373 To Turn or To Convert (*Vertere uel Conuertere*)

According to Bernard, *Super Cantica*, Homily 39,[[1]](#endnote-1) they who do not wish to be converted to the Lord not on that account are they rejected, unless because they project themselves as grave and severe, which is pious, hard and inflexible, which is merciful, fierce and terrible, which is loveable. But their iniquity lies to itself. Because every conversion to good is from God, Prov. 12[:7]: “Turn the wicked, and they shall not be” natural servants. And according to Augustine, book 11, *De Trinitate*, c. 7,[[2]](#endnote-2) the chameleon which is the most delicate of nature assimilates itself to whatever it turns itself to by looking upon it, Isai. 38[:2]: “Ezechias,” who on account of sin was judged for death, “turned his face toward the wall” of the temple, which was near his house, weeping he merited life. So “stone melted with heat is turned into brass,” Job 28[:2]. When the sinner is hard through obstinacy, he is turned into brass of the sounds of divine praise lest therefore “Delay not to be converted to the Lord,” according to that of Eccli. 5[:8].

Wherefore Augustine, *Sermo* 16,[[3]](#endnote-3) when will you correct yourself, when will you change. Tomorrow, you say. Behold how often you say, Tomorrow, tomorrow (*Cras, cras*) and you become a crow. I say to you, brother, when you make for yourself the voice of crow, I fear lest quickly ruin may come to you. For that kind exiting from Noe’s ark did not return. You however, brother, return to the Church which that ark prefigured. It should be written on knives, Pain tomorrow not today. But in what kind of morrow will it be found. And thus, always it is promised and never given. A monster is an animal that for two or three years carries its young in the belly. So, it is if a man carries for a long time a good intention. It will be done according to what is said in Luke 21[:23]: “But woe to them that are with child and give suck in those days.”

¶ Concerning this it is to be noted that a driver while he is in the broad way can easily turn his wagon, as it is not so in the narrow way. So, a man while he is in this wide world can turn himself to the good, not so on the point of death, 2 Paral. 18[:34]: “The king of Israel,” fighting, “against the Syrians,” was wounded but “died at the sunset.” He died because he turned himself too late.

1. Bernard, *Sermones in Cantica* 38.2 (PL 183:975): Ego autem dico omnes ignorare Deum, qui nolunt converti ad Deum. Neque enim ob aliud procul dubio renuunt, nisi quia gravem [Col.0975C] et severum imaginantur, qui pius est, durum et implacabilem, qui misericors est, ferum et terribilem, qui amabilis est: et mentitur iniquitas sibi, formans sibi idolum pro eo quod non est ipse. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. Augustine, *De Trinitate* 11.2.2 (PL 42:988): Licet videre corpusculum chamaeleontis ad colores quos videt facillima conversione variari. Aliorum autem animalium quia non est ad conversionem facilis corpulentia, fetus plerumque produnt libidines matrum, quid cum magna delectatione conspexerint. [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. Augustine, *Sermones de tempore*, 224.4.4 (PL 38:1095): Quando corrigis, quando mutaris? Cras, inquis. Ecce quoties dicis, Cras, cras; factus es corvus. Ecce dico tibi, cum facis vocem corvinam, occurrit tibi ruina. Nam ille corvus, cujus vocem imitaris, exiit de arca, et non rediit (Gen. VIII, 7). Tu autem, frater, redi in Ecclesiam, quam tunc illa arca significabat. [↑](#endnote-ref-3)