

Scholia[†]

† The Scholia offers never-before-translated documents of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Protestant and Roman Catholic moral theologians and philosophers. Our objective is to put important historical texts back into circulation and, by so doing, to assist scholars in Christian social ethics, economics, and moral philosophy to reclaim the once vibrant natural-law foundation of these disciplines.

Commentary on
1 Thessalonians
4:6 and “A Paper
on Usury”

John Jewel

Edited and Translated by André A. Gazal

Introduction by André A. Gazal

Contents

Introduction by André A. Gazal	<i>iii</i>
Commentary on 1 Thessalonians 4:6	1
"A Paper on Usury"	19

Introduction

In a letter to Thomas Wilson (1523–1581), the Master of Requests, dated August 20, 1569, John Jewel (1522–1571), bishop of Salisbury, enthusiastically commended him for his recent *Discourse on Usury*, urging him to publish it.

I have perused your learned and godly travail touching the matter of usury, M. D. Wilson, and have no doubt but, if it may please you to make it common, very much good may grow of it. Such variety of matter, such weight of reasons, such examples of antiquity, such authority of doctors both Greeks and Latins, such allegation of laws, not only civil and canon, but also provincial and temporal, such variety of cases so learnedly and so clearly answered, such eloquence, and so evident witness of God’s holy will, can never possible pass in vain.¹

Wilson did indeed publish his *Discourse on Usury* three years later, and in fact dedicated it to Jewel’s memory. Furthermore, he affixed this letter by Jewel to the front of the work, having received it from his executor, John Garbrand

¹ John Jewel, *The Works of John Jewel*, ed. John Ayre, 4 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1845–50), 4:1276.

(1542–1589), after the bishop’s death.² The inclusion of these words to enrich the credibility of the work shows that the bishop, the first major apologist for the Elizabethan Settlement, was considered an authoritative source on the subject.

Although principally known for his *Apology of the Church of England* (1562) and *Defense of the Apology of the Church of England* (1565, 1567), John Jewel also engaged the controversial issue of usury, or the lending of money at interest. At the 1571 Parliament, Jewel served on the committee in the House of Lords that dealt specifically with the usury bill that eventually passed during this session. It was also at this same Parliament that Thomas Wilson participated actively in the debate concerning the same bill in the House of Commons. Moreover, Jewel contributed to the literature pertaining to this contentious topic in the sixteenth century.³ Specifically, this literary input consists of an exposition of 1 Thessalonians 4:6, which is part of a larger commentary on both of St. Paul’s epistles to the Thessalonians, originally preached as sermons at his cathedral in Salisbury either before or after the 1571 parliamentary session, and a Latin paper on usury written in what appears to be the form of a dialogue.

Exposition on 1 Thessalonians 4:6

As mentioned above, a major discussion of usury occurs within the larger context of Jewel’s *Exposition upon the Two Epistles to the Thessalonians*. The verse, which Jewel directly applies to usury, is the command not to “oppress” or “defraud” one’s “brother in any manner.” According to the bishop, usury is particularly egregious because it deceives one’s “brother,” another Christian, who is a “son of God,” whether rich or poor.

² See Thomas Wilson, *A Discourse vpon Usurye, by vwaye of Dialogue and Oracions, for the better varietye, and more delite of all those, that shall reade thys treatise* (London: Tottelli, 1572). Interestingly, Peter Medine, in his biography of Thomas Wilson, makes no mention of this letter when discussing the *Discourse*. See Peter Medine, *Thomas Wilson* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1986), 107.

³ See, for instance, David W. Jones, *Reforming the Morality of Usury: A Study of Differences that Separated the Protestant Reformers* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2004); Eric Kerridge, *Usury, Interest, and the Reformation* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002); and Norman L. Jones, *God and the Moneylenders: Usury and Law in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1989).

Because it was originally a sermon, the exposition is at once more exhortatory than exegetical.⁴ The discourse follows a clear homiletical structure. After defining usury, Jewel describes its causes and destructive effects on the commonwealth. He then gives specific reasons why people should abhor it and finally provides patristic and biblical grounds for detesting usury.

Jewel defines usury as the lending of either money or goods for repayment in an amount over and above the principal. He characterizes the practice as “filthy gains and a work of darkness.” As a sin, usury derives from the same source as all other vices, “the works of the devil and the works of the flesh.” Specifically, covetousness is the root of usury.

The bishop next describes the deleterious effects of usury. What is most interesting here is Jewel’s emphasis on the disintegration of communal love that usury causes. It is only after averring this dissolution of mutual love resulting from usury that Jewel goes on to discuss the particular harmful consequences usury yields to the citizens of the commonwealth, rich and poor alike.

Jewel then seeks to support his opposition to usury with patristic authority. Toward this end, he cites specifically Ambrose, Chrysostom, and Augustine to show that condemnation of usury aligns with the consensus of the Fathers. However, Jewel references the church fathers in resistance to usury as reliable interpreters of the ultimate authority forbidding this vice—Holy Scripture.

It becomes quite apparent following the patristic discussion that Jewel’s chief contention against usury is that Scripture as the Word of God clearly prohibits it. In this section of the commentary, Jewel endeavors to support his application of this verse to usury by appealing to abundant biblical passages that generally comprise the common body of scriptural references marshaled against usury by scholastic as well as contemporary opponents.⁵

One of the most telling features of this exposition occurs toward the end, in which Jewel acknowledges the presence of usurers in Salisbury (and therefore

⁴ This should be expected because Jewel was primarily a rhetorician. In fact, he was the Reader of Humanities and Rhetoric at Corpus Christi College, Oxford, before he fled to the Continent during the reign of Mary Tudor. For more on Jewel’s rhetorical prose, see David K. Wieser, *The Prose Style of John Jewel* (Salzburg: Institut für Englische Sprache und Literatur, 1973).

⁵ For a helpful discussion of the frequent appeal to such passages, see Jones, *Reforming the Morality of Usury*, 18–19.

presumably in the congregation) and threatens them with excommunication, indicating that usury was considered a cause for ecclesiastical discipline. Another distinct characteristic of this selection is the exception the bishop makes regarding the investment of money for interest on behalf of orphans, which also was allowed by the usury law of 1571.⁶ The selection from the *Exposition upon the Two Epistles to the Thessalonians* that follows has been rendered into contemporary English.⁷

Jewel's "Paper on Usury"

Unlike his *Exposition upon the Two Epistles to the Thessalonians*, Jewel's "Paper on Usury" is much less known. In fact, even though the *Exposition* has been frequently referenced since the sermons comprising it were compiled into this volume by Garbrand, "A Paper on Usury" has comparatively received less consideration in accounts of Jewel's thought and works. Jewel's first biographer, Laurence Humphrey (1527–1590), is the first to mention "A Paper on Usury," reporting that he obtained it after the bishop's death (most likely along with the volumes of Jewel's library).⁸ Humphrey further relates that he assigned the names to the opponents arguing throughout the text. Specifically he wrote Jewel's name above those arguments associated with him, and the letters, "A.B." to his unknown opponent.⁹ Such editorial action suggests that Humphrey was quite familiar with Jewel's position on the subject because the late bishop was his patron. The entire

⁶ Jones, *God and the Moneylenders*, 62–63.

⁷ In addition, the scriptural citations that were originally less precise and appeared in the marginalia have been updated and integrated parenthetically. Scriptural references in the selection from Jewel's *Exposition upon the Two Epistles to the Thessalonians* have been updated to reflect the *1599 Geneva Bible* (White Hall, West Virginia: Tolle Lege Press, 2006). On one occasion, however, it is clear that Jewel is working with a Latin text and is providing his own rendering into English, which has been maintained in his own words and updated into contemporary English.

⁸ Laurence Humphrey, *Iohannes Iuelli Angli, Episcopi Sarisburiensis Vita* (London: John Day, 1573), 217.

⁹ Humphrey, *Iohannes Iuelli*, 217: "Annotationes quasdam, sive breves propositiones de usura, in ipsius musaeo post obitum repertas, placuit evulgare: ubi Lector intelliget ad quondam principalem quaestionem duas advesarias & acutas & succinctas

“Paper on Usury” appears following these comments throughout the proceeding fifteen pages of Humphrey’s biography of Jewel.¹⁰

Over three decades after the printing of Humphrey’s biography of Jewel, an edition of the bishop’s works was published in 1609 and reprinted in 1611. This edition included a biography of Jewel written by Daniel Featley (1582–1645), which was really an abridgement of Humphrey’s work.¹¹ While this collection contains Jewel’s *Exposition upon the Two Epistles to the Thessalonians*, it totally omits “A Paper on Usury.” Moreover, Featley, in his biography of Jewel, makes no mention of it. Jewel’s “Paper on Usury” again appears in the nineteenth century, as it is specifically mentioned in Charles Webb Le Bas’ biography of Jewel¹² and published in volume four of the Parker Society’s edition of Jewel’s works.¹³ Furthermore, the biographies of Jewel published throughout the twentieth and first decade of the twenty-first century contain no mention of “A Paper on Usury.”¹⁴ Reference to this document is even absent from Norman L. Jones’ important work on usury in early modern England in which he devotes considerable attention and analysis of both Wilson’s *Discourse on Usury* as well as Jewel’s thoughts on the subject, while referencing the *Exposition upon the Two Epistles to the Thessalonians* as the source of the bishop’s position on usury.¹⁵ However, Eric Kerridge, in his 2002 monograph, *Usury, Interest, and the Reformation*, references and cites Jewel’s “Paper on Usury” alongside the Commentary of

responsiones. Alteri quia author est incertus, literas. A.B. apponemus, in altera erit Ioannes Iuellus.”

