

The Beginning of the Treatise on the Good of the Community by Brother Remigius O.P. of Florence.

1. That the Common Good Should be Preferred to the Good of One's Own Private Affairs is Proven by Many Authorities in the Sacred Scripture.

The prophecy of the apostle Paul in second *Timothy* says that: “there follows close a perilous time, and there will be those who love themselves, who are greedy, puffed up and proud etc...”¹ this is seen clearly fulfilled in these times and in modern men (alas, most of all in us Italians); who, because of their very great and inordinate love for themselves have neglected the good of their communities, because they have little or no care for them and, driven on by a demonic spirit, have thrown the castles, cities, provinces and the entire region into confusion through strife and destroyed them by assault. Following the order of love, of which is written in the *Song of Songs*: “he set love in me,”² the common good is without doubt to be preferred over the good of the individual and the good of the many over the good of one single person. This can be proven with a variety of arguments.

First: many in the authority of Sacred Scripture, whether in the canon of the Old or New Testaments or even in the saints.

Of Onias, the high priest and perfect man, is written in second *Maccabees* that: “he went to the king not as an accuser of the citizenry, but for the good of the community, considering the whole multitude in his own mind, for he saw that, without the providence of the king, it would be impossible to bring peace to the state and to hold back Simon

¹ II *Timothy* 3: 1-2.

² *Song of Songs* 2:4.

from his folly.”³ From this it is apparent that for peace, which is without doubt good for the community just as health of body is certainly for the good of the community of the entire person, he even submitted himself to the king and procured through the misfortune of one troubled kinsman, the good of the community for all men, compelling him to the order of love, from which he had strayed. Of this Onias is again written, at the conclusion of second *Macabees*, that he was: “a good and kind-hearted man, modest of look, mild of manner, proper in speaking and schooled in virtues from childhood.”⁴

The same is said in *Ecclesiastes*: “contend even unto death for justice,”⁵ through which, you may be sure, the good of the community for the many, which is peace, is acquired and maintained. In agreement with this is *Isaiah*: “The work of justice will be peace.”⁶

The same says Caiaphas, who was certainly a wicked man, but being compelled by the uncreated spirit of truth toward love, in *John*: “It is better for you that one man should die for the people than that the entire nations should perish.”⁷

The same is said in first *Corinthians*: “love does not search out those things that belong to it;”⁸ blessed Augustine expounding on this in the *Rules* says that this is to be understood in such a way because: “love puts the community interests before its own,”⁹ and again later: “however much more you care about the common good than about your own, so much more will you learn to advance.”

³ II *Maccabees* 4: 4-6.

⁴ II *Macabees* 15:12

⁵ *Ecclesiastes* 4:28

⁶ *Isaiah* 32:17

⁷ *John* 11:50

⁸ I *Corinthians* 13:5

⁹ Augustine *Regula* Caput V: 31

Boethius makes the same point when he says: “Every good brought forth into the community shines more beautifully for all.”¹⁰

This suffices, for the present, for this first point.

2. The Same Proven by Pagan Authorities

The Philosopher says in the first book of the *Ethics*: “though, indeed, good is the same both for an individual and for a community, it is better and more perfect to support and save a community; it is certainly pleasant for one person, but truly more divine for whole peoples and nations”¹¹ i.e., for the many. This is as if he said that however much good is in common so much more is it to be loved, that is, the good of a city is more than the good of a private citizen and the good of a province, which contains many cities, more than the good of one city. From whence also and as a consequence the good of a kingdom is more to be loved than the good of a province and the good of the universal church more than the good of one kingdom.

In the ninth chapter too he says: “truly then – to wit: it is – of the devoted man – that is, said – that he distributes much for the love of his friends and would die for his country if it would be necessary.”¹² In chapter one, too, he says that the most principle virtue and art and the greatest architect is the community.¹³ In chapter eight of the *Topics* too he says: “a perverse associate is he who hinders the work of the community.”¹⁴

¹⁰ Cf. Dante Alighieri *The Purgatory of Dante Alighieri*. Butler, Arthur J. (ed. and trans.). (London: MacMillan and Co., 1880), pg. 178.

