161 Man (*Homo*) 1

Concerning the study of the human condition, we can consider the entry, progress, and exit. In the first of which is the entry, “a heavy yoke is upon all the children of Adam,” Eccli. 40[:1]. In the second heavier. In the third the heaviest. And therefore, he is formed from the earth, conceived in fault, and born to pain. He does crooked deeds, which are not even valued as foul, which do not deserve to be called vain, and which are not expedient.

¶ At last he becomes food for the fire, a meal for worms, and he is considered a mass of putridness. Therefore, from what man was made, what might man do, and what will become of man. For he was formed of dust, from the mud, from the ashes, he was conceived from a spurious seed in the prurience of the flesh, in the fervor of desire, and stink of lust. What is worse, he was born in the stain of sin to labor, fear, sorrow, and what is more miserable, to death. He does crooked deeds by which he offends God, his neighbor, and himself. He does repulsive deeds by which he pollutes his speech, his person, and his conscience. He does vain deeds by which he neglects serious, useful, and necessary matters. Let him become finally food for the fire burning inextinguishably. A meal for the worms gnawing inconsumably, and a mass of putrefaction stinking horribly.

¶ Concerning the conception it is said in Job [14:4-5]. As Augustine says in the *Confessiones*:[[1]](#endnote-1) No one is clean from sin, neither the infant of whom the life is but of one day of God upon the earth. Hear also to what he is born because “to labor” according to Job [5:7]. And Eccle. [2:23]: “All his days are full of sorrows and miseries.” But what thence will happen when he will exit, [Augustine] says,[[2]](#endnote-2) his spirit also will return into the earth. Again Job [13:28]: “Who am to be consumed as rottenness.” Isai. the last chapter [66:24]: “Their worm shall not die.”

¶ Again, Bernard, *In meditationibus*,[[3]](#endnote-3) attend, O man, what you were before you were born, what you will be up to your death, clothed in a second skin, you have come to us not mindful of what you are, how vile is your origin. Wherefore Bernard:[[4]](#endnote-4)

¶ A fine form, the good will of the people, youthful ardor and wealth have snatched from you how to know what man is.

¶ For[[5]](#endnote-5) there is nothing else to a man than stinking sperm, a sack of dung, and food for worms.

¶ After man the worm, after the worm the stink and the horror. Thus, every man is turned into non-man.

Wherefore Job 13[:1]: “Man born of a woman, living for a short time, is filled,” etc., up to “continues in the same state.” Wherefore says Ambrose in *Hexameron,* book 6, chapter 41,[[6]](#endnote-6) therefore scripture says God rested having made man and not having made the beasts, so that it may be understood he would [not] repose in that one who lives like a beast.

¶ How much man excels other creatures in dignity is evident in the reverence of creation; while creating others by saying let them be and they were made. But creating man, as if with great deliberation of counsel, he said, “Let us make man to our image and likeness,” Gen. 1[:26]. Wherefore, Boethius, *De consolatione,* book 2, prose 5,[[7]](#endnote-7) how much man excels the other creatures when he is cognizant of himself, so much is he pushed beneath other creatures when he deserts to know himself. For other creatures it is their nature not to know themselves, if however, man does not know himself this is because of vice, from which vice other vices arise. For when a man is thus defined, he is a rational and mortal animal, if man notes that he is an animal he will not be proud. For example, Dan. 4[:29] concerning Nabugodonosor because on account of pride he was humiliated to the level of a beast, etc. If again man notes that he is rational he will not swell in that concupiscence of the flesh, because he will not permit to grow in him what would destroy himself, but concupiscence enervates the reason. Just as it is evident in Solomon, 3 Kings 11[:4], where “his heart was turned away” by his love of women, etc. And the flood was made on account of this vice, Gen. 6[:6-7].

Again, it is evident through Boethius, *De consolatione*, book 2, poem 3,[[8]](#endnote-8) because the good man is changed from a rational into an irrational creature, just as the companions of Ulysses in returning from the Trojan war through a potion drunk were turned into various forms of beasts, but the reason remained whole in them, according to Boethius there. The poisons of lust more powerfully draw a man from himself because they carry off the reason. Therefore, says the Lord, Gen. [6:3]: “My spirit shall not remain in man … because he is flesh.”

