Worcester F 80 Distinctiones

83 Man ought to attend (*Homo debet attendere*)

Man ought to address two things in himself, namely, his dignity, lest he become worthless, and his weakness, lest he become proud. The dignity of man is evident in four things.

First, in creation because he was made to the image of God and this binds him to the world lest anywhere, he cast out the image. But alas because of the Psal. [48:13]: “Man when he was in honor did not understand.”

¶ Second, in recreation because he was redeemed by the blood of Christ. This binds him to the humility of obedience. For a thing bought belongs to the buyer, and not his own. Therefore, he ought to be subject to the buyer, Rom. 6[:6]: “Our old man is crucified with him, that it may be destroyed,” etc. [Rom. 5:18]: “As by the offence of one, unto all men to condemnation,” etc. Psal. [8:5]: “What is man that you are mindful of him?” But, alas, because Eccli. 9[:14-15]: “A little city, and few men,” etc.

¶ Third, in justification and this binds man to love, the sick man loves the physician healing even one member. Therefore, God is to be loved more who heals the whole, Psal. [102:13]: “As a father has compassion on his children.” Gen. 6[:3]: “My spirit shall not remain,” that is, my indignation, “in man, because he is flesh.” But because [Psal. 13:2]: “The Lord hath looked down from heaven, to see.”

¶ Fourth, in beatification because no other corporal creature is capable of beatitude, [1] Tim. 2[:4]: “God will have all men to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth.” And this binds him to perseverance of good works. For one who can and does not, will not merit, Job 14[:14]: “Shall man that is dead, think you, live again?” Eccli. 27[:12]: “A holy man continues in wisdom as the sun,” etc. But, alas, because “the holy man is perished out of the earth, and there is none upright among men,” Mich. 7[:2].[[1]](#endnote-1)

¶ Again, the fragility of man appears in four ways. In nature, in fault, in ignorance, and in wretchedness.

¶ In nature certainly in another four ways. And first, on the part of the body because when the other creatures, such as those made of purer elements, man however from mud, Gen. 2[:7]: “God formed man of the slime of the earth.” But also, this links to humility. As a peacock[[2]](#endnote-2) when he looks at his feet puts down his tail, Eccli. 17[:31]: “All men are earth and ashes.” Job [30:19]: “I am compared to dirt and

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am likened to embers and ashes.” Mud is made of water and dust and both remaining, but ashes are made of wood and fire and both lacking. Therefore, why do you take pride in mud? Wherefore do you glory in ashes.[[3]](#endnote-3)

¶ Second, on the part of the soul, because he is strong to sin. And this binds him to caution. So, the bee[[4]](#endnote-4) flying through the wind takes a little pebble in his feet lest he be blown away by the wind. Eve did not have this when she consented to the devil, Eccli. 15[:14]: “God made man from the beginning and left him in the hand of his own counsel,” etc. But, alas, because “God made man right, and he has entangled himself,” etc., Eccle. 7[:30]. Third, on the part of the agreement, because he is strong for dying. And this binds him to timorousness. So, a dog when he sees a stick, a bird the snare is in fear, Gen 2[:17]: “In what day so ever you shall eat of it, you shall die the death.” But, alas, because through sin we have the potential of dying we are led into act, Rom. [5:12]: “Wherefore by one man” [Wis. 2:24] “death came into the world.”

¶ Fourth, on the part of all of these, because he is powerless after the fall to be restored through himself, and this binds him to frequent prayer, Psal. [77:39]: “A wind that goes and returns not.”

¶ Again, in fault the fourfold fragility of man is evident. First since he was born in original sin, just as a grain with its husk, a nut with its shell, Job 15[:14]: “What is man that he should be without spot,” and clean, Psal. [50:7] “For behold I was conceived in iniquities.” Second, because he is overwhelmed by venial sin, just like a ship by the waves. The flesh by the worms, Eccle. 7[:21]: “There is no just man upon earth, that does good,” etc. Third, because he is prone to mortality, just as idle iron to rust, clothes to the gnawing worm, Gen. 8[:21]: “For the imagination and thought of man’s heart are prone to evil.” But also, this binds him both to circumspection and trembling, Prov. 28[:14]: “Blessed is the man that is always fearful.” Fourth because it is difficult for hard good things, just as the merry maker for abstaining, the one in decline for burdens, Rom. 7[:15, 24]: “I do not that good which I will. Unhappy man that I am, who shall deliver me?” etc. This binds him to the imitation of the just, Prov. 27[:17]: “Iron sharpens iron, so a man sharpens the countenance of his friend.”

