238 Woman (*Mulier*)

In the Old Law, a triple curse was inflicted on women. Of which every woman was subject to another man. For if she did not conceive, she was subject to the curse of disgrace because of sterility. Wherefore Lia said after her conceiving, Gen. 30[:23]: “God hath taken away my reproach.”

Again, if she conceived the curse of sin subjected her, Psal. [50:7]: “In sins did my mother conceive me.” If she conceived and brought forth the curse of punishment exposed her, Gen. 3[:16]: “In sorrow shall you bring forth children.” Concerning these matters Bernard says, *Super missus est* [Luke 1:26],[[1]](#endnote-1)a woman has a hard necessity. If they give birth, they are punished. If they do not give birth, they are maligned. But the good virgin has fertility. Therefore, the curse of reproach is lacking. In conception she had chastity. Therefore, she lacked the evil of sin. In the bringing forth she had joy. Therefore, she lacked the evil of punishment.

Wherefore, for the first the blessing of Ruth [2:12] can compare to herself. For the second the blessing of Judith [13:18]. For the third the blessing of Jael, Judges 5[:24-27]. Note therefore according to Aristotle, book 8, *De animalibus*, c. 1,[[2]](#endnote-2) that a woman has some conditions that are good and some that are evil.

Therefore, in the first place a woman is of more piety than is seen. Therefore, it is said in Eccli. 36[:27]: “Where there is no wife, he mourns that is in want.” Hence it is that when Christ was led to death, many women followed, Luke 23[:27]: “And there followed him a great multitude of women.” And even when Christ was dead, the women more diligently visited and offered obsequies when his disciples left him, Matt. 28[:1]. Wherefore that a woman is cruel it is against nature. In truth however, the female among the rapacious animals is crueler than the males, according to the Philosopher.[[3]](#endnote-3) Thence it is that a pious woman, although in other matters she is less good, she is commended by the Apostle, [1] Tim. 4[:8]: “Godliness is profitable to all things,” etc. Where Ambrose in the *Gloss*,[[4]](#endnote-4) following piety that if she suffers the slipperiness of the flesh, without doubt she will be beaten, but not perish.

¶ The second condition of a woman that she can cry more quickly that a man, of which the reason can be because she has a moister brain, according to the Philosopher, book 12, *De animalibus*, c. 9.[[5]](#endnote-5) Wherefore it is read in Luke 7[:37-38]: “A woman that was in the city, a sinner, when she knew that he sat at meat in the Pharisee's house,” and it follows, “she began to wash his feet, with tears.” And John 20[:15] Christ appeared to Mary crying. Wherefore a certain poem thus describes women:[[6]](#endnote-6)

¶ To cry, to talk, in truth to change and never be quiet,

To lie, and to give birth run together in a woman,

A female is a fragile thing,[[7]](#endnote-7) a deceitful thing, quickly cheap,

Chattering, inconstant, there is nothing in her except quarrels,

For she conceals with her face,[[8]](#endnote-8) her look, her laugh, her skin, and her make-up,

From the attack of this one be as far away as you can be.

¶ The third condition is that she is envious and the reason for this is according to the Philosopher, book 2, *Rhetoric*,[[9]](#endnote-9) because all lovers of honor are both cowardly and envious, but now it is so that women naturally are lovers of honor and cowardly because of the fragility of their sex. Wherefore when one woman sees another to excel in something that pertains to a woman immediately, she is envious. So, it happens between two sisters, Rachel and Lia, Gen. 30[:1]. Thus, between Phenenna and Anna, the wives of Elcana, 1 Kings 1[:2]. This between Agar and Sarah, Gen. 16[:4-5].

¶ The fourth condition which is more litigious whose cause is because a woman is more envious and cannot vindicate herself. Therefore, quickly she runs to the law, Prov. 19[:13]: “A wrangling wife is like a roof continually dropping through.” Wherefore it is read in 3 Kings 3[:16-28] quod two women prostitutes were contending before the king.

¶ The fifth condition is that a woman loves to chatter of which the reason is because the tongue of a woman is more capable than of a man. In truth however as the Philosopher says, book 5, *De animalibus*, c. 12,[[10]](#endnote-10) nature gives to men to have more teeth than women so that they may be less loquacious and less voracious.

¶ In the second place, for the teeth assist, according to Ambrose and the *Hexameron*.[[11]](#endnote-11) Wherefore this condition seems more contrary to a woman from malice and stupidity than from nature, because in Prov. 7[:10] it is said “a woman is talkative and wandering,” and wordy. Aristotle, in the first book of *Politics*, c. 8,[[12]](#endnote-12) assigns to woman silence as her glory.