¹⁰ Humphrey, *Iohannes Iuelli*, 217–32.

¹¹ John Jewel, *The wvorkes of the very learned and Reuerend Father in God Iohn Ievvell, not long since Bishop of Sarisbvrrie. Newly set forth with some amendment of diuers quotation and a briefe discourse of his life* (London: John Norton, 1611).

¹² Charles Webb Le Bas, *The Life of Bishop Jewel* (London: J. G. and F. Rivington, 1835), 326–27.

¹³ Jewel, *Works*, 4:1293–98.

¹⁴ John E. Booty, *John Jewel as Apologist of the Church of England* (London: SPCK, 1963); Gary W. Jenkins, *John Jewel and the English National Church: The Dilemmas of an Erastian Reformer* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2006); W. M. Southgate, *John Jewel and the Problem of Doctrinal Authority* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1962).

¹⁵ Jones, *God and the Moneylenders*, 26–29.

St. Paul's Epistles to the Thessalonians as an authoritative source of Jewel's thought on the subject.¹⁶ Moreover, he includes excerpts of this document along with a translation among other primary source samplings by various Reformers on usury in an appendix. The selection below represents the first time Jewel's "Paper on Usury" has been translated in its entirety.¹⁷

The original Latin composition of the document indicates a different audience from that of his commentary on First and Second Thessalonians. A.B. could likely be any educated cleric, or even jurist, whose position Jewel was trying to refute. The body of the document consists of a series of exchanges between Jewel and A.B. concerning different aspects of the issue. Among some of the noteworthy discussions throughout "A Paper on Usury" concern the place of usury in the divine law and specifically in the Decalogue. This, as well as other scriptural discussions, indicates once again that Jewel's primary objection to usury in any form is its proscription by the Word of God.

After the scriptural discussion, the dialogue turns to the subject of the effects of usury on the commonwealth. Answering A.B.'s assertion that usury benefits the commonwealth, Jewel insists, on the contrary, that usury causes extensive harm to the commonwealth. It is within the larger context of the discussion regarding the harmful effects of usury on the commonwealth that an exchange concerning contracts occurs. Much of this aspect of the dialogue concentrates on the difference between usury and rent.

A distinguishing aspect of "A Paper on Usury" is Jewel's opinion concerning partnerships. The bishop juxtaposes a partnership over and against a usurious agreement in which the lender gains profit in any event, regardless of the debtor's loss. Moreover, a partnership is a contract that is characteristically Christian. Undergirding this concept of a partnership as well as his distinction between usury and a simple loan is the Christian virtue of love.

A question that persists regarding "A Paper on Usury" is Jewel's reason for writing it. It would seem that given the composition of the document as well as Jewel's strong opposition to usury and his own involvement with the 1571 usury bill in Parliament that "A Paper on Usury" served as notes to be used in discussions with one or more specific opponents on the committee reviewing the same bill.

¹⁶ Kerridge, *Usury, Interest, and the Reformation*, 67.

¹⁷ In addition to the translation, the footnotes represent modern editions and references to sources that are referred to in Jewel's text.

Conclusion

These two selections indicate that Jewel appropriates a concept of usury, along with its supporting arguments, standard scriptural texts, categories, and distinctions, formulated mainly by Thomas Aquinas and other schoolmen as well as canonists.¹⁸ Among the Reformers, this position would align Jewel with Luther and Melancthon while placing him in direct odds with Reformed theologians with whom he would normally agree on most doctrinal matters such as Bucer, Calvin, Beza, and Bullinger, whose views on interest were far more nuanced.¹⁹

Furthermore, the position espoused by Jewel in "A Paper on Usury" is virtually identical to that of Thomas Wilson's as outlined in both his *Discourse* as well as in his lengthy speech during the debate in the Commons concerning the usury bill.²⁰ A cursory examination of this debate would show that the various positions on usury (of which Wilson's was one) were disputed mostly on theological grounds.²¹ When considered within this particular context, especially since Jewel himself participated in the parliamentary process regarding the course of the usury bill, it becomes apparent that the position for which he argues in "A Paper on Usury" as well as his commentary on 1 Thessalonians 4:6 represents a position commonly shared, in this case, by members of Parliament.

¹⁸ Kerridge, *Usury, Interest, and the Reformation*, 18, 81–82. See also David W. Jones, *Reforming the Morality of Usury*, 16–36.

¹⁹ See Kerridge, *Usury, Interest, and the Reformation*, 23–35; 79–80; 87–112. On the cross-confessional nature of positions on usury in the sixteenth century, see Jordan J. Ballor, "Wolfgang Musculus on Christian Righteousness, Oaths, and Usury," *Journal of Markets & Morality* 11, no. 2 (Fall 2008): 375: "The disputes that had arisen in the late medieval era between distinctively permissive and restrictive attitudes toward usury do not come over into the Reformation along confessionally identifiable lines."

²⁰ Sir Simonds d'Ewes, "Journal of the House of Commons: April 1571," *The Journals of all the Parliaments during the Reign of Queen Elizabeth* (1682): 155–80, accessed July 5, 2011, <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=43684>.

²¹ This observation has also been made by Norman Jones. See Norman L. Jones, "Religion and Parliament," in *The Parliaments of Elizabethan England*, ed. D. N. Dean and N. L. Jones (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990), 118.

Commentary on 1 Thessalonians 4:6*

*That no man oppress or defraud his brother in any matter:
for the Lord is avenger of all such things, as we also have
told you beforetime, and testified.*

—1 Thess. 4:6

Let no man defraud his brother, neither by false weight, nor by false measure, nor by lying words. Let your measures and weights and words be true; let your gains be just and true that God may bless them. His blessing will make you rich, and whatever he blesses not will waste and consume and do you no good. Do for others as you would have them do for you. This is true and upright dealing.

If you speak more than what is true, if you take more than your goods are worth, your conscience knows it is not yours. God will destroy all the workers of iniquity. He who delights in sin hates his own soul. The mouth that is accustomed to lying kills the soul.

Do not defraud your brother; he is your brother, whether he is rich or poor: he is your brother and the son of God. Will you wrong your brother? Will you oppress the son of God, and that even in the sight of God? God is his Father; he will not leave you unpunished for it. If he is naïve and inexperienced, do not

* John Jewel, *The Works of John Jewel*, ed. John Ayre, 4 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1845–1850), 2:850–61. Rendered into contemporary English by André A. Gazal.

abuse his naivety. God is the God of righteousness. Deal justly so that your own conscience does not accuse you. Teach neither your sons nor your servants to deceive others and to gain by wickedness. After they have learned from you to deceive others, they will deceive you also. Job prayed daily for his children. You be careful also that your children and servants neither deceive nor hurt anyone. Their sins shall be laid to your charge. Why do you ask God to feed you and give you your daily bread and do not wait on his will but feed upon the bread of iniquity? This food will not nourish you; this wealth will not stand by you, for God will not prosper it. The wise man says, "The bread of deceit is sweet to a man: but afterward his mouth shall be filled with gravel" (Prov. 20:17). Ill-gotten goods have an ill end. God said by the prophet Haggai, "Ye have sown much, and bring in little ... ye brought it home, I did blow upon it" (Hag. 1:6, 9). We have examples of this daily. We have seen great heaps of wealth suddenly blow away and consumed to nothing: great houses decayed and the hope of the wicked quite overthrown.

Here I will speak somewhat of the unhappy business of usury because here stands the most miserable and shameful deceiving of the brethren. I will not speak all that may be said, for it would be too long and overly wearisome. I will have regard for what will be agreeable and profitable and fitting for you to hear. So that you may better understand this subject and see the whole matter of usury, I will first show you what usury is. Then, where it springs from and what are the causes of usury. Third, what results from it, and what hurt it brings to the commonwealth; and I will give such reasons that would make any good man abhor it. Then I will declare what the holy fathers, the apostles, martyrs, and Christ, as well as God himself have thought and spoken about usury.

