Worcester F 80 Distinctiones

116 The Lily pales in its roots (*Lilium palliet in radicibus*)

The lily turns pale in its roots, turns green in its leaves, turns white in its flowers, and turns red in its grains. So, the just man turns pale through humility, turns green when he undertakes animosity, turns white through chastity of the body, and turns red through charity of the mind. Or so the lily turns pale in its root, turns green in its stalk, and turns white in its flower. So, the just man turns pale in his consideration, turns green in his operation, and turns white in his conversation. Therefore Matt. 6[:28]: “Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow.” Because the lily by growing is useful, while it is pierced by thorns, and while it is surrounded by rocks, because it neither demands nor renders in return, but it expands and is opened again, because the just man expands toward God through the offering of his heart

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and he reclines toward his neighbor with the assistance of his work.

¶ Therefore, in the lily is noted moral purity when a holy man is compared to it, Ose. [14:6]: The just “shall spring as the lily.” Therefore, it is clearly said that the lily is not a reed mobile through adulation, not a nettle pricking to detraction, and not a hemlock hiding by contamination.

¶ Therefore by imperfection.

¶ Again the root of the lily, the more it is pressed by rocks the more it spreads out, and the higher it grows, the more deeply it is rooted. Therefore, “Send forth flowers, as the lily,” Eccli. 39[:19]. Regarding chastity, which is easily harmed, and stinks if it is worn out, so the lily is better served among the thorns than among the hands. So, continence is better served among works of penitence than among kisses, touches, and embraces. Wherefore Ambrose in his *Hexameron*,[[1]](#endnote-1) says that the flower of the rose before the sin of Adam did not have thorns, but now among the thorny bushes it grows better, so before the sin of Adam it was not necessary that chastity afflict itself through penance, but now because according to Augustine,[[2]](#endnote-2) chastity is endangered in delights. Wherefore it is experienced that roses can be kept for a long time if enclosed in vases for which the wind or the air cannot enter, so chastity in humble flesh lacking the wind of vain glory and the air of human solicitude. Otherwise, it is easily lost, James 1[:11]: “The flower thereof fell off.” According to Vegetius, *De re militari*,[[3]](#endnote-3) when one part of the army can withdraw the food from other, it conquers it. So, if the spirit withdraws the delights from the flesh, it will subjugate it. The example in Claudian, book 6,[[4]](#endnote-4) how Hercules conquered Antaeus, Prov. 26[:20]: “When the wood fails, the fire shall go out.”

1. Ambrose, *Hexaemeron* 3.11.48 (PL 14:175): Surrexerat ante floribus immixta terrenis sine spinis rosa, et pulcherrimus flos sine ulla fraude vernabat: postea spina sepsit gratiam floris, tamquam humanae speculum praeferens vitae, quae suavitatem perfunctionis suae finitimis curarum stimulis saepe compungat. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. Augustine, cf. Bernard of Clairvaux, *De conversione ad clericos* 21.37 (PL 182:855): Quidni periclitetur castitas in deliciis, humilitas in divitiis, pietas in negotiis, veritas in multiloquio, charitas in hoc saeculo nequam? [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. Vegetius, *Epitoma Rei militaris* 4.27: Oportunitas enim insidiarum aliter non potest inueniri, nisi scias, quibus horis aduersarius a laboris intentione discedat, quibus reddatur incautior, interdum medio die, interdum ad uesperum, saepe nocte, aliquando eo tempore, quo sumitur cibus, cum utriusque partis milites ad requiem aut ad curanda corpora disperguntur. Quod in ciuitate cum coeperit fieri, obsidentes astu se a proelio subtrahunt, ut aduersariorum neglegentiae licentiam tribuant.

<http://www.thelatinlibrary.com/vegetius4.html> [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. Claudian, *De raptu Proserpinae* 2 Preface 41 (LCL 137:316-317): non cadere Antaeo

Vain the falls of Antaeus, [↑](#endnote-ref-4)