¶ The sixth condition which is more malicious because where a woman cannot follow up her intention through power or prudence, she converts herself to the malice of a woman. This appeared in Dalilah, Judges 16[:1-20].

¶ Again, Jezebel who planned how Naboth should die, 3 Kings 21[:14].

Again, note here that Jerome narrates in *Epistola* 64,[[13]](#endnote-13) how a certain woman provoked a boy of ten years through inebriation to lust and she conceived by him. Because of which Solomon says [Prov.] 5[:2-4]: “Mind not the deceit of a woman. For the lips of a harlot are like a honeycomb dropping, but her end is bitter as wormwood.”

¶ Seventh condition, which is weak hope, the reason is weakness of mind. Wherefore also Job says this 2[:9]: “Bless God and die,” as if saying, nothing is more beyond hoping for except death. And Tob. 2[:22] the wife of Tobias said to him in this way, “It is evident your hope is come to nothing,” etc. Therefore, the wife of Lot looking back not hoping that she could be saved was turned into a statue of salt, and anointed without goods she perished in Sodom, Gen. 19[:26].

¶ The eighth condition in which women are more given to lying, the reason can be that she has learned to lie from the devil himself who is the father of lying, John 8[:44].

¶ Again, Gen. 31[:32-34] when Laban searched the household stuffs of Jacob for his statues which Rachel had stolen, she said sitting upon them, “Let not my lord be angry that I cannot rise up before thee, because it has now happened to me, according to the custom of women.”

Again, Gen. 18[:15] Sarah denied having laughed.

¶ The ninth condition is that they are without shame, Gen. 39[:7] Ruth placed herself at the feet of Booz on the bed. And Jer. 3[:3]: “You had a harlot's forehead; you would not blush.” And Prov. 7[:13]: “Catching the young man, she kisses him, and with an impudent face,” etc.

¶ The tenth condition is that she easily deceives, so also the devil through woman attacked humanity, Gen. 3[:4]. So, the Philistines through Dalila attacked Samson, Judges 16[:5].

¶ Again, the eleventh condition is that they have a short memory, but in this the Blessed Virgin prevailed, because Luke 2[:19]: “But Mary kept all these words,” etc.

¶ The twelfth condition is that they are gravely moved. Therefore, the Philosopher said, book 18, *De animalibus*,[[14]](#endnote-14) that movement and work are good for women.

¶ The thirteenth condition is that they are less useful than men. Wherefore also they are of no merit in war nor to conserving the republic as is evident in Num. 1[:20]. But for the education of children and the caring for the sick and to doing certain domestic offices they are useful.

The fifteenth condition is that she is not brave for the good, namely, for according to *Valerius ad Ruffinum*,[[15]](#endnote-15) she is brave for everything which she loves or hates, and to injure the craftsman when she wants, which is all the time. This is evident in Judith 13[:7-10].

Again, there is another condition which can lead a man to good and to evil, Eccli. 25[:11]: “Blessed is he that dwells with a wise woman.” And Eccli. 26[:1]: “Happy is the husband of a good wife.” The reason of this is evident among the grammarians. For a woman (*mulier*) is said as if the soft head of a family, (*molliens herum*), that is, a man. For a soft thing is malleable to various figures, 1 Cor. 7 [:14]: “For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the believing wife.”

¶ The example for this in nature according to Isidore,[[16]](#endnote-16) and Solinus,[[17]](#endnote-17) and Hugo,[[18]](#endnote-18) a crystal in water is soft and malleable, which when separated from water it becomes hardened into a rock, Jerome, *Epistola 84*,[[19]](#endnote-19) Sampson was stronger than a lion, harder than a stone, alone and naked he overthrew a thousand armed-men, but he grew soft in the embraces of Dalila. So, it is for a man with a woman. Where Augustine, *Super Genesim*, book 11, c. 59.[[20]](#endnote-20) Just as with Adam so with Salomon, I do not know anything evil they did, but with natural good will to a woman they condescended lest they be sorrowful.

