Worcester F 80 Distinctiones

202 Prelates are placed (*Prelati ponuntur*)

Prelates are placed. They are put in a place of more eminence, just as their states excel others in dignity, so also, they are prominent by holiness of life. Wherefore also Gregory, in *Moralia*,[[1]](#endnote-1) he ought to be conspicuous in habits, who is proposed to be imitated by others. And Bernard, *Ad Eugenium*,[[2]](#endnote-2) listen to the canticle, less pleasant but healthful. A monstrous thing, the highest step, and the lowest mind; the first seat, and the lowest life; magniloquence in tongue, and emptiness in hand; great speech,

/fol. 287ra/

and no fruit. Therefore, the Emperor Constantine [[3]](#endnote-3) to his mother Helen, is reported to have written, when we hold a higher place among men, how much more we are open to all viewers. Therefore, one ought to be not only irreprehensible but also laudable, because we wish to be the great rock, but falling from the mountain drags many rocks with it, so concerning the prelate. Wherefore Gregory in the *Pastoralis*,[[4]](#endnote-4) when the shepherd goes by the edge of vices, it is necessary that the flock follow him to the precipice. Who therefore is on high ought to be careful of the fall. Wherefore Bernard, *Ad Eugenium*,[[5]](#endnote-5) now from the son you are for me the father. Who came after me, has been made before me. I confess I am not envious, but I consider the step and I watch that it is a fall, I consider the fatigue of dignity and I reform by the mirror, that of Psal. [48;13]: “Man when he was in honor did not understand.”

¶ Again, a prelate ought to recollect that however much higher so much greater the ruin, 4 Kings 1[:2]: “Ochozias fell through the lattices of his upper chamber.” And given that proposition, how many things happen from only one fall. How many falls are accused and taken away from the Lord. For he ought to fear to accuse of crime and be taken away from control. And thus, fall ignominiously. Again, just as the eye on high judges things below to be little, so often the prelate judges concerning his subordinates, Eccli. 32[:1]: “Have they made you ruler? be not lifted up.” And Deut. 17[:20] it is said concerning the new king, “That his heart be not lifted up with pride over his brothers.” Again, since the prelate has one mouth and two hands, he is instructed that he should rather pay attention as a watchman rather than talker, to working rather than sermonizing. For it befits a prelate to be one who talks little and does much. Therefore, says Job 29[:25, 22]: “when I sat as a king, with his army standing about me,” etc., “my speech dropped upon them.” He does not say flooded. For it is better that the ears of men be thirsty for listening to the conversation of the prince, than that the listeners be satisfied with his conversations and be pacified in weariness. Wherefore when someone asked Socrates[[6]](#endnote-6) how he would be able to make his best reputation, he responded if you do the best and speak the least.

¶ Again, the prelate ought to be as if the eye to watch over the whole body, Ezech. 3[:17]: “Son of man, I have made you a watchman to the house of Israel.” A watchman

/fol. 287rb/

is to be vigilant and warn against dangers. Wherefore Bernard, *Super Cantica*, homily 77,[[7]](#endnote-7) few are our watchmen today if they do not serve us, except they also perish. For nothing of the Lords threatening thunder are they awakened. What will you give to me of their number who are no more unvigilant for the emptying of purses than rooting out vices. Oh, if only they were as vigilant for caring, as they are swift to the episcopal chair.[[8]](#endnote-8) Oh, if only they thus watched as the cranes,[[9]](#endnote-9) as namely, they hold the little stone in their foot, that is, Christ in the mind, which if from the foot it fell surreptitiously on account sleep, he calls out through confession, namely, that he might awaken the sleepers. Therefore Prov. 6[:1, 3-4]: “My son, if you be surety for your friend, run about, make haste, stir up your friend. Give not sleep to your eyes.” But in Isai. 56[:10] it is said, “His watchmen are all blind,” etc. For just as Heli the leader of the people being blind and sitting on a lazy stool examining reports concerning the army of the Lord, but not wanting any outward labor, [1 Kings 1:9]. Also, they are like Jacob being blind who with canceling hands placed his right one upon Ephraim who is interpreted fruitful, because they signified the principal intention of the earth, [Gen. 48:5]. But upon Manassas who is interpreted as forgetfulness he placed his left hand because heavenly things were entirely forgotten being blind, [Gen. 48:13]. Even as Lamech who thought to shoot a wild animal but killed a man, [Gen. 4:23]. So today many think they pursue fault and really pursue perverse things according to Hebrews [8:7]. This Lamech is read as the first to incur blindness and committed bigamy, [Gen. 4:23]. So, from the blindness of prelates certainly is bigamy first come into the Church, [2] Kings 5[:6], the Jebusites said to David, “You shall not come in hither unless you take away the blind and the lame.” The blind are they whose intellect is blinded through ignorance, depraved through malice. Lame is he who has two benefices as if having unequal shin bones, in neither may he rest. These are said to be placed on the walls of Jerusalem and prohibit the entry of David, those who today are set in authority who impede the good to be promoted. These cannot say with Job 29[:15]: “I was an eye to the blind, and a foot to the lame.”

