Worcester F 80 Distinctiones

189 Sins are to be avoided (*Peccata sunt vitanda*)

Sins are to be avoided, especially on account of three matters. Because it is a harmful act to God and the angels, a hateful iniquity to God, a loveable but harmful infirmity to the world.

¶ Concerning the first it is said [Wis. 14:9]: “To God the wicked and his wickedness are hateful.” For God hates nothing of those which he made but only sin which he did not make. To such an extent that God because of sin almost scattered all their works which he had made in the world by “the flood” Gen. 7[:17]. Other kings in hate of their enemies depopulate their lands, but not their own land. But God scattered his own land because sin had entered it. For God knew that sin is a spiritual poison quickly extending and diffusing itself through the whole surroundings. Again,[[1]](#endnote-1) God not only hates sin itself, but anything that sin touches. When the danger is on the sea, the liquid of containers is poured out, but the precious containers are saved. But God not only pours out the sin, but the containers of sins into the sea of hell, that is, the souls made to his image and redeemed by his blood.

¶ Again, because of sin God promised his only begotten to be killed, Isai. 53[:8]: “For the wickedness of my

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people have I struck him.” But no one is found hating his enemy so much. Because on account of it he wishes to kill himself or his Son. Again[[2]](#endnote-2) from the beginning he put sin to flight from heaven afterwards he personally descended to put him to flee from the world finally in the end he thrust it into hell, Mich. 7[:19]: “He will cast all your sins into the bottom of the sea.” Again, sin is directed to the angels. The example in the *Vitae patrum*,[[3]](#endnote-3) concerning the angel who because of the body of the dead did not cover his nostrils, but because of the stink of a certain lascivious sinner. Wherefore Anselm,[[4]](#endnote-4) more tolerably smells the stink of a dog before men than the soul of a sinner before angels.

¶ Second,[[5]](#endnote-5) sin is a friendly iniquity to the devil whose sign is that he is beloved by no one else, Gen. 14[:21]: “Give me the persons, and the rest take to thyself.” The example in the *Legend* of John the evangelist,[[6]](#endnote-6) a youth raised from the dead saw some devils rejoicing over the ruin of some whom John had converted, Psal. [12:5]: “They that trouble me will rejoice when I am moved,” that is, from the state of my good. But note that sin does not please the devil because of sin itself, but because of the wealth that he acquires from it. So, one cleaning a privy does not do this because he loves the stink, but because of the money.

¶ Again just as a raptor bird from the whole of his prey wants the heart more, so that one the heart of man. Just as it is evident concerning that one who sought from the devil what he loved more in a man he responded the new moon, the wheel of the sun, and a heap of iron which three represent the heart.

¶ Second,[[7]](#endnote-7) the sign of the affection of the devil for sin is that in procuring sin ne never tires. For from the beginning of the world up to now he has done almost nothing else than to procure sin. It is this which when the Lord asked him in the book of Job [1:7]: “Whence do you come?” He responded, “I have gone round about the earth, and walked through it.” There is no rest for the devil to eat or sleep lest per chance he would be impeded from the procuration of sin, Job 30[:17]: “They that feed upon me, do not sleep.”

¶ The third sign is that the devil in such occupation is never satisfied. Rather “as a roaring lion, he goes about seeking whom he may devour, [1] Pet. 5[:8]. He is always hungry and thirsty, Job 40[:18]: “He will drink up a river,” that is, secular men who flow with the impetus, “and not wonder,” for, “he trusts that the Jordan may run into his mouth,” that is, ecclesiastical men. The example in the *Vitae patrum*,[[8]](#endnote-8) from the meeting of the devils,

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where each one gave an account of his procuration, but that one who after forty years had brought down one monk, he was crowned and installed on the ceremonial chair next to the prince of the demons.

¶ Concerning the third,[[9]](#endnote-9) sin is said an infirmity, and it can be called a triple fever because of triple concupiscence of delights, riches, and honors. About which 1 John 2[:16]: “All that is in the world, is the concupiscence of the flesh, and the concupiscence of the eyes, and the pride of life.”

