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He ought to attend to two things in himself, namely, his dignity lest he become worthless, and his weakness lest he become proud. The dignity of man is evident in four things.

First, in creation because he was made to the image of God and this binds him to the world lest anywhere, he cast the image of God in the mud, Gen. [1:27]: “God created man to his own image.” And, alas, because in the Psal. [48:13]: “Man when he was in honor did not understand,” etc.

Second, in restoration because he was redeemed by the blood of Christ and this binds him to the humility of obedience. For a thing bought belongs to the buyer, and not his own. Therefore, he ought to be subject to the buyer, Rom. 6[:6]: “Our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin may be destroyed.” And Rom. 5[:18]: “As by the offence of one, unto all men to condemnation,” etc. Psal. [8:5]: “What is man that you are mindful of him?” But, alas, because Eccli. 9[:14-15]: “A little city, and few men in it: there came against it a great king, and invested it, and built bulwarks round about it,” and it follows, “there was found in it a man … wise, and he delivered the city … and no man afterward remembered that poor man.”

Third, in justification and this binds man to love, just as the sick man loves the physician healing even one member. Therefore, God is to be loved more who heals the whole, Psal. [102:13]: “As a father has compassion on his children, so has the Lord compassion on them that fear him.” Gen. 6[:3]: “My spirit shall not remain,” that is, my indignation, “in man … because he is flesh.” But, alas, because [Psal. 13:2]: “The Lord hath looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if,” etc.

¶ Fourth, in beatification because no other corporal creature is capable of beatitude, [1] Tim. 2[:4]: “God will have all men to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth.” And this binds him to perseverance of good work, for one who can and does not, will not merit, Job 14[:14]: “Shall man that is dead, think you, live again?” Eccli. 27[:12]: “A holy man continues in wisdom as the sun.” But, alas, because “the holy man is perished out of the earth, and there is none upright among men,” Mich. 7[:2].

¶ Again, the dignity of man is evident in this that God placed him in the sweet light, namely, as the light of the senses relates to the body, the light of the intellect relates to the soul.

About which see below, chapter [212] Light (*Lux*).

Again, the fragility of man appears in four ways: in nature, in fault, in ignorance, in wretchedness. In nature certainly in another four ways. First, on the part of the body because when the other creatures are made of purer elements, man however from mud, Gen. 2[:7]: “God formed man of the slime of the earth.” Job [30:19]: “I am compared to dirt and am likened to embers and ashes.” Mud is made of water and dust and both remaining, but ashes are made of wood and fire and both lacking. Therefore, what pride in mud or glory in ashes.[[1]](#endnote-1)

Where Bernard says,[[2]](#endnote-2) what pride is there, O man, son of the earth, father of worms, brother of moles; your strength is infirmity, your riches are poverty. If therefore,[[3]](#endnote-3) you flourish in youth, if you flower in prosperity, if you gleam in beauty, if you thrive in wisdom, if you shine in eloquence; youth is proscribed by old age, prosperity is driven out by adversity, fever expels beauty, oblivion takes away wisdom, death ends eloquence. If therefore you consider, O man, what comes out of your bowels, will you not find that you are viler than a dung-heap? Therefore, we will be humbled because we are poor, because we are vile, because we are fragile, because we are apt for falling, weakened for resisting. See what crops and trees produce of themselves because they are flowers and leaves, but you slime and fleas, they oil and balsam, you indeed dung and spit. Why therefore do you widen your hems?

Again, Gregory,[[4]](#endnote-4) the mind of a just man is touched by grief if he considered where he was, because he was in sin; where he is, because he is in misery; where he is not, because he is not in glory; where he will be, because he will be in fearful judgment. The consideration of these ties man to humility, just like a peacock[[5]](#endnote-5) when he looks at his feet puts down his tail, Eccli. 17[:31]: “All men are earth and ashes.”