¶ Again, Bernard,[[10]](#endnote-10) it is a monstrous thing to be a blind watchman, an ignorant teacher, a mute suppliant. These, however, sometimes are permitted that they may have knowledge not however according to that do they direct their life. They are like

/fol. 287va

the peacock that has many eyes in its tail, but with those they see nothing because such do not taste according to knowledge, [4] Kings 7[:2]: “You shall see it with your eyes but shall not eat thereof.” Again, just as the eye becomes debilitated as the body grows old. So, prelates who are just as the eyes in the Church grow dim in these days, Isai. 24[:2]: “It shall be as with the people, so with the priest.” Again, the Church is figured well by the statue of Nabuchodonosor, Dan. 2[:38]: “Whose head of gold.” About which see above in chapter [65] Church (*Ecclesia*).

¶ Again, the prelate ought to be compassionate to the weaknesses of his subordinates. So, Job [30:25]: “I wept heretofore for him that was afflicted.” [2] Cor. 11[:29]: “Who is weak, and I am not weak?” Philip. 1[:8]: “For God is my witness, how I long after you all in the bowels of Jesus Christ.” The example in the story of Cedrus [Cecrops][[11]](#endnote-11) king of the Athenians how he died for the safety of his people. Therefore, our prelates are ashamed of their hire who do not put themselves up as a wall for the house of the Lord. But as it is said in Luke 10[:31], having seen one wounded, a priest and Levite passed by. Wherefore Bernard, *Ad Eugenium*,[[12]](#endnote-12) daily expenses are searched with a daily scrutiny, but we do not know the continual harms of the flock. The ass falls, and who is to lift it, the soul perishes, and there is no one to reflect upon it. Wherefore someone, They do not seek souls but altars, not true things but the mistress, not justice but a horse, not the helpless but riches. It was once asked why the eggs of the ostrich[[13]](#endnote-13) hang in the church next to the crucifix. And it is responded because the prelates imitate the ostrich as for as the neglect of their children. Because in Job 39[:14] it is said of the ostrich that she is hardened to her children as if they were not hers.

¶ Again, it was asked, Who were the men who lied more often. And it was answered that priests and clerics because daily they say in the Psal. [118:53]: “A fainting has taken hold of me, because of the wicked that forsake your law.”

¶ Again, since prelates are in the Church like eyes in the body and an eye has hair on the eyelid [eyelashes] of which the quantity by the progress of time is not increased, so prelates and men of the church are instructed that temporal things should not multiply too much, but they should be content with humble things. But in as much as their hairs on men grow as it is said that of Isai. 13[:21]: “Ostriches shall dwell there, and the hairy ones shall dance there.” An ostrich has feathers and because of its weight they cannot fly, it signifies the hypocrite prelates who show the works of Satan.

/fol. 287vb/

But to heaven they fly not at all. Again, just as a defect appearing in the eye is greater and more perilous than in another member, so sin is greater and more of a deformity in a priest than in a lay person. A thorn harms the eye more than the foot, and respectively the sin of a lay person is like a straw, the sin of a priest is like a beam, Matt. 7[:3]: “And why do you see the mote that is in your brother's eye; and see not the beam that is in your own eye?” Wherefore Juvenal says,[[14]](#endnote-14) Every fault of character, etc. In the figure of which matter Moses numbered more uncleanness of birds than fish or animals, Deut. 14[:3-10]. Because other things being equal the same sin is worse in the cleric than in the lay person. For just as a good priest is in a better condition than a good lay person. Just as a bad priest is worse than a bad lay person. For a priest if evil has the duty to which he is held, he cannot exercise without sin, which however a lay person can do although he be evil. Wherefore just as a good priest is called an angel of God, Mal. 2[:7]: “The lips of the priest shall keep knowledge,” etc. So, an evil priest can be called an angel of Satan. For just as the devil sins in his work, although in him it is a good work and a good creature of God. Because however everything that he does, he does with an evil intention, so also an evil priest sins even doing a good work. And just as it is more perilous to sleep upon a horse than upon a column, so the prelate sins more severely than the subordinate. In the sign of which [1 Kings 4:18], Heli falling from his stool died. Again, since subordinates hang from the neck of the prelature, with that one falling to ruin, they all fall to ruin. Wherefore Isai. 3[:6]: “Be our ruler, and let this ruin be under your hand.” And just as we see that the defect of the sailor rowing, but the defect of the skipper guiding the ship in the end, so, the defect of the prelate harms more, Eccli. 10[:3]: “An unwise king shall be the ruin of his people.” Here also note that princes in the book of Numbers [25:1-4] did not sin with the Madianites, but the people did. And however, princes are hanged for the faults of the people, because sometimes the fault of the underlings comes from negligence of the prelate.

