144 Bridle (*Frenum*)

Just as a horse[[1]](#endnote-1) is guided by a bridle wherever the rider wishes, so the devil guides the sinner by sin without a bridle wherever they wish, Jam. 3[:3]: “We put bits into the mouths of horses, that they may obey us.” So, God sometimes by the bridle of adversity draws man to himself, Psal. [31:9]: “With bit and bridle bind fast their jaws.” Ezech. 29[:3-4]: “Behold, I come against you, Pharaoh king of Egypt … I will put a bridle in your jaws.” But note here that since those ascending are let go free of the bridle, but those descending are drawn back. Thus, when man wants to ascend through pride the devil lets them go free of the restraint of the bridle, but when they would descend through humility he draws them back as much as he can. But God withdraws the bridle of the devil when he inspires the grace of those doing penance in the figure of which, 2 Kings 8[:1]: “David took the bridle of tribute out of the hand of the Philistines.” Thus, God by the hand of the strong man takes the bridle from the devil.

¶ But note here that just as a bridle impedes a horse lest he bite, lest he eat, or lest he run, so morally the bridle of castigation impedes man lest he bite through detraction, lest he eat through excessive eating and drinking, lest he run away through insolent wandering. Therefore, James says in chapter 1[:26]: “If any man think himself to be religious, not bridling his tongue … this man's religion is vain.” And Eccli. 28[:29-30]: “Make a balance for your words, and a just bridle for your mouth … lest you slip with your tongue.” Wherefore, Gregory in his *Pastorale*, c. 54,[[2]](#endnote-2) speaking of Sodom which “he proclaimed abroad their sin,” [Isai. 3:9], fundamentally it had lost the bridle of fear so that for their faults it did not seek the darkness. It is a grave danger that many put themselves among the enemy upon a horse lacking a bridle, or not obeying the bridle. Thus, when flesh lacks the bridle of shame or reason, being faultless, it is a danger to the spiritual rider.

1. William de Lancea, *Diaetae Salutis* 5.6 (8:301b): Habet autem temperantia typum multiplicem, vel figuram. Comparatur autem temperantia specialiter tribus, scilicet freno quo equus regitur, bysso quo caro tegitur, et muro quo castrum cingitur. Est itaque temperantia sicut frenum equum regens: nam sicut a sessore, mediante freno, ducitur equus; sic caro a spiritu, freno temperantiae, gubernatur. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. Gregory, *Regulae Pastoralis* 3.31.32(PL 77:112): Unde scriptum est: Peccatum suum sicut Sodoma praedicaverunt, nec absconderunt (Isai. III, 9). Peccatum enim suum si Sodoma absconderet, adhuc sub timore peccaret. Sed funditus frena timoris amiserat, quae ad culpam nec tenebras inquirebat. [↑](#endnote-ref-2)