220 Hand (*Manus*)

According to the Philosopher in the second book of *De anima*,[[1]](#endnote-1) the hand is the organ of organs, because by the hand man provides necessities for himself. Thus, spiritually through the works of the hands man can provide the necessities for his soul, Psal. [127:2]: “For you shall eat the labors of your hands.” Wherefore concerning the good woman, it is said in Prov. last chapter [31:13, 20, 31]: “She has wrought by the counsel of her hands.” And “She has opened her hand to the needy,” and it follows, “Give her of the fruit of her hands.”

¶ Concerning the evil man who has hands which are dry, it is said in Job 21[:16]: “Yet because their good things are not in their hand, may the counsel of the wicked be far from me.” For a man ought not contemplate to give so that he ought not for his and others’ necessities vex himself, as Gregory says, *Super Ezechielem,* 1,[[2]](#endnote-2) the hand of man under their garments does not suffice for man to speak well with his mouth nor prevent the evil by his mouth lest he speak that to him, Gen. 27[:22]: “The voice indeed is the voice of Jacob; but the hands are the hands of Esau.” Therefore, it is proper that Gideon gave to his people “trumpets in their hands,” Judges 7[:16], with which they put to flight the enemy. And David playing the psalter by hand put to flight the evil spirit from Saul, 1 Kings 16[:17]. Wherefore to the letter music which becomes the mediating hand profits more to lifting the heart of man than what happens only by the mouth, so morally in the figure of these those holy animals, Ezech. 1[:8]: They had “the hands under their wings” which are the wings of contemplation. They had the hands of good work. Wherefore Aristotle says, 1, *De animalibus*, c. 7,[[3]](#endnote-3) that when the lines are inside the hand of man are long extending across the whole palm, they signify longevity of life and when short a brevity of life, so spiritually they who persevere in good works can hope for a longevity of eternal life, otherwise not. Wherefore Chrysostom, homily 12, *Super Mattheum*,[[4]](#endnote-4) the right hand of man is the will of the soul; the left hand is the will of the body. Which things are thus desired because the soul is created in its will, so that it may decline what it desired, whether for good, or for evil. But the flesh is not thus created in its will. Therefore, the saints are said to exercise the right hand of God; the sinners in truth who follow the flesh are said to be the left.

¶ Again, the hand is read to be triple: of God, of the just man, and of the evil man. The hand of God is read to be enclosing and governing like the one who is navigating with a ship in hand, Psal. [94:4]: “In his hand are all the ends of the earth.”

Again, protecting and covering just as the any prelate under the highest pontiff, Eccli. 10[:4-5]: “The power is in the hand of God, and of man,” namely, for presiding and preaching.

¶ Again, the hand of God is read to be punishing and restraining, namely, the unrepentant, as thieves in the hand of the judge, Eccli. 5[:22]: “If we do not penance, we shall fall into the hands of the Lord.”

¶ Again, sustaining and cherishing, namely, being obedient just as a monarch in the hand of the hand of an abbot, Sap. 3[:1]: “The souls of the just are in the hand of God, and he shall not touch them.”

Again, helping and lifting as is evident in many sick people healed. But because a sign leads into knowledge of a thing signified. Therefore, it is depicted by the crucifixion of Christ before men, but alas because in Psal. [77:42] it is said, “They remembered not his hand, in the day that he redeemed them from the hand of him that afflicted.” For this is the hand by which he created, governed, healed, redeemed, blessed, drew his own and conquered the devil, Isai. [17:10]: “Because you have not remembered your strong helper.” The hand of the just man ought to be extended according to six dimensions, because above to God by devotion, Psal. [140:2]: “The lifting up of my hands, as sacrifice.” So, Christ “While he blessed them, he was carried up to heaven,” Luke 24[:51]. Below to the needy through compassion, just as the sun extends its rays below for illuminating, Prov. last chapter [31:20]: “She has opened her hand to the needy.” So, Christ, Matt. 8[:3] by extending his hand cleansed the leprous, Psa. [103:28]: “When you open your hand, they shall all be filled with good.” On the right to the friend through promotion, Psal. [88:22]: “For my hand shall help him.” So, Christ, Matt. 9[:25]: “He took her by the hand.” And he rose on the left to the enemy through patience, Prov. 1[:24]: “I stretched out my hand, and there was none that regarded.” So, Christ on the cross, Isai. 65[:2]: “I have spread forth my hands all day to an unbelieving people.” Before to the spiritual worker plowing, Prov. last chapter [31:19]: “She hath put out her hand to strong things.” So, Christ, John 13[:5] where “He washed the feet of the disciples.” Where he fed the crowds a little behind for the time by a favor.

Just as a sailor throws heavy goods from a ship because of peril, Acts 27[:29]. Paul shaking from his hand the viper suffered nothing of evil, so Christ when he threw out the buyers and sellers from the temple. Therefore, according to that of Eccli. 4[:36]: “Let not your hand be stretched out to receive, when you should give.” The hand of the wicked is read as extended to gorge through gluttony, Eccli. 31[:21]: “If you sit among many, reach not your hand out,” etc. This is the hand of the dog, Psal. 21[:21]: “Deliver my soul from the sword: from the hand of the dog.”

Second, it is read in cleanliness to stain by lust, Isai. 1[:15]: “Your hands are full of blood.” This is the hand of the prostitute about which, Eccle. 7[:27]: “And I have found a woman more bitter than death,” and it follows “her hands are bands.”

¶ Third, it is read dryness by sloth, Matt. 12[:10]: “Behold I had a withered hand.” Because without power of working, Prov. 19[:24]: “The slothful hides his hand under his armpit.” This is the hand of a bear which is an animal slow of movement about which 1 Kings 17[:37]: “Out of the paw of the bear, he will deliver me.”

Fourth, it is read things collected for attracting by avarice, Ezech. 16[:49]: “They did not put forth their hand to the needy, and to the poor.”

1. Aristotle, *On the soul* 3.8 432a1-2 (Barnes 1:686): It follows that the soul is analogous to the hand; for as the hand is a tool of tools, so thought is the form of forms and sense the form of sensible things. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. Gregory, *Homiliae in Ezechielem* 1.3.9 (PL 76:809): Manus hominis sub pennis eorum. [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. Aristotle, *History of Animals* 1.15 493b31-33 (Barnes 1:786): The inner part of the hand is termed the palm', and is fleshy and divided by joints or lines: in the case of long-lived people by one or two extending right across, in the case of the short-lived by two, not so extending. [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. (Pseudo-)Chrysostom, *Opus imperfectum in Mattheum* Homilia 12 cap. 5.28 (PG 56:695): Dextra manus hominis est voluntas animae: sinistra autem manus voluntas corporis est. Haec autem corporea manus not est manus, sed organum manus illius. ... quoniam anima in arbitrio suo creata est, ad quod voluerit declinare, sive ad bonum, sive ad malum: et sub lege justitiae creata est, ut recta videat, recta audiat, et agat, et ambult. Partes autem corporis sinistrae dicuntur, quia non est in arbitrio suo creata caro, ut, siue ad bonum, sive ad malum declinare voluerit, possit. [↑](#endnote-ref-4)