Worcester F 80 Distinctiones

208 Three things ought to be sought (*Querenda sunt tria*)

Three things ought to be sought, namely, wisdom for conversing, grace for persevering, and glory for accomplishing.

¶ Concerning the first, the prudent seeks wisdom, just as the pilgrim seeks a guide, and the blind a light, Prov. 15[:14]: “The heart of the wise seeks instruction.” And this triply, because with the heart studying as far as its own finding, just as the first philosophers by the ear. By hearing as far as human erudition, just as the disciples of the philosophers. By praying with the mouth as far as to divine inspiration, just as the saints do. Second the prudent seek grace in persevering, just as the servant seeks to be continuously pleasing before his lord, or the wife before her husband, Amos 5[:14]: “Seek the good, and not evil.”

¶ Third, he seeks glory, just as the pugilist victory, the pilgrim the end of the journey, Matt. 6[:33]: “Seek first the kingdom of God,” etc. Col. 3[:1]: “Seek the things that are above.” But, alas, because the imprudent seek what is not to be sought, because they seek worldly glory such as pride of life, just like a bear[[1]](#endnote-1) seeking honey in climbing a tree, John 5[:44]: “How can you believe who seek glory one from another.” Eccli. 3[:22]: “Seek not the things that are too high for you.” And Eccli. 7[:4]: “Seek not a pre-eminence” from a man. Others seek temporal abundance as far as the concupiscence of the eyes, just as a mole seeks earth, and fire seeks wood,

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Psal. [4:3]: “Sons of men, how long will you be dull of heart?” etc. Jer. 45[:4-5]: “Them whom I have planted, I do pluck up, and do you seek great things for yourself?” Others seek carnal pleasure, just as a scabious person seeks rubbing, a feverish person seeks wine, Phil. 2[:21]: “For all seek the things that are their own.” [3] Kings 1[:2]: “Let us seek for our Lord.”

¶ For seeking the Lord, four things ought to be addressed: place, time, manner, and fruit. Place where he is sought, it is required that it be the world, quiet, and secure. For he ought not to be sought in a place where the concupiscence of the flesh stinks, because there, there is not beauty without stain, Can. 3[:1]: “In my bed by night I sought him whom my soul loves and found him not.” But in the place of penance and asperity with the shepherds, Luke 2[:8]. Not in the marketplace where the concupiscence of the eyes stinks, because there, there is no trader of animals (*animalium*) but of souls (*animarum*), Osee 5[:6]: “With their flocks they shall go to seek the Lord, and shall not find him.” But in the house, in the quiet of conscience, with the kings, Matt. 2[:9]. Can. 3[:2]: “In the broad ways I have sought him whom my soul loves.”

¶ Not in the pomp by which the pride of life reigns, because in the wind he does not go, because he is the truth, Luke 2[:44]: “Thinking that he was in the company,” etc. But he is found in the school of truth, among the teachers.

¶ Again, the time for seeking the Lord is double. First while it is day because in night of death, faults of nature, hardly is he to be found, Can. 3[:1]: “By night I sought him whom my soul loves and found him not.” Therefore Isai. 21[:12]: “If you seek,” that is, if you want to seek, “seek,” namely, in the day, not in the night.

¶ Second, while he is near, Isai. [55:6]: “Seek the Lord, while he may be found; call upon him, while he is near.” For now, he knocks at the door of the heart, Matt. [7:8]: “For every one that asks, receives.” John 7[:36].

¶ The manner of seeking is that the tongue asks, Can. 3[:3]: “Have you seen him, whom my soul loves?” This happens through a devout prayer, Eccli. last chapter [51:18]: “I sought.”

¶ Second, the eye hurries to understand what happens through right intention, Wis. [1:1]: “Seek him in simplicity of heart.” Third, the foot for walking because it becomes very warm in affection, John 20[:15]: “Woman, whom do you seek?”