Third, if man notes concerning himself that he is mortal he will not spring up in that concupiscence of the eyes. Wherefore, Jerome, in *Epistola ad Paulinum Presbyter,[[9]](#endnote-9)* he easily despises all things who realizes that he is about to die.

¶ The Son of God when he wished to be a mortal man decided to be poor and needy. And Aristotle writing to Alexander the Great said,[[10]](#endnote-10) If you are a man, know that you are mortal and will lose all your riches; If you are a god, you should rather disburse than carry away. Seneca, *Epistula* 79,[[11]](#endnote-11) no one should glory except in that which is his own. We praise a vine if it loads the shoots with fruit. In a vine the virtue is fertility; in a man in truth we do not praise him if he has a beautiful household, and then if he plants much, if he lends much. None of these is the man in himself, but they are all outside of him. Praise therefore what is in him that cannot be taken away from him nor given to him, that which is the work of a rational man and the good of a man.

¶ When therefore a man becomes a rational animal it is perfected in him that good for which he is born and from which he is named, if his lives according to his name. This is Seneca. If a man lives according to his nature in that condition he was established, his reason will rule over his body and the whole will rule over every creature he was placed over from the beginning, because in truth by sinning man has subjected himself under whom he ought to be [the master

]. Therefore, now he is subject to those over whom he ought to be [placed].

¶ For example, the lions spared Daniel and the fire did not consume the boys, Dan 6[:16-24, 3:11-24]. And all the animals obeyed Noah, Matt. [24:37-39], because he was “a just and perfect man, [Gen. 6:9].”

Again, at the command of Joshua, the sun stood still against the Gibeonites, Josh. 10[:13] and at the command of Elias the fire descended and devoured fifty of them, 4 Kings 1[:10]. Nor is it any wonder because the intact image of the king in a seal is believed and obeyed throughout the kingdom. Man, however, was created innocent in the image of God, so long as the image is intact in him. This image of innocence obeys him everywhere in the kingdom of God, but, alas, because now according to the Psalm [48:13]: “Man when he was in honor did not understand; he is compared to senseless beasts,” etc. No creature now considers himself subject to man. Wherefore, Eccli. 17[:1, 3]: “God created man of the earth, and … gave him power over all things that are upon the earth.” But man, who is the best of the animals through sin has made himself the worst of the animals.

Wherefore as Aristotle in *Politics* says,[[12]](#endnote-12) just as man under law is the best of the animals. Wherefore, Chrysostom 44, *Super Mattheum*,[[13]](#endnote-13) above all evils an evil man is the worst evil. For if you wish to compare him to the beasts, you would find him the worse. For each beast has some proper evil, but man has as if all evils. Finally, an evil man is worse than every devil. For this devil is superior to man in strength, but on the other hand man is superior to the devil in weapons. Wherefore, this man is besieged and just as a man without weapons can do nothing against an enemy, so the devil without man can do nothing whatsoever against the saints.

Wherefore, Boethius, *De consolatione*, book 4, prose 3,[[14]](#endnote-14) you would not consider him human whom you see transformed by vice. Wherefore there he commonly compares the seeker for gold to a wolf, the litigious man to the dog, the fraudulent man to the fox, the wrathful man to a lion, the coward to the timid deer, the lazy man to an ass, the inconstant man to a bird, and the libidinous man to a hog. And he adds below when he leaves off being a man he cannot pass into the divine condition; it is necessary that he transform into a beast.

¶ There when man of himself has such a low condition, he does not have the nature of being proud nor glorying.

Unless except in the way that was said above in chapter [157] Glory (*Gloria*).

And below in chapter [349] Pride (*Superbia*).

