348 The Sun (*Sol*)

According to the Philosopher,[[1]](#endnote-1) and others,[[2]](#endnote-2) the sun is said to be the eye of the world, because all things that are in the world have their potency from the sun alone. Wherefore Nathan the prophet said to David, 2 Kings 12[:12]: “For you did it secretly: but I will do this thing in the sight of the sun.” Of this by the sun can be understood [Prov. 15:3]: “The eyes of the Lord in every place behold the good and the evil. And “who makes his sun to rise upon,” etc., Matt. 5[:45]. This sun went “ten degrees backwards by the lines, in the dial of Achaz” in a sign of the king’s health, 4 Kings 20[:11]. This happened when the eternal was made temporal. For eternity is the supreme measure, time is the lowest which allows a creature to proceed from God just as a line from the center, according to Dionysus.[[3]](#endnote-3)

¶ Therefore the sun went backwards ten lines when the nine orders of angels omitted and exceeded to the tenth line, that is, they joined themselves to humans, according to that of Mal. 4[:2]: “Unto you that fear my name, the Sun of justice shall arise.” According to Albumasar,[[4]](#endnote-4) the sun after its rise if it ascends it is moved in augmentation and strength. When it declines it is moved in debility. So, it is when God ascends or descends in the heart of man. And just as a sick man languishes badly at night, and is strengthened by the rising of the sun, so humanity feels itself strengthened by the rising of Christ. Wherefore the physicians say that the chronic sick, that is, suffering for a long time, begin [their sickness] at the recess of the sun from our hemisphere, and they are cured at its return to it. In the sin of our first parents the sun, God, recessed from them, but in his rise, he returned [to us]. In the sign of which when the sun went backward in the sundial of Achaz, King Ezechias was cured, [4 Reg. 20:11]. Vegetius in the first book, *De re militari,* chapter 2,[[5]](#endnote-5) says that those nations which are neighbors to the sun abound more in intellect, but are more prone to war, because of this they have less of blood. The Philosopher says the same thing, book 7, *Politicorum*, c. 7,[[6]](#endnote-6) thus spiritually they who approach closer to the sun, Christ, have more of intellect such that by acquisition which if they aspire to be intelligent which are next to and which are above them and more pacified.

Again, the sun has three characteristics: substance, strength, and performance.

¶ Concerning substance, note that it has four, namely, purity in material, beauty in form, greatness in quantity, and perpetuity in duration. Because of these the just man can be compared to the sun.

First, because he has purity in life. For just as the sun does not receive foreign impressions, nor are its rays tinged by these which are near, so the just man does not receive impressions nor the stain of blame. The winds of pride, the clouds of envy, the lightning of wrath, the heat of avarice, the frost of sloth, the plague of lust, and the intemperance of gluttony seek him, Can. 6[:9]: “Who is she that cometh forth,” etc. and it follows, “bright as the sun,” what is bright is pure.

Second, he has beauty in teaching, who in himself is never eclipsed although he appears so to us, Wis. 7[:29]: “For she is more beautiful than the sun, being compared with the light, she is found before it.”

Third, he has humility in his state, just as the sun which although it is large, namely, having actions larger than the earth, according to many, however it seems little compared to us. And this because of its distance from the earth, so a just man the more remote he is from the earth and the closer to God, so the humbler he is in himself, Psal. [137:7-8]: “Who made the great lights, the sun to rule over the day.”

Fourth, he is incorruptible in perseverance. For the sun does not have contrary qualities, just as inferior bodies have such as heat and coldness, dryness and dampness, so the just man is not affected to consent by the heat of swimming ambition, nor the cold of sluggish omission, nor the damp of flowing voluptuousness, nor the dryness of elevating vanity. Therefore, he saves his sanctity uncorrupted, Eccli. 27[:12]: “A holy man continues in wisdom as the sun,” the uniformity of light, “but a fool is changed as the moon,” since his is almost totally flesh. For now, he is round through emerging cupidity, and in the end as if no one by eternal damnation.

¶ Again, as for the second property, the sun has a triple virtue, because it is illuminative, Eccli. 17[:30]: “What is brighter than the sun; yet it shall be eclipsed.” Not to the extent of substance and light, but to the extent of its present course, office, and profit, Apo. 21[:23]: “The city has no need of the sun.”

¶ Again, it has the power of heating, Eccli. 43[:3]: “At noon he burns the earth, and who can abide his burning heat?”