¹¹ Aristotle *Nicomachean Ethics* I. 1094b

¹² Aristotle *Nicomachean Ethics* I. 1169a

¹³ Aristotle *Nicomachean Ethics* I. 1094a

¹⁴ Aristotle *Topics* VIII. 161a

Similarly Tullius says in the *Oration in Defense of Quintus Ligarius*: “fortune has anything better for you than that you could– nor nature anything better for you than that you would save as many people as possible.”¹⁵

Similarly in book one of *On Moral Duties*: “They who declare the state publically should hold on to two precepts of Plato: the first is that they should watch over what is to the advantage of the citizenry, so that whoever should agitate, they would inform to him, as sullyng their own advantage; the other is that they do not take care of the entire body of the state until they watch over some part that the rest have forsaken.”¹⁶

Similarly in the *Invective against Salust* he says: “however much someone devotes himself to the state, so much shall he be my friend or my enemy.”¹⁷

Similarly in the book *On Moral Duties*: “splendidly was written by Plato that we are not only born for ourselves; our fatherland claims a share of our life, a part too is claimed by our friends, and, as it pleases the Stoics, since the cause of all things that are brought forth onto the earth is for man’s use, men too are brought forth for the use of others, so that there can be help between them each to the other.”¹⁸ The same is said in the *Oration on behalf of the People to the Senate*: “that death is not miserable which is met for the sake of the state nor is that exercise shameful which is performed with virtue.”¹⁹ The same is found in the first book of the *Invective*: “my fatherland is by far dearer to me than my life.”²⁰

¹⁵ Cicero *pro Ligario* XII. 38

¹⁶ Cicero *De Officiis* I. 26

¹⁷ Ps. Cicero *Invectia contra Salustium* IV.11

¹⁸ Cicero *De Officiis* I. 7

¹⁹ Ps. Cicero *Oratione Popolari ad Senatum* IX. 9

²⁰ Cicero *Oratio in Catilinam Prima in Senatu Habita* I.11

Cato too says: “fight for your fatherland.”²¹

But for this topic too this is satisfactory.

3. The same is proven by examples concerning creatures that have only natural love

Concerning creatures that have only natural love: we see that water ascends upwards, contrary to its nature, though this does not happen contrary to the nature of the whole universe, that is, that there should not be a vacuum in the universe. This is evident when a lit candle is placed in a basin filled with water under the opening of a phial filled only with air; then, in fact, the water ascends into the phial through this opening, because of the consumption of the air by the fire. Similarly, and for the same reason, air descends downward in place of the water, just as is evident when a vase full of some other liquid is immersed in water, from which the liquid comes out through the lower opening of the vase this is because an opening is made in the part of the higher vase and immediately air descends into that vase.

For this reason the commentator says in regards to “introducing water into a water clock” in book four of the *Physics*: “In this instrument, water does not flow from the bottom part, when the top part is closed off, but when it is open it flows; this occurs by necessity from the incursion of air into this instrument,”²² that is when air is able to enter into it; “therefore when air is forced out of it, there does not remain a vacuum, but air rushes in to replace it.”²³

²¹ Dionysius Cato *Monasticha Catonis* 30

²² Aristotle *Physics* IV. 6: 213a

²³ Ibid

Augustine too, in the second book of *On the Origin of the Soul*, says: “Sink a concave vase, which you believe to be empty, but that you should understand to be full, from that part through which it is filled in water and behold that no liquid is able to enter it, repelled as it is by the air with which it is filled. When, however, it is sunk with the mouth facing upward or toward the side, it accepts the liquid, the air, to which an exit is accessible, exits and rushes out.”²⁴ From whence, though, is it impossible for water to enter into water in the vase, nor two bodies to be in the same place simultaneously? This is because, so to say, it is against the natural law of the universe. Earth and fire function similarly in the same situations.