But Chrysostom inveighs most strongly against those who glory concerning their kind, *Homilia* 3,[[15]](#endnote-15) What does it profit him, he says, who of a noble birth tarnishes his customs, or how does it hurt that one of a vile slave who adorns his customs. What did it profit Cham, who was the son of Noah or what did it harm Abraham who had a pagan father a cultivator of idols. For gold is born from the earth, the gold is chosen, the earth rejected. And the story for this concerning gold rejected, the gem from the sand is drawn out. The worm is born of the fruit, but not its origin, but rather the thing itself is considered.

¶ Again, from a worm silk and purple cloth are born, nor therefore is purple cloth vile because it is drawn from a worm, nor is a moth noble because it demands precious clothes. Some animals seem to have some generosity over certain other animals, as the lion, the eagle, the peacock, or the tiger. However man in his body does not have such superiority above others, Wis. 7[:1]: “I myself also am a mortal man, like all others, and of the race of him, that was first made of the earth,” and it follows, “none of the kings had any other beginning of birth.” Therefore, nothing of good has the nobility of kind except what is of good. He has nourished his sons and for the good.

Wherefore Aristotle in his *Rhetoric* it is very true that out of good people, proceeds the good well-nourished on account of which we commend them who begot them and thus nourished them. Wherefore Christ, John 8[:37] with the Jews glorying concerning their kind when they said, we are “the children of Abraham,” etc. I responded, “If you be the children of Abraham, do the works of Abraham. Because from works it will be to your praise, not from the kind of such, for there was almost complete recognition of Tobias because of his good instruction, Tob. last chapter [14:11]. Wherefore Seneca, *Epistula* 80,[[16]](#endnote-16) that is the one point to be considered. From the earliest beginnings of the universe to the present, we have been led forward out of splendid things because of a series of alternating parents. Only the soul makes us noble.

Chrysostom, *Super Mattheum*, homilia 13,[[17]](#endnote-17) every animal can love what he understands is good for him and hates what he understands as evil for himself. Only man loves what is hurtful to himself. For, in himself he has two opposed natures. So that what displeases the one pleases the other, Job [7:1] temptation is “the life of man upon earth.” Wherefore, exclaims the Apostle, Rom. 7[:24-25]: “Unhappy man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?” and it follows, “I myself, with the mind serve the law of God; but with the flesh, the law of sin.” Therefore, said Seneca, *De Naturalibus Questionibus*,[[18]](#endnote-18) O how corrupt a thing man is unless he raises himself above the human. Again, John Chrysostom in the book *30* *Homelie*, homily 16,[[19]](#endnote-19) If you are a man, you are full of falls, conquering you will conquer in the fight. Therefore, with the burden of the flesh, with the desires of the wind.

¶ Again, the life of man is turned between two states, namely, of fault and of grace, between two fortunes, namely, prosperous and adverse. Between two lives, active and contemplative. In the state of fault, he needs penance, in the state of state grace he needs perseverance, in the state of prosperity he needs temperance, in the state of adversity he needs patience, in the active state he needs justice, in the contemplative state he needs modesty.

See more Concerning Man (*Homo*) below at such a sign # [chapter 165, Man 2].

1. Augustine, *Confessiones* 1.7.11 (PL 32:665): quoniam nemo mundus a peccato coram te, nec infans cuius est unius diei vita super terram? [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. Augustine, *Enarrationes in Psalmos* 145.10 (PL 37:1890): Subito exiet spiritus eius, revertetur in terram suam. [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. Bernard, *Meditationes, piissimae de cognitione humanae conditionis* 3.8 (PL 184:490): Attende, homo, quid fuisti ante ortum, et quid es ab ortu usque ad occasum, atque quid eris post hanc vitam. Profecto fuit quando non eras: postea de vili materia factus, et vilissimo panno involutus, menstruali sanguine in utero materno fuisti nutritus, et tunica tua fuit pellis <al. pellicia> secundina.

Sic indutus et ornatus progressus es ad nos:

Nec memor es quam sit vilis origo tui. [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. Bernard, *Meditationes, piissimae de cognitione humanae conditionis* 3.8 (PL 184.490): Forma, favor populi, fervor juvenilis, opesque. Subripuere tibi noscere quid sit homo.

