394 Vine (*Vinea*)

A vine can be called the church or religion. For just as the vine has labor in the workers, greenness in the foliage, odor in the flowers, and sweetness in the fruits, so the place of the Church or religion has labor in corporal penance, odor of general reputation, greenness of spiritual life, sweetness of spiritual joy.

Concerning the first, the vine has labor in the workers. For now it is dug around, now pruned, now propagated, now extended by the branches and tied up. So many labors are needed in the cultivation of the Christian life, because it is dug around by the love of contrition, it is pruned by expulsion of confession, it is tied to the stake by submission of obedience, it is extended in the shoots by the execution of worthy satisfaction. Wherefore the labor of this is to live significantly as expressed in that gospel parable, Matt. 21[:33] where that householder, that is, God the creator leads some to his vineyard in the morning of their youth, some in the middle of their age, some in the evening of their old age, according to that [Eccle. 11:6]: “In the morning sow your seed, and in the evening let not your hand cease.” But in the end, he commands the wages to be paid. Therefore, according to the counsel of wisdom, [Eccle. 9:10]: “Whatsoever your hand is able to do, do it earnestly.” Because it is not now the time of leisure, but of exercise. Therefore, work in rooting out vices, in sowing virtuous habits, because this householder leads in workers who are not lazy, but alas I fear that in this vineyard are some few workers, but many who are lazy. For slothfulness holds some, the hardship of work terrifies some, and sexual wantonness of the flesh holds some back. Wherefore wisdom is conquered, Prov. 24[:30-31]: “I passed by the field of the slothful man, and by the vineyard of the foolish man: and behold it was all filled with nettles, and thorns had covered the face thereof.” By nettles which burn the body and it is the fire of nature, according to Papias,[[1]](#endnote-1) sexual wantonness of the flesh kills, by which the mind is inflamed, and the body is consumed, by such matters the vine is satiated when desires are indulged. By the thorns is expressed the cure of the body which works on the upper part of this vine when by the labor of penance, he makes it withdraw, but we do not thus.

¶ Second, the vine has greenness in its foliage, that is, worldliness in its affections. For just as among all colors green is the color more pleasing to the eye, just as among the other virtues when clean riches occur it pleases. Concerning this greenness, it is said in Ezech. [17:8]: “It was planted in a good ground upon many waters, that it might bring forth branches, and that it might become a large vine.” Explain because of the vine therefore the greenness of cleanliness.

¶ Third, the vine has odor in the flowers. Wherefore that of Can. 2[:13]: “The vines in flower yield their sweet smell.” The vines flowering through good conversation give the odor, by the conveyance of good reputation. These vines are religious men who ought to flower with various flowers. Hence with roses of charity, daughters of chastity, hence with violets of humility, hence with heliotropes of truth, etc. Wherefore Can. [2:5]: “Stay me up with flowers, compass me about with apples: because I languish with love.” And elsewhere in the same, Can. [1:15]: “Our bed is flourishing.” And these flowers with their odor fill the world, according to that of the Apostle, [2] Cor. [2:15-16]: “We are the good odor of Christ,” in every place, but see what follows, “To the one the odor of death unto death.” For from the odor of good reputation evils die, just as a toad at the odor of the flowering vine. However, others are enlivened and attracted by the good odor. Wherefore they are gathered to call that of Can. 1[:3]: “Draw me: we will run after you to the odor of your ointments.” But oh alas, because today the odor of this reputation of the foolish in disrepute harms because perhaps by chance from the fresh fervor they give an odor, but afterwards being lacking they convert the odor into stench, so that now it is verified concerning these, that of Job 15[:33]: “He shall be blasted as a vine when its grapes are in the first flower.” Vines are easily harmed in the first flower at a little frost, so those beginning in flower are harmed at a little temptation or tribulation, because often detractors rely on turning backwards a good reputation. About which under the metaphor of the foxes it is said in Can. [2:15]: “Catch us the little foxes that destroy the vines: for our vineyard has flourished.”

¶ Fourth, vines have a sweet taste in their fruits. Wherefore that of Can. [1:13]: “A cluster (*botrus*) of cypress my love is to me, in the vineyards of Engaddi.” At Engaddi is a safe habitation, just as is recounted in first Kings [24:1] where it is said that “David dwelt in strong holds of Engaddi.” Through which the enclosed places are understood which are safest for dwelling. A cluster (*botrus*) is a collection of vines in one bunch. Cyprus is an island in the Mediterranean Sea, where there are not born the strongest and sweetest vines, but then he is beloved of God, a cluster of cypress. When in this multitude of good works which are generated from the sweetness of holy devotion in which God is delighted, according to that of Amos [9:14]: “They shall plant vineyards and drink the wine of them.” This is, they are intoxicated by this wine of devotion on the way until they are drunk on the wine of glorification in the fatherland.

1. Papias, (Venetiis, 1485, fol. 108): Vrtica dicta quod tactius eius corpus adurat: est enim igneae naturae et tactu perurit.

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