20 To Appear (*Apparere*)

“For the grace of God our Savior has appeared,” etc., [Tit. 2:11], that is, the appearance of Christ is triple: one, in the past by which he appeared in the flesh; another, in the present by which he appears in the heart; third, in the future by which he will appear in the end.

Concerning the first appearance it is said, [1] John 1[:2]: “We declare unto you the life eternal, which was with the Father, and has appeared to us.” And this is on account of two things. First, for destroying the work of the devil, which was when the devil suggested and man consented, and thus man offended God, but with Christ appearing, he took up the offense, made the correction, the gate of paradise appeared, but it broke in pieces, and, dividing into two pieces, he made to annul, when, namely, that one who is the door, John 10[:7], broken on the cross, he dismissed himself, when his body was laid in the sepulcher, and with his soul ascending into limbo, and thus the work which the devil started was finished, [1] John 3[:8]: “For this purpose, the Son of God appeared, that he might destroy the works of the devil.” And in the same place [1 John 3:5]: “He appeared to take away our sins.” But there are many, such as the thief who after his liberation from the gibbet of punishment, is as he was before. See the example of that one who cut off the purse of the judge who was wishing to free him,[[1]](#endnote-1) Psal. [24:12]: “They repaid me evil for good.”

Second, in order to show the way of paradise, appearing as a staff placed in the sun, he gives radiance, Tit. 2[:11]: “For the grace of our Savior has appeared to all men; instructing us, so that, denying ungodliness and worldly desires,” etc. But many receive the form of preaching, just like an anvil which is hardened by many blows rather than softening, Job 41[:15]: “His heart shall be as hard as a stone, and as firm as a smith's anvil.”

¶ Concerning the other cause of appearance it is said, Tit. 3[:4-5]: “But when the goodness and kindness of God our Savior appeared, not by the works of justice, which we have done.”

¶ Second, now Christ appears in the heart, Num. 12[:6]: “If there be among you a prophet of the Lord,” that is, to direct one’s thoughts to the Lord, “I will appear to him in a vision.” Not because one may see the divinity, but because he receives his goodness. In this way he appears spiritually and bodily.

¶ In the first way he appears steadfastly to his believers, just as light appears to the open eye and not to the closed, truth is to the wise not to the foolish, Wis. 1[:2]: “He shows himself to them that have faith in him.” Wherefore, Acts 1[:3]: “appearing to them, and speaking of the kingdom of God.” Isaiah 7[:9]: “If you will not believe, you shall not continue.”

Second, he appears to those loving fervently, just as the heat of the fire appears, so such deeds by the believer, Eccli. 1[:15]: “They to whom she shall show herself love her by the sight, and by the knowledge of her great works.” John 14[:21]: “And he that loves me, shall be loved of my Father: and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him.” This is the custom of lovers who, because they are free, the one freely appears to the other. For it is said,[[2]](#endnote-2) the eyes see better when guided by love.

¶ Concerning the third, Christ will appear at the end, as the requiter of the just, Habac. 2[:3]: “It shall appear at the end and shall not lie.” But this is also triple: because he will be a severe prosecutor of the wicked, Wis. 6[:6]: “Horribly and speedily will he appear to you, for a most severe judgment shall be for them that bear rule.” Then to the elect he is beloved just as he who makes one a participant in such a wonder, [1] John 3[:2]: “When he shall appear, we shall be like to him, because we shall see him as he is.” Col. 3[:4]: “When Christ shall appear, who is your life, then you also shall appear with him.” Psal. [16:5]: “I shall be satisfied when your glory shall appear.” Now then the eye[[3]](#endnote-3) shall be satisfied by the sight of the greatest beauty, the ear by the hearing of celestial harmony, the smell by the fragrance of the highest waftings, the palette by the taste of divine sweetness, the touch by the embrace of perpetual sweetness.

[31] To Open (*Aperire*), see below after [30] To Ascend (*Ascendere*).

1. Jacques de Vitry, *Exempla ex Sermonibus Vulgaribus*, ed. Thomas Frederick Crane (London: David Nutt, 1890), 126: CCXCIX. Immo de quodam audivi qui nundum absolveretur, ante sacerdotem pectus tundebat, et videns bursam sacerdotis plenam denariis, alia manu illam abscidit. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. Richard of St. Victor, *De praeparatione animi ad contemplationem* 13 (PL 196:10): Ubi amor, ibi oculus. [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. Cf. the steps of love that are frequently cited: Alludit ad quinque amoris *lineas*, seu *gradus*. Hi sunt visus, colloquium, osculum, tactus, et concubitus. [↑](#endnote-ref-3)