Nihil aliud est homo quam sperma fetidum, saccus stercorum, cibus vermium. Post hominem vermis, post vermem fetor et horror. Sic in non hominem vertitur omnis homo.

Cf. Association for the Preservation of the Memorials of the Dead, Ireland: Journals 1888-1916: Kilfenora Parish: 1892, Vol. II (1): Kilfenora Churchyard.

I. “DONALDUS MACDONAGH et uxor ejus MARIA O’CONOR sibi et suis ambobus posteris hunc tumulum fieri fecere An Dni 1685.

 Momento Mori.

 Formo favor populi fervor juvenilis ospesque

 Subripuere tibi noscere quid sit homo

 Post hominem vermes post vermem foetor et horror,

 Sic in non hominem vertitur omnis homo

 Sic transit gloria mundi.

 Quisquis eris qui transieris sto perlege, plora.

 Sum quod eris, fueramque quod es; pro me, precor, ora.”

I. “Donald Macdonagh and his wife Maria O’Conor caused this monument to be made for themselves and for their posterity, on both sides, A.D. 1685.

 Remember death.

 A fine form, the good will of the people, youthful ardour and wealth have snatched from thee how to know what man is. After the man, a worm, after the worm foul smell and horror. Thus even man is turned into what is not a man. Thus the glory of this world passes away. Whoever thou art who shall pass by. Pause, read carefully, and lament. I am what thou wilt be, and have been what thou art, pray for me, I beseech thee.” [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
5. William de Lancea, *Diaetae salutis* 7.1 (8:315b): Ultimo, si consideret proprium subjectum, videt quod in principio est semen immundum, in medio saccus stercorum, et in fine cibus vermium, but dicit Bernardus. [↑](#endnote-ref-5)
6. Ambrose, *Hexameron* 6.8.49 (PL 14:261): Denique cum fecisset piscium belluas, cum fecisset ferarum genera et bestiarum, non requievit: requievit autem posteaquam hominem ad imaginem suam fecit. In quo requiescat audi dicentem: Supra quem requiescam nisi super humilem et quietum, et trementem verba mea (Esai. LXVI, 2)? Esto ergo humilis, et quietus, ut in tuo Deus requiescat affectu. Qui non [Col.0261D] requievit in [H]bestiis, multo magis non requiescet in pectore bestiali. Sunt enim animi bestiales, sunt ferae forma hominum indutae, de quibus dicit Dominus: Attendite vobis a falsis prophetis, qui veniunt ad vos in vestitu ovium, intus autem sunt lupi rapaces (Matth. VII, 15). In his ergo non requievit Deus: sed requievit in moribus humanis, quos fecit Deus ad imaginem suam et similitudinem, quando fecit virum qui non debet velare caput suum; quoniam imago et gloria est Dei. [↑](#endnote-ref-6)
7. Boethius, *De Consolatione Philosophiae*, 2 pr. 5 (PL 63:694-695): Humanae quippe naturae ista conditio est, ut tum tantum caeteris rebus, cum se cognoscit, excellat: eadem tamen infra bestias redigatur, si se nosse desierit. Nam caeteris animantibus sese ignorare, natura est: hominibus vero, vitio venit.

For the nature of man is such that he is better than other things only when he knows himself, and yet if he ceases to know himself he is made lower than the brutes. For it is natural for other animals not to have this self-knowledge; in man it is a fault. [↑](#endnote-ref-7)
8. Boethius, *De Consolatione Philosophiae* 4 met. 3 (PL 63:801-802): Et vagas pelago rates

Eurus appulit insulae,

Pulchra qua residens dea

Solis edita semine,

Miscet hospitibus novis

Tacta carmine pocula.