¶ Fourth, the hand for touching because it happens through good work, Psal. [76:3]: “I sought God, with my hands.”

¶ Fifth, strength for continuing because it happens through final perseverance, Psal. [104:4; 68:21]: “Seek the Lord, etc., and I found none.”

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As the foolish, even this or because they did not persevere just as a monkey in seeking the edible kernel of a nut, or because they have not found the place and the time, just as they who seek flowers in winter, John 7[:34]: “You shall seek me and shall not find me.”

¶ Others do not seek and yet they find which is a marvel, like innocent children, Act. 5[:10] and Isai. 65[:1]: “They have found me that sought me not.”

¶ Third neither do they seek, nor do they find like the infidels and the lazy, Job. 28[:13]: “Neither is it found in the land of them that live in delights.”

¶ Fourth they seek and find just as the good Christians in the likeness of the woman seeking her drachma, Luke 15[:8]. But how much more ought man to see the Lord, Deut. 4[:29]: “When you shall seek the Lord your God, you shall find him, yet so, if you seek him with all your heart.” In this way his parents sought Christ and therefore they found him just as it is said here, [Luke 2:46].

¶ Again things lost are to be sought diligently if it were suitable, just so a solder should seek a horse if it were necessary, just as a pauper should seek food. Therefore, the physician if he were in love should seek to be married, the spouse should seek to be a mother of children. So, Mary sought her Son in the temple, although he was taken care of by an angel, Luke 1[:32]: “He shall be great and the Son of the highest.” Again, just as one seeks the necessary in the world, Luke 1[:50]: “His mercy is from generation unto generations,” as one loved intimately, Luke 2[:35]: “And your own soul a sword shall pierce.”

¶ A certain magnate sent three enemies. Two were soldiers and one was a cleric to a certain great emperor for expediting some negotiation. Who did not wish to hear them until they unraveled three questions for him, namely, how far is it from heaven to earth, how much time would it take to walk around the world, and how much was his body worth. With his habit put on, the cleric thus responded to the first, It seems to me, he said, that it is less far from heaven to earth than it would be from the house of one to the house of his neighbor, because one cannot see what another does in his house, but God from heaven sees what happens on earth. To the second he responded, It would be the journey of one day because the firmament goes around the whole earth in one day, but concerning this whole, you king, will not have this in the end unless you have seven feet.[[2]](#endnote-2) For the third, I say that, you king, are worth twenty-eight denarii and an obol, because your body is worse than the body of Christ by three obols.[[3]](#endnote-3)

1. Cf. Bartholomeus Anglicus, *De proprietatibus rerum* 18.110 (1505 p. 492a-b): Ursus inquit comedit omnia indifferenter. Comedit enim fructus quando ascendit arbores et frangit alucarie et comedit mel. Et infestant apes oculos eius et pungunt linguam et quandoque fugiunt ipsum. Et comedit cancros et formicas propter medicinam et comedit carnes propter eius magnam fortitudinem. ... Miro modo scit scandere super arbores vsque ad altissimas ipsarum arborum summitates. Solent autem mellificare apes in arboribus cocauis quarum fauos deprehendens vrsus per odorem ascendit vsque ad locum mellis, et faaciens vguibus in arbore aperturam extrahit mel et comedit, ex consuetudine frequenter quando esurit ad locum redit.

   He can wonderly sty upon trees unto the highest tops of them, and oft bees gather honey in hollow trees, and the bear findeth honey by smell, and goeth up to the place that the honey is in, and maketh a way into the tree with his claws, and draweth out the honey and eateth it, and cometh oft by custom unto such a place when he is an-hungered. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. seven feet of earth needed for a grave? The king must die and go to heaven to experience the journey of one day around the world? [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. Christ was sold for thirty pieces of silver assumed here as thirty denarii. Each denarius was worth 2 obols. Therefore, if the king is worth three obols less than Christ, he would be worth 28 denarii and one obol. [↑](#endnote-ref-3)