¶ Again, it has an emotive power, by which one is moved by God, Ezech. 9[:9]: “The land is great,” etc. So, a holy man has the light of health or honesty, the heat of charity, or the motive of obedience.

¶ Again, the sun has a multiple operation, for where its power of illumination operates four things result because it shows small things, puts to flight darkness and clouds, delights the eyes, and refrains malefactors. Thus, the true sun of justice arises in the soul of the just man, it shows small defects, just as in the rays of the sun are seen minimal particles of matter. Eccli. 42[:16]: “The sun giving light has looked upon all things.” He says well that all things perish along a single evil path. A man in a game by the loss of one foot loses, a man or a horse, so by one mortal sin man loses the kingdom. By the change of one thing it takes away the specific, and the whole difference is changed, Psal. [118:101]: “I have restrained my feet from every evil way.” Therefore, he says well all things not only mortal sins but also venial. Therefore, Ezechias illuminated said, “I will recount to thee all my years,” Isai. 38[:15].

¶ Again, he puts to flight the clouds by the detestation of sin. For a ship the fog is called a fault because it is stinking by the absence of charity, wet by the ease of slipping, obscure by the choosing of error, and dissolute by separation of damnation, Wis. 2[:3]: “Our life shall pass away as the trace of a cloud, and shall be dispersed as a mist, which is driven away by the beams of the sun. But this cloud disturbs the eyes more, that is, church men, than other members of the church, Habac. 1[:13]: “Your eyes are too pure to behold evil.”

¶ Again, his eyes sing by the taste of heaven, Eccli. 11{:7]: “The light is sweet, and it is delightful for the eyes to see the sun.” The delight results from the application, the coming together results with the uniting, but nothing so much fits to the rational soul as God to whose image it was created and for one recovered by his grace.

¶ Therefore to be joined with God is the greatest delight, Psal. [33:9]: “O taste and see that the Lord is sweet.” But some like beasts of burden carry wine, however they do not taste it. In service to the Lord they labor but impeded by sins they do not taste because they distance themselves from God by the four feet: thought, word, deed, and omission.

¶ Again, the four malefactors return through the door of coercion. The adulterers, before the sun appearing, namely, thieves, return to [their habit]. And the enemy does not dare to attack the castle where the Lord is thought to be reaping, Psal. [103:22]: “The sun arises,” of justice in the heart of the faithful, “and they are gathered together,” the demons, who do not dare to invade those in whom they see the sign tau (T). But every man [2] Esd. [4:15]: “To his work,” etc.

Again, by the power of heating four things are at work which alters colors, brings forth fruits, dissolves the congealed, and makes things to abound. Thus, the true sun, Christ, having arisen in the soul alters the colors through honest association. For the color of the world flourishes in the trappings of horses, in the crowds of attendants, by imitation of clothes, plurality of riches, sweetness of delights, the boasting of members, heaping of hair, but Can. 1[:4]: “I am black but beautiful.” I am black on the outside because of poverty in begging, because of labor striving, because of discourse in preaching, because of affliction in fasting, because of humility in begging, but I am beautiful because of brightness of chastity, because of the modesty of honesty, because of the clearness of knowledge. I am black, she says, like the dwellings of cedar which were exposed to the sun and rains, but beautiful like the surface of the sea of which sometimes they are red, sometimes blue. Therefore, do not consider me as if held to little account because I am dark, because the sun has discolored me on the outside through penitence, above through glory. For how much more I am in form, that is, because of it, which is pure act or matter, that is, in bodily substance, so much more the entity is more beautiful.

¶ Again, it procreates fruit through good work. Wherefore the sun is called the father of the planets, Deut. 33[:14]: “Of the fruits brought forth by the sun and by the moon.” *Gloss*,[[7]](#endnote-7) which the heat of the sun and the dampness of the moon nourish, because just as a fire always is in motion, so heat is always in operation. Wherefore Gregory in his *Homilia* de penitentibus,[[8]](#endnote-8) if love is idle, it is not love. If it is great it works great things, at least effectively, Col. 1[:10-11]: “That you may walk worthy of God,” as for good association to God, “in all things pleasing,” as for the right intention, “being fruitful in every good work,” as for meritorious operation, “and increasing in the knowledge of God,” as for saving knowledge, “strengthened with all might,” as for the final perseverance.