¶ Again, it can be called a quadruple fever because of the four ways of sinning, namely, in the heart, mouth, work, and custom. Against which it is said four times, Can. 6[:12]: “Return, return, O Sulamitess: return, return, that we may behold you.” It is also called a daily fever because of the sin of pride which is so frequent. It is also called gout or an ulcer of the feet because of sloth. It is also called paralysis of the hands because of the sin of disaffection and unpiety. It is called dropsy because of the sin of envy. It is called quinsy because of the sin of gluttony. It is called leprosy because of lust. Because of all these it is called concerning that sinner, that of Isai. 1[:6]: “From the sole of the foot unto the top of the head, there is no soundness therein.”

¶ Again,[[10]](#endnote-10) concerning any sin note the type which produces (*profert*) damnation because it enters (*infert*). For sin is as if the rottenness in an apple which carries from (*aufert*) it beauty, color, fragrance, glow, and taste. Thus, sin carries away (*aufert*) the beauty of the soul, the color of life, the fragrance of fame, the glow of grace, the taste of glory, Job 13[:28]: “I am to be consumed as rottenness.”

¶ Second,[[11]](#endnote-11) sin is as if a wound in the body. For one wounded recently permits it to be touched and the wound to be investigated, but after the third day not touched without great pain. So sin in its newness is easily cured, but after the third day, of perpetrating, habituating, defending, hardly is it cured because it does not permit itself to be touched after correction, Gen. 34[:25-26]: “The third day, when the pain of the wound was greatest, Simeon and Levi, killed also Hemor and Sichem.” For the correction of the sinner is as if intolerable after the aforesaid three days, Prov. [18:3]: “The wicked man when he is come into the depth of sins, contemns.” For according to that, Amos 5[:10]: “They have hated him that rebukes in the gate.” For they say that of Isai. 30[:10]: “Speak unto us pleasant things.”

¶ Again,[[12]](#endnote-12) sin is like falseness in a piece of cloth whose middle or end the merchant does not show, but only the beginning. So, the devil, the worst merchant, shows only the head to the sinner, that is, the delight of fault, not the middle which is the remorse

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of conscience, nor the end, that is, the pain of hell, Isai. 24[:2]: “It shall be, as with the buyer, so with the seller,” that is, he was deceived so the devil as the sinner.

¶ Again,[[13]](#endnote-13) sin is like a game of gambling where the game maker permits the fellow players to be enriched, but finally he recuperates the whole and all the wealth of the players. So, the devil permits the sinner to prosper in the beginning but in the end, he takes away all the substance and glory. Therefore, Sara said, Tob. 3[:17]: “Never have I joined myself with them that play,” that is, the devils.

¶ Again,[[14]](#endnote-14) sin is like a chain by which the pig is led to the butcher’s stall, the cow to the sacrifice, and by which the falcon is bound to the perch. The monkey to the box. The butcher does not tie the foot of the pig too tight in the beginning lest it by chance squeal. So, neither does the devil tie the sinner too tight by temporal adversity lest per chance he would cry out through confession or prayer, Prov. 7[:22]: “Not knowing that he is drawn like a fool to bonds.” Again, the cow, the monkey, and the falcon do not feel themselves bound, unless they wish to flee. So, neither does the sinner feel the chain of sin while he sins, but afterwards.

