesumat*) to join the choir” (*RB* 43:11) until he has made satisfaction, and at meals, “no one is to presume (*praesumat*) to eat or drink before the time appointed” (*RB* 43:18). In chapter 44, a monk “should not presume (*praesumat*) to lead a psalm or a reading or anything else in the oratory without further instructions from the abbot” (*RB* 44:6), and further, in chapter 47, “no one should presume (*praesumat*) to read or sing unless he is able to benefit the hearers” (*RB* 47:3). In fact “*whatever* (italics mine) is undertaken without the permission of the spiritual father will be reckoned as presumption (*praesumptioni*)” (*RB* 49:9). Some form of the Latin word for “presume” or “presumption” is used in the Rule an additional twenty-five times beyond the occurrences in this paragraph. Clearly, presumption, or preventing it, is actually a huge issue for Benedict. To today’s reader of the Rule, this may seem to be an unduly strict and unyielding position on Benedict’s part. But remember, as already discussed above, right at the beginning of his life as a monk, the monk should be “well aware that from that day he will not have even his own body at his disposal” (*RB* 58:25).

So, as we have just mentioned, presumption, or preventing it, is actually a huge issue for Benedict. And the attitude of presumption is to be found contained in the vice of avarice. Returning then to the theme of avarice, Kardong reminds us that “On no account may a monk,

including the abbot, accumulate private reserves or distribute personal largesse” (Kardong, p. 274). The very attitude that would cause the monk to accumulate private reserves, is avarice, and it is really what Benedict is legislating against. Avarice does not merely spiritually debilitate the individual monk, but also weakens the whole community. Like a spreading disease, if left unchecked, avarice would create a fractured community in which concern for the needs and welfare of one’s fellows has gone by the wayside, and self-serving will have won the day. Therefore, it is avarice against which violence must be done. *Radicitus amputandum* says Benedict. If avarice is a gangrene which will eventually kill the organism of community, it must be amputated.

Also integral to the all-important issue of attitudes is the term *habere*, in verse three, which Kardong translates as *consider*: “or consider anything personal property” (Kardong, p. 274). It is, of course, perfectly acceptable and necessary to use what is needed. Problems will only arise if and when one thinks of things possessively. It is a question of attachment. One’s thinking about possessions is key, even more than whether one actually has or does not have the possessions themselves. Cassian gets right to the heart in his *Institute* seven, from which Benedict almost surely drew inspiration:

For it is impossible for a person who has been overcome by the desire for a small sum...and who has planted its root in his heart not to be set ablaze at once by the fire of a still greater desire.... For it is not so much the result of avarice that must be avoided as it is the disposition toward it that must be uprooted, since it is profitless not to have money if the desire to possess it exists in us. (Cassian. *Inst.* 7.21)

And so in his vehemence of chapter 33, it is a preoccupying, obsessive thought of possession as much or more than the actual fact of possession that Benedict is going after (Kardong, p. 294).

Looking at this chapter in the light of Cassian then, it could be said that what is *not* being stated in the vehement prohibition of private property is that possessions are bad in and of

themselves. The monastery owns property, a library, there are all the necessities to live and maintain a sufficient if not opulent life. Due attention is paid to the maintenance and upkeep of the monastic properties, tools, and facilities. A look at Benedict's instructions to the cellarer and the abbot in chapters 31 and 32 respectively, will show the care and concern that is enjoined in the care and stewardship of the common property of the monastery. In part, it seems that what Benedict is legislating to establish here is a mental attitude of detachment regarding possessions. It is the mental, spiritual, emotional slavery to possessions that is avarice that is under attack. A monastic life is a life of detachment, a life of dispossession, because it is a life in which all things are committed to God.

If chapter 33 in its sternness presents an essentially negative vision, this is evened out by the positive in chapter 34, where once again the balance and true human compassion of Benedict is seen. It is noteworthy that Benedict is not following a strictly egalitarian regime in the distribution of goods in the monastery, but is rather realistic in his acknowledgement that individuals will have different needs (Kardong, p. 279). Verse four speaks of the *miser cordia* shown to the weak. *RB 1980* translates this as "kindness," and Kardong as "mercy." Kardong comments that Benedict's "system for the distribution of goods is not based upon rights" (Kardong, p. 281). Neither is it based upon any measure of "merit." Rather, it is based in compassion.

Here again the influence of Augustine can almost surely be seen, where severity is balanced by charity, kindness, compassion, dealing with individuals according to their differing needs. In the version of Augustine's *Praeceptum* which was circulated as his Epistle 211, which was written to consecrated virgins, Augustine begins the letter with the words, "As severity is ready to punish the sins which it discovers, [one may be put in mind here of all of Benedict's

stern admonitions regarding any and all presumption and infractions upon the command of “not even a single thing”] so charity does not wish to discover anything to punish.”⁶ The Augustinian emphasis here and in the *Praeceptum* draws once again on Acts 4:32, and would have the community living “harmoniously in the house” as “one heart and one soul seeking God” (*Praec.* 1.1). Augustine forges the necessary link between unity of heart/mind/purpose in the community, and the prohibition of any private ownership, as well as the distribution, not equally to all, but according to need. It is clear that Benedict saw the wisdom and balance of the Augustinian approach, and saw the necessity of it for the preservation of unity and a common purpose.

