CHEATING

THE ORIGIN, NATURE, IMPORTANCE
AND IMPROVEMENT
OF BUSINESS AND OTHER ETHICS

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ANNEX II / A CHRISTIAN VIEW ON AVARICE AND THE SPIRIT OF POVERTY
(TRANSLATED FROM AN 18TH CENTURY FRENCH TEXT)

Anonymous author. 1773. Abrégé des principes de morale et des règles de conduite qu'un prêtre doit suivre pour bien administrer les sacrements ; par un ecclésiastique [Summary of moral principles and rules of conduct which a priest should follow to properly administer the sacraments: by a churchman.]. New Edition reviewed, edited and updated by the author. J. Felix Faulcon, Imprimeur de Monseigneur l'Evêque et du Clergé, Poitiers [J. Felix Faulcon, Printer of His Excellency the Bishop and of the Clergy, Poitiers].

On Avarice and the Spirit of Poverty

On Avarice

1. Q. What is greed (avarice)?
   A. It is the unrestrained love of material riches.

2. Q. What are its characteristics and effects?
   A. (1) Misleading others in order to enrich oneself, by breaking a promise or by uncovering secrets; (2) lying and betraying one's oath for the same purpose; (3) being unjust and making usurious profits in sales and contracts; (4) being too anxious about the thought of gaining wealth or losing it; (5) being a skinflint when providing minimum support to one's family, when paying one's workers and servants, etc., even more stingy when giving to beggars; (6) neglecting prayers and acts of piety to satisfy one's cupidity; (7) become very angry when one loses wealth, or feeling excessive joy in receiving and accumulating more wealth, etc.

3. Q. When is greed a mortal sin?
   A. Misers, said Saint Paul, shall not enter God's realm; avarice is itself a mortal sin, (1) when one binds one's heart to material goods until one's heart is overwhelmed by such love; (2) when, in order to accumulate material riches, one is obviously unjust, or fails to keep one's word, or performs usurious contracts or deals; (3) when, to reach the same aim, one fails to honor one's charitable obligations, or fails to provide basic necessities to one's inferiors or workers; (4) when one's is ready to commit a deadly sin to secure more wealth; (5) when, through abject attachment to material goods, one neglects prayers, Sacraments, divine offices and exercises of piety.

4. Q. What is the cure?
A. It consists in considering (1) the emptiness of these material goods one cherishes; (2) the unhappiness of a greedy heart; (3) the sad endings of the wealthy and of Judas; (4) the joy of Heaven, the example of Jesus Christ; the cure is again in prayer, charity, and generous willingness to give what is needed by one's workers, family, etc.
On the Spirit of Poverty

1. Q. Is the Spirit of Poverty necessary for all Christians?
   
   A. It is the disengagement of one's heart from wealth, except to the extent necessary to perform God's designs and for our needs, without loving them for themselves, beati pauperes spiritu.

2. Q. What are the advantages of this spirit of poverty?
   
   A. (1) It is the absence of the sins of avarice, and of those arising from cupididy, it means having a free heart; the wicked Rich are dominated and perverted by the love of material riches; because when one is poor in virtue, one only desires them as a means of redemption; as such, under submission to God's will, then their acquisition, their possession, their retention does not alter the soul in any manner; one cannot bear to lose them, if not without some pain, or at least without complaints and anxiety.

   (2) One makes a saintly use of material riches if one yearns only for Heaven; and thus, God fills in the capacity of a heart which, thinking itself as a traveler on earth, only desires reaching heaven, and does not seek to possess wealth in heaven.

   (3) One is even assured of enough wealth because God gives to the faithful soul what is needed according to his promise.

   (4) One lives in peace without too much solicitude, and one dies with the same peace of the soul, because one is no longer attached to earthly goods.

3. Q. What means can one use to retain this spirit of poverty?
   
   A. (1) The means are those which have been assigned to destroy avarice; (2) it means considering oneself as a traveler on earth; and that not many material goods are needed to live, natura paucis contenta; (3) it means following the examples of Jesus Christ and those of the Saints; and the state we are reduced to by death; (4) it means that our heart being made for God, it would be degrading it and committing a real injustice, and a sort of idolatry to attach oneself to earthly goods, the acquisition and possession of which means so much worry and work, and that the loss of them means such pain, without mentioning the innumerable sins which usually accompany wealth; (5) it means considering that they cannot make us better, and that when one is rich, one is tempted by idleness, luxury, and excesses; (6) it means that one must pray often to our Lord to inspire in us a true disdain for all earthly goods, and a fervent desire to reach heaven; (7) it means that one must follow faithfully God's plans, make just use of the
goods he gives us, and consider ourselves as the depository of these goods for which we will have to give a strict account on the day of our death.

[TRANSLATED BY WALLACE R. BAKER]
Annexe II (continued) / Sur l'avarice et l'esprit de pauvreté (18th century French text)

3. Les avares...