4. The same is proven by examples of creatures that have animal love

The same is even apparent in animals that have animal love. Bees, ignoring labor and danger, incline naturally to the common good. For, as Ambrosius says in the *Exameron*, bees “have young in common, they inhabit one house, they are enclosed by one doors threshold, work is held in common, food is held in common, each task is done communally, enjoyment is held in common as is profit, flight and the family.”²⁵

And again: there is no indolence found in in the bee, no matter how close the examination; certain ones contend against other bees in the open, as if in war, others stand guard around their livelihood, others spy out coming rains and seek their coming together, others create wax out of flowers, others put together cells, some round and some segmented marvelous in their connection and similarity.²⁶ Even in the midst of so much different work, not one is taken in ambush by another’s labors, not one searches for food

²⁴ Augustine *De Origine Anime ad Vincentium* IV. 18

²⁵ Ambrosius *Exameron* V. 21 (cf. *Patrologia Latina* XIV. 248a)

²⁶ *Ibid* (cf. *Patrologia Latina* XIV. 249c-250a)

in order to take it, but after flying closer and working among the herbs and flowers, which are their own, he recovers and seeks harmony. The same person says that they set up a king for themselves whom they hold dear out of natural condition and whom “they defend to the highest degree and for whom they believe to die is glorious,”²⁷ because it is clear that the king is their head and rules the whole multitude.

5. The same is proved by examples of creatures that have rational love, that is by pagan examples.

The same is clear in those who have rational love, i.e. in humans. When fear strikes the heart, heat and blood leave the other members behind because of natural love and rush to the heart, for its defense. The arms, too, expose themselves to blows for the defense of the head, because, as is clear, the life of the entire body depends on the heart and on the head. Like the arms, the feet, eyes and all of the other members take from themselves and give to the stomach, because on it depends the preservation of the multitude of the body parts, just as is made clear in Aesop’s Fable where it says:

No one is satisfied on his own; every friend has need of a friend.

If you are not able to pardon on account of others, pardon on your own account.²⁸

Therefore the honor of every citizen is from the good of the community, as is his exaltation and good.

We see the same thing in humans following rational love, i.e. that of virtue. First concerning pagan examples, we see political virtue. It is said of unnumbered virtuous Romans, that they most frequently exposed themselves to death for the Republic, i.e. for

²⁷ Ibid (cf. *Patrologia Latina* XIV. 248-250).

²⁸ Phaedrus Augustus-Libertus *Fabulae Aesopiae* LV.

the good of the common public, since they cared for the common good more than for their own.

For the exterior good, we have such a great example of this in Lucius and Quintus, of whom says Augustine in book five of *The City of God* of Lucius Valerius: “who was a so well regarded that when he died a poor man during his consulship, money was collected for his tomb;”²⁹ and of Quintus Cincinnatus: “When he possessed four iugera of land, and cultivated them with his own hands, he was taken from his plow and made dictator, a greater position than that of the consul; following this great honor, after defeating the enemies he remained in the same poverty.”³⁰ These men did not rob the community for their own gain, as do the officials in our own time; for the officials of the community, because they were poor before, are seen enriching themselves without any artifice in office; this is certainly a most terrible sign.

Likewise we have an example in Fabricius, a poor Roman soldier, who was sent by the Roman people with many others as an ambassador to king Pyrrhus, who is descended, as it is said, from the lineage of Achilles, for the return of the captives. He was sought out through a messenger at night and in secret by the king in order to ask him whether he would abandon the Romans and go over to his side, if he would give him a fourth part of his kingdom. The lover of his community responded that he could in no way do this. Afterward, it is said that Pyrrhus was defeated by the Romans and that he was wounded.

Afterward, Fabricius, it is said, was made the captain of the Roman army against Pyrrhus, and when the armies were drawing near to each other and because, it is said,

²⁹ Augustine *De Civitate Dei* V. 18

³⁰ Ibid

Phyrrys was lying down because of these wounds, Phyrrus' doctor came at night in secret to Fabricius, promising to poison the king, if he would give him money. Fabricius captured him, however, and had him bound in chains, and so had him returned to the king and related to him through a messenger what the doctor intended to do. Then said the king: "He is Fabricius, who then was as true to his honesty and faith as the sun is to its course." In this he held forth the good of the community in a similar way.

