151 To Flee (*Fugere*)

Man ought to flee many things, and first through the contrary society, just as the healthy person flees the leper, Prov. 4[:14-15]: “Neither let the way of evil men please you. Flee from it.” So, Lot fled from the Sodomites, Gen. 19[:20]: “There is this city here at hand, to which I may flee.”

¶ Second, (flee) worldly persecution just like the lamb flees the wolf, Matt. 10[:23]: “When they shall persecute you in this city, flee into another.” Thus, Joseph with Mary fled into Egypt, Matt. 2[:13]: “Take the child and his mother, and fly.”

¶ Third, flee erroneous belief just as the eye flees injury, 1 Cor. 10[:14]: “Fly from the service of idols.” Thus, Tobias fled the company “when all went to the golden calves,” Tob. 1[:5].

¶ Fourth, flee the lying of speakers just as the bee flees poison, Exod. 23[:7]: “You shall fly lying.” Thus, John the Baptist fled the throngs of the cities, Psal. [54:8]: “I have gone far off flying away; and I abode in the wilderness.”

¶ Fifth, thus the one ill of a fever flees the fleshly delights, 1 Cor. 6[:18]: “Fly fornication.” 2 Tim. 2[:22]: “But flee youthful desires.” So, Joseph fled the lady, Gen. 39[:12].

Sixth, flee the cupidity of transitory things, just as the sailor, [1] Tim. 6[:9, 11]: “They that will become rich, fall into temptation, and it follows, “O man of God, fly these things,” just as Christ “fled into the mountain,” John 6[:15].

¶ Seventh, flee eternal damnation, just as the beast flees the sword, Matt. 23[:33]: “You serpents, generation of vipers, how will you flee from the judgment of hell?” And Job 19[:29]: “Flee then from the face of the sword, for the sword is the revenger of iniquities.” So, one fearing the Lord flees according to that of the Psal. [59:6]: “You have given a warning to them that fear you: that they may flee from before the bow.” But, alas, because Prov. 13[:19]: “Fools hate them that flee from evil things.”

Again, Chrysostom, *Homilia*, 19th,[[1]](#endnote-1) it is a great virtue of men to recognize the evil and know whom you should flee. Wherefore Jerome says in an *Epistola*,[[2]](#endnote-2) the world and woman are never better conquered than by fleeing from them. Wherefore someone said: by which the Spirit of the mother departs from the victory of the part. Wherefore also Christ by fleeing from Herod gave us the example in order that he might show him the way of salvation. The response is to him, flee men and you will be saved.

According to the Philosopher, the first book of the *Politics*,[[3]](#endnote-3) man without a law is the worst animal. However, the world is not evil unless it seems so because of the evil of men, for God who made all things and they were very good, but only man made from the good evil and for this reason the world is to be fled. Wherefore also the children of Israel fled Egyptians who oppressed them in hard labors, Exod. 14[:4-5]. Thus, the world oppresses men by the mud of riches and the lash of concupiscence and delights. David fled the sun the whole time and fled to the desert just as is evident in the first book of Kings [19:10]. And Elias fled Achab and Jezabel, 3 Kings 17[:5].

Nature gives us the example in that every animal flees things harmful to itself, but not the place from which the more harmful thing is brought in. From a man than in an evil society. Wherefore also John who was sanctified in the womb [Luke 1:15] fled the crowds of the cities, tender in years,[[4]](#endnote-4) Psal. [54:8]: “Lo, I have gone far off flying away; and I abode in the wilderness.” Wherefore Gregory in a *Homilia*,[[5]](#endnote-5) when suddenly the fire takes a house whoever is its inhabitant takes what he can and flees. He considers whatever he takes from the flames to be valuable. Behold the flames of tribulations burn up worldly wealth. Therefore, believe the same if fleeing you take anything.

¶ Note here how David pretended that he was insane in the house of Achis, 1 Kings 21[:13], so that he could flee from danger, but the ignorance of this world is wisdom with God and vice a versa, 1 Cor. 3[:19]. Wherefore Chrysostom, *Homilia* 50,[[6]](#endnote-6) that we live well when we live in the house of God, because we live badly when we live in the house of the devil. Therefore, flee the world, that is, the delights of the world, lest coming into the possession of works you become the servant of them. Wherefore, 2 Pet. 1[:4]: “Flying the corruption of that concupiscence which is in the world.”

