217 Evil (*Malum*)

In Psal. [89:15] it is written, “We have rejoiced for the days in which you have humbled us; for the years in which we have seen evils.” Where it is to be noted that we ought to see our own evils and the evils of others. Our own for penance, others as caution, such as the warning of the pride of the angels [Apo. 12:9], condemnation of the commerce of the Jews [Matt. 21:12], the drowning of the hatefulness of the Egyptians [Exod. 14:28], the damnation of the avaricious rich [Luke 16:23], the imprisonment of the lazy servant [Matt. 18:34], etc.

Again, we ought to see our own evils for penance, Isai. 5[:7]: “For the vineyard of the Lord of hosts is the house of Israel,” etc.

Again, evil is divided in three ways for fault, penalty, and temptation. Of which the first we do, the second we suffer, and the third we are attacked.

The first evil, namely, of fault we ought to flee on account of three matters. On account of the offense to the divine, Jer. 2[:13, 19]: “For my people have done two evils. They have forsaken me, the fountain of living water, and have digged to themselves cisterns, broken cisterns,” land it follows, “Know and see that it is an evil,” in fault, “and a bitter thing,” in penalty, “for you, to have left the Lord.”

Second, on account of due penalty just as for the fear of the gibbit it is avoided by the thief, Rom. 2[:8-9]: “Wrath and indignation … upon every soul of man that works evil.”

Third, on account of the contracted blemish, Jer. 4[:l4]: “Wash your heart from wickedness.” The evil of penalty is double because it is transitory and eternal. The evil of present penalty is to be suffered. First because it demands the fault lest it pollute. Just as one weakened by hunger, sickness, or labor does not easily grow insolent, Eccli. 11[:29]: “The affliction of an hour,” that is, emotion, “makes one forget great delights,” which certainly is small in the thought, large in the delight, greater in the consent, and greatest in the perpetration, Eccli. 11[:14]: “Good things and evil are from God.” Good things, namely, of grace and glory. Evil things of the present wretchedness and the natural death.

Second, because it demands grace, because it merits glory, just as the knight of a tournament, Luke 16[:25]: “Remember that you received good things in your lifetime, and likewise Lazareth evil things.” And Rom. 8[:18]: “The sufferings of this time are not worthy to be compared” having to each one who is evil eternal pain, Psal. [144:20]. It is to be avoided according to that of Eccle. 7[:15]: “Beware beforehand of the evil day.” Because it happens first through the humility of patience, just as the lion[[1]](#endnote-1) spares the one prostrate, 4 Reg. 2[:19]: “because Achias humbled himself before me,” I will not bring evil, etc. Jer. 18[:8]: “If that nation shall repent of their evil, I also will repent of the evil that I have thought to do to them.”

Second, on accout of giving of alms, as the guilty one renders himself fully, Psal. [40:2]: “Blessed is he that understands concerning the needy and the poor: the Lord will deliver him in the evil day.”

Third, through the integrity of obedience, as on observing the saying is freed from sickness, Eccle. 8[:5]: “He that keeps the commandments shall find no evil.” The evil of temptation is to be avoided according to that of Rom. 12[:21]: “Be not overcome by evil,” namely, of temptation,” but overcome evil by good,” namely, however evil is conquered by the good of constancy. This matter of temptation is in three ways, and the first is in the consideration of the end, Prou. 20[:8]: “The king, that sits on the throne of judgment, scatters away all evil with his look.”

Second, by the clamor of prayer, as the oppressed clamor for their work, Matt. 6[:13]: “And lead us not into temptation.”

Third, concerning the avoidance of the occasion, just as a boy is withdrawen from fire, water, and dirt lest he fall in it, Eccli. 7[:2]: “Depart from the unjust, and evils shall depart from thee.” Wis. 4[:11]: “He was taken away lest wickedness should alter his understanding.”

Again, concerning the penalty for evil, it is said in Job 21[:30] that “the wicked man is reserved to the day of destruction.” A similar thing is read in Matt. 13[:47, 49] concerning the net cast “into the sea, and gathering together of all kind of fishes,” up to “they shall separate the wicked from among the just,” etc. And Matt. 21[:41]: “He will bring those evil men to an evil end.” Wherefore Augustine, *Epistle* 26,[[2]](#endnote-2) upon that, “lead us not into temptation,” [Matt 6:13]. Why do you look around whence God may deliver you? Don’t go far from yourself. Return to yourself. You are still evil. When God delivers you from yourself, he delivers you from evil. It is placed in Canon law [De Cons.], Dist. 4, [c.] [*Est unitas*] *ecclesie,[[3]](#endnote-3)* so there are in the church evil men just as in the body there are evil humors which sometimes go out of the body.

¶ Again, Chrysostom, *Homily* 55,[[4]](#endnote-4) the evil man offers virtue to the devil, not the other way, for just as a man without arms cannot do anything against an enemy, so neither can the devil without a man have any power against the saints.

1. Cf. Isidore, *Etymologiae* 12.2.6 (PL 82:43): Circa hominem leonum natura est benigna, ut nisi laesi nequeant irasci. Patet enim eorum misericordia exemplis assiduis. Prostratis enim parcunt; [Col.0434C] captivos obvios repatriare permittunt; hominem non nisi in magna fame interimunt. De quibus Lucretius: Scymnique leonum, etc.

Cf. Pliny, *Natural History* 8.19.48 (LCL 353:36-37): Leoni tantum ex feris clementia in supplices; prostratis parcit, et, ubi saevit, in viros potius quam in feminas fremit, in infantes non nisi magna fame. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. Augustine, *Sermones de tempore* 256.1 (PL 38:1191): qui nos liberat a malo. Quid circum inspicis unde te liberet, quando te liberat a malo? Noli longe ire, noli aciem mentis circumquaque distendere. Ad te redi, te respice. Tu es adhuc malus. Quando ergo Deus te ipsum liberat a te ipso, tunc te liberat a malo. [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. Decretum, De consecratione, Dist. 4, c. 49: Est unitas ecclesiae, ... Sic sunt in ecclesia homines mali, ut in corpore humano humores mali, qui interdum exeunt ex corpore. [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. (Pseudo-)Chrysostom, *Opus Imperfectum in Mattheum* Homilia24 ex cap. 10.18 (PG 56:758): Non enim diabolus homini praestat virtutem, sed homo diabolo. Arma enim diaboli est malus homo. Sicut enim homo sine armis non potest aliquid facere contra hostem, sic diabolus etiam sine homine non valet aliquid contra sanctos. [↑](#endnote-ref-4)