Many simple people do not know what usury is, nor have they ever heard of the term. The world would be happy if no one knew it, for evil things do less harm when they are mostly unknown. Pestilences and plagues are known only with great misery. But that you may learn to know it, and all the more to abhor it, this is it:

Usury is the lending of money, grain, oil, wine, or anything else, wherein we agree to get back the whole principal that we lent, and something more for the use and keeping of it; for instance, if I lend 100 pounds, and for it contract to receive 105 pounds or any other sum greater than was the sum which I loaned. This is that which we call usury, a kind of bargaining that no good or godly person has ever used. It is a kind of bargaining that all people who have ever feared

God's judgment always abhorred and condemned. It is filthy gain, and a work of darkness. It is a monster in nature, the overthrow of mighty kingdoms, the destruction of flourishing states, the decay of wealthy cities, the plagues of the world, and the misery of the people. It is theft, it is the murder of our brethren, it is the curse of God and the curse of the people. This is usury. You may be able to tell it from these signs, for wherever it reigns, all these injuries occur. How and how many ways it can be produced, I will not declare. It would be horrible to hear, and my purpose here is to reprove usury, not teach it.

Let us see then what causes it, where it grows, and who is the mother, the nurse, or the breeder of usury. It grows not everywhere, nor among all people. Many hate it and detest it, and would rather die than live off of such spoil. It is not of God, for God soundly forbids it. Neither is it found among the children of God, for love seeks not her own profit, but to do good to her neighbor.

Where then does usury spring? It is soon shown. It springs in the same place as theft, murder, and adultery, the plagues and destruction of the people. All these are the works of the devil and the works of the flesh. Christ tells the Pharisees, "Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do" (John 8:44). Even so, may it truly be said to the usurer: You are of your father the devil and you will do the desires of your father, and therefore you have pleasure in his works. The devil entered into the heart of Judas, and put in him this greediness and covetousness of gain, for which he was content to sell his Master. Judas' heart was the shop; the devil was the foreman to work in it. Saint Paul says, "They that will be rich, fall into tentation and snares, and into many foolish and noisome lusts, which drown men in perdition and destruction. For the desire of money is the root of all evil" (1 Tim. 6:9–10). Saint John says, "He that com-miteth sin, is of the devil" (1 John 3:8). Thus we see that the devil is the planter and the father of usury.

Covetousness, desire of money, insatiable greediness, deceitfulness, unmercifulness, injury, oppression, extortion, contempt of God, hatred toward the brethren, and hatred of all people are the nurses and breeders of usury. It springs from Satan and grows and is watered, fed, and nourished by these cruel and damnable monsters.

Let us see further the fruits of usury. Perhaps it does some good, and you may think many are the better off because of it. These therefore are the fruits. It dissolves the knot and fellowship of humanity. It hardens the human heart. It makes people unnatural and bereft of charity and love toward their dearest friends.

It breeds misery and provokes the wrath of God from heaven. It consumes the rich. It eats up the poor. It makes people bankrupt and undoes many households. The poor occupiers are driven to flee; their wives are left alone; their children are helpless and are driven to beg their bread through the unmerciful dealing of the covetous usurer.

When David lays out the wickedness of the country where he was persecuted, he says of them, *Non deficit usura et dolus in plateis eorum*: “Usury and deceit do not depart from their streets” (Ps. 55:11). One seeks to spoil and eat up another. These are the commodities and fruits of usury. Such is usury in the midst of a city, and such good it works as fire does when it is set to the roof of a house or as the plague does when it is taken to the midst of the body and reaches the heart.

We have heard where usury springs and what hurt it causes. Whoever considers this finds cause enough to loathe and forsake it. Someone asked of Cato what it was to commit usury. “What is it,” he answered, “to kill a man?”¹ He who is a usurer is a murderer. The same Cato says, “Our fathers punished a thief with double payment of that which he had taken; but the usurer was always condemned to pay four times the value.”² They were wise men. They thought that a usurer was much worse than a thief.

A thief is driven by extremity and need; the usurer is rich and has no need. The thief steals in corners and in places where he may be unknown; the usurer openly and boldly at all times and in any place. The thief steals to relieve his wife and children; the usurer steals to spoil his neighbor and to undo his wife and children. The thief steals from the rich who have enough; the usurer steals from the poor who have nothing. The thief flees and will be seen no more; the usurer stands by it, continues, and still steals: day and night, sleeping and waking, he always steals. The thief repents of his deed, he knows he has done wrong and is sorry for it; the usurer thinks it is his own, that it is well gotten, and never repents or sorrows but defends and maintains his sin impudently. The thief, if he escapes, many times becomes profitable to his country and applies himself

¹ As related by Marcus Tullius Cicero, *De Officiis*, 2.89. For the Latin text with English translation, see Cicero, *De Officiis: With An English Translation*, trans. Walter Miller (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1913), 264–67.

² Marcus Cato, *De Agricultura*, prologue 1. For the Latin text with English translation, see *Cato and Varro: On Agriculture*, Loeb Classics Library (Bury St. Edmunds: St. Edmundsbury Press, 1934), 2–3.

painfully to some trade for livelihood; the usurer leaves his merchandise, forsakes his farming, and gives himself to nothing whereby his country may benefit. The thief is satisfied at length; the usurer never has enough. The belly of the wicked will never be filled. As the sea is never filled with water, though all the streams of the world run into it, so the greediness of a usurer is never satisfied though he gain never so unreasonably. The sea is profitable; the usurer is hurtful and dangerous. By the sea we may pass and come safely to the haven, but no man passes by usury without loss or shipwreck.

Now hear what the godly and learned fathers of the church have thought of usury. No doubt they were godly men who wrote concerning this subject as God moved them and as others before them had done. Augustine says, *Quid dicam de usuris, quas ipsae lege*, and so forth: "What shall I say about usury, of which the laws and judges require that restitution be made? Is he more cruel who steals something away from the rich person, or he who kills a poor person with usury?"³ Note this: a usurer, says Augustine, is cruel. Why? Because he kills. Whom? The poor person, whom in charity he is bound to relieve.

Ambrose says about this, *Usuras solvit, qui victu indigent: an quicquam gravis?* and so forth: "He who lacks what is necessary to sustain his life pays you usury. What heavier case may there be? He seeks to be healed, and you poison him; he asks you for bread, and you give him a knife; he desires for you to set him free, and you bring him into further bondage."⁴ Again: "You, usurer, grow wealthy by other people's heaviness; you make gains from their tears and weeping; you are fed with their hunger; you make your money from the skins of those people whom you destroy; how can you think yourself to be rich, and yet beg alms from him who is poor?"⁵ The same father says further, *Ab hoc usuram exige, quem non sit cirmen occidere*: "Whomever it is lawful to kill, you may

³ Augustine, *Epistles*, 153. For the Latin, see *Patrologia Latina (PL)* 33:664–65. For an English translation, see *Augustine: Political Writings*, ed. E. Margaret Atkins and Robert Dodaro (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 71–88

⁴ Ambrose, *De Tobia*, 3.11. For the Latin, see *Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum (CSEL)* 32/2, 517–73. For an English translation, see *De Tobia: A Commentary, with an Introduction and Translation*, ed. and trans. Lois Miles Zucker (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America, 1933), 31.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 14.

lend him your money to usury.”⁶ He who takes usury kills without a sword. These are holy fathers, and worthy of credit; they show us that usury is as bad as to kill and murder someone willfully.

Chrysostom likewise: *In his sensibilibus pecuniis prohibuit ne quis usuram acciperet*, and so forth: “God has forbidden anyone to take usury in this sensible or common money. Why? Because both of them are very much hindered. He who owes money is made poorer, and he who lends it by this kind of enriching himself increases the number of his sins.”⁷ Again he says, *Sicut fermentum modicum, quod mittitur in multam farinam, totam consersionem corrumpit*, and so forth: “Just as a little leaven leavens the whole lump of dough, so usury, when it comes into one’s house, draws all his substance, and changes it into debt.”⁸

He who is a usurer wishes that all others would be in need and come borrow from him, that all others may lose so that he may have gain. Therefore our old forefathers so much abhorred this trade that they thought a usurer was unworthy to live in the company of Christians: they excommunicated him. They did not allow a usurer to serve as a witness in matters of law. They did not permit him to make a testament, and to bestow his goods by a will. When a usurer died, they would not allow him to be buried in places appointed for the burial of Christians, so highly did they dislike this unmerciful spoiling and deceiving of our brethren.

What speak I of the ancient fathers of the church? There was never any religion, nor sect, nor state, nor degree, nor profession of people that approved of it. Philosophers, Greeks, Latins, lawyers, divines, catholics, heretics, and all nations have always thought of a usurer as being just as dangerous as a thief. The very sense of nature proves it so. If the stones could speak, they would say as much.

Therefore our Savior says, “Do good, and lend, looking for nothing again” (Luke 6:35). He does not say, “Lend, and look not for your principal again,” but, “Look for no gain in it, look not to receive more than your own for the use and keeping of it.” Defraud not another: you would not want another to defraud

⁶ Ibid., 15.

⁷ John Chrysostom, *Homiliae in Genesin*, 41. For the Greek with a Latin translation, see *Patrologia Graeca (PG)* 53:374–86. For an English translation, see John Chrysostom, *Homilies on Genesis*, vol. 2, trans. Robert C. Hill, Fathers of the Church (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America, 2002), 400–417.

