381 To Watch (*Vigilare*)

Many things make man to watch spiritually just as also corporeally.

Of which the first is love of profit forthcoming, just as it is evident concerning the craftsmen and the merchants, Lam. 2[:19]: “Arise, give praise in the beginning of your watches.”

The second is the clamor of imminent war, as when it is cried, To arms, to arms. Therefore, the overseers are watchful, 1 Pet. 5[:8]: “Be sober and watch: because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, goes about.” Matt. 26[:41]: “Watch and pray.”

The third is the fear of the Lord’s coming, Luke 12[:43]: “Blessed is that servant, whom when his lord shall come,” and knocks. And now Eccli. 39[:6] the just man “will give his heart to resort early to the Lord that made him.”

¶ The fourth is jealousy of one’s neighbor, just as the hen watches over her chicks against evil, Luke 2[:8]: “There were in the same country shepherds watching and keeping the night watches over their flock.” Here if seems that the Master in the *Historiale*,[[1]](#endnote-1) and the Compiler of the *Legendorum Sanctorum*,[[2]](#endnote-2) errored when they say that it was the custom of the ancients in each of the solstices to keep watches for the veneration of the sun, which perhaps was the custom among the Jews from the use of the meetings which grew up. Therefore, because they were watching, but this seems against the intention of the evangelist who says that they were keeping night watches over their flock. Because if these shepherds were nefarious and as if they made idolatrous vigils, the clarity of God by no means would have shined upon them, nor the angel of God would have appeared to them, nor would they have announced the Son of God.

¶ Again, three instruments make us to watch, namely, the chiming of the clock, as is evident in the great churches about the middle of the night. Second is the call of the cock as is evident in the homes of the rustics. Third is the sound of the trumpet, as is evident in guards of the armed. Therefore, according to the counsel of the Apostle, [1] Thess. 5[:6]: “Let us not sleep, as others do,” those unintelligent, “but let us watch, and be sober.” Each does what is praiseworthy if he looks about watchfully for six matters. If first, he weeps after he has committed sins. If second, he sets before himself the missed examples. If third, he is not raised up at the prosperity of external things. If fourth, he is not depressed by sinister adversities. If fifth, he is terrified by the punishments of the infernal ones in hell. If sixth, he desires the rewards on high for the higher.

Concerning the first, Eccli. 39[:6] the just man “will give his heart to resort early to the Lord that made him.” The daybreak is the last of the night and the beginning of the day and designates the state of penitence. He who has the memory of past sins as if the third part of the night and the beginning of new life, as if the beginning of God for whom our heart ought to watch. For original sin from the heart of the princes, Matt. 15[:18]: “They come forth from the heart,” evil thoughts, “and those things defile a man.” To which we ought to put up four watches because according to Gregory, *Moralia* 4,[[3]](#endnote-3) upon that of Job [3:11]: “Why did I not die in the womb?” The sin is committed in four ways, in the heart, namely, suggestion, delight, consent, and defense. What also was done in the first temptation of man. For the serpent kissed, Eve delighted, Adam consented, and the rest he did not want to confess. In these matters we much watch.

1. Peter Comestor, *Historia scholastica* Evangelica.6. (PL 198:1540): Mos fuit antiquioribus, in utroque solstitio, vigilias noctis custodire ob solis venerationem. Qui forte mos etiam apud Judaeos ex usu cohabitantium inoleverat. «Et ecce angelus Domini stetit juxta illos, annuntians eis natum Salvatorem in Bethlehem, et in signum positum puerum in praesepio nuntiavit. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. James of Voragine, *The Golden Legend* 6 trans. William Granger Ryan (1:41): At the hour of the Nativity they were watching over their flock, as was customary twice a year on the longest and shortest nights. It was the custom among the Gentiles to observe these nocturnal vigils at each solstice, namely, the summer one around the fest of John the Baptist and the winter one close to Christmas, by way of veneration of the sun; and the Jews may have borrowed the practice from the neighboring peoples.

Cf. James of Voragine, *Legenda aurea* 6 ed. Th. Graesse, 2nd ed. (Lipsiae: Librariae Arnoldianae, 1801), p. 45: Nam in ipsa hora pastores super gregem suum vigilabant, sicut bis in anno in longioribus et brevioribus noctibus anni consueverant. Mos enim fuit antiquits gentibus in utroque solstitio, scilicet aestivali circa festum Johannis baptistae, et hyemali circa nativitatem domini vigilias noctis custodire ob solis venerationem, qui forte etiam apud Judaeos ex usu chohabitantium inoleverat. [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. Gregory, *Moralia* 4.27.49 (PL 661): Peccatum quatuor [Col.0661B] modis seu gradibus in corde, ac totidem in opere perficitur.---Quatuor quippe modis peccatum perpetratur in corde, quatuor consummatur in opere. In corde namque suggestione, delectatione, consensu, et defensionis audacia perpetratur. Fit enim suggestio per adversarium, delectatio per carnem, consensus per spiritum, defensionis audacia per elationem. Culpa enim, quae terrere mentem debuit, extollit, et dejiciendo elevat, sed gravius elevando supplantat. Unde et illam primi hominis rectitudinem antiquus hostis his quatuor ictibus fregit. Nam serpens suasit, Eva delectata est, Adam consensit; qui etiam requisitus, confiteri culpam per audaciam noluit. Hoc vero in humano genere quotidie agitur, quod actum in primo parente nostri generis non ignoratur. Serpens suasit; quia occultus hostis mala cordibus hominum [Col.0661C] latenter suggerit. Eva delectata est; quia carnalis sensus, ad verba serpentis mox se delectationi substernit. Assensum vero Adam mulieri praepositus praebuit; quia dum caro in delectationem rapitur, etiam a sua rectitudine spiritus infirmatus inclinatur. Et requisitus Adam confiteri noluit culpam, quia videlicet spiritus, quo peccando a veritate disjungitur, eo in ruinae suae audacia nequius obduratur. [↑](#endnote-ref-3)