Worcester F 80 Distinctiones

52 Love of God (*Dileccio Dei*)

The love of God is light in knowledge, fire in affection, strength in work. First, I say that love illuminates the intellect because it is light. For it puts to flight the darkness, it melts the sin just as the heat of the sun, it dissolves the clouds, Wis. 2[:3]. And John 2[:10]: “He that loves his brother, abides in the light.” Job 38[:24]: “By what way is the light spread.” Wherefore just as in the sun diminutions are seen but nothing beyond, so in love some defects are seen. Therefore, such matters are more often confined and consequently more often mercy results, Deut. 5[:9-10]: “I am the Lord showing mercy to them that love me.”

¶ Second love gives joy, Eccli. 40[:20]: “Wine and music rejoice the heart.” Wine rejoices by the color of things seen, by the fragrance of things smelled, by the flavor of things tasted, by the coolness of things touched. But music gives joy to things heard, “but the love of wisdom is above them both.” Third it assures persevering from evil, John 14[:23]: “If anyone loves me, he will keep my word.” Fourth it manifests the colors because if informs the works of virtues.

¶ Judges 5[:31]: “Them that love you shine as the sun shines in his rising.” The sun illuminates other

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shining bodies. The lack of heat is the cause and sign of death. And likewise dead plants do not bear fruit, so neither does a man merit without love, [1] John 3[:14]: “He that does not love, abides in death.” And consequently, does not bear fruit for life, Gal. 5[:6]: “In Christ Jesus neither circumcision avails anything, nor uncircumcision, but faith that works by love.”

¶ Second love inflames the affection because it is fire, Luke 12[:49]: “I am come to cast fire on the earth.” For just as fire attracts by its heat, so also the love of God in the way that a lodestone attracts iron, not by manifest violence, but through a hidden strength. For when God exceeds in the infinite realms of nature and creatures, a creature does not approach to him for the substance of blessedness unless drawn, John [6:44]: “No man can come to me, except the Father draw him.” This drawing happens through love, Osee 11[:4]: “I will draw them with the cords of Adam, with the bands of love.”

¶ Second just as fire consumes by its heat, just so love consumes sin, just as one acting more forcefully to its opposite as heat to mud, fire to rust, Luke 7[47]: “Many sins are forgiven her, because she has loved much,” etc. Where Gregory,[[1]](#endnote-1) what do we believe love to be unless a fire, what is fault if not rust. And the more fully the rust of sin is consumed, so much more one is loved. And just as an act is more powerful in substance it is consonant to itself rather than dissonant. So, love is more powerful in a clean soul consenting to it, Eccli. 3[:4]: “He who loves God, shall obtain pardon for his sins by prayer, and shall refrain himself from them.”

¶ Third just as fire burns with its heat, so does love, Can. 5[:6]: “My soul melted, as” one loved. For just as fire gives to the charcoal splendor, color, and heat, so love gives to the soul the splendor of divine knowledge, Eccli. 1[:10]: “According to his gift and has given her to them that love him.” Second it gives the heat of heavenly compassion, [1] John 3[:17]: “He who has the substance of this world, and shall see his brother in need,” etc. Third it gives the color of honest conversation, Can. 1[:16]: “My beloved is to me and I to him. But alas because Lam. 4[:8]: it is said “their face is now made blacker than coals.” Fourth just as fire ascends by its own weight or vapor, so the soul by love, according to Augustine in his book of *Confessiones*,[[2]](#endnote-2)what makes weight in bodies, love makes this in spirits, for just as what is heavy ascend from the earth by the power of the sun, so the soul by the heat of love, Can. the last chapter [8:5]: “Who is this that comes up from the desert.”

¶ Third love is principally a virtue in operation. For a man needs virtue for four matters, for working the good of nature, for sustaining the evil of pain, for resisting the evil

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of guilt, for persevering in the good of grace. for the first we must be agile. For the second strong. For the third virile. For the fourth constant. Love gives these four. For it gives agility for working the good, just as heat for iron or wax which is molded to the will of the artist, Eccli. 2[:19]: “They that love him, shall be filled with his law.” As namely, all parts of a man obey the law as namely the ear to hearing, the tongue to reading, Can. 3[:2]: “I will rise,” from the love of sine, “and will go about the city,” for the well-being of my neighbor, “I will seek him whom my soul loves,” for the love of God. Charity is fruitful when a brother esteems a brother, the devout corrects the dissolute, the present prays for the absent, one does not criticize the sick, has pity with the healthy, rejoices with the restored, does not provoke the wrathful, settles and respects the elderly.