¶ Again, it dissolves the congealed and loosens through the remission of sins, just as frozen water is dissolved by heat, Exod. 16[:21]: “After the sun grew hot, the manna melted.” Luke 7[:47]: “Many sins are forgiven her.” Because the crystal is not at all dissolved by heat.

Again, it makes the moisture through the weakening of the flesh, James 1[:11]: “The sun rose with a burning heat, and parched the grass, and the flower thereof fell off.” Isai. 40[:6]: “All flesh is grass,” etc. Just as dried plants do not fructify, so neither flesh whose origin is evil, the delightful fruit is evil in performance, Gal. 5[:19]: “Now the works of the flesh are manifest.”

¶ Again, by motive power it does four operations. For it illuminates the earth, determines the times, varies the shadows, and manifests the glory of God. So, the true son Christ rising in the soul makes man to shine by the consideration of his various states, Eccle. 1[:5-6]: “The sun rises, and goes down, and returns to his place: and there rising again, makes his round by the south, and turns again to the north: the spirit goes forward surveying all places round about.” So,[[9]](#endnote-9) man shining like the true son now ascends at the rising of his nativity considering that the soul is made from nothing, the body from the mud, and thus he humiliated himself. Now he descends to the setting of death considering that after this life he could not merit, but according to the merits he brought back, so thus he prepares himself. Now he turns south to the grace of inspecting, the splendor of vision, the heat of love, so that he may desire that. Now he is turned to the north of hell considering the fierceness of fire and the perpetuity of the fierceness, and thus he holds it off, Gen. 13[:14]: “Lift up your eyes, and look from the place wherein you now are, to the north,” etc.

¶ Again, it determines the times, Gen. 1[:14]: “Let there be lights made in the firmament of heaven, to divide the day and the night, and let them be for signs, and for seasons.” The sun distinguishes four times in the year.

Spring when the sun is in the eastern signs: the Ram, the Bull, and the Twins.

Summer when it was under the northern signs: Cancer, the Lion, and the Virgin.

Autumn when it was under the western signs: Libra, Scorpio, and Sagittarius.

Winter when it is under the southern signs: Capricorn, Aquarius, and Pisces.

¶ In winter the fruit is conceived. In spring it is born and grows. In summer it is increased. In autumn it is collected. So, man illuminated by the sun Christ. In adolescence he conceives a good very soon. In youth he is unwilling. In old age he is unable, Psal. [118:126]: “It is time, O Lord, to do,” namely, now, but “they have dissipated your law.” Therefore, after death they gather nothing of good.

¶ Again third, the sun varies the shadows by contending association, Jer. 6[:4]: “Woe unto us, for the day is declined, for the shadows of the evening are grown longer.” When man is subjected to the true sun Christ, he is perpendicular and little or no shadow. The more he declines from that he makes a longer shadow, that is, a greater fault.

¶ Fourth, he manifests the glory of God by a right intention of working, Eccli. 43[:5]: “Great is the Lord that made him, and at his words,” etc. And he says well by words plurally because there are two words of God. The word of the precepts, about which Matt. 19[:17, 21]: “If you will enter into life, keep the commandments.” And the word of the counsels about which it follows there, “If you will be perfect, go sell what you have,” etc. If therefore Christ is compared to the sun, he can have evils or [Mala. 4:2]: “Unto you that fear my name, the Sun of justice shall arise.” Deservedly his word is compared to the solar rays.

¶ For the solar ray is derived from the heat of the work, inflamed directly by the air. So, the word of God inflames the affections for loving, Psal. [118:140]: “Your word is exceedingly refined.” It directs an aspect to succeed, Jer. 42[:3]: “Let the Lord shew us the way by which we may walk.” Psal. [142:8]: “Make the way known to me, wherein I should walk.”

¶ Again, it illuminates the intellect for believing, Luke 24[:45]: “Then he opened their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures.”

¶ Again, in the sun is placed nobility of condition, and according to this it can designate Christ by reason of the multiplicity of power to this is compared the surroundings. For the sun is among the stars brighter, hotter, and more useful.

Concerning the first, the sun (*sol*) is called as if the only shining one (*solus lucens*), because according to Dionysus,[[10]](#endnote-10) the other stars change their light by him, so the other saints by Christ, Eccli. 42[:16]: “The sun giving light has looked upon all things.” Truly this sun brings the light against blindness which the devil inflicts.