¶ This natural good will perhaps arises from this that the woman was made from the rib of a man which is next to his heart. However, that a woman does not deceive the heart Job himself shows, Job 31[:9]: “If my heart has been deceived upon a woman.” Therefore Eccli. 9[:9]: “For many have perished by the beauty of a woman.” Solomon narrating other tedious conditions concerning women and men, Eccle. 7[:27, 28] says, “And I have found a woman more bitter than death, who is the hunter's snare,” etc. up to “he that is a sinner, shall be caught by her.” And wishing to render the reason of these he says also “this have I found, weighing one thing after another,” as if saying, I have not found any cause except a man and a woman are one and separate, differing in alterity, as some material, so Aristotle teaches, book ten of the *Metaphysics*,in the end.[[21]](#endnote-21) And they are one according to the design of God in the first creation of them, he said, “They shall be two in one flesh,” Gen. 2[:24]. Water lacks in the unity of man with man, and therefore naturally man can love a woman more, than a man and the contrary with other things being equal. Therefore, it is said commending the lovableness of Jonathan, he said, “amiable to me above the love of women,” 2 Kings 1[:26]. Therefore, not without reason is it said in 3 Esdras [4:22]:[[22]](#endnote-22) Women are stronger because often they dominate men and even what men acquire, they give to women.

¶ Again, when Balaam could not harm the people of God by his curses he advised whereby the Moabite women should approach the sons of Israel through which they would be attracted to idolatry, Num. 24[:9], one account of this it is said in Apo. 2[:14]: “You have there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balac to cast a stumbling block before the children of Israel, to eat, and to commit fornication.” And 1 Cor. 11[:8] it is said, “The man is not of the woman, but the woman of the man.” For the man was not created because of the woman, but the woman because of the man. Therefore, the woman ought to have her head veiled one account of the angels, that is, so that the ministers of the Church would not thereby be tempted. Wherefore Gen. 20[:1-18] the King of the Gerares Abimelech was drawn by the beauty of the eyes of Sarah he was rebuked by the Lord and gave her a thousand pieces of silver for veiling her eyes, Jerome, *Epistola* 44,[[23]](#endnote-23) I judge, if men live with women, the honeypot of the devil is not absent. Wherefore Chrysostom, *Homilia* 29,[[24]](#endnote-24) what else is a woman, than a natural temptation, a desirable calamity, a domestic peril, a delectable detriment, an evil of nature, painted with the color of good.

Again, Augustine in his *Sermo de xl.*,[[25]](#endnote-25)woman is the tinder of evils. For Adam could have stayed unshaken in the delights of paradise if Eve had not been present. And where the devil was introduced, but where he found the woman he conquered, where he did not find her, he was conquered. And although Christ and his disciples are reported to have had women in their company, however they did not walk with them mixed together, but they kept a long distance in between, according to Chrysostom, *Homilia* 39.[[26]](#endnote-26)

1. Bernard, *De laudibus Virginis Matris Super verba Evangelii: “Missus est angelus Gabriel”*, 3.7 (PL 183:74): Dura necessitas, et grave jugum super [Col.0074C] omnes filias Evae! Et si parturiunt, cruciantur: et si non parturiunt, maledicuntur. Et dolor prohibet parere, et non parere maledictio. Quid facies, Virgo, quae haec audis, quae haec legis? Si parturis, angustiaris: si sterilis manes, malediceris. Quid eliges, Virgo prudens? Angustiae, inquit, mihi sunt undique: melius est tamen mihi maledictum incurrere, et castam manere, quam prius quidem concipere per concupiscentiam, quod merito post cum dolore parturiam. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. Aristotle, *History of Animals* 9.1 608b9-13 (Barnes 1:949): Hence woman is more compassionate than man, more easily moved to tears, at the same time is more jealous, more querulous, more apt to scold and to strike. She is, furthermore, more prone to despondency and less hopeful than the man, more void of shame or self-respect, more false of speech, more deceptive, and of more retentive memory. She is also more wakeful, more shrinking, more difficult to rouse to action, and requires a smaller quantity of nutriment. [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. Aristotle, *History of Animals* 9.1 608b9 (Barnes 1:949): Hence woman is more compassionate than man, more easily moved to tears, [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. Ambrose, cf. Peter Lombard, *In Epistolam I at Timothaeum* 4:8 (PL 192:348-349): Omnis enim summa disciplinae Christianae in pietate et misericordia est, quam aliquis sequens si lubricum [Col.0349A] carnis patitur, sine dubio vapulabit, sed non tamen peribit. [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
5. Aristotle, *History of Animals* 9.1 608b9 (Barnes 1:949): Hence woman is more compassionate than man, more easily moved to tears, [↑](#endnote-ref-5)
6. This verse may have been composed by Higden out of other pieces. [↑](#endnote-ref-6)
7. Cf. W. Wattenbach, *Beschreibung einer Handschrift der Stadtbibliothek zu Reims*. (p. 523):

