Worcester F 80 Distinctiones

272 To Overcome (*Vincere*)

To overcome. It is written in the history of the Romans that for one conquering three times for the republic he would be awarded a triple honor, namely, that he would sit in a gilded chariot pulled by four white horses up to the capitol. Second, that those conquered by him would be led bound after his chariot. Third, that in the capitol he would be clothed with the tunic of Jupiter. But lest he become proud of these things, he would have to undergo three insults, namely, that someone of slave status should sit with him on the chariot, and that he would give him slaps saying Notis elytos, (Gnothi seauton), that is, know yourself. Third, that on that day it would be allowed to anyone to reproach him for the victory wherever he wished.

¶ Morally if we conquered three enemies, the world, the flesh, and the devil, we are owed a triple honor, namely, to sit in a chariot of good reputation which is drawn on four wheels, namely, it will be drawn by the love of God, by humility before one’s neighbor in prosperity, by patience in adversity. Four wheels, that is, the four cardinal virtues. The second honor is that our enemies after us are bound because according to Origen,[[1]](#endnote-1) a demon even once conquered in tempting will not tempt further concerning that vice or that man concerning the vice.

¶ The third honor is that we ought to be clothed with the tunic of God, that is, the compassion of Christ, but lest we become proud in these, he sits with us our similar flesh and it slaps us daily by tempting because, [Gal. 5:17]: “The flesh lusts against the spirit,” etc., And even our enemies of our unconfessed sins will rise up against us. It is reported about the king of the Medes that always he prevailed against the king of the Persians, but his son on the other hand always surrendered.

/fol. 321ra/

And it was asked why by some wise man. Three things make themselves overcome, old unchangeableness, love of one’s own advantage, and the counsel of youth of which the father had contrary.

¶ As for the first kind the fathers did not love themselves in return nor rule their own. There is the Philosopher in the *Politics*,[[2]](#endnote-2) that a city is better ruled by love of the citizens than by wisdom in which there can be discords. What good is a castle where hearts are lacking.

¶ As for the second this was the cause of the destruction or the downfall of the Roman kingdom. For as long as the consuls and senators were poor in their own homes and they were zealous for the abundance of the public goods, Rome flourished according to Augustine, *De civitate*.[[3]](#endnote-3)

¶ As for the third it is evident concerning king Roboam, [3] Kings 12[:8]: who despised the counsel of the elders.

¶ Again there was a certain city in Egypt on account of its sins was infected both within and without. Finally, they sent to a certain great one to help, having explained the strength of their city. But that one, Is it not, he said, that your city is united above and diminished against the wrath of God, lest he be able to descend over you and it thus I come and defend you, as if one says, with the Psal. [126:1]: “Unless the Lord keep the city, he watches in vain that keeps it.” And Bar. 3[:10, 13]: “How does it happen, O Israel, that you are in your enemies' land?” it follows “if you had walked in the way of God, you had surely dwelt in peace forever.”

1. Origen, cf. Luke 4:1-13. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. Aristotle, *Politics* 5.9 1314a5 (LCL 264:462-463):  In fact owing to this tyranny is a friend of the base; for tyrants enjoy being flattered, but nobody would ever flatter them if he possessed a free spirit—men of character love their ruler, or at all events do not flatter him.  [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. Augustine, *De civitate* 5.18 (LCL 41:234-235):  For although the state or republic (that is, the people’s estate, the country’s estate, the common estate, or commonwealth) was very rich and wealthy, the people who owned it were in their houses so poor that one of them who had been consul twice was expelled from that senate of poor men by the action of the censors, who crossed off his name because he was found to possess silver vessels of ten pounds’ weight.[4](https://www.loebclassics.com/view/augustine-city_god_pagans/1957/pb_LCL412.235.xml?rskey=48ie8p&result=4#note_LCL412_235_4) Such was the poverty of the very men by whose triumphs the public treasury was enriched.  [↑](#endnote-ref-3)