12 To Walk (*Ambulare*)

The good walk, the evil walk. In truth the evil walk on the broad way of error, Philip. 3[:18]: “For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you weeping, that they are enemies of the cross of Christ”; [Matt. 7:13]: “at the narrow gate.”

Wherefore the Lord wants his servants to walk and advance in the present. But note, and not to delay, for which reason he reproves the idle and those standing about who do not want to advance, Matt. 20[:6]: “Why stand you here all day idle?” Thus, one must walk, but in the first place one must stand, 3 Kings 10[:8]: “Blessed are your servants, who stand before you always.”

It is necessary to walk, therefore, in the present life, just as the Lord commanded Abraham, Gen. 17[:1]: “Walk before me, and be perfect,” as if saying, unless you walk and advance you will not be perfect. According to the Philosopher,[[1]](#endnote-1) animals which do not walk are declared imperfect. Thus, also not advancing in this life is declared defective. Because of this those animals which appeared next to wheels, Ezech. 1[:18-19]: “The wheels also went together by them.” The reason of this is because he is on a hostile earth or he has abjured the earth. It is good for him to walk continuously until he has escaped. Thus, any man lives here with perils and he who aspires to heaven as if abjures this earth and such a one ought to hurry, and not to turn aside into any part, Isaiah 30[:21]: “This is the way, walk in it: and go not aside neither to the right hand, nor to the left.” The Philosopher says, 8, *De animalibus,* chapter three,[[2]](#endnote-2) that shepherds teaching their fellow herdsmen to walk quickly, when they hear the voice of another sound, lest by chance with thunder clapping, some pregnant sheep remain behind and have a miscarriage. Thus, the elect of God having heard the perils of this world ought to advance quickly, Heb. 4[:11]: “Let us hasten therefore to enter into that rest.”

Again, whoever is in a place full of chasms ought to hurry, such a place is the world. There the angel said to Lot, Gen. 19[:17]: “Look not back, neither stay in all the country about.” Therefore, whoever wishes to advance the right way in the spiritual life ought to have several things with him, like unto one setting out bodily at first light, so that the way and the countryside in every conceivable way may be recognized. For the present way is dark, but this is addressed by faith, John 1[:9]: “If a man walks in the day, he stumbles not, because he sees the light of this world.” And John 12[:35]: “Walk while you have the light,” And 2 Cor. 5[:7]: “For we walk by faith, and not by sight.” On the contrary concerning the infidels is Psal. [81:5]: “They have not known nor understood, they walk on in darkness.”

In the second place, the one walking ought to have confidence that he will reach the fatherland, but this is addressed through hope, Isaiah 40[:31]: “They that hope in the Lord shall renew their strength, they shall walk and not faint.”

In the third place, love of the fatherland, so that it is loved that it happens through charity, Eph. 5[:2]: “Walk in love.” But Tob. 3[:5]: “We have not done according to your precepts and have not walked sincerely.”

In the fourth place, rectitude of life is required lest one deviate from it, which here is through prudence, Prov. 9[:6]: “Walk by the ways of prudence.” Eph. 5[:15]: “See how you walk circumspectly.”

¶ In the fifth place, the sobriety of modesty is required lest one is weighed down by the burden which happens through temperance, Gal. 5[:16]: “Walk in the spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lusts of the flesh.” Whereby against the uncleanness it is said they walk as if a shielded battering ram against the wall, 1 Pet. 4[:3]: “Who have walked in riotousness, lusts, excess of wine, banquetings.” Like a pig under an oak,[[3]](#endnote-3) Philip. 3[:18]: “For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you weeping.”

¶ In the sixth place, the strength of the person is required lest he fall away along the way, which is addressed through fortitude, 3 Kings 19[:8]: “He walked in the strength of that food,” that is, they did not turn back when they walked. Which is said against the inconstant who walk like a crab,[[4]](#endnote-4) John 6[:67]: “After this many of his disciples went back.”