   Femina res fragilis, res subdola, res puerilis,

   Est pluvie similis: optata diu, cito vilis [↑](#endnote-ref-7)
8. In a m.s. brugensis 588, page 96 verso, [Eibert van der Veen] found an anti feministic poem as sequens:

   Femina fax sathane fetens rosa dulce vera  
   Semper prona rei quae prohibetur ei  
   Urit enim vultu, risu, cute, cultu,  
   Huius ab insultu. quantum potes esto procul tu

   The m.s. is from 1460 - 70 written in domus sancti Nicolai,  
   ordinis canonicarum regularium sancti Augustini in Bergum apud Leovardiam.  
   The poem is in an article with the incipit "Florete flores quasi lilium"

   https://groups.google.com/forum/#!topic/alt.language.latin/FcvCyzMqZFY [↑](#endnote-ref-8)
9. Aristotle, *Rhetoric* 2.10 1378b21-24 (Barnes 2:2211): To take Envy next: we can see on what grounds, against what persons, and in what states of mind we feel it. Envy is pain at the sight of such good fortune as consists of the good things already mentioned; we feel it towards our equals; not with the idea of getting something for ourselves, but because the other people have it. [↑](#endnote-ref-9)
10. Aristotle, *History of Animals* 2.3 501b20 (Barnes 1:797): Males have more teeth than females in the case of men, sheep, goats, and swine; [↑](#endnote-ref-10)
11. Ambrose, *Hexameron*, 5.5.12 (PL 14:210): Quid autem de densitate dicam dentium? Non enim ut bos aut ovis ex una parte dentes habent: sed utraque pars armata est dentibus; quia in aqua sunt, et si diutius cibum versarent, et non cito transmitterent, aquarum alluvione de dentibus eorum esca posset auferri ac dilui. Ideo densos et acutos habent, ut cito incidant, cito conficiant cibum, facile et sine aliqua mora et dilatione transmittant. [↑](#endnote-ref-11)
12. Aristotle, *Politics* 1.13 1260a29-31 (Barnes 2:2000): as the poet says of women, "Silence is a woman's glory, " but this is not equally the glory of man. [↑](#endnote-ref-12)
13. Jerome, *Epistola* 72.21 (PL 22:674): Audivi, Domino teste non mentior: quaedam muliercula cum expositum nutriret infantem, et instillaret cibos, ac nutricis officio fungeretur, cubaretque cum ea parvulus, qui usque ad decimum jam pervenerat annum; accidit, ut plus quam pudicitia patitur, se mero ingurgitaret, accensaque libidine, obscoenis motibus ad coitum duceret infantem. Prima ebrietas alterius noctis et caeterarum deinceps fecit consuetudinem. Nec dum duo menses fuerant evoluti, et ecce feminae uterus intumuit. Quid plura? dispensatione Dei factum est, ut quae contra naturam simplicitate parvuli in contemptum Dei abutebatur, a naturae Domino proderetur, impleto sermone quo dicitur: Nihil occultum quod non manifestetur (Matth. 10). [↑](#endnote-ref-13)
14. Aristotle, *History of Animals* 9.1 608b10 (Barnes 1:949): She is also more wakeful, more shrinking, more difficult to rouse to action, and requires a smaller quantity of nutriment. [↑](#endnote-ref-14)
15. Walter Map, *Dissuasio Valerii* *Valerius ad Rufinum philosophum ne uxorem ducat,* Dist. iv. cap. iii ed. M. R. James [“Anecdota Oxoniensia; Mediaeval and Modern Series,” XIV (Oxford, 1914), pp. 143 ff.)],, pp. 153-154: Exemplum harum experimentum cape, quod audax est ad omnia quaecunque amat vel odit femina, et artificiosa nocere cum vult, quod est semper; et frequenter cum iuuare parat obest, unde fit ut noceat et nolens. In fornace positus es; si aurum es, exibis aurum