1. Cf. William de Lancea, *Diaetae salutis* 1.2 (8:249a): Item non solum habet peccatum odio, sed et quidquid peccatum tangit. Alii autem homines, propter vinum corruptum, non projiciunt in mari vasa aurea, vel argentea; sed servant vasa, et vinum effundunt: Deus autem non solum peccatum, sed etiam vasa peccati, id est, creaturas rationales, scilicet animas ad suam imaginem factas, et suo pretioso sanguine redemptas in odium peccati projicit in oceano infernali, quia, ut dicitur, *odio est Deo impius, et impietas ejus*. Deus insuper in tantum peccatum odit, quod propter peccata mundi innocentem Unigenitum interfecit. Unde dicitur: *Propter scelus populi mei percussi eum*. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. Cf. William de Lancea, *Diaetae salutis* 1.1 (8:249a-b): Item Deus persecutus est pecatum ab initio in tantum, quod projecit ipsum de coelo, et videns quod remanserat in mundo, ipse in propria persona descendit in mundum, ut de ipso fugaret peccatum, et tandem in judicio projiciet, et includet ipsum in inferno, quia dicitur: *Projiciet in profundum maris omnia peccata nostra.* [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. *Vitae patrum* Verba seniorum 6.3.18 (PL 73:1014): Dicebant Patres de aliquo sene magno, quia cum ambularet in eremo, vidit duos angelos comitantes secum, unum a dextris, et alium a sinistris [Col.1014C] suis. Dum vero ambularent, invenerunt cadaver in via jacens. Et cooperuit ille senex nares suas propter fetorem: fecerunt autem et angeli similiter. Et profecti pusillum, dixit senex: Et vos hoc odorastis? Qui dixerunt ei: Nequaquam, sed propter te cooperuimus et nos; nam immunditiam mundi hujus non odoramus nos, neque appropiat nobis; sed animas, quae fetorem peccatorum habent, ipsarum odorem nos odoramus. [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. Anselm, *Liber meditationum et orationum* 2 (PL 158:722): Quam tolerabilius canis putris fetet hominibus, quam anima peccatrix Deo; [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
5. Cf. William de Lancea, *Diaetae salutis* 1.1 (8:249b): Secundo peccatum est iniquitas, quam daemon amplexatur. Et not quod triplex est signum, quod peccatum placet diabolo. Primum signum est, quia in nullo alio delectatur, quia ipse non vult aliud bonum, non quaerit aurum, non amat argentum, quia in persona ejus dicitur: *Da mihi animas, caetera tolle tibi*. [↑](#endnote-ref-5)
6. Jacobus de Voragine, *The Golden Legend* 9 St. John Apostle and Evangelist (Ryan, 1:52-53).

Cf. James of Voragine, *The Golden Legend*, trans. F. S. Ellis, 2:72: When S. John had said all this there was brought tofore him a young man dead, which only had been in marriage thirty days. And his mother and friends wept sore, which tofore S. John kneeled down on their knees, praying him that he would raise him to life. S. John had great pity, and when he had long wept he bade to loose and unbind the body and said: O Satheus, which wert blinded with fleshly love, soon thou hast lost thy soul, and because thou knewest not thy maker Jesu Christ, thou art fallen ignorantly into the leash of the right evil fiends, wherefore I weep and pray that thou mayst be releved from death to life, and show thou to these twain, Actius and Eugenius, what great glory they have lost and what pain they have deserved. Anon Satheus releved him in yielding thankings to S. John, and blamed much the two disciples in saying: I saw your two angels weep and the devils demene joy of your perdition, also I saw the realm of heaven made ready for you and full of all delights, and ye have follily gotten for you the place of hell, dark and tenebrous, full of dragons and of all pains, and therefore it behoveth you to pray to the apostle of God that he remise and bring you again to your salvation, like as he hath revived me goodly. And among all other pains, this Satheus reciteth these that be contained in two verses following:

Vermes et umbrae, flagellum, frigus et ignis, Dæmonis aspectus, scelerum confusio, luctus.