⁸ Ibid.

you. Do not oppress him, have pity on his wife and children: you would not have your wife and children undone. In Leviticus, God says, "If thy brother be impoverished, and fallen in decay.... Thou shalt take no usury of him, nor vantage, but thou shalt fear thy God, that thy brother may live with thee" (Lev. 25:35–36). God says, "You shall take no usury," and he has power and authority to command. In Exodus: "If thou lend money to my people, *that is*, to the poor with thee, thou shalt not be as an usurer unto him: ye shall not oppress him with usury" (Exod. 22:24–26). Show them mercy for my sake: they are my people. I can enrich him, I can impoverish you. I set up and throw down whom I will. When your neighbor needs your help, and seeks comfort at your hands, afflict him not as an enemy, oppress him not like a tyrant.

Ezekiel the prophet declares the wrath of God against usurers: He that "hath given forth upon usury, or hath taken increase, shall he live? [H]e shall not live," says the Lord (Ezek. 18:13). He shall perish in his own sin; his blood shall be upon his head. Therefore when he reckons the offenses of Jerusalem, and declares the heavy plagues that are prepared against that wicked city, he says, "Thou hast taken usury and the increase, and thou hast defrauded thy neighbors by extortion, and hast forgotten me, saith the Lord God. Behold, therefore I have smitten mine hands upon thy covetousness, that thou hast used" (Ezek. 22:12–13). You have done injury to my people, so that you might make your own gain. Your wrongs and oppressions done by usury rise up into heaven; therefore, I will gather you, and blow the fire of my wrath upon you, says the Lord.

Thus has God spoken, indeed the Lord of heaven and earth, who can scatter your gold in the wind, and blow it to nothing. Thus he speaks to you who hear and read his word, who knows that his will is that you should not loan your money in usury. You oppress, says he. Whom? Your brother, for whom Christ condescended to shed his blood. What brother? Him who was poor, who came to you with a need, seeking your help. How? Wickedly, obstinately, falsely, craftily, deceitfully, like a hypocrite, under the pretense of doing good. With what? With your money, your gold and silver, which God has given to you with which to relieve the poor and needy.

God has said you shall not take usury; and who are you, who despises the voice of the Lord? Whose words will you hear, who will not hear the word of God? Remember the words: you cannot forget them. You shall not take usury from your brother; he is poor and fallen in decay; you shall not be a usurer to him; you shall not oppress him with usury. It is cruelty and abomination in the

sight of God; therefore God will pour out his wrath, and consume the usurer; he shall not enter into the tabernacle of the Highest, he shall have no part in the kingdom of Christ and of God, but shall be cast into the outward darkness.

Some will say, "All kinds of usury are not forbidden. There may be cases where usury may agree with reason and equity." Here out of ingenious contrivance they say so much in order to paint a foul and ugly idol, and to conceal themselves while being manifestly and openly wicked. Whatever God said, yet this or that kind of usury, they say, which is done in this or that sort, is not forbidden. It profits the commonwealth; it relieves great numbers. The poor would otherwise perish; no man would lend them.

For the same reason there are some who defend theft and murder. They say there may be some case where it is lawful to kill or to steal; for God willed the Hebrews to rob the Egyptians, and Abraham to kill his own son Isaac. In these cases, their robbery and the killing of his son were lawful. So say they. Even so for the same reason do some of our countrymen maintain concubines, courtesans, and brothels, and stand in defense of open prostitutes. They are, they say, for the benefit of the country; they keep men from more dangerous inconvenience; take them away, it will be worse. Although God says, "There shall be no whore of the daughters of Israel, neither shall there be a whore keeper of the sons of Israel," (Deut. 23:17) yet these men say all kinds of whoredom are not forbidden. In certain cases, it is not wrong to allow it.

God said to Saul, "Go, and smite Amalek, and destroy ye all that pertaineth unto them, and have no compassion on them, but slay both man and woman, both infant and suckling, both ox, and sheep, both camel, and ass" (1 Sam. 15:3). So exact and precise was God's commandment. Saul marched forth, pursued his enemies; God assisted him, and gave him the victory. When he took Agag prisoner, and saw him to be a handsome tall gentleman, he had pity on him and spared his life. He did not destroy the best and most beautiful of the sheep, and oxen, and other cattle, although he knew well that God had commanded him to kill man and beast, every one without exception. Then came Samuel to him, and said, "O why have you not done as you were commanded" (cf. 1 Sam. 15:19)? Here let us note the wicked answer given by Saul in defense of his willful disobedience: "It would have been a great pity to have slain Agag, who was so handsome and tall a gentleman. I have taken him and kept him prisoner. And, if I should have destroyed this fine cattle, they would have come to nothing. It was better to save them for the feeding of my soldiers; and the best of them could

be offered in sacrifice." So he broke the commandment of God under pretense of doing honor to God.

Samuel said, "Hath the Lord as great pleasure in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as when the voice of the Lord is obeyed? [B]ehold, to obey is better than sacrifice" (1 Sam. 15:22). To disobey his holy will is to renounce and forsake him.

So we may say to the usurer: You have devised cases and colors to hide your shame, but what regard does God have for your cases? What does he care for your reasons? The Lord would have more pleasure, if, when you hear his voice, you would obey him. For what is your device against the counsel and ordinance of God? What bold presumption is it for a mortal man to control the commandments of the immortal God and to weigh his heavenly wisdom in the balance of human foolishness? When God says you shall not take usury, what creature of God are you that you can take usury? When God makes it unlawful, who are you, O man, who say it is lawful? This is a token of a desperate mind. It is found true in you what Paul said: "The desire of money is the root of all evil" (1 Tim. 6:10). You are so given over to the wicked mammon that you do not care to do the will of God.

Willfulness and presumption are signs that such men are impudent and past shame. He who offends out of ignorance may find mercy. They who out of pride and boldness go against the known truth and do that thing that they know is wrong and devise shifts to disguise that which all reason and learning of God and men, and nature itself have condemned, they have fallen into temptation and snares and into foolish desires that drown them in destruction.

God is the Lord. We are but servants; he has made us, and not we ourselves; we are but as clay in his hands; we cannot repeal the law that God has established; we must obey it. We may not do the things that seem good in our own eyes; they may deceive us; but we must do whatsoever God bids us to do and forsake to do those things that he forbids.

So much for understanding those who can bring so good reasons for so ill a matter.

Many defend their usury by that liberty which they think they have to use their goods in such a way as seems best for themselves and is most to their advantage. May I not, say they, do with my own goods what I want? They would not say this, if they were of him who has said by his holy apostle, "Let every man as he hath received the gift, minister the same one to another, as good disposers of the manifold grace of God" (1 Peter 4:10). It is the law of nature that no one abuse

the things that are his to the hurt and hindrance of another. May a man take his own dagger, and therewith commit murder? Or may a man take of his own fire, and uses it to burn his neighbor's house? He who said, "You shall not kill," also said, "You shall not steal; you shall not commit usury; you shall not defraud your brother in bargaining." He is not unrighteous, in that he would judge the murderer and would not condemn the usurer. In that day the usurer will know whose money it was with which he defrauded his brother. His money will not help him; he will have no means to deliver himself from the wrath of God; he and his money will perish together.

The usurer will say, "The poor man came to me; I was not in haste to seek him. He moaned his case to me. I took pity on him and lent him money. Since then he and all his have been better." Here you will see the great kindness and pitiful heart of this rich usurer. He opens his purse, gives of his goods, and helps the poor; and the poor is much eased by him. But, alas! What help is this? Just as much as giving someone a cup of cold water while suffering a fit of fever. No doubt he is refreshed and cooled, and for that present time much better. After a while, when his heaves resume, the heat increases; his heart pants, his pulse beats, his mouth is dry, his tongue burns; he is more terribly tormented than ever before. So well it fares with him who borrows money upon usury. He looks in his hand, and sees something; it is not his own; yet he is refreshed with it, and very much eased. The year passes, the day of payment arrives, the creditor demands money; but then, the heats, fits, and agonies begin to grow. Then must pot and pan trudge to redeem his body. Then he feels more cruel torments than ever before.

Thus does the gentle usurer help to relieve the poor in time of his necessity; as if a man would cure a sore finger by cutting off the arm; or as if he would cure the blemish of the eye-sight by pulling out the eyes; or as if he would quench thirst by giving poison to drink; or as if, to save one from drowning in a violent tempest, he would cast him out of the boat into the sea.

The scorpion embraces a man sweetly with his legs, but in the meantime strikes him deadly with his tail. His face looks amiable; his tail poisons. So a usurer appears attractive, and speaks good words, but at the end he destroys.

He who is bitten by a viper feels no hurt, but rather a gentle beating of his veins with some delight over which he rejoices. After this, he falls asleep; then the poison works, overcomes him, and kills him. Even so, he who borrows upon usury finds himself wonderfully helped, and rejoices; but he is stung, and has a deadly stroke. The poison will grow over him; he will die in sleep, and be undone

before he is aware. A usurer is as necessary to relieve the poor and needy as rust is to help iron, and as the moth is to help a garment: it eats him through from one side to another. Therefore says Ambrose, *Talia sunt vestra, divites, beneficia. Minus datis, et plus exigitis. Talis humanitas, ut spoliatis etiam dum subvenitis*: "Such are the benefits that you rich men bestow; you give out little and require much in return. Such is your kindness that you undo them whom you help."⁹

Thus is the ease that the poor find from borrowing money upon usury. They are bitten and stung and eaten up and devoured by it. Most people confess that this kind of usury is forbidden, because it does not relieve but spoils and consumes. May God take the liking of it out of all people's hearts! Then they will be better able to discern the other kinds of usury, which they still think allowable.

