309 Straight (*Rectum*)

According to Euclid,[[1]](#endnote-1) a straight (line segment) is said to be one whose middle does not extend beyond the extremes. God made man such from the beginning, as treated in Eccle. 3[:11]. But quickly from the extremes he went beyond leaving his principle, God, and deviating from his due end, God, through disobedience.

Again, the ends of man are the present life and the future life. If, however our middle course does not go beyond from these ends it is unified rightly, Psal. [26:11; 16:5]: “Guide me in the right path … that my footsteps be not moved.” For God saves the upright in heart.

¶ Again, there is a difference between a straight movement and a circular. For the straight is terminated similarly in rest, the circular not. Thus, they who live upright are ordained for rest, but those following a circular course will not rest on the wheel of fortune, Psal. [106:42]: “The just shall see and shall rejoice.”

Again, the wicked walk in a circle. Gregory in *Moralia*,[[2]](#endnote-2) no one comprehends his own crookedness, unless when he begins to be upright. For the perverse and crooked, cannot see what is right. Chrysostom, *Homilia* 30,[[3]](#endnote-3) in the same way as a column, if it stands upright, it is not burdened by the weight, but it is confirmed even more. If, however it is crooked under the weight, it will fall. Thus, the heart of an upright man, seeing or hearing the works of a just man, is confirmed even more. If the heart is upright, it is not inclined to envy. Thus, the Pharisees envied Christ’s miracles, Matt. 21[:45]. There if we ought to return to the middle, it is necessary to proceed along the straight way, because it sometimes happens that rectitude is in the heart by the truth of thought, as, namely, things are inflamed just as they are. For truth is to the extent of the matter to the intellect, Prov. 4[:25]: “Let your eyes look straight on, and let your eyelids go before your steps.”

Second, when rectitude is in your heart by the charity of affection, as, namely, we live upright with God, Deut. 32[:4]: “God is faithful and without any iniquity, he is just and right.” For then he who begins rightly according to the whole is upright, Can. 1[:3]: “The righteous love you.” And Ezech. 1[:7]: “Their feet,” [etc.] But alas because in the Psal. [77:37] it is said, “But their heart was not right with him.”

Third, when rectitude is in the heart through simplicity in intention, as, namely, in his works he intends the will of God, Heb. 12[:13]: “Make straight steps with your feet, that no one (be) halting.” Job 1[:1]: “There was a man, and that man was simple and upright.” But alas because in Prov. 21[:2] it is said, “Every way of a man seems right to himself.”

Second, he is returned to the middle when rectitude is in his mouth because it happens in three ways. By praising God, like lamps rightly trimmed, when the mouth has its objective above. So, man is said to be upright who renders in return for life, that is, thanks for a benefit, Psal. [32:1]: “Praise becomes the upright.” Mark 7[:35]: “The string of his tongue was loosed, and he spoke right.”

Second, by preaching truly, Prov. 8[6]: “The lips of the mute shall be opened to preach right things.” Luke 20[:21]: “Master, we know that you speak rightly.” But alas because Act. 13[:10]: “You cease not to pervert the right ways of the Lord.”

Third, in judging justly so that by bestowing to each one what is his, Psal. [57:2]: “Judge right things, sons of men.” Luke 7[:43]: “You have judged rightly.” But alas because Wis. 6[:5]: “Because being ministers of his kingdom, you have not judged rightly.”

¶ Concerning these three it is said in Eccli. 28[:29]: “Make a balance for your words, and a just bridle for your mouth.” By praising, namely, the good against the evil you praise God, by teaching whether you should bend against the aslant, by judging justly against the curved of iniquity because of the Psal. [32:4]: “The word of the Lord is right.”

Third, he is returned to the middle when there is rectitude in work, men have right work.

First, if they have humility to God who is the true rule of right working, Psal. [18:9]: “The justices of the Lord are right.” But alas because in Prov. 14[:2]: “He that walks in the right way by heart, is despised by him that goes by an infamous way.”

