378 Road (*Via*)

Our life however is a certain road. Of which the beginning is stinking and defiled, the middle is slippery and shrewd, and the third, that is, death, is perilous and not safe. Therefore, against these three Christ made for himself a way, John 14[:6]: “I am the way, and the truth,” without error, “and the life,” without fear. The philosophers knew God, but because he displeased them, Christ went across the lowest way and not on the road.

Augustine, *De verbis Domini*, sermon 56,[[1]](#endnote-1) if Christ was not the way, we were always in error. I do not say to you, Seek the way. For this way comes to you. Therefore, rise and walk, not with feet but with customs. For it is better to limp in the way, than to walk strongly against the way. If therefore it is the way, but you walk through it, but this we cannot do unless either by following his innocence or his penitence. For the dragon with “his tail drew the third part of the stars” on earth, namely, those who are on the third step, namely, outside of the state of innocence or penitence, Apo. 12[:4]. Wherefore also two people found the way into paradise, Enoch [Gen. 5:24] and Elias [4 Kings 2:11], who prefigured these two roads in a sign that whoever are in neither will not enter paradise.

Wherefore Chrysostom, *Super Mattheum*,[[2]](#endnote-2) homily 18, they will not fall into the hands of the devil, unless they walk in the way of the sinners. If therefore you go to the devil, you should not impute it to the devil that he has drawn you, to you yourself, because you have gone to him. For is there no gate that leads to the way? But on the contrary the way leads to the gate. So, the devil does not lead to sins, but rather sins to the devil.

Wherefore Augustine, as above,[[3]](#endnote-3) do you wish to walk, Christ says, I am the way. Do you wish not to be deceived on the way, Christ says, I am the truth. Do you wish not to die at the end of the way, Christ says, I am the life. The way as example, the truth as promise, and the life as reward. But because this way is narrow, therefore few go on it, Matt. 7[:14]. And therefore says Jer. 6[:16]: “Ask for the old paths which is the good way and walk in it.” Every way is good which leads to the proverbial good, and especially if it leads to the greatest good, Prov. 14[:12]: “There is a way which seems just to a man, but the ends thereof lead to death.” Since therefore Christ is the way, go through it. Perhaps another has delights, but it is perilous because it is full of thieves.

Wherefore Gregory, *Super evangelium*, homily 11,[[4]](#endnote-4) in this present life we are as if on a journey, by which we travel to the fatherland. However malignant spirits besiege the journey as if certain robbers. Therefore, he desired to be robbed, who carries his treasure publicly on the way. Sometimes it happens that another lord keeps the ways of his land and then it is crossed securely there. Because those watching thieves unite with the travelers as if they too were wayfarers and they lead them from the right road, and then they despoil them and sometimes kill them. So Christ keeps the way of faith and virtues in which there is no danger, but the devil unites himself with those travelers and often despoils them, Jer. 21[:8]: “Behold I set before you the way of life, and the way of death.”

Wherefore Isidore, *De summo bono*, the first book, chapter 18,[[5]](#endnote-5) first it is for each to know what matter he seeks. Then so that he may take what he desires. Certainly, knowledge is imperfect, by which one tends to know, and not to know the journey through which it is expedient to go. For how is it useful to be hungry at a time of plenty to see the region, and ignore the way by which one journeys there? Behold the fatherland which one seeks through the way, but if such a one enters, he loses the way by straying, but that does no good. Because however much more one walks, the more he is distanced from him whom he seeks.

Again, Gregory, book 22 of *Moralia*,[[6]](#endnote-6) often we pursue the right and clean journey. But however, we are held back by our clothes by the brambles grown along the way. On the way we do not encounter them, but by the side of corrupted nature the brambles of concupiscence are born by which our clothing, that is, the virtues of the soul are torn, at least we go forward on the road of penitence, 2 Pet. 2[:15] who “Leaving the right way they have gone astray.” No wonder because many more are the ways for going astray than for holding on to the straightness. For the evil way is multiplex. For sometimes the way is a desert of dry land, Isai. 57[:17] man “went away wandering in his own heart.” Sometimes the way is slippery like a turtle against a wall, Psal. [9:26]: “His ways are filthy at all times.” And in the canonical Jude c. 1[:7]: “Going after other flesh, were made an example, suffering the punishment of eternal fire.” Thus “Ruben went, and slept with Bala, the concubine of his father,” Gen. 35[:22].

There is a thorny way of avarice which pierces through solicitude, so goes the partridge to seize other eggs which however afterwards she loses, Jer. 17[:11}: “The partridge has hatched eggs which she did not lay.” Psal. [13:3]: “Destruction and unhappiness in their ways.” And Osee 2[:6]: “I will hedge up your way with thorns.” See therefore how wretched it is to arrive through a narrow way to an evil hospitality, but many are they who cannot sleep unless in a tumult as of a mill.