¶ Again, in the sun there is no stain as we see in the moon. Therefore, a prelate like the sun ought to illumine others with his rays. dry the mud of lust, dissolve the ice of avarice. Therefore, it is not without mystery

/fol. 288ra/

that it would be a rare writing making mention of a darkening of the sun without immediately following the darkening of the moon and the stars, Isai. 13[:10]: “The sun shall be darkened in his rising, and the moon shall not shine with her light.”

¶ Again Joel. 2[:3]: “The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood.” Helinand says,[[15]](#endnote-15) that prelates and princes as if physicians ought never use severer remedies, unless when a good one is despaired of for the benefit of health. Wherefore it befits the prelate and the prince to be wise in their habits. Who in the likeness of the physicians, now in emptiness, in fullness, now by eating in emptiness, now cauterization, now sedating the pain with poultices. For if the harper procures with much diligence how to constrain the vices by wandering through the chords, by how much more solicitude ought the prelate moderate the underlings whom he makes one in customs to dwell in the house.

¶ It is safer to let go of the rope, than to extend it more intensely. For the rope let go recovers artificially. However, the broken rope is repaired by no art. Wherefore Chrysostom,[[16]](#endnote-16) if we err, by imposing a small penance, is it not better because of mercy to render a reason, than because of too much severity to collapse the penitent under the strain.

1. Gregory, cf. Cassiodorus, *Variarum* 4.3 (PL 69:612): Moribus enim debet esse conspicuus, qui datur imitandus. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. Bernard, *De consideratione ad Eugenium* 2.7.15 (PL 182:750): Et nunc audi canticum meum, et quidem minus suave, sed salutare. Monstruosa res gradus summus, et animus infimus: sedes prima, et vita ima; lingua magniloqua, et manus otiosa; sermo multus, et fructus nullus; vultus gravis, et actus levis; ingens auctoritas, et nutans stabilitas. [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. Constantine, cf. Nathaniel Lardner, *A large collection of ancient jewish and heathen testimonies* (London: Buckland and Longman, 1766) *The second Edict of Constantin and Licinius:* 3:313-314:

Itaque hoc consilio salubri, ac rectissima ratione ineundum esse credidimus, ut nulli omnino facultatem abnegandam putaremus, qui ves observationi Christianorum, vel ei religioni mentem suam dederat, quam ipse aptissimam esse sentiret: ut possit nobis summa divinitas, cujus religioni libertis mentibus obsequimur, in omnibus solitum favorem suum benevolentiamque praestare.

Moreover it is not thought proper to signify to you, that all the restrainst concerning the Christians, which were in the former letter sent to you should be left out: that whatever is unsuitable to our benignity may be omitted, and tht now for the future every one who chooseth to adhere to the Christian Religion, may observe it freely, without any impediment or molestation. These thing we have thought proper to signify to you, in order to your perceiving, that we have given free and full liberty to these3 same Christians to follow their oen religion. And you may perceive, that as we have granted this full liberty to them; so in like manner we have granted the same liberty to others, to observe their own institution and religion For, as it is manifest, this is suitable to the tranquility of our times: that every one should have libert to choose and follow the worship of that Deity which he approves. [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. Gregory, *Regula pastoralis* 1.2. (PL 77:15): cum Pastor per abrupta graditur, ad praecipitium grex sequatur. [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
5. Bernard, *Epistolae* 238.1 (PL 182:428): Jam enim filium dicere non audeo, quia filius in patrem, pater mutatus est in filium Qui post me venit, ante me factus est: sed non invideo, quia quod mihi deerat, in eo me habere confido, qui non solum post me, sed etiam per me venit. [↑](#endnote-ref-5)
6. Socrates, cf. Pseudo-Caecilius Balbus, De Nugis, 5.43.1 (Agesilaus): si gesseris optima et locutus fueris pauca. [↑](#endnote-ref-6)
7. Bernard, *In Cantica Canticorum* 77.2 (PL 183:1156): Parum est nostris vigilibus quod non servant nos, nisi et perdant. Alto quippe demersi oblivionis somno, ad nullum Dominicae comminationis tonitruum expergiscuntur, ut vel suum ipsorum periculum expavescant. Inde est ut non parcant suis, qui non parcunt sibi, perimentes pariter et pereuntes. [↑](#endnote-ref-7)
8. Cf. Bernard, *Sermones in Cantica Canticorum* 77.2 (PL 183:1156): O utinam tam vigiles reperirentur ad curam, quam alacres currunt ad cathedram. [↑](#endnote-ref-8)
9. Cf. Bartholomaeus Anglicus, *De proprietatibus rerum* 12.15 (1505, p. 232a): Vigiles autem super vnum crus stant directged et lapillum tenent in pede altero a terra suspenso vel elevato, vt si casu aliquando dormierint per casum lapilli excitentur vt dicit Aristoteles.

