CHAPTER THREE

TOPOGRAPHICAL ANTHROPOLOGY

Of the features of Pickles’s cartographic scheme, we have so far looked at the cartographer’s communication of a geographic reality (topographies based on interpretative appropriation of the Bible) by means of textual mappings encoded with signatures (topographical indications and their interaction). The aspects pertaining to that part of the process which relates to the reader’s perception thus remain to be examined. In this context, the interest lies with the implied reader rather than the receptive Sitz-im-Leben of the Bernardine texts.

Accordingly, we shall give some attention to Bernard’s directions to the readers, pointing them towards their own position in the soteriological landscape. Not surprisingly, there are many such directions. Bernard after all is not a modern cartographer pretending to objectivity but an author with a quite distinct intention. He offers a range of textual indicators pinning down man’s post-lapsarian “You are here”, furthermore charting the point of departure, the destination, and eventually the way leading there. His textual mapping thus offers a kind of prolongation of the vision, and an aid to those who do not know the way by heart—the ideal according to De gradibus humilitatis.

I. Topographical anthropology: Prolegomena

The textual “You are here” is most commonly to be found in references to the anthropology that is inseparable from the topography. The representation of soteriological topography gives rise to a topographically attuned anthropological vocabulary capable of denoting a spectrum of relations between man and land, and thus signifying the situation of man in the topographical framework.

Like the topography, the related anthropology is no Bernardine invention. It has its footings in the Bible and has been elaborated by the Church Fathers. In summary, this anthropology runs as follows: man has been created in the Garden of Eden, his original homeland. In this homeland, he has dominion over other creatures and may
even be considered the adopted son of God. *Qua* his creation in the image and likeness of God, he is moreover capable of partaking in celestial beatitude as a fully-fledged citizen. After the Fall, however, he has been expelled from his homeland, henceforth to live in a state of exile and alienation. Alienation, that is, both from the original and the future homeland. Such is his basic post-lapsarian condition. The onus is now on man to acknowledge this situation and estrange himself from terrestrial carnality, thus exerting himself to achieve a degree of propinquity with the homeland.

1. *New Testament bases*

Three New Testament passages will be adduced by way of thematic prologue to this compound field. We shall come across these and other biblical references in recontextualized versions when we come to look more closely at the Bernardine texts in the course of the chapter.

2 Cor 5.1–6 expounds the difference between the body which forms the earthly habitation of man and the house of God for which he yearns:

> For we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For in this tent we groan, longing to be clothed with our heavenly dwelling—if indeed, when we have taken it off we will not be found naked. For while we are still in this tent, we groan under our burden, because we wish not to be unclothed but to be further clothed, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life. He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who has given us the Spirit as guarantee. So we are always confident; even though we know that while we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord.¹

This passage evokes the transitory nature of terrestrial life. It also points to the absoluteness of the distance from God in ontologically marked corporeality. As we shall see, the word *peregrinor* is central in the receptive history of this text.

¹ Vulgate: “scimus enim quoniam si terrestris domus nostra huius habitationis dissolvatur quod aedificationem ex Deo habeamus domum non manufactam aeternam in caelis nam et in hoc ingemescimus habitationem nostram quae de caelo est superindui cupientes si tamen vestiti non nudi inveniamur nam et qui sumus in tabernaculo ingemescimus gravi eo quod nolumus expolii sed supervestiri ut absorbeatur quod mortale est a vita qui autem efficit nos in hoc ipsum Deus qui dedit nobis pignus Spiritus audentes igitur semper et scientes quoniam dum sumus in corpore peregrinamur a Domino”.