¶ And the rocky road of wrath is the way of pride, mountainous and ruinous, Prov. 17[:16]: “He that makes his house high, seeks a downfall.” Just as a bear ascends a tree to have the honey and he falls. Therefore, it is said in Eccli. 32[:25]: “Go not in the way of ruin.” There is the dark way of envy, the canonical Jude [1:11]: “Woe unto them, for they have gone in the way of Cain.” There is the way of profound mistrust through which Judas walked when he hung himself with a noose. There is the laborious way of avarice which one acquires with labor, preserves with fear, and loses with sorrow, Sap. 5[:7-8]: “We wearied ourselves in the way of iniquity, and have walked through hard ways, What has [pride] profited us?” Like a mole that always in the earth, he has his eyes under the skin by which he does not see except near death and then that skin is broken and this one “There is a way which seems just to a man, but the ends thereof lead to death,” Prov. 14[:12]. For example, among the rich, Luke 16[:19].

Here the secular ones say that they can go to heaven just as well as the religious because they can walk such a narrow way outside of the religious orders as within. To which it is said that so easily the example that a horse is by himself alone can walk along a very narrow way, but if he is hitched to a cart or with a second horse at his back, willy-nilly, he finds the way worn away, muddy, and lengthy. So, a man not entwined with the cares of the world can live holy enough, but if a wife is joined to him with a family which is called a long narrow face, a man dismisses the way of God’s commandments. In the figure of which matter the entry to the philosophic horse with carts and horses to drive, the lord leads them back over them. However, the children of Israel walked through the waters of the sea through it thus in its middle. Wherefore also the religious can say that [Psal. 19:8]: “Some trust in chariots, and some in horses: but we will call upon the name of the Lord our God.”

1. Augustine, *De scripturis*, 141.4.4 (PL 38:777-778): Si enim via esse ipse noluisset, semper erraremus. Factus ergo via est qua venias. Non tibi dico, quaere viam. Ipsa via ad te venit: surge et ambula. Ambula moribus, non pedibus. Multi enim bene ambulant pedibus, et male ambulant moribus. Aliquando enim ipsi bene ambulantes, praeter viam currunt. Invenies quippe homines bene viventes, et non christianos. Bene currunt: sed in via non currunt. Quanto plus currunt, plus errant; quia a via recedunt. Si autem tales homines perveniant ad viam, et teneant viam, o quanta securitas est, quia et bene [Col.0778] ambulant, et non errant! Si autem non tenent viam, quantumvis bene ambulent, heu quam dolendum est! Melius est enim in via claudicare, quam praeter viam fortiter ambulare. Haec satis sint Charitati vestrae. Conversi ad Dominum, etc. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. (Pseudo-)Chrysostom, *Opus imperfecta in Mattheum* 18 ex cap. 7 (PG 56:735): Similiter nec incurrit in manus diaboli, nisi qui in via ambulat peccatorum. Vis non incurrere in diabolum? Declina a via, quae ducit ad illum, et nullam habet in te diabolus potestatem: si autem ambulaveris in via, quae ducit ad illum, jam non diabolo imputes perditionem tuam, quasi ille te traxerit ad se, sed tibi, quia tu ivisti ad illum. Numquid porta ducit ad viam? Sed via ducit ad portam: sic non prius diabolus homines ducit ad peccata, sed peccata ad diabolum ducunt. [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. Augustine, *In Joannis Evangelium* 22.8 (PL 35:1578): Ambulare vis? ego sum via. Falli non vis? ego sum veritas. Mori non vis? ego sum vita. [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. Gregory, *XL Homiliarum in Evangelia* 1.11. (PL 76:1115): In praesenti etenim vita quasi in via sumus, qua ad patriam pergimus. Maligni autem spiritus iter nostrum quasi quidam latrunculi obsident. Depraedari ergo desiderat, qui [Col.1115B] thesaurum publice portat in via. [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
5. Isidore, *Sententiarum* 1.17.5 (PL 83:575-576): Primum unicuique est scire quid appetat; secundum vero est ut id quod appetit apprehendat. Imperfecta quippe sapientia est, quo tendas scire, et nescire iter per quod expediat ire. Quid enim prodest si [Col.0575C] quis famis tempore ubertatis regionem videat, et viam per quam ad illam pergat ignorat? Ecce patriam quisque quaerit, sed qui viam perdidit errando [Col.0576A] graditur, non proficiendo; quantoque plus ambulat, tanto magis ab eo quod quaerit elongatur. [↑](#endnote-ref-5)
6. Gregory, *Moralia* 5.26.26 (PL 76:374): sicut saepe rectum mundumque iter pergimus, et tamen ortis juxta viam vepribus [Col.0374D] per vestimenta retinemur. In via quidem munda non offendimus, sed a latere nascitur quo pungamur. [↑](#endnote-ref-6)