Worcester F 80 Distinctiones

162 Cloud in a cloud (*Nubes in nube notatur*)

Cloud. In a cloud is noted and confirmed the state of grace. For clouds the firmer they are the more dense.

¶ A cloud has three characteristics, splendor because it is illuminated by the sun, elegance because it is elevated above the earth, it has sweetness because it is removed from the sea. So, Paul in his conversion received the splendor of cognition, the elegance of contemplation, and the sweetness of benignity. In the first the error of infidelity is excluded. In the second the love of pleasure. In the third rancor of malignity. And thus through his faith he was illuminated by the rational, through his hope he was raised up to God by his desire, through his charity he was refrained from irascibility. Concerning the first, Gen. 9[:13]: “I will set my bow in the clouds” of heaven. This happens when the knowledge of the heavens is placed in the prophets or in the apostles. According to that of Isai. 60[:8]: “Who are these, that fly as clouds,” certainly they fly through a quick inclination, rain through erudition, thunder through communication, shake through work. These conditions the good preacher ought to have.

¶ Second A cloud has elegance, and this is because it is elevated above the earth. According to Pliny,[[1]](#endnote-1) a cloud is removed from the earth by forty

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furlongs (*stadia*), Job [7:15]: “My soul rather chooses hanging,” that is, removed from the earthly desires. However, if our affections or subjected, they will approach too close, and will be weighed down by earthly concerns.

¶ Third, this holy man has sweetness as if a cloud, because the earth is raised above the sea which in the sea it is salty, in the could it is sweet. Wherefore [3] Kings 18[:44]: “A little cloud,” small, “It arose out of the sea,” truly this holy man was like that cloud, small through humility, light without the weight of sin. And truly “It arose out of the sea,” and from the world which fears through pride, etc.[[2]](#endnote-2)

¶ Again the Virgin is called a cloud because she is lively through obedience, shiny through chastity, light through want. Certainly, there was a cloud for the sons of Israel indicative of the journey as a sign of the agreement in the temperament of the heat and air, Num. 14[:14]. Again, a cloud is light in motion, Isai. 60[:8]: “Who are these, that fly as clouds.” It is lofty in site, Isai. 14[:14]: “I will ascend above the height of the clouds.” It is useful in effect, Psal. [146:8]: “Who covers the heaven with clouds and prepares rain for the earth.” So, Mary was light as far as incorruption of fault, Isai. 19[:1]: “The Lord will ascend upon a swift cloud,” which is explained concerning the flesh of the virgin.

¶ Second, it was lofty through the conversation of life, Num. 10[:11]: “This cloud was taken up.” Third it was useful through perpetration of forgiveness, [3] Kings 18[:44-45]: “A little cloud arose out of the sea like a man’s foot,” and it follows, “and there fell a great rain.”

¶ Again just as a cloud is elevated from earthly matters, so Mary through casting off and oblivion of earthly affairs, Psal. [44:11]: “Forget your people, and your father’s house.” Upon which Bernard,[[3]](#endnote-3) she forgot that plan and house because she did not want the people to increase the children of succession nor to make the heredity of their father. Certainly, also all earthly things are considered as dung to profit Christ.

¶ Again just as a cloud is carried on high, so Mary through devotion. Wherefore Jerome, *Ad Eustochium*,[[4]](#endnote-4) new things are daily inflamed by the affections.

¶ Again just as a cloud is bedewed by rains, so Mary through grace, Psal. [71:6]: “He shall come down like rain upon the fleece,” because the heavenly one is bedewing and bedewed. Wherefore Anselm,[[5]](#endnote-5) O lady full and overflowing, etc. Again, Mary is like a cloud obscured through humility, Gen. 19[:9]: “I will come to you in the darkness of a cloud,” that is, in the humility of a virgin.

¶ Again just as a cloud is her coolness through chastity. For she tempers the concupiscence of man and the wrath of God. Eccli. 35[:26]: “The mercy of God is beautiful in the time of affliction,

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as a cloud of rain in the time of drought.” Psal. [104:39]: “He spread a cloud for their protection.” And Apo. 14[:14]: “I saw and behold a white cloud.”

1. Pliny, *Natural History*  2.21 (LCL 330:228-229): Posidonius non minus quadraginta stadiorum a terra altitudinem esse in quam nubila ac venti nubesque perveniant,…

   Posidonius holds that mists and winds and clouds reach to a height of not less than 5 miles from the earth, …

   plures autem nubes nongentis in altitudinem subire prodiderunt.

   The majority of writers, however, have stated that the clouds rise to a height of 111 miles. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. At this juncture F 128 adds: About which see above in the chapter [222] Sea (*Mare*) and chapter [239] World (*Mundus*). [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. Bernard, *De laudibus virginis matris* 3.3 (PL 183:72): Merito autem concupivit Rex decorem Virginis. Fecerat enim quidquid longe antea praemonita fuerat a patre suo David, dicente sibi: Audi, filia, et vide, et inclina aurem tuam, et obliviscere populum tuum et domum patris tui. Et si hoc feceris, concupiscet rex decorem tuum (Psal. XLIV, 11, 12). Audivit quippe et vidit, non ut quidam, qui audientes non audiunt, et videntes non intelligunt; sed audivit et credidit, vidit et intellexit. Et inclinavit aurem suam ad obedientiam, et cor suum ad disciplinam, et oblita est populum suum, et domum patris sui: quia nec populum suum augere prolis successione,   
   **[Col. 0072D]**nec domui patris sui relinquere curavit haeredem; sed quidquid honoris in populo, quidquid de paterna domo rerum terrenarum habere potuisset, omnia arbitrata est ut stercora, ut Christum lucrifaceret.  [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. Jerome, *Epistolae* 9.13 (PL 30:136): Puto quod quidquid cordis est, quidquid mentis, quidquid virtutis humanae, si totum adhibeas, non sufficiat ut cogitare valeas, quanto indesinenter cremabatur ardore pii amoris: quantis amovebatur repleta Spiritu sancto coelestium secretorum incitamentis: quia etsi diligebat Christum ex toto corde, et ex tota anima, et ex tota virtute, novis tamen quotidie inflammabatur praesentia absens desideriorum affectibus… [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
5. Anselm of Canterbury, *Orationes* 1 (PL 158:955):  O femina plena et superplena gratia, de cujus plenitudinis exundantia respersa sic revirescit omnis creatura! [↑](#endnote-ref-5)