Valerius, however, says, in book six,³¹ that the father of the doctor, Timocrates by name, promised this to Fabricius and that the senate responded and sent legates to Phyrrus that he should be on his guard; he did not, however, reveal the author of the wickedness, but only the crime.

Likewise, it is said in the histories of the Romans (and Valerius touches upon in book five as well)³² that, after the death of Camillus and two years of plague, a most terrible opening of the earth appeared in the middle of the city with a vast mouth, which was seen to be so deep that it reached even to the underworld and for a long time the populace endured this with great fear. A certain Marcus Curtius, a soldier, armed with all his weapons sprang into this chasm and that the mouth was closed up after him, and that the city was freed from such a danger. He had heard that the astrologers and the augurs had agreed that this mouth would not be closed, unless some live man threw himself into it; and this was done, and the earth returned to its former state after Marcus threw himself into it, whom no one saw again.

Such a great example of the good concerning the members of the body we have in the king Zaleucus, of whom Valerius says in book six: "although his son was condemned

³¹ Valerius Maximus *Factorum ac Dictorum Memorabilium Libri IX V. 5*

³² Valerius Maximus *Factorum ac Dictorum Memorabilium Libri IX V. 6*

for adultery and ought to be blinded, the entire populace opposed this in honor of the father. Lest he violate the law that he had established, after first taking his own and then his son's eye, Zaleucus left the other for use in seeing."³³ The law therefore pertained to the common good of the people.

Such a great example truly of the bodily good among those who are related we have in Torquatus, of whom Augustine says in book five of *The City of God*: "There was another Roman prince, whose name was Torquatus, who killed his own son who fought, not against his country, but for it, driven by youthful ardor after being taunted by the enemy, despite his victory, because he fought contrary to his command, that is against that which his father, and general, had commanded. Nor is there anything worse to be struck down in contempt as an example by the general, nothing better than to be struck down in glory by the enemy."³⁴ Whence he preferred the greater good of the community to the smaller personal good, since it is written in *Proverbs*: "The obedient man is called victorious."³⁵ This is certainly the normal state, from time to time, however, the inobedient man wins by chance.

Such a great example of the good of the corporal life itself we have in Marcus Regulus, of whom Augustine says in *The City of God*: "Marcus Regulus, a general of the Roman people was made a captive by the Carthaginians. Who preferred to have their own returned to them, than to keep their captives, In order to achieve this, they sent this Regulus with their ambassadors to Rome, first they constrained him with a vow, that if they wish that this not occur, he would be returned to Carthage. He hastened, and he

³³ Valerius Maximus *Factorum ac Dictorum Memorabilium Libri IX VI. 5*

³⁴ Augustine *De Civitate Dei V. 18*

³⁵ *Proverbs 21:28*

persuaded the opposite course in the senate, because he did not think that an exchange of captives was useful for the Roman Republic. Nor was he compelled to return to the enemy from his own people after this, but because he had sworn, he fulfilled it of his own volition. But they put him to death with inventive and horrible tortures. He was enclosed in a narrow wooden box, where he was compelled to stand, fixed on all sides with sharpest nails so that he could lean on no part of it without severest pain, and so they killed him by forcing him to stay awake.”³⁶

Likewise we have an example in Codrus, of whom Valerius says: “Codrus was king of Athens when the crippled fatherland was laid waste by a vast army of enemies with fire and the sword, because they were mistrustful of human help, they fled to the oracle of Apollo, and through ambassadors it was asked in what way he could shatter the enemy in battle; he responded that this would occur only if he himself were killed in battle by the enemies hand. This was known not only in the Athenian camp, but in the opposing camp as well. Because of this a decree was made that Codrus should not be wounded. He learned of this later, and having set aside the signs of his rank, he put on the clothing of a household servant and exposed himself to the array of enemies, he forced one of these to strike him with a curved blade to his death, so that Athens not be destroyed.”³⁷