that is to say: worms, darkness, scourges, cold, heat, sight of devil, confusion of sins, and wailing. Anon then these two men by right great repentance prayed S. John that he would pray for them, to whom S. John answered that they should do penance thirty days long, and pray to God that the rods of gold and the precious stones might return to their first proper natures. After these thirty days they came to S. John and said to him: Fair father, ye have always preached misericord and mercy, and commanded that one should pardon another his trespass, we be contrite and repentant of our sins and weep with our eyes for this evil worldly covetise, the which we have by them received, and therefore we pray you that ye have mercy on us. And S. John answered: Our Lord God when he made mention of the sinner he said, I will not the death of the sinner, but that he be converted and live, for great joy is in Heaven of a sinner repentant. And therefore know ye that he hath received your repentance, go ye forth and bear the rods and stones thither where ye took them, for they be returned to their first nature. Thus received they the grace that they had lost, so that after they did great miracles in the name of our Lord Jesu Christ. [↑](#endnote-ref-6)
7. Cf. William de Lancea, *Diaetae salutis* 1.1 (8:249b-250a): Secundum signum quod Diabolus amat peccatum, est, quia in procurando peccatum nunquam fatigatur. ... Unde dicitur: *Absorbebit fluvium, et non mirabitur, et habet fiduciam, quos influatJordanis in os ejus*. Peccatores cum impetu currentes in os ejus, id est, in infernum, vocantur hic fluvius quem absorbet diabolus, et non miratur; justi vero quieti et pacifici dicuntur *Jordanis*, qui interpretatur humilis descensus, et tales summe diabolus desiderat absorbere. Exemplum in *Vitis Patrum* de capitulo daemonum, et singulis daemonibus de peccatis et malis, quae procuraverant, reddentibus rationem, et de illo qui specialiter fuit laudatus et honoratus a principe eorum, et in cathedra collocatus, quia fecerat fornicari unum monachum, quem in quadraginta annis vix traxerat ad peccatum. [↑](#endnote-ref-7)
8. *Vitae Patrum,* Verba seniorum 3.18 (PL 73:1014): Dicebant Patres de aliquo sene magno, quia cum ambularet in eremo, vidit duos angelos comitantes secum, unum a dextris, et alium a sinistris **[Col.1014C]**suis. Dum vero ambularent, invenerunt cadaver in via jacens. Et cooperuit ille senex nares suas propter fetorem: fecerunt autem et angeli similiter. Et profecti pusillum, dixit senex: Et vos hoc odorastis? Qui dixerunt ei: Nequaquam, sed propter te cooperuimus et nos; nam immunditiam mundi hujus non odoramus nos, neque appropiat nobis; sed animas, quae fetorem peccatorum habent, ipsarum odorem nos odoramus.