Second, the fragility of man is evident in nature on the part of the soul, because he is strong to sin, and this binds him to caution. So, bees[[6]](#endnote-6) flying through the wind take a little pebble in their feet lest they be blown away by the wind. Eve did not have this when she consented to the devil, Eccli. 15[:14]: “God made man from the beginning and left him in the hand of his own counsel.” But, alas, because “God made man right, and he has entangled himself with an infinity of questions,” Eccle. 7[:30].

Third, on the part of the agreement, because he is strong for dying, and this binds him to timorousness. So, a dog when he sees a stick, a bird when he sees the snare is in fear, Gen 2[:17]: “In what day so ever you shall eat of it, you shall die the death.” But, alas, because through sin we have the potential of dying indeed, Rom. [5:12]: “Wherefore … by one man” [Wis. 2:24] “death came into the world.”

¶ Fourth, on the part of all of these, because he is powerless after the fall to be restored through himself, and this binds him to frequent prayer, Psal. [77:39]: “A wind that goes and returns not.”

Again, in the state of fault the fourfold fragility of man is evident because he was born in original sin, just as a grain with its husk, a nut with its shell, Job 15[:14]: “What is man that he should be without spot.” Unclean, Psal. [7:15] behold we are conceived unjustly. Second, because he is overwhelmed by venial sin, just as a ship by the waves. The flesh by the worms, Eccle. 7[:21]: “There is no just man upon earth, that doth good.” Third, because he is prone to mortality, just as idleness to rust, clothes to the gnawing worm, of the kind, namely, of the sense and thought of man are in evil, but also this binds both to looking up and trembling, Prov. 28[:14]: “Blessed is the man that is always fearful.”

¶ Second, because it is difficult for hard good things, just as the merry maker for abstaining, Rom. 7[:15, 24]: “I do not that good which I will. … Unhappy man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?” A man binds himself to the imitation of the just, Prov. 27[:17]: “Iron sharpens iron, so a man sharpens the countenance of his friend.”

¶ Third, how much is due to ignorance is evident in the fragility of man. For man does not know his future state, his death date, or the heart of another. First, a man has ignorance of his state, just as a mole does not see as far as his death, Eccle. 9[:1]: “A man knows not whether he be worthy of love, or hatred.” This binds him to a multiplicity of good work, just as a man in the dubious case multiples his advocates, Mich. 6[:8]: “I will show you, O man, what is good, and what the Lord requires of you: Verily, to do judgment, and to love mercy, and to walk solicitous with your God.”

Second, he is ignorant of future mishaps, just as one navigating in the sea, Eccle. 8[:6-7]: “Great affliction for man: Because he is ignorant of things past, and things to come he cannot know by any messenger.” And this binds him to the consideration of himself, Eccle. 7[:1]: “What needs a man to seek things that are above him, whereas he knows not what is profitable for him in his life.”

Third, man does not know the day of his death and its circumstances, such as when, where, or how he will die, Eccle. 9[:12]: “Man knows not his own end.” Let him chose to contemn present prosperity, just like one sailing throws out temporal goods in order that he may be saved, Matt. 16[:26]: “For what doth it profit a man, if he gain the whole world, and suffer the loss of his own soul?”

¶ Fourth, he does not know the heart of another, 1 Kings 16[:7]: “Man sees those things that appear, but the Lord beholds the heart.” And this binds him to avoidance of a suspicious judge, Rom. 2[:1]: “You are inexcusable, O man, whosoever you are that judges. For wherein you judge another, you condemn yourself.”

Again, fourth, in misery is evident the fragility of man in four ways. First, on account of the multiplication of penalties, for he is like a weathervane, just like a toad between the runners of a sled, Job 5[:7]: “Man is born to labor.” And this binds him to patience and hope of reward, Job 33[:16]: “Teaching instructs man in what they are to learn.” Tob. 3[:21]: “This everyone is sure of that worships you, that his life, if it be under trial, shall be crowned.”

Second, on account of the certitude of death, for our life is vanishing just like a smoke and vapor, Psal. [88:49]: “Who is the man that shall live, and not see death?” And this binds man to the meditation of death, Eccle. 11[:8]: “If a man live many years … he must remember the darksome time,” etc.