they ordain watches that they may rest the more surely, and the wakers stand upon one foot, and each of them holdeth a little stone in the other foot, high from the earth, that they may be waked by falling of the stone, if it hap that they sleep. [↑](#endnote-ref-9)
10. Bernard, cf. P. Jacues Nouet, *L’Homme d’Oraison* (Paris: Librairie Catholize de Perisse Freres, 1844, 10:223-224, note 1): Monstruosa res est speculator caecus, doctor inscius, praeco mutus. [↑](#endnote-ref-10)
11. Cecrops, the reference may fit Solon more precisely: “After he had finished his reforms, he travelled abroad for ten years, so that the Athenians could not induce him to repeal any of his laws. ... After his return to Athens, Solon became a staunch opponent of Peisistratos. In protest, and as an example to others, Solon stood outside his own home in full armour, urging all who passed to resist the machinations of the would-be tyrant. His efforts were in vain. Solon died shortly after Peisistratos usurped by force the autocratic power that Athens had once freely bestowed upon him. Solon died in Cyprus at the age of 80.

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Solon> [↑](#endnote-ref-11)
12. Bernard, *De Consideratione ad Eugenium* 4.6.20 (PL 182:786): Quotidianas expensas quotidiano reciprocamus scrutinio, et continua dominici gregis detrimenta nescimus. De pretio escarum et numero panum cum ministris quotidiana discussio est: rara admodum cum presbyteris celebratur collatio de peccatis populorum. Cadit asina, et est qui sublevet eam: perit anima, et nemo est qui reputet. [↑](#endnote-ref-12)
13. Cf. Bartholomaeus Anglicus, *De proprietatibus rerum* 12.33 (1505, p. 237a): Natura que in in omnibus est prouida dedit ei facere oua maxima et durissime teste, vt circa eorum generationem occupatus calor temperaretur et sei essem nimis intensus cqalor: essent cause quare citius moreretur. [↑](#endnote-ref-13)
14. Juvenal, *Satires* 8.14-141 (LCL 91:334-335):

omne animi vitium tanto conspectius in se / crimen habet, quanto maior qui peccat habetur.

Every fault of character lays itself open to criticism—and the higher the wrongdoer’s status, the more glaring the criticism. [↑](#endnote-ref-14)
15. Helinandus Frigidi Monis, *Flores a Vincentio Bellovacensi Collecti*, De Bono regimine principis, 15 (PL 212:737): Principes sicut medici nunquam debent gravibus uti remediis, nisi cum levium beneficio desiderata sanitas desperatur (unde Lucius: «Principem saevum moribus esse non oportet et qui moderatiora consilia sequatur et vicem gerere medicorum, qui morbos curant, nunc ex inanitione in repletis, nunc refectione in vacuis. Et dolorem etiam sedant nunc cauterio, nunc fomentis. Si enim citharoedi aliique fidicines multa diligentia procurent, quomodo oberrantis chordae compescant vitium, et aliis concordem reddant; quanta sollicitudine oportet principem moderari, [Col.0737B] ut subditos reddat quasi unanimes, et unius moris habitantes in domo? Certum est autem, tutius chordas remitti amplius, quam intentius protendi, remissarum namque intensio artificis opera convalescit. Quae autem semel rupta est, nullo artificio reparatur. [↑](#endnote-ref-15)
16. (Pseudo-)Chrysostom, *Opus imperfectum in Mattheum* homilia 43, ex cap. 23 (PG 56:878): Deinde etsi erramus, modicam poenitentiam imponentes: nonne melius est propter misericordiam rationem dare, quam propter crudelitatem? Ubi enim paterfamilias largus est, dispensator non debet esse tenax. [↑](#endnote-ref-16)