Likewise, says Valerius, when Alexander took the city of Lampsacus by assault, in order to destroy it, he met Anaximenes, his teacher, coming out of the walls, Knowing that he would ask him to set aside his anger, he swore that he would not do whatever he

³⁶ Augustine *De Civitate Dei* I. 15

³⁷ Valerius Maximus *Factorum ac Dictorum Memorabilium Libri IX V. 6*

asked. “I ask therefore,” he said “that Lapsacus be destroyed.” And so safety was maintained through the benefit of one oath.³⁸

Likewise Cato killed himself, as others suppose, because the possession of the city came to the hands of Julius Caesar, believing because of this that the Republic had fallen into great danger.³⁹ Augustine, nevertheless, said that Cato did this –as Caesar had said- because he envied the glory of Caesar in such a great way that he did not want to be pardoned by him just as he hoped and wished pardon for his son; and Augustine adds: “or he was ashamed, as we may say in another way more gently,”⁴⁰ that is, because he was spared by Caesar.

But this suffices for the present.

6. The Same is proven by the Faithful of the Old Testament.

This is clear in examples of the faithful of both Testaments as well. First let us look in the Old Testament, from which it suffices, for the present, to bring three men who were the most excellent

For it is said of Moses, that he said to the Lord: “I beseech You, Lord, the people have made this greatest sin; they have made for themselves golden gods; remove this stain from them, or, if You cannot, delete me from that book which You have written;”⁴¹ however, because he did this first, twenty three thousand were killed because of this crime, according to one translation, or three thousand, according to another.⁴² Certainly God places the majority of the multitude above the minority in the order of love. So that

³⁸ Valerius Maximus *Factorum ac Dictorum Memorabilium Libri IX VII*. 3

³⁹ Plutarch *Cat. Mi.* 70. 6 and Cicero *De Officiis* I. 31

⁴⁰ Augustine *De Civitate Dei* I. 23

⁴¹ *Exodus* 32:31-32

⁴² *Exodus* 32:28

God would spare the remaining majority He made a punishment among the minority and Moses said: “I beseech You, Lord.” Etc...

On these words the Magister says in the *Hystories*: “They speak certain words not because of reason, but because of boldness of spirit, saying what is impossible through great confidence in God, as if ‘just like it is impossible that you delete me, so, I pray that you cannot abandon me.’ Augustine says that the reason must be concluded from the consequences since, certainly, these follow from what is done: ‘Either delete me or remove from them.’ Since he puts them as equivalent, as if he said: ‘If you do not delete me, remove from them.’ The disjointed ideas are turned and joined together, destruction, which precedes, and remaining, which follows.”⁴³ And the Magister adds: “It is written in two ways who is to be deleted from the book of life, either according to foreknowledge or following the present justice.”⁴⁴

Likewise it is said of David in first Kings: there existed a young man who, for the liberation of the people of Israel, exposed himself in battle, unarmed, with a most powerful and well-armed giant.⁴⁵ Likewise of the same man it is said in second Kings: “When he saw the angel withdrawing from the people he said to the Lord: ‘I am the one who sinned, I have done iniquity, what have these people, who are sheep, done? Turn, I pray, Your hand against me and against the house of my father.’”⁴⁶

Likewise of Judas Maccabeus exposed himself and his brothers to seemingly infinite dangers for the liberation of his people and he did incredible deeds, which are

⁴³ Petrus Comestor *Historia Scholastica: Libri Exodi Capitulum LXVII*

⁴⁴ Ibid

⁴⁵ I *Kings* 17: 31-51

⁴⁶ II *Kings* 24:17

held in first Maccabees.⁴⁷ Of this same man can be read in chapter nine that together with eight hundred men⁴⁸ he fought against twenty two thousand men,⁴⁹ where this most brave man fell fighting, saying: “Far be it from us to do this thing, to flee from them; and if our time draws near, let us die with honor,” This how it befits that honorable men die, “for our brothers, and let us not bring judgment on our glory.”⁵⁰

7. The Same is Proven by the Faithful of the Canonical New Testament.

Following these examples from the Old Testament, we shall bring examples from the New Testament as well, and first from the canonical books. Where many must be omitted, the example of two will suffice for us, certainly that of St. Paul, and of Christ our Lord Himself.