¶ Second love provides patience for sustaining. For just as a hunter sustains hunger and labor to capture the wild animals, the merchant that he may fill his purse, so one loving as God would have it, Eccli. 2[:18]: “They that love God will keep his way,” which, namely is “mercy and truth” according to the Psal. [24:10].

¶ Our love for the Lord ought to be inseparable, therefore compared to death. Insuperable, therefore compared to hell. Insatiable, therefore compared to fire, which never says enough. Inextinguishable, therefore compared to water.

¶ Third love gives virility for resisting, just as indivisibility care, or continuity, it gives virtue to an edifice by its impetus, Rom. 8[:37]: “In all these things we overcome, because of him that has loved us.” Augustine,[[3]](#endnote-3) charity is tolerant in adversities, strong in sufferings, joyful in works.

¶ Fourth it gives constancy to persevering just as cement in concrete material makes a wall to last. So, charity in the soul. A dog for love often follows its lord, Prov. 17[:17]: “He that is a friend loves at all times.” Can. 3[:4]: “I found him whom my soul loves.” Concerning all this, Psal. [17:2-3]: “I will love you, O Lord, my strength,” for working, “my firmament,” in resisting, “my refuge,” for being refreshed, “my deliverer,” for being patient, “my helper,” for being attacked, for persevering against those breaking in.

¶ Fifth love gives life to the dead because it is life eternal, Eccli. 4[:13]: “He that loves her, loves life.” For following upon future life, four things are necessary, namely, to be absolved from an old detaining fault, to be liberated from sin added powerlessly, to be informed of grace freely given, make yourself be invested in beneficent glory. First God made us by love, Apo. 1[:5]: “Who has loved us and washed us from our sins.” Eph. 2[:4]: “But God, (who is rich

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in mercy,) for his exceeding charity,” etc. The great charity of God is evident in creation, greater in its governance, greatest in its redemption. But least in glorification. Concerning these four it is said in Heb. 1[:2-3]: “By whom also he made the world,” as for the first, “upholding all things by word of his power,” as for the second, etc.

¶ Sixth it justifies the command, Deut. 5[:10]: “Showing mercy unto many thousands, to them that love him.” Eccli. 3[:8]: “A time of love.” Third he pours in grace, Psal. [83:12]: “For God loves mercy and truth, the Lord will give grace and glory.” Fourth he gave glory, 2 Tim. 4[:7]: “I have fought a good fight,” etc.

¶ James 2[:5]: “Has not God chosen the poor.” He encourages, [1] John 5[:2]: “When we love God, and” not the world. [1 John 2:15]: “Love not the world, nor the things which are in the world. If any man loves the world,” etc. In ancient times it was as if a broad opinion by the apostles against those not loving God. For Paul [1] Cor. 16[:22] said “if any man loves not our Lord Jesus, let him be anathema, maranatha,” that is, excommunicated. But whoever loves the world does not love the Lord Jesus according to that of James 4[:4]: “A friend of this world, becomes an enemy of God.” Therefore, whoever loves the world is excommunicated. Therefore Rom. 12[:2] it is said “be not,” by desiring, “conformed,” by imitating, “to this world,” wicked. But be reformed who first was formed by nature but after was deformed by sin. Reform now by grace in the newness of your senses. New things are more accustomed to be perceived by someone as a new picture to be seen, a new song to be heard, a new flower to be smelled, a new food to be tasted, a new garment to be felt. Therefore, be reformed in the newness of your spiritual senses just as truth in beholding, obedience in hearing, emitting the odor of a good reputation, a holy action in touch, a great devotion in taste.