Third, because of the poverty of death, Psal. [48:17-18]: “Be not thou afraid, when a man shall be made rich … which he shall take nothing away,” etc. Job 27[:19]: “The rich man when he shall sleep shall take away nothing with him.”

¶ Fourth, on account of the perilousness of damnation, for it is for man just like a fish in a river, just like a captive in the prison of an abbot, that is, the face of man is like a fish of the sea, for there the greater devours the lesser.

Again, a man is turned in order when he is ordered rightly to himself, to God, and to his neighbor. Therefore, in so far as man is a rational animal, he is susceptible of prudence by which he is separated from the brutes, so he is ordered to himself. In so far as he is an animal mild in nature, he ought to be meek and humble by which he is distinguished from the proud, so he is ordered to God. In so far as he is a social animal suitable for eating together, so he is ordered to his neighbor. Concerning the first, Eccli. 44[:1]: “Let us now praise men of renown,” etc. Concerning the second, Num. 12[:3]: “For Moses was a man exceeding meek.” Concerning the third, Eccli. 13[:20]: “Every man shall associate himself to his like.”

Again, three things concern a man: to be born in sin, to live in peril, to die in uncertainty. Concerning the first, man is born in sin, just as a grain with its husk, Eph. 2[:3]: “we all … were by nature children of wrath.” Just as we are saved by faith, Eph. 2[:8]: “You all are saved through faith.” Concerning the second, man lives in danger just as one sailing in a storm, a thief being kept in a prison, Eccle. 8[:6]: “Remember that we are all worthy of reproof.” Therefore, we must manfully resist just as those besiege in castles, Matt. 25[:12-13]: “I say to all … Watch.” And Prov. 4[:23]: “With all watchfulness keep your heart.” But, alas, because Matt. 26[:43]: “He … finds them all sleeping.” Third, he dies in an uncertain condition, just as a bird ensnared does not notice it until he would fly, 1 Pet. 4[:7]: “The end of all is at hand. Be prudent therefore.” 2 Kings [14:14]: “We all die, and like waters that return no more.” Therefore, we must be prepared just like servants awaiting their lord when he would return from the wedding, according to that of Can. 3[:8]: “All holding swords, and most expert in war.” Matt. 25[:7]: “Then all those virgins arose.”

¶ Therefore, O man, if you do not know your misery, look to my beginning and end, Job [14:1]: “Man born of a woman, living for a short time, is filled with many miseries.” And Apo. 3[:17]: “You do not know that you are wretched, and miserable.” And by attending to the beginning you will see that you are impotent, if you look to the middle you will see the world narrowing in, if you look to the end you will see the earth opening and a demon standing about.

It is read[[7]](#endnote-7) concerning a certain king who sought from some philosopher five questions concerning the condition of man, what is man, what is a man like, where is man, with whom does man frequent, and how does man fare in this world.

¶ To the first,[[8]](#endnote-8) he responds that man is the slave of death, a transient voyager, Eccle. 1[:11]: “There is no remembrance of former things.” Wis. 5[:15]: “It will be as the remembrance of a guest of one day.” Therefore, it is good to prepare a viaticum for the transition, Ezech. 12[:3]: “O son of man, prepare thee all necessaries for removing,” that is, works of mercy by which the soul of the dead may be restored.

¶ To the second question,[[9]](#endnote-9) he responded that man is like a heap of snow, to an early rose, and a new apple. Snow with a modicum of heat melts into water, from which this man begotten in the festering earth arises, the soul does not return to the primordial elements, Eccle. 3[:19-20]: “All things are subject to vanity, and all things go to one place.” Again, a rose is splendid in the morning but droops in the evening, Prov. 31[:30]: “Favor is deceitful, and beauty is vain.” Again, an apple hanging in the tree is believed to arrive at perfection, but it is corrupted by the worm. Behold there is a triple miser in this similitude: the brevity of life, the mutability of form, and the infirmity of the subject.

