Worcester F 80 Distinctiones

41 To Increase (*Crescere*)

Man ought to increase spiritually in the way a tree does bodily, because in the deep as for itself, in breadth for its neighbor, in altitude for God.

¶ First for oneself through grace and humility, Job 8[:11]: “Can a sedge-bush grow without water?” [1] Pet. 2[:2]: “As newborn babes,” etc. For how much more the root goes down deep, so much more the tree is lifted, 1 Macc. 9[:66], Jonathan began, who is interpreted as the dove, “and to increase in forces.” Esth. 10[:6]: “The little fountain which grew into a river,” the humble handmaid grew into a queen.

¶ Second by purgation and purity just as a plant purged of briars, rocks, and superfluous branches grows better, Judges 13[:24]: “The child grew,” namely Sampson, “and the Lord blessed him.” Gen. 49[:4]: “You are poured out as water; you will not grow.”

¶ Third man grows in breadth toward his neighbor.

First through patience in adversities just as the soldier resolutely receiving the blows grows in glory. So, the sons of Israel by how much more they were oppressed, so much more they grew, Exod. 1[:12], Eccli. 2[:3]: “Join yourself to God, and endure, that your life may be increased in the latter end.” Wherefore Gen. 41[:52], Joseph said, “God has made me grow in the land of my poverty.”

Second by mercy toward their need, as water or seed pours out, Job 31[:18]: “From my infancy mercy grew up with me.” Therefore, also his possessions grew on the earth, [2] Cor. 9[:10]: “He that ministers seed to the sower will multiply your seed, and increase the growth of the fruits,” etc.

Third by teaching

/fol. 224va/

the ignorant, thus Act. 6[:1]: “The number of the disciples increasing” by the word of God.

¶ Third man grows in height toward God through the knowledge of first truths. Thus, the morning light grows until, etc., Prov. 4[:18]: “The path of the just, as a shining light, goes forwards and increases,” Eph. 2[:21]: “In whom all the building, being framed together, grows up into a holy temple.”

¶ Second through love of the highest good. Thus, plants grow toward the heat of the sun, Eph. 4[:15]: “Doing the truth in charity, we may in all things grow up in him who is the head, even Christ.” [2] Pet. 3[:18]: “Grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our God.”

Third, through obedience and fear of the divine majesty. Thus, creatures obeying the divine nod grow naturally, Matt. 6[:28]: “Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow.” 1 Kings 2[:26]: “The child Samuel advanced, and grew on, and pleased the Lord.”

¶ And note that there are four ways that things grow, because in the deep just as pits and roots. In height just as buildings and trees. In breadth just as vines and branches. In length just as measures and days, just so the man of God grows into the deepness through the contempt of the earthly, Esth. 10[:6]: “The little fountain which grew into a great river.”

¶ Second in heights from the desire of eternal goods, just as fire when the more it tends up, so much more it grows, Eph. 4[:15]: “Doing the truth in charity, we may in all things grow up.”

Third in breadth through an extension of moral conduct, [2] Pet. 3[:18]: “Grow in grace, and in knowledge.”

Fourth in length through continuation of good desires, so money grows through multiplication, Gen. 48[:16]: “The angel that delivered me,” and Gen. 41[:52]: “God has made me to grow in the land.”

¶ Again one grows morally in length through sustained labors, Luke 13[:18-19]: “The kingdom of heaven is like to a grain of mustard seed.” In breadth through the fragrance of moral conduct, Esth. 9[:4]: “The fame of his name increased.” In depth through the experience of sorrows, John 3[:30]: “I must decrease, but he must increase.” In height through the excellence of virtues.

¶ Again the perfection of man consists in the augmentation of three, namely of love, works, and knowledge, so that when the love of charity is more fervent, when the work of the good is more frequent, when knowledge of the faith is purer. So, a physician perfects himself when he is more diligent in care, is more energetic in practice, is more prudent in rhetoric. And just as in natural and artificial works, so also in moral, the imperfect successively gives way to the perfect. For it does not rise by sudden steps into an ear of corn nor from a stone into

/fol. 224vb/

an image, so neither does a man suddenly become the highest if he proceeds three steps, beginning, advancing, and perfecting, he changes from the good into the better.