Worcester F 80 Distinctiones

37 Consolation (*Consolacionem*)

Diverse people seek consolation in diverse ways. For some seek vainly in transitory things such as riches, delights, and honors, just like the she goat in the narrow places,[[1]](#endnote-1) the man suffering from dropsy is consoled in a superfluity of drink, Luke 6[:24]: “Woe to you that are rich, for you have here your consolation. But these things plainly are to be feared and rejected because however much greater so much heavier the following desolation, Apo. 18[:7]: “As much as she has glorified herself, and lived in delicacies, so much torment giver to her.” Therefore Psal. [76:3]: “My soul refused to be comforted.”

¶ Others, however, are consoled and well in spiritual goods, and this triply so because some in these look out for their neighbor, others in these look for God. Others in these look out for man himself.

¶ Concerning the first, doubly because either through a little reproof just as medicine although bitter, if it is tempered with sugar, therefore he is comforted, so in spiritual matters correction ought to be tempered with mercy, Gen. the last chapter [50:20]: “You thought evil against me.” Behold reprehension out of justice, but God turns that into good, behold mitigation out of mercy, Psal. [140:5]: “The just shall correct me in mercy and shall reprove me.”

¶ The second is useful instruction. So, the pilgrim is consoled in showing the way, the blind man in the recuperation of his sight. The example of both is Tob. [1:19] and in Ruth 2[:13]: “I have found grace in your in your eyes, my Lord, who has comforted me and has spoken to the heart of your handmaid.” But many speak not to the heart because they speak not out of devotion, but in the composition of words caressing the ears. In which on the other hand Psal. [118:49]: “Be mindful of your word to your servant, in which [you have given me hope].” Hear what hope because he is contrary it is a costly union, Zach. 10[:2]: “The dreamers have spoken in vanity, they comforted in vain.” Concerning these two, Psal. [22:4]: “Your rod,” correcting, “and your staff,” directing, “they have comforted me.”

¶ Concerning man himself, two things are consoling, namely, temperance in prosperity, just as excellence or deficiency of light

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confuses the eye. But light medium and proportioned is consoling. Let there be temperance in food, drink, and discursive words, let him sing spiritual consolation in the manner of harmony. But there are many just as the vessel without a lid from which quickly the heat evaporates, just as a city without a wall, which is easily attacked, Job 15[:11]: “Is it a great matter that God should comfort you? but your wicked words hinder this.”

¶ The second is patience in adversities, just as the Sirene is comforted by a period of rain, a fighter in good arms, a farmer in hope of harvest, the crow in the hatching of its chicks. Boethius, in book 3 of *The Consolation*,[[2]](#endnote-2) says that in the palace of Jove there were two jugs of wine. One most sweet, the other most bitter. But whoever wishes to taste the sweet must first taste of the bitter. The example of the rich man and Lazarus, Luke. 16[:25]: “Now he is comforted, you are tormented.” Psal. [93:19]: “According to the multitude of my sorrows in my heart, your comforts have given joy to my soul.” Therefore Job 6[:10]: “This may be my comfort, that afflicting me with sorrow, he spare not.”

1. Thomae Cisterciensis, *in Cantica Canticorum Commentarii* 9 (PL 206: 631): Item capra in arduis pascitur, et cogitatio justi in coelis delectatur. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. Boethius, *De consolatione philosophiae* 2, pr. 2 (PL 63.667-68): duo dolia, unum quidem malorum, alterum autem bonorum. in Jovis limine jacere didicisti? Quid si uberius de bonorum parte sumpsisti? Quid si a te non tota discessi? Quid si haec ipsa mei mutabilitas justa tibi causa est sperandi meliora? Tamen ne animo contabescas, et intra commune omnibus regnum locatus, proprio jure vivere desideres.

   Cf. Boethius, *The Consolation of Philosophy* 2 pr. 2 (LCL 74:182-183): Did you not learn as a youth that on Jupiter’s threshold there stand “two jars, the evils in one, the blessings in the other”? Suppose you have had more than your share of the goods; suppose I have not altogether deserted you; and suppose that this very changeableness of mine is a fair cause for you to hope for better things to come: still you must neither pine away, nor, set as you are in a kingdom which embraces all men, desire to live under a law peculiar to yourself.

   Nimirum Platonici videntes hominum mentes, quas conditas longe prius, quam corporibus conjunctas arbitrabantur, miseram unas, alias felicem vitam agere, finxerunt, duo ante fores Jovis esse vasa plena, unum quidem bonorum, alterum malorum, quorum alterutro potae mentes in corpora infunderentur, felicem propterea aut miseram. Bin terris sortem habiturae: quod Homerus Iliad sic expressit:

   Praeterea posuisse Jovem duo vasa loquuntur

   Ante fores primoque domus in limine coeli.

   Quae sint muneribus dandis mortalibus aegris

   Plena, bonis aliud, pejoribus illud abundet

   E quibus, ut voluit, Deus, omnia sortibus aequis

   Distribuit generi humano, simul omnia miscens,

   Nunc bona, nunc mala; nunc laeva, nunc lance secunda:

   Cui mala contigerint, curae hunc exponit iniquae.

   Tristibus aerumnis, miserique laboribus aevi:

   Vivet enim neque diis gratus, neque gentibus ullis. [↑](#endnote-ref-2)