Worcester F 80 Distinctiones

251 A Southern Land (*Terram australem*)

“You have given me a southern and dry land, give me also a land that is watered,” Josue 15[:19]. When in man there are three, body, soul, and spirit, according to that of the Apostle, [1] Thess. 5[:23]: “May the God of peace sanctify you in all things; that your whole spirit, and soul, and body, may be preserved blameless in the coming of our Lord.” They have a dry earth of which the body is desiccated from delight by abstinence, Gen. 1[:9]: “Let the waters be gathered together,” that is, the delights, “into one place,” that is, in marriage, “and let the dry land appear,” that is, continence in virgins and the chaste. They also have a watering further down, of which the soul under tribulation is in tears, John 16[:20]: “You shall lament and weep.” They however have a watering further up, of which the spirit for desire of the fatherland poured out tears, Psal. [41:4]: “My tears have been

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my bread, day and night,” etc. Such a field therefore or earth being so dry in the body. Thus, watered below in the soul, so watered above in the spirit, it is apt for producing the lily, the rose and the violet.

¶ For in a body so mortified by continence there grows the lily of chastity, which is precious for the fecundity of marriage, Isai. 56[:4-5]: “I will give to my eunuchs a name better than sons and daughters: an everlasting name.” Wis. 4[:1]: “O how beautiful is the chaste generation.” In the soul also watered by bitterness grows the rose of patience. Wherefore Augustine,[[1]](#endnote-1) every evil person either lives to be corrected, or by that one the good person may be exemplified. In the spirit therefore watering by devotion is born the violet of heavenly contemplation, Isai. 26[:9]: “My spirit within me in the morning early I will watch for you.”

¶ Triple certainly the earth is one which we seek about which Psal. [26:13]: “I believe to see the good things of the Lord in the land of the living.” Another which we do concerning which Gen. 1[:1]: “In the beginning God created heaven and earth.” Another which we do about which Gen. [3:19]: “You are of the earth.” And Job 9[:24]: “The earth is given into the hand of the wicked.” When someone becomes a traitor to his lord his land is given into plunder.

¶ Thus our flesh, when it consented to the devil, is exposed to miseries in which we ought to consider three things, namely, its vileness so that we may be humbled. For earth is the dross of all the elements from which man is made, Eccle. [3:20]: “All things were made of earth,” that is, man. Therefore Eccli. 10[:9]: “Why is earth and ashes proud?”

¶ Second, its struggle so that we may care for it solicitously. For the devil says that of Job 1[:7]: “I have gone around about the earth and walked through it.” Therefore, [1] Pet. 5[:8]: “Be sober and watch: because your adversary,” etc. For when the earth is not protected from robbers it is laid waste, Eccle. 10[:16]: “Woe to you, O land, when your king is a child.” A child does not care for justice.

¶ Third, its condition so that we cultivate it although it does not fructify. So, neither our flesh nor works of penitence have an effect, Prov. 28[:19]: “He that tills his ground, shall be filled with bread.” The flesh is like the evil rustic who wants to do nothing good unless he is beaten. And again, if it is attacked too much evil weeds come forth, Isai. 7[:24]: “Briars and thorns shall be in all

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the land.”

¶ Again, the earth is small in quantity, Jer. 4[:23]: “I beheld the earth, and lo it was void,” etc. Arid in quality, Gen. 1[:10]: “God called the dry land, Earth.” It is solid in firmness, Eccle. 1[:4]: “The earth stands forever.” Weak in dignity, Prov. 25[:3]: “The heaven above, and the earth beneath.” In the first, it is designated as brief in present joy in respect to heaven, just as an eye existing in heaven sees nothing but only a point. So, the mind elevated through contemplation thinks of earthly things as small, Acts 9[:8]: “Paul arose from the ground; and when his eyes were opened, he saw nothing.”

¶ Second, that the earth is arid in quality is understood the lack of courage of the timid, by which the evil are constrained lest they be moved to penitence, Matt. 24[:7] there will be on earth the pressure of the people by men drying up for fear.