Quos ut in varios modos

Vertit herbipotens manus:

Hunc apri facies tegit,

[Col.0802A] Ille Marmaricus leo

Dente crescit et unguibus;

Hic lupis super additus

Flere dum parat, ululat:

Ille, tigris ut Indica,

Tecta mitis obambulat,

Sed licet variis malis

Numen Arcadis alitis

Obsitum miserans ducem

Peste solverit hospitis:

The ship of Ulysses And his ocean-wandering fleet The south-east wind drove to the isle Where the fair goddess dwells Sprung from the Sun’s seed, Who mixes for each new guest An enchanted cup. Her herb-skilled hand Thus changes them in various ways: This one the shape of boar conceals, That one a lion of Africa Grows fangs and claws; Another just becoming one with wolves, While he essays to weep, but howls; Another like an Indian tiger Prowls tame around the house. But though the power of the Arcadian flyer Had pity on the captain Beset by these different ills, And freed him from the poison of his host, [↑](#endnote-ref-8)
9. Jerome, *Epistola* 53.10 (PL 22:549): Facile contemnit omnia, qui se semper cogitat esse moriturum. [↑](#endnote-ref-9)
10. Cf. Quintus Curtius Rufus, *History of Alexander* 7.8.26 368:204): Denique, si deus es, tribuere mortalibus beneficia debes, non sua eripere si autem homo es, id quod es semper esse te cogita. [↑](#endnote-ref-10)
11. Seneca, *Epistula* 41.7-9 (LCL 75:276-279): Nemo gloriari nisi suo debet. Vitem laudamus si fructu palmites onerat, si ipsa pondere [ad terram] eorum quae tulit adminicula deducit: num quis huic illam praeferret vitem cui aureae uvae, aurea folia dependent? Propria virtus est in vite fertilitas; in homine quoque id laudandum est quod ipsius est. Familiam formonsam habet et domum pulchram, multum serit, multum fenerat: nihil horum in ipso est sed circa ipsum. Lauda in illo quod nec eripi potest nec dari, quod proprium hominis est. Quaeris quid sit? animus et ratio in animo perfecta. Rationale enim animal est homo; consummatur itaque bonum eius, si id implevit cui nascitur. Quid est autem quod ab illo ratio haec exigat? rem facillimam, secundum naturam suam vivere. Sed hanc difficilem facit communis insania: in vitia alter alterum trudimus. Quomodo autem revocari ad salutem possunt quos nemo retinet, populus impellit? [↑](#endnote-ref-11)
12. Aristotle, *Politics* 1.2 1253a31-36 (Barnes 2:1988): For man, when perfected, is the best of animals, but, when separated from law and justice, he is the worst of all; since armed injustice is the more dangerous, and he is equipped at birth with arms, meant to be used by intelligence and virtue, which he may use for the worst ends. [↑](#endnote-ref-12)
13. (Pseudo-)Chrysostom, *Opus imperfectum in Mattheum* Homilia 24 ex cap. 10 (PG 56:758): prae omnibus malis homo malus est pessimum malum. Quaelibet bestia unum habet et proprie malum, homo autem Omnia. Dyabolus enim ad iustum accedere non audit, sed malus homo non timet sed contempnit. [↑](#endnote-ref-13)
14. Boethius, Consolation of Philosophy 4 pr. 3 (PL 63:800): Evenit igitur, ut quem transformatum vitiis videas, hominem aestimare non possis. Avaritia fervet alienarum opum violentus ereptor? lupi similem dixeris. Ferox, atque inquies, linguam litigiis exercet? cani comparabis. Insidiator occultis surripuisse fraudibus gaudet? vulpeculis exaequetur. Irae intemperans fremit? leonis animum gestare credatur. Pavidus ac fugax non metuenda formidat? cervis similis habeatur. Segnis, ac stupidus torpet? asinum vivit. Levis atque inconstans studia permutat? nihil ab avibus differt. Foedis immundisque libidinibus immergitur? sordidae suis voluptate detinetur. Ita fit, [Col.0800B] ut qui, probitate deserta, homo esse desierit, cum in divinam conditionem transire non possit, vertatur in belluam.