Cf. *Fasciculus morum* 5.35 (p. 604): Unde narratur in *Vitas* Patrum de quodam sanco sene ut corpora mortuorum sepeliret transeunte, cui comitabanturqu9idam angelus et quidam iuvenis lascivius. Cum ergo ad quoddam corpus fetidum pervenissent et senex nares obturasset, ait angelus: “Quare hoc corpus non sepelis?” Et ille: “Non possum, inquit, pro fetore.” Cui angelus: “Quantum fetet corpus illud in oculis tuis, tantum et multo amplius fetet iuvenis iste peccator in conspectu Dei.” [↑](#endnote-ref-8)
9. Cf. William de Lancea, *Diaetae salutis* 1.1 (8:250a): Tertio peccatum est infirmitas, qua mundus dissipatur. Et nota, quod peccatum est febris tertiana propter triplicem concupiscentiam, scilicet divitiarum, deliciarum, et honorum, de qua dicitur: *Omne quod est in munto aut est concupiscentia carnis, aut concupiscentia oculorum, aut superbia vitae*. Quartana etiam est propter quadruplicem gradum peccati, scilicet cordis, oris, operis, et consuetudinis, contra quae dicitur: *Revertere, revertere, Sunamitis,* id est, anima misera: quater dicit: *Revertere*, propter illa quatuor predicta. Est etiam febris quotidiana propter peccatum superbiae, quod est in omni peccato; et continue, vel continua est, quia est valde periculosa. Nam sicut febris continua aliquando aufert vitam temporalem, vel corporalem, et confert mortem corporalem; sic peccati infirmitas aufert vitam, non solum temporalem, sed et aliquando spiritualem, quia confert mortem infernalem, vel aeternalem. Podagra pedum vel gutta est, propter peccatum acediae; paralysis manuum est, propter peccatum invidiae, vel irae; hydropisis est propter peccatum avaritiae; dolor viscerum vel tortiones, propter peccatum gulae; lepra, propter peccatum luxuriae. Et propter haec omnia dicitur de peccatore: *A pranta pedis usque ad verticem capitis, non est in eo sanitas*. [↑](#endnote-ref-9)
10. Cf. William de Lancea, *Diaetae salutis* 1.2 (8:250b): Et nota, quod peccatum est sicut putredo in pomo. Sicut enim putredo aufert pomo decorem, valorem, colorem, odorem et saporem; sic peccatum aufert animae decorem vitae, et odorem famae, valorem gratiae, et saporem gloriae. Unde dicitur: *Quasi putredo consumendus sum*. [↑](#endnote-ref-10)
11. Cf. William de Lancea, *Diaetae salutis* 1.2 (8:250b): Secundo peccatum est sicut vulnus in corpore humano: nam recenter vulneratus permittit se tangi, et vulnus premi et investigari; sed post tertium diem non sine magno dolore tangitur in vulnere: sic peccatum in sua recentia cito curatur, et post tertium diem est gravissimus dolor vulnerum. Unde dicitur: *Die tertio, quando gravissimus dolor vulnerum erat, acceptis gladiis duo filii Jacob Simeon et Levi, fratres Dinae, ingressi sunt urbem confidenter, et Hemor et Sichem pariter necaverunt*: quia scilicet quasi intolerabilis est correctio, vel sanatio peccati post tres dies. Tres dies isti sunt peccati perpetratio, peccandi consuetudo, et peccati obstinatio. Nam post istum tertium diem, peccator non permittit se tangi per correctionem, juxta illud: *Peccator cum in profundum peccatorum venerit, contemnit.* Dicunt enim illud: *Loquimini nobis placentia, videte nobis errores: Exceaecavit enim eos malitia eorum.* Unde etiam *odio habuerunt corripientem in porta*, ut habetur in Amos. [↑](#endnote-ref-11)
12. Cf. William de Lancea, *Diaetae salutis* 1.2 (8:250b-251a): Tertio peccatum est sicut falsitas in panno. Nam sicut mercator de falso panno non ostendit emptori medium, neque finem, sed tantum caput; sic diabolus, qui est mercator peccati, ostendit fatuo emptori solum caput panni, id est, delectationem culpae, non medium, id est remorsum conscientiae, vel finem, id est poenam gehennae. De hac mercantia dicitur: *Sicut emens, sic ille qui vendit;* quia scilicet tam peccator quam diabolus in mercatura peccati est deceptus. [↑](#endnote-ref-12)
13. William de Lancea, *Diaetae salutis* 1.2 (8:251a): Quinto peccatum est sicut ludus aleatoris, qui vulgo dicitur ludus corriciae. Nam sicut ille falsus aleator, id est, corrigiator permittit illos homines in principio aliquid lucrari, et finaliter aufter et recuperat totoum quof amiserat, et cum hoc lucratur ab eis quidquid habetg, etiam quandoque vestes; sic diabolus, tanquam falsus aleator, permittit peccatowrem in aliquo temporali prosperari, sed finaliter aufter animam et corpus, gratiam, et gloriam temporalem, edt substantiam. Contra quod Sara gloriabatur, dicens: *Numquam cum loudentibus miscui me*, id est, cum daemonibus sive aleatoribus. [↑](#endnote-ref-13)
14. Cf. William de Lancea, *Diaetae salutis* 1.2 (8:251a-b): Septimo peccatum est sicut vinculum, quo ducitur porcus ad macellum, et bos ad victimam, et quo ligatur falco ad perticam, et simia ad truncum. Sicut enim carnifex, ducens porcum, non stringit nimis pedem ejus, ne clamet; sic diabolus non stringit nimis peccatorem per temporalem adversitatem, ne clamet per confessionem vel orationem, ut sic ducat eum liberius ad macellum infernale. Unde dicitur: *Ignorat, quod ad vincula stultus trahitur*. Item, sicut bos ligatus non sentit se esse ligatum, quando ducitur ad macellum, nisi quando vult fugere: item, sicut simia non sentit se esse ligatam, nisi cum vult pilotam a se removere; nec falco, nisi cum vult de pertica volare: sic peccator non sentit vinculum peccati, dum perpetrat et in peccato perseverat; sed tunc vincula sentit, cum anima infelix a corpore recedit. [↑](#endnote-ref-14)