286 To Perish, Peril (*Perire, Periculum*)

The chick abandoning its parent either falls into the thorns or in the briars, or it is captured by the kite[[1]](#endnote-1) and thus it perishes. So, we who in this present life as if chicks under the wings of the parents, abandoning God either we fall into the thorns of avarice or in the briars of lust, or they are captured by the demon, Jer. 17[:13]: “O Lord, all that forsake thee shall be confounded.” And Job 4[:7-9] it is said, “Remember, I pray thee, whoever perished being innocent?” and it follows, “On the contrary I have seen those who work iniquity, and sow sorrows … perishing by the blast of God.” From which it is evident that man does not perish unless because of iniquity. For Lot fell into the danger of drunkenness and incest. Unless he disbelieved the angel, who moved him on the mountain to be saved, Gen. 19[:30]. It is said however in Eccli. 43[:26]: “Let them that sail on the sea, tell the dangers thereof.”

¶ Of which the first danger is if the ship is too much loaded, so it is concerning the rich of this world.

¶ Concerning this danger it seems to be said in Eccle. 5[:12]: “There is also another grievous evil, which I have seen under the sun: riches kept to the hurt of the owner.” For the worst perish in affliction. Therefore, in all dangers man ought as much as he can within reason help and commit the rest to God. Wherefore Augustine says in book 16, *De civitate*, chapter 19,[[2]](#endnote-2) if a man does not beware of danger as much as he is able, he tempts God more than he hopes in him. Wherefore Abraham is excused who in danger of death said his wife was his sister. For Augustine says,[[3]](#endnote-3) too headlong is he who contends to cross over where he sees another to perish. Wherefore Chrysostom, *Homilia* 27,[[4]](#endnote-4) the ruin of those going before ought to be an admonition to the following. If, however we the following do not fall, where those praying together have fallen, the first will find more forgiveness than we the second. And Jerome, *Epistola* 91,[[5]](#endnote-5) he is more secure who cannot perish, than he who has not perished near danger.

1. Cf. Isidore, *Etymologiae* 12.7.58 (PL 82:467): Milvus, mollis viribus et volatu, quasi mollis avis, unde et nuncupatur, rapacissimus tamen, et semper domesticis avibus insidiatur.

The kite (milvus) is soft in flight and strength, but it is a rapacious bird that is always hostile toward domestic birds. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. Augustine, *De civitate Dei* 16.19. (PL 41:498): Ubi uxorem suam dixit sororem (Gen. XII, 7-19), nihil mentitus. Erat enim et hoc, quia propinqua erat sanguine: sicut etiam Lot eadem propinquitate, cum fratris ejus esset filius, frater ejus est dictus. Itaque uxorem tacuit, non negavit, conjugis tuendam pudicitiam committens Deo, et humanas insidias cavens ut homo: quoniam si periculum quantum caveri poterat, non caveret, magis tentaret Deum, quam speraret in Deum. [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. Augustine, cf. Cyprianus Carthaginensis, *De singularitate clericorum* adscriptus necnon Augustino (PL 4:837): Nimium praeceps est qui transire contendit, ubi alium conspexerit cecidisse: et vehementer infraenis est, cui non incutitur timor alio pereunte. [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. (Pseudo-)Chrysostom, *Opus imperfectum in Mattheum* hom. 34 ex cap. 20 (PG 56:817): Ruina pracedentium adminitio debet esse sequentium. Si autem et non sequentes cediderimus in ipsam, magis veniam merentur illi, qui primi ceciderunt, quam nos qui secondi. [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
5. Jerome, *Epistolae* quarta classis, 117.3 (PL 22:955): Securius est perire non posse, quam juxta periculum non perisse. [↑](#endnote-ref-5)