Worcester F 80 Distinctiones

265 The Way Three (*Via tria*)

The way. Three ways are profitable for the voyager as, namely, he be defended in the way, as through the way he be directed, as after the way he may be rested. So that thus he may walk through a safe way, right, and good. God made these three for the holy one because it was for the one fighting in safety, for the one striking in leadership, for the one arriving in management. The way of God is like any other way, it had a beginning, middle, and end or terminus. The beginning was charity, the middle was poverty and humility, just as was evident in the cradle and the swaddling clothes, the end was the penalty. The first was admirable on account of the condescension of majesty. The second mutable on account of the example of poverty. The third venerable on account of the office of utility.

¶ Concerning the first Psal. [18:6]: “He has rejoiced as a giant to run the way.” [1] Cor. 12[:31]: “I show unto you yet a more excellent way.”

Concerning the second, Jer. 14[:8]: “Will you be a stranger in the land, and as a wayfaring man turning into lodge,” etc. But they hold the contrary [1] Kings 8[:3]: “Samuel’s sons walked not in his ways: but they turned aside after lucre.”

¶ Concerning the third. Lam. 1[:12]: “O all you that pass by the way.” Certainly, our life is like a way whose beginning is polluted, middle is cunning, and the end, that is, death less safe. Therefore, against these Christ made for himself a way. John 14[:6]: “I am the way, the truth, and the life.” I say, I am the way without the filth, I am the truth without error, I am the life without fear. Wherefore Augustine, *De verbis Domini*, sermon 56,[[1]](#endnote-1) if Christ was not the way,

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we were always in error. I do not say to you, Seek the way. For the way comes to you. Therefore, rise and walk, not with feet but with customs. For it is better to limp in the way, than to walk strongly against the way. If therefore Christ is the way, it is necessary you walk through him, but this we cannot do unless either by following his innocence or his penitence. For the dragon with “his tail drew the third part of the stars” on earth, namely, those who are on the third step, namely, outside of the state of innocence or penitence, Apo. 12[:4]. Wherefore also two people found the way into paradise, Enoch [Gen. 5:24] and Elias [4 Kings 2:11], who prefigured these two roads in a sign that whoever is in neither will not enter paradise. Wherefore Chrysostom, *Super Mattheum*,[[2]](#endnote-2) homily 18, they will not fall into the hands of the devil, unless they walk in the way of the sinners. If therefore you go to that one, you should not impute it to the devil that he has drawn you, just as you have gone to him. For is there no gate that leads to the way? But on the contrary the way [leads] to the gate. So, the devil does not lead to sins, but sins to the devil. Wherefore Augustine, as above,[[3]](#endnote-3) do you wish to walk, Christ says, I am the way. Do you wish not to be deceived on the way, I am the truth. Do you wish not to die at the end of the way, I am the life. I say the way as example, the truth as promise, and the life as reward. But because this way is narrow, therefore few go on it, Matt. 7[:14]. And therefore says Jer. 6[:16]: “Ask for the old paths which is the good way and walk in it.” Every way is good which leads to the good, and especially if it leads to the greatest good, Prov. 14[:12]: “There is a way which seems just to a man, but the ends thereof lead to death.” Wherefore Augustine on Psal. 36, the Christian is he who wants to follow Christ through his sufferings. Therefore, do not go through another way which he himself went, another strong way has delights, but is full of thieves. Gregory, *Super evangelium*, homily 11.[[4]](#endnote-4)

¶ In this present life we are as if on a journey, by which we travel to the fatherland. However malignant spirits besiege the journey as if certain robbers. Therefore, he desires to be robbed, who carries his treasure publicly on the way. Sometimes it happens that another lord keeps the ways of his land and then it is crossed there without peril. Because those watching thieves

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unite with the travelers as if they too were wayfarers and they lead them from the right road, and then they despoil them and sometimes kill them. So Christ keeps the way, the faith, and the virtue in which there can be no danger. But the devil unites himself with those travelers and despoils them, Jer. 21[:8]: “Behold I set before you the way of life, and the way of death.” Wherefore Isidore, *De summo bono*, the first book, chapter 18,[[5]](#endnote-5) first it is for each to know what matter he seeks. Then so that he may take what he desires. Certainly, knowledge is imperfect, by which one tends to know, and not to know the journey through which it is expedient to go.

¶ For how is it useful to be hungry at a time of plenty to see the region, and ignore the way by which one journeys there? Behold the fatherland which one seeks, but he loses the way by straying, he goes another way, but that does no good. However much more one walks, the more he is distanced from that which he seeks.