¶ Concerning the flight of the world, see more below chapter [239] The World (*Mundus*).

¶ Concerning the flight of women and fornication, the Apostle says, 1 Cor. 6[:18]: “Fly fornication.” Wherefore Ambrose[[7]](#endnote-7) in the other vices man can expect conflict, but flee fornication lest you approach it, otherwise you will not have the victory. Wherefore also the wise men of Troy said let us flee Helen, in the second book of the *Ethics*.[[8]](#endnote-8) Wherefore Augustine in the first book of the *Soliloquies*,[[9]](#endnote-9) nothing so defeats the manly soul like the blandishments of women.

¶ Avicenna narrates the example in this book *De Veneno*,[[10]](#endnote-10) that a certain knight with his lance speared a serpent and killed it, but by means of the lance the soldier and the horse which he was sitting on were killed. Thus, the sin of lust kills those wishing to conflict with it in the same battle. Therefore, in this conflict the opportune remedy is flight which is evident in Joseph “who leaving the garment in her hand, fled, Gen. 39[:12]. Wherefore Augustine, *De vera innocencia*,they are better who flee the devil pursuing them than they who follow him going before, because it is more useful to have that devil as an enemy than as a prince,[[11]](#endnote-11) 4 Kings 7[:7]: The Syrians “fled and left … desiring to save their lives.”

Concerning this Bernard says, *Super Cantica*,[[12]](#endnote-12) the dove on a seat above the water, if it sees by a shadow the falcon approach it flees. So, the devout soul on its seat next to the teacher of the Gospels, if he sees the devil to approach by the shadow of temptation immediately he should flee. But there are some who are like to the vulture[[13]](#endnote-13) who do not rise to flee until he has made his swoop. Therefore, sometimes a goat does not flee chased by a dog. So, some wish to ease themselves on the earth until they have completed three lifetimes and such ones are easily caught by the infernal dog, Josue 8[:20], the children of Israel pretending flight conquered those pursing because otherwise they could not do it. Wherefore Christ warning us to a salubrious flight said, Matt. 24[:20]: “Pray that your flight be not in the winter, or on the Sabbath,” because Gregory, *Homilia* 12,[[14]](#endnote-14) says through the laws it was mandated that it was not permitted to walk on the Sabbath. Winter is also an impediment to walking, therefore, “Pray,” etc. But if he may say, See to it lest then you seek to flee your sins, it is not permitted, in a way it ought to be considered where it is permitted to flee.

Wherefore, Seneca, *Epistula* 10,[[15]](#endnote-15) I know of no one with whom I should be willing to have you shared. Avoid the many, avoid the few, avoid even the individual. Therefore, it is healthful for man now to flee sin when he can flee sin, because the time will come when he will not be able to flee because of his inability, Amos 3[:11]: “Your strength shall be taken away from you,” when because of the swiftness of things following, Lamen. 4[:19]: “Our persecutors were swifter than the eagles of the air.”

When because of the wretchedness of the pursuers because in pursuit of a thief not one man pursues, but the whole fatherland, so at the end of the world God, the angels, and every creature pursue the sinner, Sal. 5[:21]: “The whole world shall fight with him against the unwise.” Nor is it a wonder because what he yields to man as a convenience, if he does what is owed, this he gives as an inconvenience if he does now the opposite, for example, fire while it is in due distance from its object helps against the cold, but if there is no distance it becomes for man a detriment. So, the creatures of God yield good things for man if he does well, because God for the curing, the angels for the ministering and congratulating, all the saints for the exemplification, but if man is evil they yield annoyance.

