102 On the Right hand (*Dextra*)

According to Isidore, book 11, chapter 9, of the *Etymologies*,[[1]](#endnote-1) on the right hand (*dextra*) is said to be from giving (*dando*), because by this hand the pledge of peace is given, and this hand is the witness of faith. Wherefore the Apostle says in Gal. 2[:9]: “They gave to me the right hands of fellowship.” Again, the right hand of the Father is said to be the beatitude which is given to the saints; his left hand is said to be the affliction to be given to the wicked. Wherefore also on the right-hand part the disciples caught fish, Luke [5:6]. Along the present journey the elect seem to be on the left-hand part, because here they are as if lightly esteemed, Prov. 4[:27]: “Those ways are perverse which are on the left hand.” But in the general resurrection that will be verified, Job 14[:15]: “To the work of your hands you shall reach out your right hand.”

¶ For, just as in the figure of Job, the hand of Joseph cancelled the hate by blessing the sons of Jacob, Gen. 45[:14]. If those in the present are placed at the right hand of prosperity, in the end they will be placed by God the Father at the left hand of suffering. Wherefore Matt. 25[:33]: “He shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on his left,” and he will say to them, etc. Prov. 3[:16]: “Length of days is in her right hand, and in her lefthand riches and glory.”

¶ Again, by the righthand prosperity is indicated, by the left is adversity. To this it comes to pass, that when two lines intersect each other, that one which first was on the right in the end will be on the left and vice versa. But towards a natural death the progress is as if by the line, and in death it is similar as in the life of the rich man and the poor man, where he who was first at the right hand of prosperity, afterwards he will be at the left hand of adversity and vice versa. Just as it is evident in the rich man and Lazarus, Luke 16[:20]. Let us flee therefore those things that are on the left hand, if we wish to have those that are on the right.

Wherefore, Gregory, *Super Ezechielem*, the second part, homily 7,[[2]](#endnote-2) all of us who strive for eternal life, we ought to have the palm on the right and on the left side. On the right side he has the palm whom prosperous things did not elevate; on the left side because adverse things did not cast him down. Wherefore as if from either side Paul carried the palm who said: “By the armor of justice on the right hand and on the left; by honor and dishonor, by evil report and good report; as deceivers, and yet true” [2 Cor. 6:7-8].

1. Isidore, *Etymologiarum* 11.1.68 (PL 82:406): Dextra vocatur a dando, ipsa enim pignus pacis datur, ipsa fidei testis atque salutis adhibetur, et hoc est illud apud Tullium: Fidem publicam jussu senatus dedi, id est, dextram. Unde et Apostolus: Dextras dederunt, mihi et Barnabae, societatis. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. Gregory, *Homilia in Ezechielem* 2.7.15 (PL 76:1022-23): Omnes enim qui ad vitae aditum tendimus, et ex dextro et ex sinistro latere habere palmam debemus. Quod enim hinc et inde dicitur, latus utrumque signatur. A dextro igitur palmam habet is quem prospera non extollunt; a sinistro palmam habet is quem adversa non dejiciunt. Quasi ex utraque parte portabat Paulus palmam cum diceret: Per arma justitiae a dextris et a sinistris, per gloriam et ignobilitatem, per infamiam et bonam famam, ut seductores, et veraces (II Cor. VI, 7). [↑](#endnote-ref-2)