Worcester F 80 Distinctiones

60 Sleep (*Dormicio*)

Some sleep is a natural concession as a poultice of nature, just as rest is interposed as a recreation of labor, Mark 4[:38], Jesus “was in the hinder part of the ship, sleeping upon a pillow.” This sleep is delightful if it comes from sobriety, just as a proportioned subject delights the senses, but excelling it corrupts, Eccli. 31[:24]: “Wholesome sleep with a man.” Against which is said in Eccle. 5[:11]: “The fullness of the rich will not suffer him to sleep.”

¶ However, sleep becomes blameworthy if it comes from a superfluity, just as is evident in the lethargic, Psal. [40:9]: “Shall he that sleeps rise again no more?” Prov. 6[:9]: “How long will you sleep, O sluggard? when will you rise out of your sleep?”

Third, it is excusable if it comes from sadness or pregnancy, just as infirmity excuses from the law, Matt. 26[:43]: “He finds them sleeping: for their eyes were heavy.”

¶ Fourth, it is commendable if it comes from suitableness, just as with the infirm, after a critical day, John 11[:12]: “If he sleeps, he shall do well.” This is against those who sleep when others are watchful, and the contrary, 1 Thes. 5[:7]: “For they that sleep, sleep in the night,” etc. therefore just as it is said 5[:6]: “Let us not sleep, as others do; but let us watch, and be sober.” For just as it is said in Act. 20[:9]: “Eutychus,

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by occasion of his sleep fell from the third loft down and was taken up dead.” And Matt. 13[:25]: “While men were asleep, his enemy came and over-sowed cockle.” And Jonah 1[:5], while Jonah slept the ship was endangered.

¶ Again in a double way the soul sleeps in vices, who through error and ignorance, through numbness and negligence. Against the first prays the Psal. [12:4]: “Enlighten my eyes that I never sleep in death.” Against the second, Solomon says [Prov. 6:9]: “How long will you sleep, O sluggard,” etc. Either sleep is dangerous because according to the Apostle [1 Cor. 14:38]: “If any man knows not, he shall not be known.” For while the fault is not known, penance is not performed. Therefore, pardon is not given. While the cure is neglected, medicine is not sought and thus health is despaired of. Against these we much watch through the faith of the heart. Against error and ignorance because without faith it is impossible to please God.

¶ Again by solicitude of work against numbness and negligence. For [James 2:20]: “Faith without works is dead.” Therefore, we watch, that is, while we have time, we do good work for all because the time will come when we can neither work nor see. According to that [Matt. 22:13]: “Bind his hands and feet.” First, as for the first, throw him into the darkness, as for the second, watch. Therefore, because you do not know when the Lord will come. However late or at midnight or cockcrow or in the morning.

¶ Through these four hours are understood the four ages: childhood, adolescence, youth, or old age, in which one sleeps who neglects and ignores, he watches who believes and works. Thereafter who sleeps in one, watches perhaps in another. For if the Lord would come in the first watch, [Luke 12:38]: “And if he shall come in the second watch,” etc. And note that among those sleeping in sins the more lettered sleep more deeply. Wherefore, Chrysostom says,[[1]](#endnote-1) nothing is more difficult than that I might correct that one who thinks he knows everything. Just as we see bodily that some are light sleepers, who, namely, are awakened only by a call. Others are heavier sleepers, whom it is necessary to shake. Others are the deepest sleepers, whom it is necessary to slap or drag to this extent that they be awakened. Thus, spiritually the simple sleep lightly to such an extent that they are awakened at the voice of the preacher. Others sleep more deeply so that it is necessary to shake them by rebuking or disapproving. Others sleep most deeply whom it is necessary to slap with censure.

¶ Again, there are three kinds of men

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for whom it is perilous to sleep: the shepherds of a flock, the pilot of a ship, the gate keeper of a besieged city. Because of the first danger, it is said in Gen. 31[:40]: “Sleep departed from my eyes.” And Luke 2[:8]: “And there were in the same country shepherds watching.” Second, the sense is dangerous because these are the pilots of the ship of the church, Prov. 23[:34]: “You shall be as one sleeping in the midst of the sea, and as a pilot fast asleep.” Third, because the gatekeepers and overseers of a rich city, the Church is now besieged by devils and tyrants. Wherefore the first gatekeeper is blamed, Matt. 26[:40], Simon, are you sleeping?

1. (Pseudo-)Chrysostom, *Opus imperfectum in Matthaeum* Homilia 40 ex cap. 21:32 (PG 56:852): Nihil autem impossibilius, quam illum corrigere, qui omnia scit, et tamen contemnens bonum, diligit malum. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)