¶ Again the fragility of man is evident in ignorance. For man does not know his future state, his death date, or the heart of another. First, a man has ignorance of his state, just as a mole does not see as far as his death, Eccle. 9[:1]: “A man knows not whether he be worthy of love, or hatred.” This binds him to a multiplicity of good works, just as a man in the dubious case multiples his advocates, Mich. 6[:8]: “I will show you, O man, what is good, and what God requires of you: Verily, to do judgment, and to love mercy, and to walk solicitously,” etc.

¶ Second, of future mishaps, just as one navigating in the sea, Eccle. 8[:6-7]: “Great affliction for man: Because he is ignorant of things past, and things to come he cannot know by any messenger.” Vulgarly it is said, He will not know when

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evil will take him (*Nuyl ne siet quant mail luy prent.*) And this binds him to the consideration of himself, Eccle. 7[:1]: “What needs a man to seek things that are above him, whereas he knows not what is profitable for him in his life.”

¶ Third, man does not know the day of his death and its circumstances, such as when, where, or how he will die, Eccle. 9[:12]: “Man knows not his own end,” etc. And this binds him to a contempt of present prosperity, which is useful to do for Christ, just like one sailing throws out temporal goods, Matt. 16[:26]: “For what does it profit a man, if he gains the whole world?”

¶ Fourth, he does not know the heart of another, [1] Kings 16[:7]: “Man sees those things that appear, but the Lord beholds the heart.” And this binds him to an avoidance of a suspicious judge, Rom. 2[:1]: “You are inexcusable, O man, whosoever you are that judges. For wherein you judge another, you condemn yourself.”

¶ Again, in misery the fragility of man is evident in four ways. First, on account of the multiplication of penalties. For he is like a weathervane, just like a toad between the runners of a sled, Job 5[:7]: “Man is born to labor.” And this binds him to patience and hope of reward, Job 33[:16]: “Teaching instructs man in what they are to learn,” etc.

¶ Second, on account of the certitude of death. For our life is vanishing just like smoke and vapor, Psal. [88:49]: “Who is the man that shall live, and not see death?” And this binds man to the meditation of death, Eccle. 11[:8]: “If a man lives many years,” etc.

¶ Third, because of the poverty of death, Psal. [48:17-18]: “Be not afraid, when a man shall be made rich.” Job 27[:19]: “The rich man when he shall sleep shall take away nothing with him.”

¶ Fourth, on account of the perilousness of damnation. Because it is for man just like a fish in a river, just like a captive in the prison of an abbot, that is, the face of man is like a fish of the sea, for there the greater devours the lesser.

1. At this point F 128 adds the following: Again, the dignity of man is evident in this that God placed him in the sweet light, namely, as the light of the senses relates to the body, the light of the intellect relates to the soul. About which see below, chapter [212] Light (*Lux*). [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. Cf. Bartholomeus Anglicus, *De proprietatibus rerum* 12.31 (1505, p. 236b): Vidcens autem pedum suorum deformitatem quasi erubescit, et velut non attendens predicta pennarum pulcritudinem eas subito deprimit et submittit. [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. Cf. Innocent III, *De miseria* 1.2 (PL 217:703): «Comparatus sum, ait Job, luto, et assimilatus sum favillae et cineri (Job XXX).» Lutum efficitur [Col.0703C] ex aqua et pulvere, utroque manente. Cinis autem fit ex ligno et igne, utroque deficiente. Expressum mysterium, sed alias melius exprimendum, quid ergo lutum superbis? de quo pulvis extolleris? unde cinis gloriaris? [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. Virgil, *Georgics* 4.194-196 (LCL 63:232-233): et saepe lapillos, ut cumbae instabiles fluctu iactante saburram, tollunt, his sese per inania nubila librant.

   and often they raise tiny stones, as unsteady barques take up ballast in a tossing sea, and with these balance themselves amid the unsubstantial clouds. [↑](#endnote-ref-4)