¶ Again, Gregory, book 22 of *Moralia*,[[6]](#endnote-6) says often we pursue the right and clean journey. But however, we are held back by our clothes caught in the brambles bordering along the way. On the way we do not encounter them, but by the side of corrupted nature the brambles of concupiscence are born by which our clothing, that is, the virtues of the soul are torn, at least we go forward on the road of penitence, [2] Pet. 2[:15] who “Leaving the right way they have gone astray.” Therefore, our way has been cleaned because the mud ought to be removed lest we be troubled, that is, the sins of gluttony and lust, Psal. [17:31]: “As for my God, his way is undefiled.” But alas because Psal. [9:105]: “His ways are filthy at all times.”

¶ Not so David who asked Psal. [68:15]: “Draw me out of the mire, that I may not stick fast.” However, the mud was cleansed thus when the rains of contrition descended, the mud was removed, when the hammer of confession was set near it was thrown out.

¶ Second the thorns are to be taken away lest they wound. These are the cares of the world, Psal. [13:3]: “Destruction and unhappiness in their ways.” Osee 2[:6]: “I will hedge up your way with thorns.” See therefore how miserable it is to go through such as a sharp way to an evil hospice, but there are many just like millers, who cannot sleep except in a noisy disturbance, and just like the ass that does not know delight except in thistles, Job 30[:7]: “They counted it delightful to be under the briers.”  
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Third, the stones are to be taken away lest they cause harm, Eccli. 21[:11]: “The way of sinners is made plain with stones,” and obstacles, “and in their end is hell, and darkness.” Behold the evil way and a worse hospice.

1. Augustine, *De scripturis*, 141.4.4 (PL 38:777-778): Si enim via esse ipse noluisset, semper erraremus. Factus ergo via est qua venias. Non tibi dico, quaere viam. Ipsa via ad te venit: surge et ambula. Ambula moribus, non pedibus. Multi enim bene ambulant pedibus, et male ambulant moribus. Aliquando enim ipsi bene ambulantes, praeter viam currunt. Invenies quippe homines bene viventes, et non christianos. Bene currunt: sed in via non currunt. Quanto plus currunt, plus errant; quia a via recedunt. Si autem tales homines perveniant ad viam, et teneant viam, o quanta securitas est, quia et bene [Col.0778] ambulant, et non errant! Si autem non tenent viam, quantumvis bene ambulent, heu quam dolendum est! Melius est enim in via claudicare, quam praeter viam fortiter ambulare. Haec satis sint Charitati vestrae. Conversi ad Dominum, etc. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. (Pseudo-)Chrysostom, *Opus imperfecta in Mattheum* 18 ex cap. 7 (PG 56:735): Similiter nec incurrit in manus diaboli, nisi qui in via ambulat peccatorum. Vis non incurrere in diabolum? Declina a via, quae ducit ad illum, et nullam habet in te diabolus potestatem: si autem ambulaveris in via, quae ducit ad illum, jam non diabolo imputes perditionem tuam, quasi ille te traxerit ad se, sed tibi, quia tu ivisti ad illum. Numquid porta ducit ad viam? Sed via ducit ad portam: sic non prius diabolus homines ducit ad peccata, sed peccata ad diabolum ducunt. [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. Augustine, *In Joannis Evangelium* 22.8 (PL 35:1578): Ambulare vis? ego sum via. Falli non vis? ego sum veritas. Mori non vis? ego sum vita. [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. Gregory, *XL Homiliarum in Evangelia* 1.11. (PL 76:1115): In praesenti etenim vita quasi in via sumus, qua ad patriam pergimus. Maligni autem spiritus iter nostrum quasi quidam latrunculi obsident. Depraedari ergo desiderat, qui [Col.1115B] thesaurum publice portat in via. [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
5. Isidore, *Sententiae* 1.17.5 (PL 83:575-576): Primum unicuique est scire quid appetat; secundum vero est ut id quod appetit apprehendat. Imperfecta quippe sapientia est, quo tendas scire, et nescire iter per quod expediat ire. Quid enim prodest si [Col.0575C] quis famis tempore ubertatis regionem videat, et viam per quam ad illam pergat ignorat? Ecce patriam quisque quaerit, sed qui viam perdidit errando [Col.0576A] graditur, non proficiendo; quantoque plus ambulat, tanto magis ab eo quod quaerit elongatur. [↑](#endnote-ref-5)
6. Gregory, *Moralia* 25.26.26 (PL 76:374): sicut saepe rectum mundumque iter pergimus, et tamen ortis juxta viam vepribus [Col.0374D] per vestimenta retinemur. In via quidem munda non offendimus, sed a latere nascitur quo pungamur. [↑](#endnote-ref-6)