Second, if they handle themselves wisely, as for themselves, what happens through cleanness, Prov. 21[:8]: “For him that is pure, his work is right.” Or even through penance, as the disruption of crookedness makes things straight, Prov. 21[:29]: “He that is righteous, corrects his way.” But alas because “The way of a fool is right in his own eyes,” Prov. 12[:15].

Third, if you are innocent as for your neighbor, just as also a balance beam, without fraud it is said upright, Prov. 21[:18]: “The wicked is delivered up for the just: and the unjust for the righteous.”

¶ The example in Peter and Herod, Act. 12[:1-15]. But alas because there are many like those old men in Dan. 13[:55] who rightly lied in their head. Concerning these three, Ose. 14[:10]: “The ways of the Lord are right, and the just shall walk in them,” namely, humbly against the demon of pride, wisely against the slant of uncleanness, innocently against the curve of injustice.

¶ Again, they ought to be triple in uprightness to be strong preachers because by rectitude of heart as far as intention, and by rectitude of mouth as far as edification, and by rectitude of work as far as imitation.

Through the first, they perceive God as propitious, Psal. [72:1]: “How good is God to Israel, to them that are of a right heart!”

Through the second, they edify their neighbor, Eccli. 28[:29]: “Make a balance for your words, and a just bridle for your mouth.”

Through the third, he leaves an example by good living, Prov. 30[:11]: “By his inclinations a child is known, if his works be clean and right.”

Again, in this life one ought to be upright of flesh to the spirit of man, to the cleanness of the mind, to God first. It happens through cleanness of life, Prov. 21[:8]: “As for him that is pure, his work is right.”

Second, through voluntary poverty, Heb. 12[:13]: “Make straight steps with your feet: that no one, halting.” The rich go halting certainly now to the right of prosperity, now to left of adversity. But not so the poor man who follows God in the middle of the extremes of the vicious. Uprightness of the mind to God happens through firm belief by which it is said against the incredulous, Haba. 2[:4]: “He that is unbelieving, his soul shall not be right in himself.”

The first rectitude the voluptuous leave behind, the second, the ambitious, and the third, the perfidious, Eccli. 2[:16]: “Woe to them that have forsaken the right ways.” But not so the holy man who stays in the first rectitude by trampling underfoot the enticements of the flesh.

In the second, by declining the riches of the world.

in the third, by stripping the machinations of the malign. Therefore, one can truly say that of Eccli. [51:20]: “My foot walked in the right way.”

1. Cf. Euclid, *Mathematical Works,* The Elements 4 (LCL 335:437-438): A straight line is a line which lies evenly with the points on itself.

   Cf. Plato (*Parmenides* 137 e) defines a straight line as “that of which the middle covers the ends.” Euclid appears to be trying to say the same kind of thing in more geometrical language. Neither statement is satisfactory as a definition.

   Cf. Thomas Aquinas, Super Heb., cap. 12 l. 3: Rectum enim dicitur cuius medium non exit ab extremis, id est, cuius operatio non recedit ab intentione et fine debito.

   Line Segment Definition: A straight line which links two points without extending beyond them.

   <http://www.mathopenref.com/linesegment.html> [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. Gregory, *Moralia* 24.8. (PL 76:294): Nemo quippe tortitudinem suam, nisi cum rectus esse coeperit, deprehendit. Nam qui omnino perversus est, neque hoc potest videre quod est. [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. (Pseudo-)Chrysostom, *Opus imperfectum in Mattheum* Homilia 38 ex cap. 21 (PG 56:843): Quemadmodum columna in templo, si steterit recta, accepto pondere amplius confirmatur, si autem modice obliqua fuerit, suscepto pondere, non solum non confirmatur, sed amplius vadit ad latus: sic et cor hominis si rectum fuerit, videns opera alicujus viri justi, aut audiens, per doctrinam sapientiae ejus amplius confirmatur; si autem fuerit perversum cor, videns opera alicujus viri justi, aut audiens, non solum non confirmatur, sed magis ad invidiam excitatur, et magis pervertitur. [↑](#endnote-ref-3)