What if one rich man loans money to another? What if a merchant takes money to usury of another merchant, and both are the better, and both are gainers? Here there is no sting or biting. What shall we think of this? What if a thief or a pirate takes usury of another pirate or thief, and both are partakers of the gain, and both of them are helped? Let no one dislike the comparison. For, as I said before, a pirate or a thief is not so guilty like a usurer. Here, you say, he who lends is a gainer, and he who borrows is a gainer. It does good for both. If both are gainers, who is the loser? For usury never passes without working loss. Take this as a rule: there is never usury without loss.

Here I pray you to give me your attention, and consider what I say. A merchant takes from his neighbor 100 pounds, and must repay 110 pounds. He spends it all on grain, and buys for his 100 pounds 100 quarters of grain. He sends it to the market; the people need it and buy it. If he sold it for eight silver pennies a bushel, he might make up his 100 pounds and be a gainer, but unless he makes up 110 pounds to discharge his usury, he must be a loser and undone. Undone he will not be. He will rather undo many others. Therefore, he sets price at three shillings a bushel, and so makes his money, and pays the usurer, and saves himself, and is no loser. Who then pays the ten pounds? Who is the loser? Anyone can see. The poor people who buy the grain. They find it and feel it in every morsel they eat. Thus, if the merchant borrower is not hindered by the usurer, the people who buy his wares are plagued. Thus it is no hard matter to find that, no matter how usury is used, it is always dangerous

⁹ Ambrose, *De Tobia*, 3.

and deceives the people, and is therefore the destruction and overthrow of the commonwealth.

Nevertheless, he says, why should I not make money yield returns to me, as well as my wares? I loan my shop for a year, or two, or three, so many pieces of velvet, satin, taffeta, grograine, camelot, hollands, and so forth. For the use he will pay me by the year forty pounds, and in the end restore me my shop, so many pieces of velvet, and so forth, so long, so broad, of the same making, so good, so fine, as were the other. This, he says, is lawful; therefore, the other is lawful.

No, no, this is not lawful. It is not lawful for you to use your shop in this manner: it is usury; it is forbidden. He who takes the shop shall be a gainer: who shall be the loser then? They who buy the wares must also buy it at the more expensive price. We may not allow one ill thing by the allowance of another. He should rather say: Usury taken upon wares is not lawful; therefore, usury for bare money is less lawful. Jerome commenting on Ezekiel says, *Putant quidam usuram tantum esse in pecunia: quod praevidens scriptura divina omni rei aufert superabundantiam, ut plus non accipias quam dedisti*: “Some think there is no usury but in money. This the holy scriptures foresaw, and therefore takes away the increase or gains in any manner of thing, and requires that you receive no more than you gave.”¹⁰

When an occupier becomes old, his occupying is done. He has in stock 200 pounds; he comes to a young man, wise, of good credit, and of honest dealing, and says, “I give you this money freely; it will be yours forever, upon this condition, that you give me twenty marks a year during life.” This may be done; it is not usury. How? It is a plain gift with a condition. The principal is gone from me forever; I have no right to it; it is not mine. If I die tomorrow before I receive any penny, my executors cannot claim anything. In usury it is otherwise: the usurer requires his whole sum again, and even more for the use and occupying. Therefore this is a gift, and not usury.

Again, I loan my neighbor twenty pounds for a day. He has it freely and friendly without any usury. Yet I say to him, “Neighbor, you must repay tomorrow; for the next day after I must discharge an obligation; I stand bound for a payment. I have no more except this which you borrow. If I miss this payment, I forfeit five pounds. I ask you to be mindful of this.” The day comes, my neighbor does not come. I lack my money, and, because I lack it, I lose five pounds. He comes

¹⁰ Jerome, *In Ezechielem Prophetam*, 6.18. For the Latin, see *PL* 25:167b–182b.

afterward and offers me my own money. Then I say, "Neighbor, I have lost five pounds because of your negligence and slackness; I hope you will not allow me to be a loser for my kindness." This is interest; it is not usury.

Here, by the way, you may learn why it is called "interest," because he may say, *Interfuit mea habuisse*: "It was required of me; it stood upon me to have it," and now because of your default, I sustain loss. It is good to know the one from the other. This kind of dealing is interest, and not usury. In usury, I seek to be a gainer; in interest, I seek only not to be a loser: I seek neither gain nor profit. Here I may lawfully seek to be answered; it stands with equity, conscience, and good reason. This is interest, and not usury, that a man who requires no gain should seek to save himself from harm. Bear patiently with me if I go too long. My desire is that you would understand this whole matter and be able to know one thing from another, so that no one may excuse his usury with the name of interest, nor others be offended, thinking that all those who loan their money or in any way dispose of their stock are usurers.

A poor orphan left in his cradle has 100 pounds worth of stock. This stock may be put out to usury, and the usury is allowed. This is a deed of charity; it is not usury, as will be made clear. For, if the 100 pounds should lie still without increase, and be bestowed from year to year to the use of the child, the whole stock would be spent before the child should come of age. If the stock be put to work into an honest man's hands, something will grow to the relief of the orphan, and yet his stock remains whole. It is charity to relieve the infant who cannot relieve himself. The same is the case with regard to using the stock of a man who does not have his wits and is unable to dispose of his goods. Or if a merchant, because of sickness, handicap, or any other hindrance, is not able to follow his business, he desires another to oversee it, and to do with his stock as it were his own, only to maintain him with the increase from it. This is not usury. Why? Because he who takes the stock of the orphan, or of the madman, or of the diseased merchant, is not bound to answer all adventures and casualties that happen. As if to similar use, I invest in cattle, and they die without my fault, or stock in money or wares, and the wares are burned by fire, or the money is stolen without my fault, I am not bound to answer for the principal; therefore it is not usury.

Yet, they say further to defend usury. It is allowed in other countries such as France, Spain, Italy, Rome, and elsewhere, the laws permit it. What law permits it? I know it is not the law of God, for that law plainly forbids it. What speak I

of the law of God? The civil law condemns usury, the canon law condemns it, the temporal law condemns it, and the law of nature condemns it. How is that allowable by any law that by so many laws is condemned? Or how is he worthy to live among men that despise the authority of so many laws? Or what will you judge of that man who will be tempered and ordered by no law, neither by civil, nor by canon, nor by temporal, nor by law of nature, nor by law of men, nor by law of God? I say not, how can we think him to be a man of God? Can we think such a person is a man? It is the part and duty of a man to be ruled by law and reason.

It is everywhere, and therefore it is to be allowed. Too true, that it is common everywhere. Would God it were false! It undoes all the world. So the devil is everywhere, and allowed; so are the prostitutes allowed in France, Spain, Italy, Lombardy, Naples, Venice, and in Rome. Rome is called the holy city; the most holy one has his seat there, and yet he allows the prostitutes in Rome. So were the Canaanites among the people of God, and allowed. They were as goads in their sides and as thorns in their eyes. As these were allowed and as the prostitutes are permitted and as the devil is allowed, so also are usurers. Usurers do just as good, and no worse, than they. For they are the children of the devil; their houses are the shops wherein the devil works his mischief. They are Canaanites and enemies of God's people. They are goads in our sides and sharp thorns and prickles in our eyes. God grant that the law may discover them and the people abhor them, and that they may repent and loathe their wickedness!

Some others are bold to take authority for usury from Christ himself. He says, "The kingdom of heaven is as a man who, going into a strange country, called his servants, and entrusted his goods to them. He gave five talents to one, two to another, and one to another; and he said to them, 'Put it to use until I come back'" (cf. Matt. 25:14–15; Luke 19:12–13).¹¹ The first did so; the second accordingly. They increased his stock, and are commended for their usury. The third wrapped his talent in a napkin and kept it together. His master returned and reprimanded him, and said, "Wherefore then gavest not thou my money into the bank, that at my coming I might have required it with vantage?" (Luke 19:23). Therefore usury is allowed by the mouth of Christ. The first two are commended, not for

¹¹ It should be noted here that it was characteristic of Jewel often to conflate verses in biblical and patristic passages he cited.

anything else but for the gain they made by usury. The third is appraised and rebuked, not for theft or adultery, but because he did not invest his stock for usury.

What? And is usury allowed? And allowed by the witness of Christ? How can that be? For Christ, as we heard before, plainly forbids it. How is it then? What is the meaning of this parable? This is it. When Christ delivered his gospel to his disciples, he gave them charge to be diligent, and to multiply and increase the number of those who should believe. To this purpose he said,

Be as careful in this business for the glory of God and the salvation of your brethren, as worldly-wise men show themselves in seeking wicked mammon. Behold the usurers: they occupy their stock, and make it grow, and so out of five pounds they make ten, and out of ten they make twenty pounds, and so they become rich. So in the same way you are to deal with the gifts and knowledge that God has bestowed on you: give them to the exchangers, and put them out to usury, increase the Lord's stock. If they be diligent and faithful in the things of this world, how much more ought you to be so in heavenly things!