¶ Third, the earth is solid by firmness through which is understood the hope of seeing the Lord and the solidness of remaining with him. Through the fourth, is designated the inordinate sorrow by reason of the another’s exaltation, Job 14[:19]: “The ground by little and little is washed away.”

¶ Again the earth is said to be the Blessed Virgin, according to that in Psal. [84:2]: “Lord, you have blessed your land.” Eccli. 38[:4]: “The Highest hath created medicines out of the earth, and a wise man will not abhor them.” And this on account of his humility, because “The heaven above, and the earth lies beneath,” Prov. 25[:3]. Again, on account of its firmness because with the apostles and others tottering, this one sands in faith, Eccle. 1[:4]: “One generation passes away,” as the generation of the apostle, “and another generation comes,” as the thief, “but the earth stands forever,” that is, the Blessed Virgin. Eccli. 1[:4]: Again, on account of fertility, Psal. [66:7]: “The earth has yielded her fruit.” And Isai. 45[:8]: “Let the earth be opened, and bud forth a savior.”

¶ Again, the earth is said to be the present Church because it is cold in the chastity of the virgins, low in the humility of the confessors, underfoot in the patience of the martyrs, fruitful in the teaching of the apostles, stabile in the truth of the prophets, spherical in the abundance of the patriarchs.

¶ Again, the earth is said to be ours by nature, Jer. 22[:29-30]: “O earth, earth, earth. Write.” Earth is said three times, because weighty things are hoped for in the world, obscured certainly by the ignorance of the truth, Amos 8[:9]: “I will make the earth dark in the day of light.” Again, defiled on account of the concupiscence of desire, Gen. 2[:7]: “God formed man of the slime of the earth.”

¶ Again difficult, mobile, on account of the difficulty for the good, Eccle. 1[:4]: “The earth stands forever.”

¶ Again, the earth is triply distinguished. For a certain supremacy as paradise, and a certain underworld as hell, a certain middle as this world.

¶ First the

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earth is desirable on account of many things. First, because it is wide and spacious. For it was given to many, it was not lessened.

¶ Not as the present land. There will be joy, living would be the joy of another, just as heat and splendor of a fire is not lessened by the application, Exod. 3[:8]: “I will bring them out of the land of Egypt into a good and spacious land.”

¶ Second, because to be always fertile and copious, which does not happen in this land, Deut. 8[:7]: “the Lord will bring you into a good land,” etc., up to “your bread.” Psal. [26:13]: “I believe to see the good things of the Lord in the land of the living.”

¶ Third, because fruitful without labor, Psal. [84:13]: “For the Lord will give goodness, and the earth shall yield her fruit,” as if saying, without our labor with goodness of God it will be fruitful.

¶ Fourth, because there is a pleasing society, Isai. 65[:9]: “My elect shall inherit” the earth, etc., Gen. 27[:43]: Arise, Jacob, that is, from the place to which you have inclined through love, etc. About which see above in chapter [245] To Stand Up (*Surgere*).

¶ This land is acquired by several ways. First, by legitimate purchase. This happens by the bequeathing of alms, Prov. last chapter [31:16]: “She has considered a field and bought it.” Psal. [36:26]: “He shows mercy and lends all day long.” Second, on account of voluntary exchange, by giving an escheat for eternity, Gen. 12[:1]: “Go forth out of your country, and from your kindred,” etc. Third, by bellicose acquisition which happens against adversaries with God’s helping, Psal. [36:11]: “The meek shall inherit the land.” Fourth, by hereditary succession which happens according to the model of Christ’s living, Matt. 5[:4]: “Blessed are the meek: for they shall possess the land.”

1. Augustine, *Enarratio in psalmos* 54.4 (PL 36:630): Omnis malus aut ideo vivit ut corrigatur, aut ideo vivit ut per illum bonus exerceatur. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)