¶ To the third question,[[10]](#endnote-10) where is man, the philosopher responded that he is in war numerous times, because within himself he has a war of a gnawing conscience if he is in mortal sin. In his body he has a war of the four elements, as if of four complexions. Wherefore Augustine, *De civitate,* book 9,[[11]](#endnote-11) the peace of the body is ordered by the moderation of the parts. The third war is exterior to things sought after, by which the more man clings to them, so much the more he is separated from God. James 4[:4]: “The friendship of this world is the enemy of God.” In this war there is no security because according to the Psal. [55:2-3]: “all day long he hath afflicted me fighting against me … for they are many that make war against me.”

¶ To the fourth question,[[12]](#endnote-12) he responded that man hangs about with seven companions who are hunger, thirst, heat, cold, weariness, sickness, and want.

¶ To the fifth question,[[13]](#endnote-13) man considers himself like a lamp in the wind, which quickly is extinguished, just like a spark in the sea, which is quickly absorbed, and just like smoke which quickly is dispersed. Note also this fable of Oedipus because the Sphinx devoured passersby who did not know how to respond to her question.

1. Cf. Innocent III, *De miseria* 1.2 (PL 217:703): «Comparatus sum, ait Job, luto, et assimilatus sum favillae et cineri (Job XXX).» Lutum efficitur [Col.0703C] ex aqua et pulvere, utroque manente. Cinis autem fit ex ligno et igne, utroque deficiente. Expressum mysterium, sed alias melius exprimendum, quid ergo lutum superbis? de quo pulvis extolleris? unde cinis gloriaris? [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. Bernard, cf. Siegfried Wenzel, *Verses in Sermons* (Cambridge, MA: The Mediaeval Academy of America, 1978) p. 147: Context. One of the considertions that may lead man to humility is *fragilitas vitae* (I, 12). “Dicit enim Bernardus: Unde superbis, homo, filius terre, pater vermium, frater talparum? Tuum robur infirmitas, tue divicie paupertas, honor tuus dedecus,

Cf. Stephen Langton, in Albert Lecoy de la Marche, *La chaire francaise au moyen age* spécialement au XIIIe siècle, d'après les ... (Paris: Libraire Renouard, 1886), p. 315: ... Unde ergo superbis, homo? Si filius terrae, frater es vermium, germanus talparum, cognatus ollarum; et vere cognatus ollae dum crepas per superbiam, germanus talpae dum excaecaris per culpam. [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. Cf. Siegfried Wenzel, *Fasciculus Morum* 1.12, pp. 92-94: Si (inquit) vires in iuventute, si flores in porsperitate, si fulges pulcritudine, si viges sapiencia, si splendes eloquencia—status tamen iuventutis in senectute proscribitur, adversitas prosperitatem excludit, modica febris pulcritudinem expellit, oblivio sapienciam, mores eloquenciam. Considera ergo, o homo, qualem te fecit Deus et disce humiliari!” Hec ille. [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. Gregory, cf. *Fasciculus Morum* 1.12, p. 94: Et ideo dicit beatus Gregorius: “Mens sancti viri sempter dolore et fletu afficitur considerando bene ubi fuit, quia in peccato; ubi est, quia in miseria; ubi non est, quia in nulla gloria; ubi erit, quia in iudicio ubi timendum erit de vindicta. [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
5. Cf. Bartholomeus Anglicus, *De proprietatibus rerum* 12.31 (1505, p. 236b): Vidcens autem pedum suorum deformitatem quasi erubescit, et velut non attendens predicta pennarum pulcritudinem eas subito deprimit et submittit. [↑](#endnote-ref-5)
6. Virgil, *Georgics* 4.194-196 (LCL 63:232-233): et saepe lapillos, ut cumbae instabiles fluctu iactante saburram, tollunt, his sese per inania nubila librant.