¶ And note that we must assist our neighbor in his need, teach him in his unknowing. Wherefore what is commanded in Matt. 22[:39]: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” It is not to be understood that in substance of a wife and children are things to be spent that a neighbor should be equal. But that from our superabundance if he is in need he should be helped just as we wish to be helped. Because if we wish evils to be said of us neither in our presence nor in our absence, however they are true, wherefore then do we hear such things and perhaps

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we say of our neighbor when this is against the law of God. Therefore, you do these things as you wish others to do unto you. Therefore, it is posited that if you have taken a temporal good from a neighbor, who would absolve you without restitution, if you have the means to repay, certainly no one. But to defame a neighbor is more serious than to take away his temporal good according to that of the Prov. [22:1]: “A good name is better than great riches.” Therefore, this cannot be absolved unless his reputation is restored, but this is difficult, because, first, the defamer must replace another matter concerning him. And second, the relator another matter. And third, [the listener] another matter. How, therefore, can the first defamer call everything back? Therefore [Matt. 19:19] love “your neighbor as yourself.”

¶ For God did not at the beginning make one man of gold from whom all [the nobles] are propagated, and another man of clay from whom the commoners proceed. But according to Gregory in his *Pastoral Care*,[[4]](#endnote-4) nature begot all men equal, but fault set one man over another. From which, therefore, all men are of the same kind. No one ought to be despised by another. For from the same grain comes forth chaff and flour, from the same root the rose and the thorn. From the same tree sweet fruit and spoiled. But you say to me how can I love him who has done so much evil to me? I respond, you ought to love him as a friend in God, and an enemy on account of God, who thus commanded, [Luke 6:27-28]: “Love your enemies and pray for them that persecute and calumniate you.”

¶ Certainly the evil neighbor is like God’s rod by which the elect are purged, who in the end, unless he corrects himself will be cast into the fire of hell. Just as the father makes the son happy, whom he has beaten, by throwing the rod into the fire. And then according to the Psal. [57:11]: “The just shall rejoice when he shall see the revenge.” You ought not to impute the evil you feel to the stick, but to the one striking. Thus, neither should you impute to the enemy of man, but to the devil whose instrument is the evil man, according to that of Psal. [77:49]: “Which he sent by evil angels.”

¶ Again, another consideration is because this one who is now evil could be good, and especially through your patience seen by him, as happens concerning many branches of knowledge. Thus, therefore the neighbor is to be loved in this as he was made, namely, in nature, in body, and in soul. But not in this as he is a sinner. For in this way God loves the sinner, Wis. 11[:25]: “You hate none of the things

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which you have made.” Wherefore, however, we must love in our neighbor what nature has formed, not that which vice has deformed.

¶ Wherefore, it is narrated concerning the three companions[[5]](#endnote-5) at the table of a certain important man. To those seated, after the luncheon, a single apple was given. But it was partly spoiled. One of them ate his apple entirely. But on account of the abomination, he quickly vomited it up. And therefore, he was said to be a glutton and uncivil. Which seeing the second did not wish to taste hardly anything of his apple. Wherefore he was also said to be uncivil and not brought up well. But the third separated out the rottenness from his fruit and ate the rest. And wherefore he himself was judged to be polite.

¶ Thus morally some love others indifferently because nothing in love displeases, but in the end, it is necessary to vomit up such ones if they ought to be saved. There are others to whom nothing is pleasing about others, neither in word nor deed. And there is a third sort who see what is good in another and approve of, what is evil they reject. Only these love orderly, according to that of Jer. 15[:19]: “If you will separate the precious from the vile, you shall be as my mouth.” But I fear that many do not love man, not for himself, but for his possessions. In this they are like the one who does not love his mouth for itself, but for the attendant meat, which when spoiled he throws in the dirt.

¶ The example is of the apple seller who when he has fruit, he is well patronized, but otherwise not. But this one does not want charity, rather the Prov. 17[:7]: “He that is a friend loves at all times.”