¶ But note here that three things impede the one walking lest he arrive at the intended fatherland, namely, error of the way, sluggishness of the person, and hate of the fatherland. But against these, three things help, so that if a man has a good leader, if he bears the labor of the way, and if he is moved to love of the fatherland.

¶ However, the good leader is triple: man, angel, and God. Man is the prelate and preacher, Psal. [67:28]: “The princes of Juda are their leaders.” But alas, because of Luke 6[:39]: “Can the blind lead the blind? Do they not both fall into the ditch?” Wherefore, Bernard,[[5]](#endnote-5) “It is ridiculous, rather it is a monstrous thing, to be a blind watchman, a mute petitioner, an unlearned teacher, or a lame runner.”

The second leader is an angel, and that one leads better than man, because Tob. [5:15] says, “I will conduct him thither, and bring him back.”

The third leader is God and that one is the best because he knows all things and does not deceive, Psal. [118:1]: “Blessed are the undefiled in the way, who walk in the law of the Lord.” For, does he not go before the good, they who walk in innocence. Therefore according to the counsel of the Apostle [1] Thess. 4[:12]: “You walk honestly towards them that are without.” And Eph. 4[:1]: “I therefore, a prisoner in the Lord, beseech you that you walk worthy.” But because in the present way, like a beast of burden, you sit down because it is your flesh. See as a beast of burden that you are not wanton. A house of rumor leads you from the way, because you cannot manage the reins. In the example of the Apostle [1] Cor. [9:27]: “I chastise my body, and bring it into subjection.” But God detests three kinds of walkers:[[6]](#endnote-6) those remaining behind, those going backwards, and those wandering from the way. The first are to be aroused, the second are to be recalled, the third are to be led along the way.

Therefore, one must walk after Christ because he is the right leader of the erring, the fearless savior of those following, and because he[[7]](#endnote-7) leads to the good of guests. Concerning the first, Christ is the right leader of one in error, for he has walked this way thirty-three years and knew it well, Tob. 5[:8]: “I know it, and I have often walked through all the ways thereof.” Osee 11[:10]: “They shall walk after the Lord.” Isaiah 30[:21]: “He will teach us his ways, and we will walk in his paths.” And Osee 14[:10]: “The ways of the Lord are right, and the just shall walk in them.”

¶ Therefore, will you not walk freely on the way with him who will carry you and your burden, such a one is Christ. For he has carried the burdens of our sins, 1 Pet 2[:24]: “Who his own self bore our sins in his body upon the tree.”

Again, he carried us by suffering with us, Deut. [1:31]: “The Lord your God has carried you, as a man is wont to carry his little son, all the way that you have come, until you came to this place.”

¶ In the second place, one must walk after Christ because he is the fearless savior of those following. In the royal retinue one can walk safely, but he is the king having a great retinue, Dan. 7[:10]: “Thousands of thousands ministered to him, and ten thousand times a hundred thousand stood before him.” Therefore whoever walks after him goes securely, Prov. 3[:23]: “Then shall you walk confidently in your way.” And Isaiah [43:2-3]: “When you shall walk in the fire, you shall not be burnt; for I am the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior.”

Wherefore, note that he who walks outside the way or alone may be stripped of hope or killed, but the sinner is outside the way, Ps. [118:3]: “For they that work iniquity, have not walked in his ways.” For such ones are thieves. They do not want to be on the right journey, but outside, Prov. 2[:13]: “Who leave the right way and walk by dark ways.”

Therefore, such ones are often banished, Judith 5[:22]: “When they had revolted from the way which God had given them to walk therein, they were destroyed.” Job 6[:18]: “They shall walk in vain, and shall perish.” But those who walk in the way of penitence walk securely, Bar. 3[:13]: “If you had walked in the way of God, you had surely dwelt in peace forever.” And 3 Kings 3[:14]: “And if you will walk in my ways, and keep my precepts, and my commandments, as your father walked, I will lengthen your days.” Therefore, “He that says he abides in him, ought himself also to walk, even as he walked,” [1] John [2:6].