Paul says in first *Corinthians*: “Not seeking for what is useful for me, but for many, that they may be saved.”⁵¹ And in second *Corinthians*, that ‘I lay out, *Glossa*: “spiritual and temporal things” most pleasingly, *Glossa*: “for your use,” and I lay this over your souls, *Glossa*: “perfect love is this, that one should be ready to die for their brothers.”⁵²

Again in Romans he says: “I would wish myself to be anathema, *Glossa*: “if this were possible, that is separate either for an hour, or in this life or after death,” from Christ for my brothers, who are my kinsmen according to the flesh, who are Israelites, *Glossa*: “Consider that he said ‘I wish’ not ‘I hope,’ since he knows such a one, that is such an

⁴⁷ I *Maccabees* 9:6

⁴⁸ I *Maccabees* 9:4

⁴⁹ I *Maccabees* 9:10

⁵⁰ Ibid

⁵¹ I *Corinthians* 10:33

⁵² II *Corinthians* 12:15

honest member, cannot be separated from Christ by any preceding crime, nevertheless he demonstrates affection and concern for them.”⁵³

Of Christ Himself Paul says in *Hebrews*: “Jesus, in order to sanctify the people with His blood suffered beyond the gates.”⁵⁴ And Christ says of Himself: “The son of man did not come to be served, but to serve and to give his life as a redemption for many.”⁵⁵

8. The Same Proven in the Faithful of the New Testament Outside of the Canon.

Following this up closely, we put examples of other saints from outside the Canon, although omitting so many, it is sufficient to put the example of four, or rather in four, that is in one pope, in one archbishop, in one bishop and in one layman.

It is said in the chronicles of Leo I, the most holy pope, by birth a Tuscan, that when Atilla, the king of the Vandals was destroying all of Lombardia, lest he do the same coming to Rome, he went personally to meet him in Lombardia, around the Po river, where he was waiting. When he approached Attila, he, when saw blessed Leo, dismounted from his horse and having prostrated himself at his feet asked that he request whatever he wished. He asked that he would retreat from Italy and that he would return the captives.

To those of his men who accused that the conqueror of the world was defeated by a priest he responded: “I provided for myself and for you. For I saw standing on his right hand a most puissant warrior with bared sword threatening me and saying: ‘If you do not obey him, you will be destroyed with all your host.’” From there he immediately exited

⁵³ *Romans* 9:3-4

⁵⁴ *Hebrews* 13:12

⁵⁵ *Matthew* 20:28

Italy and returned to Pannonia. So, then, God gives virtue and protection to those who expose themselves to peril for the good of the many.

Again, it is said of blessed Thomas the Archbishop of Canterbury, who wished rather to die than that the liberty of the church be infringed upon, that, hastening to death, when armed men were searching for him he said: "I am he, what do you wish?" and they said: "We wish that you would die and not be able to live any longer." To them he said: "I am ready to die for God and for the defense of justice and for the liberty of the church. If, therefore, you are searching for me, I prohibit you on behalf of God almighty and under anathema from injuring any of these others in any way."

Again it is said of blessed Lupus, bishop of Trecassinus, that when his city was besieged by Attila, blessed Lupus asked, shouting from above the gates, who this may be who attacks them so. To this he said: "I am Attila, the scourge of God." To this the humble defender said, sighing: "And I am Lupus, alas destroyer of the flock of God." Soon he commanded that the gates be opened. They however passed from gate to gate, blinded by divinity, neither seeing nor harming anyone.

Again blessed Ludovicus, king of the Franks, exposed himself and his sons and brothers to innumerable dangers and expenses for the defense of the Holy land and the Christian people. For after returning from his first voyage across the sea, where he was made captive by the Saracens, nevertheless he returned for a second time, and he died a blessed death.