This therefore is the meaning: Covetous men and the children of this world are wise in their generation; you are the children of light, you, too, be wise, and do so likewise in your office and service as you see them do. So he says, "Behold the fowls of the heaven.... Learn how the Lilies of the field do grow" (Matt. 6:26, 28). What of this? The lilies are but grass: the fowls of the air are but birds. The mercy of God in his providence and care, wherein he gives us all things necessary, is made plain by the example of these, and thereby our distrust and excessive worry is reprov'd. So Christ speaks this parable concerning the usurer, that, as he is diligent in doing ill, so we should be careful and ready to do well.

Should usury therefore be lawful because Christ draws a comparison or makes an example of a usurer? If it were so, we should do many things otherwise as well. In the scriptures we are often required to take example of those things that are ill. In the sixteenth chapter of Luke, Christ bids his disciples to follow the example of the unfaithful steward, being provident and careful as he was. Does he therefore commend the falsehood of the steward? Or shall falsehood therefore be lawful? Saint Paul says, "The day of the Lord shall come, even as a thief in the night" (1 Thess. 5:2). Is theft therefore lawful? Saint James says, "The devils also believe ... and tremble" (James 2:19). Take example of the devils. They believe, but their bare, vain, and dead faith, in which they can do no good, cannot serve them. Even so shall not your faith, if it is dead and

void of all good works, save you. God himself, to reprove the ingratitude and forgetfulness of his people who did so often forsake him and followed Baal and Astaroth, said in this manner to them, “Hath any nation changed their gods . . . ?” (Jer. 2:11). Does he in this speech affirm that the idols of the heathen are gods? Because God takes an example of idolatry, shall idolatry therefore be lawful? He urges his servants to be as faithful and willing and ready to serve him, the God of heaven and earth, as the Gentiles were in service of their idols, the works of their own hands. As God did will the Israelites to take example of the idolaters, and as Christ bids his disciples to note the example of the false steward, and as James of the devils, is this parable an example of that which is commendable, that is, the diligence of the servants? Usury is no more allowed by this than idolatry, falsehood, and the devil is by the other. Some will say I have no trade for a livelihood: I must give my money to usury, or else I must beg. This is what I spoke about; this shows that despair and mistrust in the providence of God is the mother of usury. If this were cause why he should be a usurer, if this rightly serves as defense of his wickedness, why may not the thief, or the procurer, or the enchanter, by similar answer excuse themselves, and stand and defend their doings? Augustine therefore said, *Audent etiam foeneratores dicere, Non habeo aliud unde vivam*, and so forth:

The usurers are bold to say that they have no other trade whereby to live. So the thief will tell me, when I confront him with his theft. So will he say that breaks into other people’s houses. So will the procurer say that buys young maidens to use them for filthiness. So will the wicked enchanter who sells his sin. If we reprove any of all these, they will answer that this is their maintenance, and that they do not have any other way to live.¹²

Therefore Augustine said, *Quasi non hoc ipsum in illis maxime puniendum est, quia artem nequitiae delegerunt unde viverent, et inde se volunt pascere, unde offendant eum a quo omnes pascuntur*: “As if they were not therefore most worthy to be punished, because they have chosen a trade of wickedness to live by, and will maintain themselves by that thing with which they displease him by whom all are maintained.” How much better would it be with them, if they

¹² Augustine, *Enarrationes in Psalmos*, 128. For the Latin, see *CSEL* 95/3. For an English translation, see *NPNF*¹ 8:609–10.

did serve God truly in such place and calling wherein they might most set forth his glory, and do such things as should be profitable for themselves and others!

The servant of God knows there is no lack for those who fear him. He knows the Lord cares for him, and therefore casts his cares upon the Lord. He says as the prophet, "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want" (Ps. 23:1). "The Lord is the strength of my life, of whom shall I be afraid?" (Ps. 27:1). "I trusted in thee, O Lord: I said, Thou art my God. My times are in thine hand" (Ps. 31:14–15).

Thus far I thought it helpful to speak about the loathsome and foul trade of usury. I do not know what fruit will grow from it, and what it will work in your hearts. If it pleases God, it may do that good which I wish. I have done my duty; I call God for a record of my soul; I have not deceived you. I have spoken to you the truth. If I am deceived in this matter, O God, you have deceived me. Your word is plain. You say, "You shall take no usury." You say, "He who takes increase shall not live." What am I that I should hide the words of my God, or keep them from the hearing of his people? The learned old fathers have taught us it is no more lawful to take usury from our brother than it is to kill our brother. They who are of God hear this, and consider it, and have concern that they do not displease him. The wicked, who are in no way moved and do not care what God says but cast his word behind them; who have eyes, and see not, and ears, yet hear not, because they are filthy, they want to continue being filthy. Their greedy desire will increase to their confusion. As their money increases, so will they increase the heaps of their sins. Pardon me if I have been long or vehement. To those who are usurers, I ask no pardon.

I hear that there are certain people in this city who wallow wretchedly in this filthiness without repentance. I give them warning in the hearing of you all, and in the presence of God, that they forsake that cruel and detestable sin. If otherwise they continue therein, I will open their shame and denounce excommunication against them and abhor them as the plagues and monsters of the world in order that, if they are past all fear of God, they may yet repent and amend for worldly shame.

Tell me, you wretched imps of the world, you unkind creatures, who are past all sense and feeling of God, who knows the will of God, and does the contrary, how dare you come into the church? It is the church of that God who said, "You shall take no usury," and you know he has said this. How dare you read or hear the word of God? It is the word of that God that condemns usury; and you know he does condemn it: How dare you come into the company of your brethren?

Usury is the plague, destruction, and undoing of your brethren; and this you know; how dare you look upon your children? You cause the wrath of God to fall down from heaven upon them; your iniquity shall be punished in them to the third and fourth generation; you know this; how dare you look up into heaven? You have no dwelling there; you shall have no place in the tabernacle of the Highest; this you know. Because you rob the poor, deceive the simple, and eat up the widows' houses; therefore, your children will be naked and beg their bread; therefore, you and your riches will perish together.

Christ says, "The hour shall come, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear it shall live" (John 5:25). Zacchaeus was a tax collector, and was rich when he received Jesus as a guest in his house: "And Zacchaeus stood forth, and said unto the Lord, Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor: and if I have taken from any man by forged cavillation, I restore him fourfold. Then Jesus said to him, This day is salvation come unto this house" (Luke 19:8–9). May God thus make his word work in the hearts of usurers, that they may also receive Jesus, and forsake usury, and restore fourfold if they have deceived any, and therefore also receive salvation. Let us increase in that usury that is to the glory of God. He has given us knowledge and many excellent graces. Let us apply them; let us use that talent that he has left us. He will return: The day of his coming is at hand. He will require his talents; we must answer for them. Let us restore them with increase that our service may be approved, and we received into his tabernacle.

A Paper on Usury*

Question: Whether any money from an earlier agreement received by someone who gives money to a merchant as a loan is unlawful profit, although he does not seek profit unless from profit, and with agreement from the merchant?

John Jewel’s Response: On the contrary, the usurer also seeks gain from loss, and not only from profit.

A.B.: I think that the contract under consideration is lawful, for it disagrees with neither the first nor the second table.¹

John Jewel: I, on the contrary, plainly see that usury is prohibited by all laws—divine, human, civil, canonical, new, old, Christian, and pagan—and that it is approved by no law or human ordinance. Therefore, I do not consider this kind of contract lawful.

A.B.: For what pertains to the first table, I think that no commandment of God stands out by which people are prohibited to exercise this kind of contract in which one offers another money for his work, done in the manner of all honest trades. Neither do I think that a distinction must be made among material

* John Jewel, *The Works of John Jewel*, ed. John Ayre, 4 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1845–1850), 4:1293–98. Translated by André A. Gazal.

¹ The reference here is to the Decalogue, or the Ten Commandments, which is commonly understood to be divided into two parts, or “tables.”

things that are rented, such as a field, a house, or lastly money that happens to be used by a merchant. For indeed, it seems to me, that diversity of material things does not make the nature of the contract different: Even lawyers finely distinguish among certain and indeed just cases, one of which is renting, whether as a partnership or a loan.

John Jewel: It was strange (indeed it seems so to me) to speak here concerning the first table. For it contains so much about religion and the worship of God; however, usury properly refers to one's neighbor. A usurer, when he openly injures a brother, knowingly and consciously sins against the second table. Yet he also sins openly against the first, that is, against God, the author of both tables. I marvel that so learned a man, when he wants to prove usury, does not wish to bring support (for I do not say that it is not possible) from the Holy Scriptures, especially when he cannot be ignorant that there are many today who deem it everywhere to be condemned in all the Scriptures. Human commands, howsoever wise, cannot possess the authority of the word of God. However, I would not think that those men, who promised that they would bend neither to the left nor to the right hand, but nevertheless only hold fast and follow what God commanded, would recall certain conjectural and obscure collections for instruction in the Christian life.

