

Consilium XI

Translated by Patricia Coyne

Argument

The most illustrious and respected Doctor Alexander Buccabella, a most worthy auditor of the Rota Romana, was allotted from birth a very feeble nature and for this reason he lives the life of an invalid without any respite, harassed by many recurring illnesses so that he is compelled to employ many precautions in the matter of food. For indeed, at the slightest instance of less than desirable food or drink he falls straightway into pains of the stomach, into griping in his bowels, into a weakness of body and loss of strength and into other undeniable symptoms which make his life a bitter one. And yet he is most devoted to his Christian duty; not willingly is he persuaded that he be allowed to eat meat and similar foods on days on which we are not permitted to eat these foods by the Catholic Church, for he would wish, in so far as he is able, to obey the precepts of this same Holy Church on the days proclaimed. Therefore, he asks whether the use of fish and eggs and abstinence from the use of meats can so perceptibly injure his health that he is constrained always to make use of meats.

Summary

1. Faults of the foods which we employ on days of fasting.
2. Eggs turn themselves into ill humours if they encounter a stomach full of ill humours.
3. Weak bodies are harmed by even the smallest errors in nourishment.
4. One may not weaken the body with fasting into clear damage to health.

Consilium XI

To reach a decision in this case, in the first place the nature of this most illustrious man and the conditions by which he is troubled must be considered. Next must be considered those parts of his body which particularly serve his constitution by the digestion of food. Thirdly we must consider the nature of the foods which we are bound to use when it is not permissible to eat meat. And with respect to the first point, it is well known that the most illustrious man is very feeble in nature because of the weakness of his natural heat and the strength of his preternatural heat; because of this strength, with the better emissions having been easily dissipated, the natural heat becomes weaker every day. And hence it follows that he easily suffers harm from the slightest cause whatsoever and so he always leads a sickly life, as mentioned before, a life tormented by many abnormal conditions and especially troubled by abdominal problems; from which problems he is accustomed to endure a thousand symptoms which he must suffer very grievously.

With respect to the second point, it can easily be seen from what has been said that this most illustrious man has been allotted internal organs which are all naturally extremely weak, so that his organs which are barely sufficient for the normal digestion of any nourishment, foods and liquids, are in such a condition that they easily cause overloading of the stomach and of the liver and of the Meseraic veins and much more stubborn obstructions of the spleen; and in fact it becomes subject to swellings which can be detected just by touch or from a very copious and constant flatulence; wherefore, in addition to the myriad of symptoms already mentioned which accompany

Consilium XI

a predisposition toward stomach disorders, his problems very easily provoke chronic colic and are accustomed to keep him in constant agony

1. With respect to the third point, it is very well known that all the foods we use on fast days and on other days on which we abstain from meat according to the precept of the Holy Church, if we except eggs, are either cold and moist and thus easily corruptible, or too hot, or cause gas or generate watery excrement; and especially there are those foods which are heavy and melancholic, some also hard to digest and some easily becoming rotten and, in short, each and every one very prone to cause diarrhea and flatulence. 2. Moreover, there is no doubt that eggs, considered on their own, offer excellent food and are not inherently harmful when they encounter a healthy stomach and one not filled with evil humours; at other times, if eggs encounter a stomach poorly disposed and filled with evil humours, or if they should have some natural contrariety with the stomach itself, it is far from the case that they supply good nourishment, so that rather they turn into very evil and detestable humours, because, moreover, they may thus at the same time have a contrariety to nature: for it is certain and witnessed in *Gal. lib. 1. de loc. aff. cap. 2.* that some people digest eggs poorly and turn them into very harmful nourishment.

3. Since matters stand thus, it must be said with absolute certainty that the most illustrious man, endowed with such a nature and suffering the aforementioned symptoms, cannot sustain life with any other foods but excellent meats and for that reason he can suffer marked and notable harm from the consumption of any other

Consilium XI

foods, even for a single day, since weak bodies are harmed even by the smallest errors in nourishment. Gal. *lib. 5. de sanit. tuen. cap. 4.* and even a single abstention from meat and the consumption of fish or of other similar foods would be enough to cause significant harm: for, as his daily experience has taught him, this illustrious man instantly would be afflicted in his stomach and his body would be filled with gas, his strength significantly impaired, whence his nature could succumb easily and so from some burgeoning sickness meriting notice he would decline into a sure crisis of health. So that this might not happen he is compelled on Fridays and Sundays as on any other days to eat only excellent meats that he may live a healthier life and be able to freely devote his time to good works; **4.** for we are absolutely forbidden *pecc. Non mediocriter de consecr. dist. 5. in 3. par. decret.* to burden the body with fasting when this develops into a notable prejudice to health, since disease of the body usually prevents us from carrying out better works than fasting is considered to be.