    [↑](#endnote-ref-15)
16. Isidore, *Etymologiae* 10.13.9 (PL 82:578): Enhydros ab aqua vocata. Exsudat [Col.0578C] enim aquam, ita ut clausam in ea putes fontaneam scaturiginem. [↑](#endnote-ref-16)
17. Solinus, *De mirabilibus Mundi* 15.29-31 (Mommsen, p. 88): 29 Istic et crystallus, quem licet pars maior Europae et particula Asiae subministret, pretiosissimum tamen Scythia edit. Multus ad pocula destinatur, quamlibet nihil aliud quam frigidum pati possit. 30 Sexangulus inuenitur. Qui eligunt purissimum captant, ne quid rufum, ne nubilum uel spumis obsitum arceat perspicuitatem; tunc ne duritia iusto propensior obnoxium fragilitati magis faciat. 31 Putant glaciem coire et in crystallum corporari, sed frustra: nam si ita foret, nec Alabanda Asiae nec Cypros insula hanc materiam procrearent, quibus admodum calor iugis est. Liuia Augusti ad magnitudinem CL librarum inter Capitolina donaria crystallum dedicauit. [↑](#endnote-ref-17)
18. Hugh of Pisa, *Derivationes* C 310 (2:294): Hec **Cristallus** –li genus est candidi lapidis, quia nix sit glacie durata per annos, unde et Greci ei nomen dederunt. …

    Cf. Hugonis de Sancto Charo, *In Libros Proverbiorum, Ecclesiastiae, Sapientiae, Ecclesiastici* Commentary on Ecclesiasticus 43. *y* Frigidus (3:255): Frigidus ventus Aquilo flavit, et gelavit crystallus ab aqua id est aqua congelavit in crystallum [↑](#endnote-ref-18)
19. Jerome, *Epistola secundum ordinem temporum* 22.12 (PL 22:401): Accipe exempla: Samson leone fortior et saxo durior, qui et unus et nudus mille persecutus est armatos, in Dalilae mollescit amplexibus. [↑](#endnote-ref-19)
20. Augustine, *De Genesi ad Litteram* 11.42.59 (PL 34:453-454): Ita Salomon vir tantae sapientiae, numquidnam credendum est quod in simulacrorum cultu credidit esse aliquid utilitatis? Sed mulierum amori ad hoc malum trahenti resistere non evaluit, faciens quod sciebat non esse faciendum, ne suas, quibus deperibat atque diffluebat, mortiferas delicias contristaret (III Reg. XI, 4). Ita et Adam, posteaquam de ligno prohibito seducta mulier manducavit, eique dedit ut simul ederent, noluit eam contristare, quam credebat [Col.0454] posse sine suo solatio contabescere, si ab ejus alienaretur animo, et omnino illa interire discordia. [↑](#endnote-ref-20)
21. Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 10.9 1058b21-25 (Barnes 2:1672): But male and female, while they are modifications peculiar to 'animal', are so not in virtue of its essence but in the matter, ie. the body. This is why the same seed becomes female or male by being acted on in a certain way. We have stated, then, what it is to be other in species, and why some things differ in species and others do not. [↑](#endnote-ref-21)
22. III Esdras is I Esdras in the Protestant Bible: 4:22: By this also ye must know that women have dominion over you: do ye not labour and toil, and give and bring all to the woman? [↑](#endnote-ref-22)
23. Jerome, *Scripta supposititia* Epistola 42.3 (PL 30:289): Ego judico, si cum viris feminae habitent, viscarium non deerit diaboli: ex eis aucupatus est ab initio peccatum. [↑](#endnote-ref-23)
24. (Pseudo-)Chrysostom, *Opus imperfectum in Mattheum* Homilia 32 ex cap. 19.10 (PG 56:803): Quid autem est aliud mulier, nisi amicitiae inimica ineffugabilis poena, necessariujm malum, naturalis tentatio, desiderabilis calamitas, domsticum periculum, delectabile detrimentum, mali natura, boni coloore depicta? [↑](#endnote-ref-24)
25. Augustine, *Sermones de tempore*, sermo 19 (57:571-572): Potuerat enim Adam inter illas paradisi delicias inconcussus stare, si Eva ibidem cum diabolicis insidiis non fuisset. Conveniens ergo est desertum saluti, ubi non est Eva quae persuadet, non est mulier quae blanditur. Videte rem miram: in paradiso cum Adam diabolus decertat, in deserto cum Christo diabolus dimicat; ubique insidiatur homini, ubique congreditur: sed ubi mulierem invenit, vincit; ubi mulierem non invenit, victus abscedit. [↑](#endnote-ref-25)
26. (Pseudo-)Chrysostom, *Opus imperfectum in Mattheum* Homilia 35 ex cap. 20 (PG 56:823): Nec enim credibile est, mixtas cum ipso ambulasse mulieres, sed long intervallo longe mulieres sequentes, et longo intervallo separatei inter se ambulabant. Christus enim et discipuli sui primi, sequentes autem de longe mulieres. [↑](#endnote-ref-26)