A.B.: As it belongs to the second table, with respect to which these things are properly regarded, it seems to me that this kind of contract in no way injures anyone, but also greatly helps human society if it is defined by certain limits concerning which I will speak later.

John Jewel: Otherwise can always be seen, not only by Christians, but also pagans. The ancient Romans, not to mention others, were no less horrified by usury than by murder or theft. "Our ancestors," said Marcus Cato concerning rural matters, "condemned the thief doubly, and the usurer four times."² When he was asked what it was to commit usury, he answered, "What is it to kill a person?"³ If the wise had thought that this contract would have helped human society so

² Marcus Cato, *De Agricultura*, prologue 1. For the Latin text with English translation, see *Cato and Varro: On Agriculture*, Loeb Classics Library (Bury St. Edmunds: St. Edmundsbury Press, 1934), 2–3.

³ As related by Marcus Tullius Cicero, *De Officiis*, 2.89. For the Latin text with English translation, see Cicero, *De Officiis: With An English Translation*, trans. Walter Miller (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1913), 264–67.

much, then certainly they would have not omitted it in their writings of the laws and ordinances of republics by reason of such fitting private and public utility, for human society was always their highest concern.

A.B.: Those things that are said in the word of God against usurers do not apply in this instance. Usury (which is named from the Hebrew *nešek*, that is, "biting," and is condemned by the Word of God) only then is committed when money is given to another as a loan, so that I may demand also interest and anything else above the interest allowable by law. To be sure, what we propose is not that money be given as a personal loan, but that a partnership be initiated in which one party brings money to the business to be done to improve his income, and the other, to be sure, brings his work for common profit.

John Jewel: Today there are many men who are not evil, and who think that every kind of usury is absolutely condemned by the word of God. Certainly David thus preaches that a good man is one "who does not give his money for usury,"⁴ and not only not to the poor, but not at all. Christ said universally, "Give a loan, henceforth, expecting nothing."⁵ If these and many other passages that are cited from the word of God do not pertain to this instance, why do you not then from that same word of God bring forth those passages for usury that do pertain to this case? Why do you not make plain from the Scriptures that it is thus lawful to make an agreement with a merchant or a rich person to demand your money with usury? Some kinds of usury are harsher, while other types are milder. A rich merchant who makes profit from money to be loaned is harmed less than a poor person who is consumed by usuries and cannot repay the money. I, indeed, hope that I can be taught by his passage that biting is part of every kind of usury, even the most moderate. The definition that he brings forth rightly agrees, for thus a merchant gives money to another merchant as a loan, so that whatever occurs, whether you are profitable or you suffer loss by whatever law or injury, it may be regained with usury.

A.B.: This, that is, to injure a brother for the sake of money, which I condemn with you to help the weak, is plainly repugnant to Christian love, and, for this reason, it is a kind of great cruelty; from such all Christians must separate.

John Jewel: It must be fought with the Scriptures, not by those reasons that prove nothing, for is this that logic: It is not lawful to demand usury from the

⁴ Psalm 15:5.

⁵ Luke 6:35.

poor; therefore, is it lawful to demand from the rich? By the same manner, it is possible to say: It is not lawful to afflict the poor in judgment; therefore, it is lawful to afflict the rich. Even school boys know that an affirmative cannot be rightly concluded from a negative.

A.B.: This, on the contrary, truly agrees absolutely with love. Who is harmed by this kind of contract? The commonwealth suffers no injury, but on the contrary, it is even helped when it is present in a commonwealth to support an honest merchant, rather than money that is spent on leisure.

John Jewel: Who, you say, is harmed? I answer, the commonwealth. A merchant, who receives money that is loaned at interest, is thought to buy his own wages at so much more, and the people are thought to pay more for goods. Chrysostom rightly said that the usurer was the common enemy of all.⁶ Moreover, why are there today so many merchants who are indebted, unless it is that young men, while they try to prepare to do business, are involved and also impeded by usury before they are able to rise? To be sure, once those merchants begin to fall, their creditors often seize many other good people with them. If this is to help the commonwealth, I indeed do not see what it would be to harm it. Lawyers indeed say that in the commonwealth, someone makes interest, not so that he may engage in the trade of usury, but that he may use his business rightly; that is, as I interpret, honestly and legitimately.

A.B.: He who uses money truly is one who also cannot be overcome by it when part of the profit returns to him.

John Jewel: I confess that it returns to him sometimes; but by this contract, as I said, the prices of things increase immensely, and the people are taken hold upon and oppressed. Moreover, the laws ought not to serve the desires of one or a few greedy merchants but protect all of the people.

A.B.: Finally, he that gathers money, which someone else should throw away on leisure and slowly exhaust, is for this reason wealthier, and hence can help brothers more sufficiently.

John Jewel: Certainly, whatever happens either to the debtor or the commonwealth, only the usurer is always more wealthy, but for iniquitous and foul reasons; that they may be so accustomed, they do business from pandering or

⁶ The Parker Society edition includes a series of references to Chrysostom, and concludes, "Chrysostom in all these places strongly condemns usury; though the exact expression of the text does not occur."

robbery. It is ridiculous and also harsh to oppress the many in order to help one, for, regarding what is added, that a rich usurer is more fit to help brothers, there is no kind of greedy, stingy, defiled person less inclined toward either supporting brothers or helping the commonwealth.

A.B.: On the contrary, some among us are inclined to object, that he who uses money harms the commonwealth and brings injury to himself and also even thus rewards unconcerned and careless men from whose snoring their wealth increases, which proves our point.

John Jewel: The matter speaks for itself from both sides. This accusation is old, public, and most true.

A.B.: They say that it harms the commonwealth because it is thought that the merchant pays more dearly for his own income so that he may seek profit for himself and another. I answer, that a cure must be sought for this evil, and also there are chiefly two matters that must be taken care of, as far as they can be taken. Certainly our dealings should not be with a dishonest person; second, we would not stipulate a payment of money not greater than equitable, but such that both parties could probably agree to an honest part of the profit.

John Jewel: Beautiful, but who would inquire? Where, when, by what contract, and in the presence of whom? This is actually what one would want to ask, which it is not possible to discover. For it is not placed in your hand how upright the man with whom you would contract is.

For infinite are the subterfuges in the souls of human beings. Concerning that really moderate payment, I do not know how it could ever come together.

A.B.: Henceforth, if this contract is condemned because of this inconvenience, why then is not also the loan rejected? Precisely the same inconvenience follows if I would rent a field or a house to anyone who is more evil, or for a price that is more than would be fair.

John Jewel: On the contrary, there is much difference. It is always lawful to rent, but it is not lawful to engage in usury. One is able to rent honestly, but one cannot engage in usury honestly. Because iniquitous renting is rightly condemned, iniquitous loaning is rightly condemned. Usury is iniquitous lending. Additionally, usury should not be compared with lending in general but with such iniquitous lending. All iniquitous lending must be condemned; therefore, all usury must be condemned. It is added, "If I would rent a field to anyone who is more evil." I do not understand what this is. For the wickedness in this place is not in the contractor who bears the injury, but in the iniquitous contracting

that brings injury; neither do we censure him who receives money as a loan with interest, but, rather, the usurer who gives money at interest.

A.B.: Next, they truly say that injury is done in two ways in business. First, because one would receive as profit that which is from the work of another. Second, because the agreement would be for fixed money in every occurrence, even when the occurrences are unknown to the merchant, and the risk ought to be shared in a partnership, otherwise it cannot be seen as a lawful agreement in which also a common liar does not bear punishment.

John Jewel: Both cases are correct.

A.B.: I answer thus regarding the first, that it is not any more iniquitous that I should receive profit from another's work than that that one should become wealthier from another's money. However, the best contract of this sort is one that is equitable, to the extent that the material of one grants work for another, in which then one helps another so that there is rightly common profit.

John Jewel: If it were so, it would be a partnership, not usury. Moreover, it would be fair and reasonable for both the creditor and debtor to be subject to the same risk. It is not enough that material be granted by one for profit to produce work by another unless it be in the same manner by both. However, now one often loses work and effort, while another is secure and certain concerning not only his share but also his profit. Therefore, since both common risk and common profit are not proposed, as often is, then one does not help another, but oppresses him, and in this best contract there is iniquity.

A.B.: Indeed I know that it can be objected, as Aristotle said, that it was contrary to nature that money can produce money,⁷ and that it can also produce a debtor, as lawyers say, not by using money that is not his, but his own, since it is on loan, which is among those things that exist in weight, number, or measure that are said to be loaned, for what is mine becomes yours. I do not marvel at these subtleties, which I trust I can easily refute since I did not say that this contract is a loan but a kind of partnership in which one brings the material of money, for certainly it is from material that money comes and another truly brings work;

⁷ Aristotle, *Politics*, 1.10. For the Greek, see *Politics of Aristotle*, ed. W. L. Newman, vol. 2, *Politics of Aristotle: With an Introduction, Two Prefatory Essays and Notes Critical and Explanatory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010 [1887]). For an English translation, see *The Basic Works of Aristotle*, ed. Richard McKeon (New York: Random House, 1941), 1127–1324.

and also the rule of love demands that compensation be common and reciprocal for common benefit.

