Worcester F 80 Distinctiones

9 Friendship (*Amicitia*)

Friendship is a table issue, that is, a “meat-friend,” who while he is called to the tables and livery promises to be of help, but when that is lacking, he is lacking in his promises, Eccli. 6[10]: “There is a friend a companion at the table, and he will not abide in the day of distress.” Such a friend is the flesh which while he feeds well promises himself as a friend. A spiritual [friend promises] to labor well in the Lord’s office for the kingdom of God. But when he is placed in another labor or penitence immediately, he murmurs and is recalcitrant. Wherefore Bernard,[[1]](#endnote-1) this is the voice of the soul, I have the marvelous companion in the flesh, namely, my flesh with me, for, it wants to reign with me, but it does not want to labor with me. Such ones today are carnal neighbors for whom while it is well for them, they promise to die as benefactors, according to that of the Psal. [48:19]: “He will praise you when you shall do well to him.”

¶ But when the benefactor dies or when he suffers the adversities of years, then he is handed over more to oblivion and another is loved in his place.

¶ Others are friends in name only, that is, “fickle friends,” who promise everything but do nothing. Such a friend is worldly, because in the beginning of death he gives nothing to the friend. But afterwards he carries off [everything] except the hairshirt, Eccli. 37[:1]: “Every friend will say: I also am his friend.”

¶ Thirdly there are hostile friends, that is, “false friends,” who knowingly feign friendship so that when opportunity presents, they do harm and deceive, Eccli. 12[:15]: “An enemy speaks sweetly with his lips, but in his heart, he lies in wait, to throw you [into a pit].” Such friendship Judas showed to Christ when he kissed him, [Matt. 26:49]. And Joab to Amasa, [2 Kings 20:10]. Such

a friend is the devil whom no one ought to believe. Because according to the saying of [1] Peter [5:8]: “Your adversary,” he does not say friend, he seems to be “the devil, as a roaring lion, goes about seeking,” etc.

¶ The fourth friend is real and true, that is “a safe friend,” and such a one is proven true in adversity more than in prosperity, because then it is not known whether fortune is loved or the person, Eccli. 12[:8]: “A friend shall not be known in prosperity.” Oh, how many today follow great men and feign to love them who however love not them but their possessions. Wherefore Seneca: the crows followed the cadavers, the wolves followed the bodies, the flies followed the honey, the ants followed the grain, but this crowd did not follow him [Dionysius the tyrant] as a man, but as prey. But in adversity the loyal friend puts aside himself and his possessions, Prov. 17[:17]: “He that is a friend loves at all times.” Such a friend was Christ who not only sacrificed his possessions but also himself. Therefore Eccli. 6[:15]: “Nothing can be compared to a faithful friend.”

To which that is worthwhile what Barlaam[[2]](#endnote-2) narrates how a certain one counseled his son that he makes for himself friends. Who seeing three near neighbors to himself, he sought from one how he might be able to acquire his friendship. And that one: “I am rich. But I need laborers because if you wish to obligate yourself to my works, I will be a friend to you.”

¶ And it was done. Afterwards he asked the same thing from another who responded: “I am poor. But if you give me many things, I will be your friend.” Which was also done by both giving and entrusting. Then he asked the same thing from the third one, who responded: “I do not need money or work. If you will often call upon me, I will be your friend.” Which was done. Wherefore the son came to his father saying he had acquired three friends, which the father warned him that he should prove them saying that the king accused him. Of which the first one said: “I will throw out betrayers of the king from my house and I will carry away your goods.” The second said: “I will lead a traitor to the gallows for hanging.” The son returning reported all to his father.

¶ The father assigned him [to go] to his one remaining friend, who said to him: “If it is theft carry your guilt to me. If it is betrayal impose upon me and I will die for you. The first friend is the world that in the end corrupts. The second is the flesh and

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carnal friends who lead one to the grave. The third is the devil. The fourth is Christ.

1. Bernard of Clairvaux, *Sermones in Cantica Canticorum* 21.2 (PL 183:87 3):  Et propterea volunt omnes te frui, at non ita et imitari; conregnare cupiunt, sed non compati.

Cf. Sermon 21: The love of the Bride, the Church, for Christ: All men therefore wish to enjoy you, but not to the extent of following your example; they will reign with you but not suffer with you. [Bernard Song of Songs 20 (clerus.org)](http://www.clerus.org/bibliaclerusonline/en/c0t.htm) [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. James of Voragine, *The Golden Legend* 180: Saints Barlaam and Josaphat (Ryan pp. 741-752 [747]: Now the first friend is the possession of riches, for which a man will incur many perils, yet when death, the end, comes, all he gets from his riches is a few poor cloths for his burial. The second friend is composed of wife, children, and parents, who come only as far as the grave and then return home to take care of their own affairs. The third friend is made up of faith, hope, charity, almsgiving, and all the good works that can go in ahead of us when we go out of our bodies, can intercede with God for us, and can free us from hostile demons. [↑](#endnote-ref-2)