210 Lamp (*Lucerna*)

A preacher can be called a lamp, Psal. [131:17]: “I have prepared a lamp for my anointed.” Because it can be understood concerning John the Baptist the precursor in whom God made a witness in his conception, he placed a candle that he lit in his satisfaction, he revealed the light in his nativity. Upon the candelabrum that he placed in the execution of his office.

Again, the lamp can be said a prelate, Philip. 2[:15]: “Among whom you shine as lights in the dark place.”

Again, a lamp can be called a good prince, 2 Kings 21[:17] concerning David. For this, superiors are ordered that they may shine light upon others by life and teaching, Matt. [5:16]: “So let your light shine before men,” etc. Wherefore John 5[:35] it is said concerning John the Baptist, “He was a burning and a shining light.” To burn of itself is not enough, to burn and shine the figure is perfected, for this Exod. 27[:20-21]: “That a lamp may burn always, in the tabernacle of the Lord without the veil.” But inside the veil where there were the holy of holies it ought not be because if we are outside the holies in this way, we need a lamp, that is, a good prelate illuminating, but in heaven we will not need it, Apo. 21[:23]: “And the city hath no need of the sun, nor of the moon,” and it follows because “the Lamb is the lamp thereof.”

¶ Augustine says, *De civitate*, c. 6,[[1]](#endnote-1) in the temple of Venus among the Romans there was a lamp continually burning at the foot of the goddess, which no power nor rain could extinguish.

¶ Here also note that sometimes the carrier of a lamp carried it on his back that it may illuminate the followers, but then this one goes badly and falls, so the prelate sometimes is not capable of light which another pours out because he himself lives badly, as it is said in Prov. 6[:23]: “The commandment is a lamp, and the law a light.” But such ones work against the sentence of the savior who says in Matt. 5[:15]: “Neither do men light a candle and put it under a bushel,” etc. For when drachma signed with the image of the heavenly king is lost, namely, the soul with sin, then the woman, that is, mother Church, lights the lamp, that is, offers the good “and seeks diligently until she finds it,” Luke 15[:8].

Again, some prepare the material lamp, some follow, and some extinguish it. The wise prepare, those on the way follows, and the mad extinguish it lest their evil worlds would be seen. So sometimes God prepares something of his for the salvation of the people, the faithful people follow, and the tyrannical infidel extinguishes it.

¶ Again, a lamp can be called faith because it directs man to knowledge, Psal. [118:105]: “Your word is a lamp to my feet.”

Again, it can be said right intention, Luke 11[:34]: “The light of your body is your eye. If your eye be single,” that is, right intention, “your whole body,” that is, the assemblage of works, “will be lightsome.” And Luke 15[:8]: “What woman having ten groats,” that is, merits resulting from the observance of the ten commandments, “if she lose one groat,” through a transgression of one commandment, “doth not light,” the fire of penance, “a candle,” of right intention, “and seek diligently,” through works of mercy, “until she finds” the original grace or greater.

Again, a lamp can be called a prudent man, 2 Kings 21[:17]: “You shall go no more out with us to battle, lest you put out the lamp of Israel.” And John 5[:35]: “He was a burning,” through zeal of justice, “and a shining light,” through the word of teaching.

Again, the light of the lamp is protected through the testaments lest it be extinguished, so virtue through the consideration of one’s own humility, the last chapter of Prov. [31:18]: “Her lamp shall not be put out in the night” of adversity. Here it can be noted concerning the seven lamps which Moses ordered in the tabernacle, Exod. 25[:37], because they can be applied to the seven virtues.

Again, a lamp is vessel for containing, conserving, and communicating. Therefore, it ought to be according to itself empty, unbroken, and transparent. Empty certainly for containing, so that naturally it contains what may impede the light. Unbroken because of the conserving the light, lest by being ruined something entering extinguish the light. Transparent because of the community of the light that namely, that its body be thin because however much more pointed so much the more it is impeded. So, a holy man ought to be empty from mortal sin having no impediment to grace. Here note that in vain he resorts to the name of Christian because he follows Christ the least, according to Augustine, *De doctrina.[[2]](#endnote-2)*

As is treated below in the chapter [246] Name (*Nomen*).

Second, a lamp ought to be closed lest anything enter through the breaks lest the light be extinguished. So, the soul ought to close the exterior senses against the wind of vanity, against the water of desire, Jer. 9[:21]: “For death is come up through our windows,” that is, through your senses. Our body is like a perforated ship easily sinkable lest it be watched over. Therefore, it is read figuratively, 2 Kings 4[:5] two thieves “went into the house in the heat of the day” and killed “Isboseth.” Explain there, and these happened because the door keeper was winnowing wheat, that is, discretion discerning between good and evil slept and thus by consent he was killed although he was not present at the act. Where Augustine, *De sermone Domini*, c. 44,[[3]](#endnote-3) to desire it is to do it. Just as you have decided to commit adultery, and therefore you do not do it because it is not the place, because the opportunity is not given, or because that one is chaste, you are an adulterer. This is figured by the daughter of the leader of the synagogue having died in the house, [Mark 5:38]. Therefore, it is to be avoided from a filthy thought, because this image of the devil is on that account in the heart of man because he is “the temple of God,” it ought not to be put there, 1 Cor. 3[:17]. Concerning broken men, it is said in Prov. 24[:20]: “The lamp of the wicked shall be put out.”

¶ And note that an extinguished lamp yields stinking smoke and consumption.

Third, a lamp ought to be transparent, so the just man is seen through transparency to be sustaining and a friend.

1. Augustine, *De civitate Dei,* 21.6 (PL 41:716):fuisse vel esse quoddam Veneris fanum, atque ibi candelabrum, et in eo lucernam sub divo sic ardentem, ut eam nulla tempestas, nullus imber exstingueret, unde sicut ille lapis, ita ista λύχνος ἄσβεστος, id est, lucerna inexstinguibilis, nominata est. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. Augustine, *De vita Christiana* 1 (PL 40:1033): quod nomen ille frustra sortitur, qui Christum minime imitatur. [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. Augustine, *Sermones de Scripturis* 128.11.13 (PL 38:719-720): Ipsum concupiscere, facere est. Sed ait Apostolus: Jam non ego operor illud, sed quod habitat in me peccatum. (Rom. VII, 17). Ergo quid tibi cavendum est? Hoc sine dubio, ne perficias. Surrexit libido damnabilis, surrexit, suggessit: [Col.0720] non audiatur. Ardet, non se compescit, et velles ut non arderet. Et ubi est, Ut non ea quae vultis, faciatis? Noli dare membra. Ardeat sine causa, et consumit se. In te ergo fiunt ipsae concupiscentiae. Fatendum est, fiunt. Ideo dixit, Ne perfeceritis. Sed non perficiantur. Decrevisti facere, perfecisti. Perfecisti etenim, si decernas faciendum esse adulterium, et ideo non facias quia locus non est inventus, quia opportunitas non datur, quia forte illa casta est de qua videris esse commotus: ecce jam illa casta est, et tu adulter es [↑](#endnote-ref-3)