John Jewel: It is a wonder that a Christian man does not see what a pagan could see imbued only with the light of nature. Neither is the authority of Aristotle so trivial that we can reject him so lightly and with such contempt as though he followed inane subtleties. This, moreover, is the force of the reasoning that was used by Aristotle that can hardly be so easily refuted. For as things are born from one another, so things can reproduce others of the same kind, as cows, for example reproduce cows, and goats, goats; however, there are inactive and senseless things which do not procreate; for instance, a rock does not give birth to a rock because in it there is no power to procreate anything. Therefore, a coin is no more able to reproduce a coin than a table can reproduce a table or a feather, a feather. Moreover, that which pertains to the name *loan* may be easily reproached by lawyers, and thus this thing would be easily resolved. Thus it must be not a loan with usury but some kind of partnership. This was not in dispute; rather, this was asked: Is it lawful to form this kind of partnership? Was this finally argued: Usury among merchants or rich people is not a loan; therefore, usury among merchants or rich people is not unlawful? Once again, for the third time, you foist in "the material of money from one, the work by the other." Who can be ignorant of this? Either it is done in a manner very much appropriate, or sometimes, as is usual, it is certainly not done in the most despicable agreements. It was not asked in this place what may be done, but what is lawful. The rule of love, you say, prescribes that compensation be common and reciprocal for the common benefit. Correct. For usurers are indeed led by love, and not avarice. What if the debtor gains nothing, or rather, what if, as is commonly the case, he loses everything? What reciprocal compensation does the rule of love then establish?

A.B.: I answer as I did before. Although events are uncertain to merchants, nevertheless, profit is rather more rightly presumed than loss; when merchants are trained in their trade, they grant minimal probability in their loss.

John Jewel: Profit is presumed rather than loss perhaps because in our heart we are inclined to hope for what is well. Nevertheless, business is always uncertain and dangerous and sometimes ruled more by chance than prudence. Wherefore since an event is uncertain, and that partnership is of common money and work, it is fair, indeed in my opinion, that the risk be common. Indeed that one undergoes all the risks and loses his business, and even from the loss must repay the money with usury, while another sits in the leisure of his house and whatever happens he is safe concerning both his portion and profit is iniquitous.

A.B.: Next, these kinds of partnerships must be distinguished from that in which both bring matter and work, so that merchants institute a partnership; for then each equally takes heed for himself.

John Jewel: A partnership must be distinguished from that. A partnership is honest; the other is always base. Truly there is no certain reason strong enough. What makes caution minimize injury? Therefore, it can be made so that one may be aware of both the foul and equitable thing in it. Certainly not even the Jews today can know this kind of partnership among themselves, so that merchants or rich people can exact usury from the rich.⁸

A.B.: Truly in this kind of partnership diversity occurs. For one has money in his power; another, content with a schedule of obligations, follows the good faith of the other.

John Jewel: This is indeed some answer, but it does not satisfy. What if a creditor does not so much follow the faith of the debtor but also wants his fields and estates to be obligated to him, but there is no equal guarantee for the debtor, and the creditor still receives his money?

A.B.: Therefore since there would be a better guarantee than that for those many, I also say that such a stipulation be allowed, so that no mention is made of common loss, that truly he would be restrained by this like a bridle, so that he would not audaciously pour out money not his own, but that as it were, his own perishable things would be used sparingly for one risk.

John Jewel: On the contrary, I said that both are equally guaranteed; also it is fair in the stipulation, if something occurs, mention should be made of common loss. Moreover it was useless here to speak about the pouring out of money: Now this discussion is not about spendthrifts, but usurers. Certainly in this matter one

⁸ The association of Jews with usury has historically been an occasion for anti-Semitic discrimination. In the medieval and early modern eras, this association was rooted in some concrete historical contexts. These realities were in place largely because of the posture of exclusion taken by the broader Christian society. As Derek Penslar writes, "Precisely because Jews were excluded from the merchant guilds, as well as most crafts and large-scale agriculture, they concentrated in low-status forms of trade such as dealing in secondhand goods, peddling, pawnbroking, and, most significant, moneylending." See Penslar, *Shylock's Children: Economics and Jewish Identity in Modern Europe* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 16.

thing is allowed in controversy: Since guarantee should be the same for both, why ought it not be proposed that the same danger be for both?

A.B.: Nevertheless, still it behooves a Christian, then, both in all other kinds of obligations and in this contract, to thus use his own law so that when he decides that another happened to cause a loss through no fault of his own, he would be prepared also from his equal and good self preferably to bear the loss of his portion than to do harsher things to the brother than Christian love would bear.

John Jewel: The Christian is to live in this manner; moreover, the Christian is to contract in this manner: for contracts and agreements are, so to speak, certain chains on human life. If a debtor, you say, suffered loss through no fault of his own, the creditor also ought to bear the loss of his portion. What if he, indeed, suffered no loss but from other causes either made little or no profit, so that something called usury could be taken from him? What then would Christian moderation add to this?

A.B.: To whom this does not seem a marvel, I say that the reason for a loan is similar, which no one can censure. For example, a brother gets up and comes to me asking for money; he asks because I am wealthier, but I nevertheless stipulate, in good faith, a certain time for repayment, which he accepts. Who condemns this stipulation? Nevertheless, it happens that debtors cannot, especially at the time prescribed, pay the loan, and this also without any fault.

John Jewel: There is much difference between usury and a loan. God commanded to give a loan, but prohibited usury; a loan was conjoined with love, while usury was joined to avarice. What kind of argument is this? You say, he is able to bear that another cannot present what he promised especially in a loan or lease; therefore, it is lawful to exercise usury. This reason hardly seems to cohere. For it is similar and dissimilar and, in my judgment, does not prove much.

A.B.: Then this same misfortune also occurs; just as it often happens in the leasing of a field and all other contracts for use, that someone who promised without exception, cannot present payment. Therefore, the same rule prevails among all, that a Christian deal Christianly with his neighbor, and the stipulation is not for this reason condemned.

John Jewel: It is a pious and Christian rule that functions well among good men; indeed usury does not fit exactly with this rule. It still has not been clearly proven that a usurer can be a good man, or that it is more lawful for a Christian to exact usury piously than to steal piously. He who said, "You shall not steal," is the same one who said, "You shall not commit usury."

A.B.: With these rules in place, as far as I am concerned, this contract is circumscribed as though to these limits.

John Jewel: You cannot control by moderating a thing that in itself does not have any moderation. How much better it is to take away all usury altogether, than to wish to circumscribe to the limit what is infinitely evil.

A.B.: I think that the first thing that must be diligently considered is that we desire to loan money neither out of greed nor desire for leisure but either to put it to work, or to gather it for improving estates.

John Jewel: Those are not by the rule of law but of injury. Certainly on the whole we find that we are now taught that usury is committed not for the sake of avarice, but piety, and that by doing nothing one seeks not luxury, but work.

A.B.: Second, it must be taken heed, that we would not in this manner act to support the poverty of the poor person less than is appropriate, so that if one has something that he commits to another, it would thus not be adequate to help the brother.

John Jewel: Ridiculous; for the more you put forth in usury, that much more is returned to you from which you help the brother.

A.B.: Third, I think that we should seek a merchant who is not as rich as possible but as honest as possible and who will make an honest transaction.

John Jewel: What is this to the matter? For integrity is not asked in usury, but money; we do not understand here the merchant who receives money as committing usury but the usurer who gives it.

A.B.: Fourth, I think that the payment of money must be moderated, so that, in addition to the judgment and decision of the merchants themselves and good people, public laws are not violated, nor the occasion for a stumbling block be shown in any just cause.

John Jewel: Who finally describes for us that golden mean so that we may receive neither more than is necessary nor less? If it is lawful to demand usury of a twelfth part [of the principal], why would a fourth part not be lawful? If a fourth part, why would a third not be lawful? If a third, why not half? If those, why not even a hundred percent? Who would establish those limits for us from which it would not be lawful to depart at any point? Why, if this kind of rule is thus able to trace a straight line, did it not trace it? Why did it not determine for us that this is lawful and that is unlawful? What reason can one give why not God himself nor any commonwealth nor any good man thus regulated those payments of usury so that it could be understood what and how much is lawful for a

merchant to demand from a merchant in the name of usury? It is absurd that when you want to reject all for a mean, to leave it in the middle, and define no limits.

A.B.: Fifth, it must be diligently observed that we must use our law, both equally and for good, just as Christian love commands.

John Jewel: This to me seems to be the same as what follows. There is indeed none other that is equal or good than the will of a good man joined with Christian love. Christian love does not lend money at interest, nor does it seek the things that are its own, but those things that are Jesus Christ's.