¶ The figure for this is of Naas the Ammonite who did not want to enter a treaty with the sons of Israel unless he would gouge out their right eyes.

¶ Again secondly, the sun is hotter, so Christ touching our hearts makes them to heat up, James 1[:11]: “The sun rose with a burning heat and parched the grass.” Christ did this when he heated and emptied man in coldness up to death by the poison of sin and withered the grass, that is, the carnality in man.

¶ Third, the sun is more useful among the stars, for without its benefit the things being born of the earth would not grow. Just so without Christ the good in the soul would not be born, but only the brambles and thorns of sins, Psal. [103:20]: “You have made it night,” namely, in the soul, “in it shall all the beasts of the woods go about.” The beasts are said as if the wasteland, that is, the wasted life, but it follows, [Psal. 103:22-23]: “The sun arises, and man shall go forth to his work.” Because with Christ lighting, he will be humble, a man for working well.

¶ Again, we read the sun heated the salvation of the people, 1 Kings 11[:9]: “Tomorrow, when the sun shall be hot, you shall have relief.” So, Christ pouring out his blood on the cross.

Second, we read that the material sun stood still to prolong the day, Jos. 10[:13]. By day is noted the time of working, John 9[:4]: “I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night comes, when no man can work.” So, Christ stayed on the cross up to the end of his life, just as it is figured, 3 Kings last chapter [22:35]: “The king of Israel stood in his chariot against the Syrians,” that is, against devils, “and he died in the evening: and the blood ran out,” etc. Here note that some as in heaven, but not in the middle of heaven, but there they do not stand. Some are in the middle and stand. The first of these lead a celestial life as for the appearance, but they are not in the middle, that is, in truth. Rather in some corner of falsity, but truth does not seek the corners, about which Luke 23[:45]: “The sun was darkened, and the veil of the temple was rent in the midst.” The sun, that is, the prelate who ought to illuminate the truth, and inflame by the example of sanctity. He is obscured by a depraved life and the veil is ripped in two parts, and in appearance and not existence from top to bottom, because such things are found among superiors. Others are in the middle of heaven, but they do not stand because while they are not in great prosperity nor in great adversity, they lead an ordered life. The same doing what they show to others, but in great prosperity they begin to be lifted and to be broken in great adversity. Nor are they disturbed so much and so they do not persevere, Amos 8[:9]: “The sun shall go down at midday,” when namely such a man falls in the middle of virtue. Some stand in the middle of heaven nor do they go down for the space of a day, that is, the whole time of life, of such kind it is to work meritoriously, Eccli. 27[:12]: “A holy man continues in wisdom as the sun: but a fool is changed as the moon.” The sun is always shining although it seems to us sometimes to be eclipsed, but it is eclipsed by the moon.

¶ Again, the sun is equally great, but the moon is enlarged and diminished according to that it approaches the sun more or less.

¶ Third, we read the sun reversed to confirm the faith of the king, Eccli. 48[:26]: “In his days the sun went backward, and he lengthened the king's life.”

1. Aristotle, cf. David Park, *The Fire Within the Eye: A historical Essay on the Nature and Meaning of Light* 1.4 (Princeton, NJ: University Press, 1999): The soul, says Socrates, is like an eye. When it looks toward the Heaven of truth and beauty it knows them and understands them, but when it looks into our world of becoming and passing away it has no knowledge but only opinions that change and change again. The Good is to the soul as the sun is to the eye, and Plato carries the analogy further: just as the sun sustains all of Nature's life and growth, so the Good, through its action in the ideal world, is the cause of all things in our world; "it causes their state of being, though the Good itself is stronger and more venerable than being."

<https://faculty.washington.edu/smcohen/320/The%20Fire%20Within%20the%20Eye.html> [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. Cf. Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 4.226-228 (LCL 42:194-195): ‘ille ego sum’ dixit, ‘qui longum metior annum, omnia qui video, per quem videt omnia tellus, mundi oculus.’