1. (Pseudo-)Chrysostom, *Opus Imperfectum in Mattheum,* Homelia 19, ex cap. 7:16 (PG 56:736): Quia magna virtus est hominum cognoscere malum. Et firma tutela salutis est, scire quem fugias. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. Jerome, cf. Hugh of St. Victor, *Allegoriae* 7. 1 Cor. 6 (PL 175:909): Fugite fornicationem. Vitium fornicationis non melius vincitur quam fugiendo. [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. Aristotle, *Politics* 1.2 1253a30-32 (Barnes 2:1988): A social instinct is implanted in all men by nature, and yet he who first founded the state was the greeartest of benefactors. For man, when perfected, is the best of animals, but, when separated from law and justice, he is the worst of all. [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. Cf. PAULI DIACONI CARMINA, *Hymnus in honorem Sancti Iohannis Baptistae* stanza 5. (PL 95:1597):

 Antra deserti teneris sub annis

 civium turmas fugiens, petisti,

 ne levi saltim maculare vitam

 famine posses. 20

*E'en in thy childhood, mid the desert places,
Thou hadst a refuge from the city gainèd,
Far from all slander and its bitter traces
Living unstainèd.* [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
5. Gregory, *Homilia in Evangelia* 1.4.5 (PL 76:1092): Si quando enim repentinus ignis habitaculum absumit, quisquis ejus possessor exstiterit, rapit quod valuerit, et fugit, lucrum deputat si quid secum ex ignibus tollat. Ecce tribulationum flamma mundum concremat, et cuncta quae in eo speciosa videbantur finis jam proximus velut ignis devastat. Lucrum ergo, fratres charissimi, maximum credite si vobiscum aliquid de illo rapiatis, si quid fugientes tollitis, si hoc quod perire manendo poterat ad retributionem vobis perpetuam largiendo servatis. [↑](#endnote-ref-5)
6. (Pseudo-)Chrisostom, *Opus Imperfectum in Mattheum*, Homelia 29 ex cap. 12 (PG 56:786): Audiens ergo, mundum domum esse diaboli, fuge mundum, ne diutius habitans in domo diaboli, iterum fias servus ipsius. Sicut enim in domo Dei malum non est, ita in domo diaboli non invenitur bonum. [↑](#endnote-ref-6)
7. Ambrose, *De fuga saeculi* 4.17 (PL 14:578): Fugite fornicationem (I Cor. VI, 18). Persequuntur enim nos peccatorum illecebrae, persequitur libido: sed tu fuge tamquam furiosam dominam, quae si comprehenderit, nec die nec nocte requiescere sinit, exagitat, urit, incendit. [↑](#endnote-ref-7)
8. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* 2.9, 1109b7-12 (Barnes 2:1751-1752): Now in everything the pleasant or pleasure is most to be guarded against; for we do not judge it impartially. We ought, then, to feel towards pleasure as the elders of the people felt towards Helen, and in all circumstances repeat their saying; for if we dismiss pleasure thus we are less likely to go astray. It is by doing this, then, (to sum the matter up) that we shall best be able to hit the mean. [↑](#endnote-ref-8)
9. Augustine, *Soliloquiorum* 1.10.17 (PL 32:878): nihil esse sentio quod magis ex arce dejiciat animum virilem, quam blandimenta feminea. [↑](#endnote-ref-9)
10. Avicenna, [↑](#endnote-ref-10)
11. Augustine in Prosper of Aquitaine, *Sententiarum ex operibus S. Augustini delibatarum*, 135 (PL 51:445): Melior causa est eorum qui diabolum persequentem fugiunt, quam qui praeeuntem sequuntur, quia utilius est eum hostem habere quam principem. (Aug. ibid., n. 4). [↑](#endnote-ref-11)
12. Bernard, *Sermones in Cantica canticorum* 61.3 (PL 183:1071): in his se columba tutatur, et circum volitantem intrepida intuetur accipitrem. [↑](#endnote-ref-12)
13. Isidore, *Etymologiae* 12.7.12 (PL 82:460): Vultur, a volatu tardo nominata putatur. Magnitudine quippe corporis praepetes volatus non habet. [↑](#endnote-ref-13)
14. Gregory, *Homilia in Evangelia* 1.12.7. (PL 76:1123): Per legis quippe mandatum ambulare longius Sabbato non licet (Exod. VI); hiems quoque ad ambulandum impedimento est, quia gressus ambulantium torpor frigoris astringit. [↑](#endnote-ref-14)
15. Seneca, *Epistula* 10.1, 3 (LCL 75:56-59): fuge multitudinem, fuge paucitatem, fuge etiam unum. … non invenio, cum quo te malim esse quam tecum.

 avoid the many, avoid the few, avoid even the individual. ...  I do not know any person with whom I should prefer you to associate rather than yourself. [↑](#endnote-ref-15)