In the third place, one ought to walk after Christ because he leads to the good of the guests. It is the custom of travelers to send forward at the beginning, to seek the good of guests, to prepare necessities, and after the beginning to walk, but Christ has gone before in the way of penitence, has made heaven ready, John 14[:2]: “I go to prepare a place for you.”

Therefore, one must walk after him, Deut. 5[:33]: “But you shall walk in the way that the Lord your God hath commanded, that you may live.” Therefore, one must walk prudently on account of the fierceness of the ambusher, constantly on account of easiness of falling, simply on account of the duplicity of error.

¶ In the first place, therefore, one must walk prudently, for which two things are required, namely, that it be an entrance without noise and that there be a scarcity of your attire.

¶ Concerning the first, thus an entrance without noise nor conspicuous to enemies, but your way is perilous, [2] Cor. [11:26]: “In journeying often, in perils of waters,” etc. Therefore one must enter without noise of words, Josh. 6[:10]: “You shall not shout, nor any word go out of your mouth.”

Concerning the second, a scarcity in attire. For such ones are not easily robbed of clothing on the way. Thus the penitent ought to avoid superfluities. This caution the Gabaonites used carrying with them their old shoes before Joshua so that they might escape death, Joshua [9:5-13].

¶ We use these cautions, Eph. 5[:15-16]: “See how you walk circumspectly, not as unwise. But as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil.” Note in this authority that it places first, “See,” because sin blinds so no one can drink, Psal. [81:5]: “They have not known nor understood, they walk on in darkness.” Therefore, whoever wants to see ought to walk in the light, Isaiah 60[:3]: “The Gentiles shall walk in your light.” For whoever walks in the darkness runs into separation from society and to rush upon offense, thus it is with one sinning, 1 John 1[:7]: “But if we walk in the light, as he also is in the light, we have fellowship one with another.” And John 11[:9-10]: “If a man walk in the day, he stumbles not, because he sees the light of this world. But if he walks in the night, he stumbles, because the light is not in him.” Therefore it is necessary for the walker to see, Jer. 6[:16]: “See and ask for the old paths which is the good way, and walk in it.”

¶ In the second place, one must walk constantly on account of the ease of falling, for the way of this life is slippery, Psal. [34:6]: “Let their way become dark and slippery.” Lament. 4[:18]: “Our steps have slipped in the way of our streets.” Therefore, Col. 4[:5]: “Walk with wisdom towards them that are without, redeeming the time.”

¶ In the third place, one must walk simply against the duplicity of error, because sinners are as if drunk at one time on the way, at another time outside, because at one time they are penitent, at another time they are sinning, but sober I am not, Prov. 28[:18]: “He that walks uprightly, shall be saved: he that is perverse in his ways shall fall at once.” In an evil way concerning such things it is just like the thief denying the region on oath, who if captured outside the way is killed, but if he holds to the king’s way he goes contently.

¶ For they who walk evilly are in great labor, but without fruit, for just as a horse in a mill goes about the whole day and is in great motion and does not profit because there where he began he ends, and at the end of the day he receives only the bran of that matter for which he labored, so much more they consume their life from what is left behind, Psal. [11:9]: “The wicked walk round about.” Jer. 6[:28]: “All of these princes go out of the way, they walk deceitfully.” Therefore, it is not perfect to walk with a circular motion in the way of rectitude, Eccli. [51:20], because “my foot walked in the right way.”

Again, many are just like worms walking in a piece of meat [Judith 16:21] and at last with the meat are thrown into the ditch, Mich. 6[:16]: “You have walked according to their wills, that I should make you a desolation.”

Again, some are just like the mole[[8]](#endnote-8) walking under the earth for cupidity lest the rays of the sun reach them. Among all the elements only the earth offers an obstacle to the sun’s loosening, thus earthly cupidity impedes hearing the word of God, Jer. 16[:12]: “Behold every one of you walks after the perverseness of his evil heart, so as not to hearken to me.”