‘Lo, I am he who measure out the year, who behold all things, by whom the earth beholds all things—the world’s eye. [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. Dionysus, *On Divine Names* 10.3 in *The Works of Dionysius the Areopagite,* trans. John Parker (London: James Parker and Co, 1897), (p. 111): But we must, as I think, see from the Oracles the nature of Time and Eternity, for they do not always (merely) call all the things absolutely unoriginated and reallly everlasting, eternal, but also things imperishable and immortal and unchangeable, and things which are in like fashion, as when they say, “be ye opened, eternal doors,” and the like. And often they characterize the things the most ancient by the name of Eternity; and again they call the whole duration of our time Eternity, in so far as the ancient and unchangeable, and the measurement of existence throughout, is a characteristic of Eternity. But they call time that concerned in generation and decay and change, and sometimes the one, and sometimes the other. [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. Abumasar, *Tractatus* 1 *Differentia secunda, in inventione....iudiciorum astrorum* in Arabic and Latin Corpus, ed. by Dag Nokolause Hasse, et al.:

242-253:

cum pervenerit Sol ad orientem eorum, quamdiu duraverit Sol ascendens ad medium celum eorum, fit motus eorum in augmentatione et fortitudine; at cum declinaverit a medio celo eorum, debilitatur motus eorum ac minuitur usque ad occasum Solis. Cum vero occiderit Sol, fit nox et quiescunt corpora in ea, debilitantur atque laxantur ad sompnum et quietudinem et colligitur universitas animalium ad domuscula atque habitacula sua. Cumque ortus fuerit Sol altera die, revertuntur ad esse primum ex motu. - Nam et in seminibus motus Solis apparet: quia plurimum ex eo apparet et confortatur ac proficit et augetur in ortu Solis. Ut mirtus ille qui dicitur annailufar, et aladrion, et alchiar (quod est quoddam genus cucumerorum).

[http://arabic-latin-corpus.philosophie.uni-wuerzburg.de/text/Liber\_introductorii\_maioris\_(Albumasar)\_la.xhtml](http://arabic-latin-corpus.philosophie.uni-wuerzburg.de/text/Liber_introductorii_maioris_%28Albumasar%29_la.xhtml) [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
5. Vegetius, *Epitoma Rei Militaris* 1.2 (p. 6): Omnes nationes, quae uicinae sunt soli, nimio calore siccitas, amplius quidem sapere, sed minus habere sanguinis. <https://books.google.com/books?id=Gb5U3VxLtX4C&printsec=frontcover&dq=Epitoma+Rei+Militaris,+Lang&hl=en&newbks=1&newbks_redir=0&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwjGmcKmuvzlAhUPSK0KHagbCNsQ6AEwAXoECAIQAg#v=onepage&q=Epitoma%20Rei%20Militaris%2C%20Lang&f=false> [↑](#endnote-ref-5)
6. Aristotle, *Politics* 7.7 1327b29-34 (Barnes 2:2107): But the Hellenic race, which is situated between them, is likewise intermediate in character, being high-spirited and also intelligent. Hence it continues free, and is the best-governed of any nation, and, if it could be formed into one state, would be able to rule the world. [↑](#endnote-ref-6)
7. *Glossa ordinaria* Deut. 33:14 (PL 113:498): Solis. Christi, qui est sol justitiae, qui ait: Fulgebunt justi sicut sol in regno Patris eorum (Matth. XIII), quia similes ei erimus.

Ac lunae. Ecclesiae, quae accipit hos fructus a sole, id est a Christo: semper igitur solem plena devotione respiciat, ne aliquando aversa lumen perdat. [↑](#endnote-ref-7)
8. Gregory, *XL Homiliaum in Evangelia* 30.2 (PL 76:1221): Nunquam est Dei amor otiosus. Operatur etenim magna, si est; si vero operari renuit, amor non est. [↑](#endnote-ref-8)
9. Cf. *Fasciculus morum* 3.21 (p. 282): Exemplum. Si enim respiciat ad orientem sui ortus, ibi propriam miseriam satis intuetur; si ad occidentem sue mortis, hoc idem prospiciet; si ad aquilonem, bene consideret iudicium et penam inferni; si quarto ad aliam partem, scilicet austrum, respexerit, ibi considerabit gloriam et gaudium beatorum. [↑](#endnote-ref-9)
10. Dionysius, cf. Interlinear Gloss on Eccli. 42:16: sol illuminans per omnia respexit

interl.| Christus de quo dicitur : orietur timentibus nomen meum sol iustitie

interl.| quia non est ulla creatura invisibilis in conspectu Dei

<https://gloss-e.irht.cnrs.fr/php/editions_chapitre.php?livre=../sources/editions/GLOSS-liber32.xml&chapitre=32_42> [↑](#endnote-ref-10)