179 To Bend (*Inclinare*)

Inclination is double. One of God to the image. The other on the opposite side of man to God.

Concerning the first, note that God is inclined to man in many ways, because first there was condescension through his incarnation as the Father for raising up the fall of the first people, Psal. [17:10]: “He bowed the heavens and came down.”

Second, prudently in conversation as the writer is inclined to writing, as the sun’s ray to illuminating, John 8[:6]: “But Jesus bowing himself down, wrote on the ground.”

Third, mercifully in his passion as the day was inclined to its setting, John 19[:30]: “And bowing his head, he gave up the ghost.”

Fourth, calmly in the justification of man, thus the rich man is inclined to the poor man for assisting him, just as the nurse bows to a boy for washing him, Psal. [114:2]: “He has inclined his ear unto me.”

Concerning the second, man bows himself to God to loosen his faults, thus Solomon prayed that God would “incline our hearts to himself,” 3 Kings 8[:58]. And Isai. 17[:7]: “Man shall bow down to his Maker.”

Second, for pleading for grace, just as the herb inclines itself for the dew early in the morning. The Psal. [118:36] seeks this: “Incline my heart into your testimonies.” Man, in a dark time never sees better than when he bows down, Prov. 2[:3, 5]: “If you shall incline your heart to prudence; then shall you understand the fear of the Lord.”

¶ The figure for this is “Mary Magdalen who stood at the sepulcher without,” to this point it was dark, as soon “she stooped down, she saw two angels,” John 20[:11-12].

Third, man inclined himself to God to pursue glory, just as the family before the divine after the labor was complete, Job 22[:29]: “He who shall bow down his eyes, he shall be saved.” The farmer before the harvest cannot judge concerning the ears of grain whether they be full or empty except he stoops down. Thus, according to Bernard,[[1]](#endnote-1) when you see a man humble in all his affairs you have an argument about him that he is full of grace. According to naturalists,[[2]](#endnote-2) the female palm tree does not conceive for bearing fruit unless it bows itself to the male and then with the blowing of the wind from the male to her, Psal. [91:13]: “The just shall flourish like the palm tree.”

1. Bernard, *In Cantica Canticorum* 34.1 (PL 183:960): Tu ergo cum te humiliari videris, habeto id signum in bonum omnino argumentum gratiae propinquantis. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. Cf. Pliny, *Natural History* 13.7.34-35 (LCL 370:118-119): cetero sine maribus non gignere feminas sponte edito nemore confirmant, circaque singulos plures nutare in eum pronas blandioribus comis; illum erectis hispidum adflatu visuque ipso et pulvere etiam reliquas maritare; huius arbore excisa viduvio2 post sterilescere feminas. adeoque est veneris intellectus ut coitus etiam excogitatus sit ab homine e maribus flore ac lanugine, interim vero tantum pulvere insperso feminis.

   For the rest, it is stated that in a palm-grove of natural growth the female trees do not produce if there are no males, and that each male tree is surrounded by several females with more attractive foliage that bend and bow towards him; while the male bristling with leaves erected impregnates the rest of them by his exhalation and by the mere sight of him, and also by his pollen; and that when the male tree is felled the females afterwards in their widowhood become barren. And so fully is their sexual union understood that mankind has actually devised a method of impregnating them by means of the flower and down collected from the males, and indeed sometimes by merely sprinkling their pollen on the females. [↑](#endnote-ref-2)