1. Cf. Aristotle, *Movement of Animals*, 7, 701a6-15 (Barnes, 1:1091): But how is it that thought (viz. sense, imagination, and thought proper) is sometimes followed by action, sometimes not; sometimes by movement, sometimes not? What happens seems parallel to the case of thinking and inferring about the immovable objects of science. There the end is the truth seen (for, when one conceives the two premisses, one at once conceives and comprehends the conclusion), but here the two premisses result in a conclusion which is an action- for example, one conceives that every man ought to walk, one is a man oneself: straightway one walks; or that, in this case, no man should walk, one is a man: straightway one remains at rest. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. Aristotle, *History of Animals*, 9.3, 610b34-611a2 (Barnes, 1:952): Shepherds train sheep to close in together at a clap of their hands, for if, when a thunderstorm comes on, a ewe stays behind without closing in, the storm will kill it if it be with young; consequently if a sudden clap or noise is made, they close in together within the sheepfold by reason of their training. [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. Guido da Pisa, *Commentary on Dante’s Inferno* ed. Vincenzo Cioffari (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1974), (p. 124): Item porcus comedit glandes sub quercu, sed unde cibus veniat non attendit. Sic gulosi cibum devorant, sed gratiam largitori non reddunt. [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. Cf. John Bromyard, *Summa praedicantium omnibus dominici gregis pastoribus, divini verbi* cap. 19: Ambulatio (p. 50): Sic qui vadit versus coelum, per quadraginta dies in quadragesima, et per totum annum versus infernum retrocedendo, sicut cancer. [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
5. Bernard, cf. *L’Homme d’Oraison*, ses meditations et entretiens pour tous les jours ed. P. Jacques Nouet. Paris: Librairie Catholique de Perisse Freres, 1844 (12:223-224 n. 1): Car, comme remarque saint Bernarde, “c’est une chose monstrueuse, qu’un sentinelle aveugle, un doctuer ignorant, et un herant muet. Monstruosa res est speculator caecus, doctor inscius, praeco mutus.

   Cf. Thomas of Ireland, *Flores Doctorum*, Abusio # 8, in edition of P. J. B. Sacerdotis O. M. S. F. (Tarraconae: Typis Francisci Aris et Socii, 1851), p. 14: Ridiculosa res est aut magis periculosa: speculator caecus, doctor inscius, praecursor claudus, praelatus negligens, praeco mutus. Attributed to Gilbert [Foliot?]. [↑](#endnote-ref-5)
6. James of Voragine, *Sermones in Dominicas* Sermo 3 Dom. 19 post Fest. Trin. (Antwerp: Henricum et Cornelium Verdussen, 1709), (2:286): Tria sunt genera hominum quos Deus odit, scilicet remanentes, retro abeuntes et aberrantes. ... Et subdit Augustinus: Remanentes, ergo excitndi sunt, retrocedentes revocandi, errantes in via reducendi. [↑](#endnote-ref-6)
7. Nicole Bozon, *Les contes moralises* ed. Lucy Toulmin Smith and Paul Meyer (Paris: Librairie de Firmin Didot, 1889) Notes: 32 (p. 244): Socio fatuo vel malo non est acquiescendum *Libro de dono timoris* Duo fratres ibant per viam unus sapiens et alter stultus. Venientes autem ad quoddam bivium ubi erant due vie una delectabilis et altera aspera voluit fatuus per viam delectabilem ire. Sapiens autem dixit “Etsi illa via sit delectabilis tamen ducit ad malum hospitium alia vero licet sit aspera tamen ad bonum hospicium ducit. Unde consulo quod eamus per eam.” Fatuus autem magis credens que videbat posuit se in delectabili via quem sapiens nolens eum derelinquere secutus est invitus.... [↑](#endnote-ref-7)
8. Cf. Isidore, *Etymologiae* 12.3.5 (PL 82:441): Talpa dicta, quod sit damnata caecitate perpetua, et tenebris. Est etenim absque oculis, semper terram fodit, et humum egerit, atque radices subter frugibus comedit, quam Graeci ἀσφάλακα vocant. [↑](#endnote-ref-8)