CHAPTER TWO

PARABOLA I, DE FILIO REGIS

I. Summary

1. “Once upon a time, there was a rich and powerful king, God the almighty. And he caused Man, whom he had created, to become his son.” As the boy was delicate, he delegated the Law and the Prophets as his teachers. God taught him and instructed him, showed him the glory of Paradise and made him the heir of it all on the condition that he did not forsake him. He even gave him a free will. But Man wanted to know evil so he left Paradise and ate from the tree of knowledge. He then hid from the Lord and began to wander about over mountains of conceit, valleys of curiosity, fields of indiscipline, woods of sexual excess, groves of fleshly delight, and rough seas of worldly cares.

2. The old robber saw the boy thus unguarded and offered him the fruit of disobedience. But when the boy had consented, the robber caught him and threw him down headlong into terrestrial desires. The robber sent him to the distant region of unlikeness on board the ship of evil carelessness. In the region of unlikeness, he learnt to feed the pigs and eat their pods and there as a slave he was forced to grind in the circles of the impious.

3. But the father had not forgotten the son of his womb, and he sent his servants to search for him. One of these, Fear, found the son in the depth of the dungeon, covered with the filth of sins, chained with the chains of evil habits, miserable but nevertheless untroubled and laughing. The words and strokes of Fear only made the son cling to the floor, and it was not until Hope arrived and placed him on the horse of longing that the king’s son was able to escape from his prison. When they saw this, the

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1 The parables are presented in brief summaries maintaining the topographical indications in a wording close to the original and truncating e.g. the passages on virtues and vices. The issue of virtues and vices is of general importance as emphasized in both Casey’s introductions and Timmermann 1982; it is however not our concern here.

2 “Rex dives et potens, Deus omnipotens, filium sibi fecit hominem, quem creaverat […]” Par I.; Winkler IV: 806. Casey’s translation, 18.

3 “Filium uteri sui”, drawing on Isa 49.15, NRSV: “Can a woman forget her nursing child or show no compassion for the child of her womb?”; Vulgate: “numquid oblivisci potest mulier infamtem suum ut non misereatur filio uteri sui”.
chiefs of Edom were dismayed, the inhabitants of Canaan trembled (Ex 15.15–16).

4. But the ride was wild because the horse was not bridled, and the king sent out Prudence and Temperance; later they were greeted by Fortitude, the soldier of the Lord. Prudence urged them to follow the way of Justice because the enemy does not position himself on the way, but rather next to the way or in a place where two or three roads meet.

5. Thus, the whole company arrived at the castle of Wisdom. The castle was surrounded by a moat of humility above which the strongest and most beautiful walls of obedience reached towards heaven. On this wall histories of good examples were painted. From the ramparts hung thousands of shields; and the gates of profession were open to everybody, but the gatekeeper stood at the threshold inviting the worthy ones and rejecting the unworthy. The son was taken to the citadel in the middle of the city and put in Wisdom’s own bed surrounded by sixty of Israel’s mightiest each with a sword (Song 3.7–8); accompanied by David with timbrel and dance and the other companions of the celestial court.

6. Then, however, a storm arose from the north. Pharaoh came with his chariots and knights pursuing Israel in its flight; they had connived with Edom, Ishmael, Moab, Hagar, Gebal, Ammon, and Amalek. The city was besieged; Pharaoh breached the walls and made fires, fighting began, and the city was threatened by destruction. Everybody inside was anxious and confused. Prudence asked Wisdom what to do. And on her advice, Prayer mounted the horse of Faith and went on the way to heaven. Here, he entered the gates by means of confession and came into the hall by means of hymns. When the king heard of his son’s pain he turned to his fellow regent Love, the queen of heaven. She offered to go and save the king’s son. Love came into the city of wisdom and her arrival caused such great harmony and joy that the enemy realized that God was on Wisdom’s side. By this recognition the enemy was scared and fled. Love led the son of the king to his father, who called for the servants to give the son clothes and a ring and for the fatted calf to be killed, “for this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found” (Lk 15.22–24).

7. There are four points in this liberation of the boy; first penitence however foolishly enacted, second the thoughtless flight, third the fearful fight, fourth victory in wisdom. Each of these phases is found in him who flees the world.

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4 Echoing Ez 1.4, NRSV: “As I looked a stormy wind came out of the north”; Vulgate: “et vidi et ecce ventus turbinis veniebat ab aquilone”.