1. Gregory, *XL Homiliarum in Evangelia* 33.4 (PL 76:1241): Quid, fratres mei, esse dilectionem credimus, nisi ignem? et quid culpam, nisi rubiginem? [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. Augustine, Confessiones 13.9 (LCL 27:350-351):  in bona voluntate pax nobis est. corpus pondere suo nititur ad locum suum.  pondus non ad ima tantum est, sed ad locum suum. ignis sursum tendit, deorsum lapis; ponderibus suis aguntur, loca sua petunt. oleum infra aquam fusum super aquam attollitur, aqua supra oleum fusa infra oleum demergitur; ponderibus suis aguntur, loca sua petunt.

 In having goodwill do we find peace. Under its own weight a body gravitates to its proper place; that gravitation is not always downward, but rather to that proper place. Fire’s natural path is upward, that of stone is downward: they have their own gravitational impetus, they make for their proper place. When oil is poured under water, it rises above the water’s surface; when water is poured onto oil, it sinks below the oil: they have their own gravitational impetus, they make for their proper place. [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. Augustine, *Sermones de diversis* 350.3 (PL 39:1534): Quapropter, fratres, sectamini charitatem, dulce ac salubre vinculum mentium, sine qua dives pauper est, et cum qua pauper dives est. Haec in adversitatibus tolerat, in prosperitatibus temperat; in duris passionibus fortis, in bonis operibus hilaris…. [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. Gregory, *Regulae pastoralis* 2.6 (PL 77:34): liquet quod omnes homines natura aequales genuit, [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
5. *Fasciculus morum*, ed. Siegfried Wenzel (pp. 190-193): Unde narratur de tribus sociis ad mensam cuiusdam magni positis, quibus in fine prandii tria poma apponebantur, sicud largitur in yeme fructus *pur deynte*, quorum singula alquantulum in una parte putrida erant. Unus ergo istorum trium pomum suum accepit et comedit totalister, scilicet, corruptum cum integro. Et cito post tantam sensit abhominacionem quod illud oportuit expuere. Unde gulososus reputabatur. Quod videns alius de pomo suo noluit gustare; unde ineducatus dicebatur. Set tercius accepit pomum suum et separavit corruptum ab integro, et quod bonum erat et sanum gustavit, reliquum reiecit; unde iste curialis dicebatur. Revera sic istis diebus aliqui sic fatue diligunt quod quicquid fecerint illi quos diligunt, sive bene sive male, in nullo displicet. Etcerte tales sumunt corruptum cum integro. Set certe ille amor non valet, quia cum venerint ad propriam conscienciam in fine, velint nolint, propter abhominacionem corrupti facti oportet totum illum amorem expellere. Alii autem sunt qui tantum alios detestantur quod quicquid fecerint, sive bene sive male, omnia displicent. Et ille totum pomum, idest totam vita proximi, abicit. Et hic nulla dilectio apparet set odium apertissimum. Set certe sunt alii qui quicquid vident in proximo de bono accipiunt et gaudent, malum vero abiciunt et detestantur. Et certe isti tantum caritative et ordinate diligunt; Ieremie 15: “Si separaveris preciosum a vili, quasi os meum eris.”

There is a story about three companions who were invited to the table of a nobleman. At the end of the meal they were offered three apples, as in winter fruit is served for dessert. Each one was partially spoiled. Then one of the three companions took his apple and ate it all up, the spoiled part with the whole. Soon thereafter he felt such a revulsion that he had to spit it out. For that he was considered a glutton. The second chap, when he saw this, did not want to taste his apple at all; and for that he was reckoned unmannered. But the third took his apple and cut the spoiled part from what was whole; the latter he ate, the rest he threw away; and for that he was said to be a gentleman. In similar fashion, some people nowadays love so foolishly that whatever those whom they love do, be it good, be it evil, it never displeases them at all. Certainly, such people take the spoiled part with the whole. But such love is no good, for when they gain the proper insight in the end, because of their revulsion to the spoiled part they willy-nilly must give up that love altogether. Others there are who detest other people so much that whatever they have done, it good, be it evil, it displeases them altogether. And these throw the entire apple away, that is, their neighbor’s entire life. In this there is no love but only open hatred. But truly, there are still others who accept and rejoice in whatever good they find in their neighbor, but what there is evil they reject and detest. These alone love with true and well-ordered charity; Jeremiah 15: “If you will separate the precious from the vile, you will be as my mouth.” [↑](#endnote-ref-5)