It results, then, that thou canst not consider him human whom thou seest transformed by vice. The violent despoiler of other men's goods, enflamed with covetousness, surely resembles a wolf. A bold and restless spirit, ever wrangling in law-courts, is like some yelping cur. The secret schemer, taking pleasure in fraud and stealth, is own brother to the fox. The passionate man, phrenzied with rage, we might believe to be animated with the soul of a lion. The coward and runaway, afraid where no fear is, may be likened to the timid deer. He who is sunk in ignorance and stupidity lives like a dull ass. He who is light and inconstant, never holding long to one thing, is for all the world like a bird. He who wallows in foul and unclean lusts is sunk in the pleasures of a filthy hog. So it comes to pass that he who by forsaking righteousness ceases to be a man cannot pass into a Godlike condition, but actually turns into a brute beast.' [↑](#endnote-ref-14)
15. (Pseudo-)Chrysostomus, *Opus imperfectum in* *Mattheum*, Homilia, 3 ex cap. 3 (PG 56:651): Quid enim prodest ei, quem sordidant mores generatio clara? Aut quid nocet illi generatio vilis, quem mores adornat? Ipse enim se vacuum ab ómnibus ostendit, qui gloriatur in patribus. Quid profuit Cham, quod fuerit Noe filius? nonne separatus de medio filiorum, qui secundum carnem frater fuerat natus, secundum animam factus est servus? Quid Timotheo nocuisse creditor, quod fuit ex patre gentili. Aut quid nocuit Abraae, quoe patrem habuit Tharam lateorum deorum cultorem? nonne sepatatus a genere suo, positus est in caput fidelium, ut jam non diceretur filius peccatorum, sed pater sanctorum? Nec potuerunt gloriam ejus sordidare paterni eorrores. Nam et aurum de terra nascitur, sed non est terra. Et aurum quidem eligitur, terra autem contemnitur. [↑](#endnote-ref-15)
16. Seneca, *Epistula* 44.5 (LCL 75:288-289): Hoc unum intuendum est: alioquin si ad vetera revocas, nemo non inde est ante quod nihil est. A primo mundi ortu usque in hoc tempus perduxit nos ex splendidis sordidisque alternata series. Non facit nobilem atrium plenum fumosis imaginibus; nemo in nostram gloriam vixit nec quod ante nos fuit nostrum est: animus facit nobilem, cui ex quacumque condicione supra fortunam licet surgere. [↑](#endnote-ref-16)
17. (Pseudo-)Chrysostom, *Opus imperfectum in* *Matthaeum* Homilia 13 ex cap. 5 (PG 56:707): Omne animal potest amare quod sibi intelligit bonum, et odire quod intelligit malum: solus homo quod intelligit malum, amare cogitur, et odire quod intelligit bonum: quia duas habet in se aduersantes naturas. Quod carni placet, animae displicet, et quod animae placet, carni displicet: vt sicut ait Iob, omnis vita nostra, tentatio sit. Quod si omnis vita nostra tentatio est, omnis vita nostra et lucrum est. Te autem faciente eleemosinam, nescit sinistra tua quid faciat dextera tua. [↑](#endnote-ref-17)
18. Seneca, *Natural Questiones*, 1 Preface 5 (LCL 450:4-5): 0 quam contempta res est homo, nisi supra humana surrexit! [↑](#endnote-ref-18)
19. John Chrysostom, *Opera* (Parisiis: In aedibus Carolae Guillard, 1543) Expositio Psalmi 29, homilía incerto interprete (f. 149va): Si homo es, casibus plenus es: si temporalis es, fer, feriris, uincis, et uinciris: si homo es, pugnas cum sarcina carnis, cum uoluptatibus uentris, cum auaritiae cupiditatibus: si homo es, sensus tui impugnantur desyderiis.

[Tomus primus (-quintus) omnium operum Diui Ioannis Chrysostomi ..., locis p... - Google Books](https://www.google.com/books/edition/Tomus_primus_quintus_omnium_operum_Diui/FnOyKM9XB6oC?hl=en&gbpv=1&dq=Si+homo+es,+casibus+plenus+es&pg=PA727&printsec=frontcover) [↑](#endnote-ref-19)