and often they raise tiny stones, as unsteady barques take up ballast in a tossing sea, and with these balance themselves amid the unsubstantial clouds. [↑](#endnote-ref-6)
7. Cf. *Gesta Romanorum* 36 (Oesterley pp. 334-336): Legitur de quodum rege, qui ante omnia naturam hominis desicerabat scire. In cujus imperio erat quidam philosophys sagax valet, de cujus consilio operati sunt multi. ... Prima questio est: Quid est homo? Secunda: Cui est similis? Tercia: Ubi est? Quarta: Cum quibus sociis est? ... Ecce quomodo mundus suis servitoribus reddit mercedem. [↑](#endnote-ref-7)
8. Cf. *Gesta Romanorum* 36 (Oesterley pp. 335): Quid est homo? dico, quod est mancipium mortis, hospes loci, viator transiens. Mancipium dicitur, quia manum mortis evadere non potest, quia mors omnes labores et dies rapit, et secundum quod meruit habebit premium vel supplicium. Item homo est hospes loci, quia oblivioni traditur. Item est viator transiens; sive dormiendo, sive vigilando, sive comedendo, sive bibendo, sive aliud faciendo semper ad mortem currit. Ideo debemus per viam nobis providere de victualibus, scilicet de bonis virtutibus. [↑](#endnote-ref-8)
9. Cf. *Gesta Romanorum* 36 (Oesterley pp. 335): Cui est homo similis? Dico, quod similis est glaciei, quia propter calorem cito dissolvitur. [33] Sic homo, de terra et de elementis compaginatus, per calorem infirmitatis cito dissolvitur et corrumpitur. Item similis est pomo novo, quoniam sicut pomum novum pendens in arbore, cum debet ad crementum debitum venire, modico verme interius exorto corroditur et subito corruens inutile efficitur. Sic homo in puericia sua crescens subito oritur infirmitas interius et anima expellitur et corpus corrumpitur. Unde ergo superbit homo? [↑](#endnote-ref-9)
10. Cf. *Gesta Romanorum* 36 (Oesterley pp. 335): Ubi est homo? Dico, quod in bello multiplici, scilicet contra mundum, diabolum et carnem. [↑](#endnote-ref-10)
11. Augustine, *De civitate Dei* 9.13.1 (PL 41:640): Pax itaque corporis, est ordinata temperatura partium. [↑](#endnote-ref-11)
12. Cf. *Gesta Romanorum* 36 (Oesterley pp. 335): Cum quibus sociis est homo? Respondeo, quod cum septem sociis, qui eum continue molestant, qui sunt fames, sitis, calor, frigus, lassitudo, infirmitas et mors. Prepara[2] ergo animam contra diabolum, mundum et carnem, quorum bella, id est tentaciones sunt diversa. Et ideo diversimode preparanda est anima, ut resistet. Caro enim temptat nos per luxuriam et voluptatem, mundus per diviciarum vanitatem, diabolus per superbie vilitatem; si ergo caro te temptat, istam adhibe medicinam: habeas in memoria, quod caro, que te provocat ad peccatum, vertetur in cineres die et tempore ignoto, et anima pro ejus delicto penam eternam sustinebit. [↑](#endnote-ref-12)
13. Cf. *Gesta Romanorum* 36 (Oesterley pp. 336): Si mundus te temptat per vanitatem, adhibe istam medicinam: considera diligenter ipsius ingratitudinem, et nunquam sibi serviendi habebis voluntatem; nam ita ingratus est mundus, quod licet per totam vitam tuam illi fideliter servias, nichil apportare tecum te permittit nisi peccatum. Est enim de mundo, sicut de perdice. Perdix habens pullos suos, sciens venatorem appropinquare nido, ut venatorem retrahat a pullis venit prope venatorem et fingit se posse non volare; quod venator credens esse verum, insequitur paulatim. Illa volat et ipse post illam vadit sperans illam capere, et sic semper facit, donec elongatus est a pullis; et sic decipitur venator, quod nec perdicem nec pullos habet. Sic est de mundo. [↑](#endnote-ref-13)