Thus far we have seen the insidious nature of avarice, and kindness in distribution of goods to be major underlying ideas in Benedict’s scheme of community ownership and allocation. In the third chapter in which private ownership and distribution of goods come to the fore, that is chapter 55 about clothing, footwear, and bedding, another idea seems to show itself as a part of Benedict’s economy. That idea is simplicity. In chapter 55, Benedict has followed the basic outline of chapter 81 of the *Rule of the Master*. In reading chapter 55, one is struck with the simplicity of the monastic life of Benedict’s monastery. Although this chapter appears utterly “nuts and bolts,” and it is, there are some underlying questions that might be posed and answered by it. How much is really needed? How much of anything is enough? Kardong observes that “three times in *RB* 55 the verb *sufficere* (“it is enough”) is employed, making it a veritable leitmotif” (Kardong, p. 451). The three occurrences of *sufficere* are in verses four, ten, and fifteen.

⁶ Augustine, *Epistle 211*. Trans. Sister Wilfred Parsons. Fathers of the Church (vol.32). (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1977) 38.

The clothes that are distributed to Benedict's monks are not many and not fancy. They are, however, well suited to the climate, with provision being made for seasonal changes, and they fit. It should be noted that by the standards of the sixth century, these provisions were ample, though they may seem quite meager by the standards of a relatively affluent twenty-first century reader. The clothes when traveling are to be "somewhat better" than the daily clothing around the monastery (*RB* 55: 14). Benedict wants his monks to present themselves well to the outside world. So, in the matter of clothing, they receive the clothes they need, when they need them, and nothing else. Likewise, with regard to bedding, they get a "straw tick, a light blanket as well as a woolen one, and a pillow" (*RB* 55: 15). Again, they receive only what they need, not more, not less. And according to the attitude enjoined in chapter 34, they are to be content, or "at peace" (*RB* 34: 5) with this. Although chapter 55 is specifically about clothing and bedding, its principles of simplicity might well be applied to the whole of monastic life, and may also hold wisdom for any life. *Sufficere*: It is enough. And this sufficiency—referencing the above observation of its ampleness by sixth century standards—was sufficient not merely for human survival, but for human flourishing.

We have examined the stern prohibitions of chapter 33 and the balancing compassion of chapter 34, along with the complete surrender of self at the monk's profession, and the reiteration of sternness in chapter 58 coupled with an essential injunction to simplicity. There is yet one more chapter that touches upon these issues, chapter 54, concerning letters or gifts for monks. Once again, the opening admonition is clear and unequivocal. Verse one: "*In no circumstances* is a monk allowed, unless the abbot says he may, to exchange letters, blessed tokens or small gifts *of any kind* (both preceding italic emphases mine), with his parents or anyone else, or with a fellow monk" (*RB* 54:1). Here again we see themes that we have seen

previously, that the prohibition is absolute, and that the monk is not his own, but has completely surrendered himself and is subject to the discretion of the abbot concerning the department of every aspect of his behavior and person. Verse two reiterates that not even gifts sent by the monks parents may be accepted, with prior permission from the abbot. Kardong suggests that the emphasis on not even receiving anything from one's own family was about allegiances. The monk's new allegiance must be to the community, and therefore the monk must be detached from his family of origin. Kardong notes the fact that "ancient families were much more powerful in their hold on members than is usual today; the struggle to detach a monk from his parents and attach him to his new community was a serious problem" (Kardong, p. 437). In further explanation of what lies behind the legislation of chapter 54, Kardong notes that should "a monk come to depend on outside sources of comfort or...income...the nerve of monastic poverty and community is cut" (Kardong, p. 438).

In verse three we see the theme of the monk's complete surrender and obedience powerfully illustrated by the clause that even if the abbot orders the monk to accept a gift, the abbot may still then distribute the gift to someone else in the community (presumably according to a need for the item). And in keeping with the (Augustinian) spirit of chapter 34, in verse four, Benedict reasserts that the monk should not be distressed by what might seem to be the inequity of such an action, "*lest occasion be given to the devil.*" (here Benedict is referencing Eph. 4:27 and 1Tim. 5:14). As we saw in chapter 34, the evil of grumbling is something that Benedict does not tolerate under any circumstance, due to its destructive effect upon the unity of the community. Finally, in verse five, we find again the familiar verb *praesumat*: "Whoever presumes to act otherwise will be subjected to the discipline of the rule" (RB 54:5). Once again, presumption is simply not tolerated.

Again it seems, upon investigation, that Benedict is taking his prescriptions in chapter 54 from Augustine's *Praeceptum*. Augustine cautions that "arguments and grumblings" must not arise from the issue of the monastery wardrobe and distribution of clothing (*Praec.* 5.1). Augustine then states the key spiritual principle which motivates and informs the simplicity, surrender of self will, and unifying charity underlying these strict practices: "the common good takes precedence over the individual good, the individual good yields to the common good" (*Praec.* 5.2). This would be a good and succinct summary statement of the spirit which motivates Benedict's entire program with regard to possessions and material goods, and their distribution in the community.

To summarize Benedict's teaching throughout the chapters herein discussed—33, 34, 54, 55, and 58—the motivation behind their strictness, austerity, and prohibitions, and the attitudes which they both warn against and enjoin, we will make the following two points. First, we must beware of the insidious disease of avarice within ourselves and our communities. It militates against the detachment and utter abandonment to God which should characterize the life of the monk. It fosters a spirit of autonomy, self-sufficiency, and self-serving which debilitates the heart of the monk and spreads to undermine community life. Secondly, we are to pursue and be content with simplicity in our lives. Perhaps we would do well to make *sufficere* a mantra of sorts: "it is enough." When this attitude, this way of life of simplicity and detachment is cultivated, it can have but one effect: to make space in our lives, and our hearts—space that would otherwise have been occupied by the care and concern for possessions—for God and for our brothers and sisters.

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