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In corporal substances light is the vehicle of heat. Therefore, it is because where there is more shadow there will be less heat, Job 38[:24]: “By what way is the light spread.” By opposition it puts to flight the darkness, by its promise it brings happiness to the seeing, by its appearance it reassures the fearing, by its radiation it manifests its heat.

Again, God illuminates man in three ways: by the light of nature, grace, and glory. But the light of nature it is said because by the light of the senses as for as the body and in this we have communicated with the beasts, Eccli. 42[:16]: “The sun giving light has looked upon all things, and full of the glory of the Lord is his work.”

¶ For when human cognition begins from the senses through the works of God which we see, we discern in our cognition and commendation of the creator, so that from the greatness and multitude of the creatures we know and commend the insuperable power of the creator, from the beauty and disposition we know and commend the infallible wisdom, from the perpetuity and conservation we know and commend the unending eternity, but because it is said in Wis. 14[:11]: “The creatures of God are turned to an abomination, and a temptation to the souls of men, and a snare to the feet of the unwise.” Because the gluttonous aspire to delights of foods, the slippery to the blandishments of women, desirous of riches, ambitious to honors.

Second, God illuminates man by an interior light as far as the soul by which man knows God himself and his neighbor, but in this we communicate with the angels. Wherefore Gregory in *Homilia de ascensione*,[[1]](#endnote-1) man has another thing in common with every creature, etc., John 1[:9]: “That was the true light, which enlightens every man that comes into this world.” Namely by the light of reason which is in common with all men.

¶ Second, God illuminates man by the light of grace and this in two ways: because in respect to the evil and in respect to the good. In respect to the evil to this in two ways: because either of the fault or in respect to the penalty. To this in two ways: because for expelling sin committed and this through penitence just as light expels the shadow, the faint hope, and the blemish, Psal. [33:6]: “Come to him and be enlightened,” namely, by the steps of penance. Therefore, elsewhere it is said in Psal. [12:4]: “Enlighten my eyes,” on the inside, “that I never sleep in death,” namely, of the fault just as the lethargic who dies sleeping never on the day announced to him.

For the second, light therefore illuminates for avoiding the relapsing man. For man needs the light for crossing a dangerous passage, and making war against the adversary but we are in danger also in battle, Eph. 5[:14]: “Rise you that sleep,” in the kitchen of gluttony, in the hiding place of lust, in the straw of sloth, in the dust of avarice, among the thorns of wrath, in the darkness of envy, in the tent of pride “arise from the dead,” that is, from the fellowships of sinners, “and Christ shall enlighten you.” For fighting and avoiding relapsing, Psal. [26:1]: “The Lord God is my light and my salvation.”

Again, in respect of the penalty of evil grace illuminates for sustaining through showing the rewards of peace, Gregory in *Homilia*,[[2]](#endnote-2) the consideration of the reward lessens the power of the whip, Eph. 1[:17]: “The Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and of revelation.” And Heb. 10[:32]: “Call to mind the former days.”

¶ In respect to the good grace illuminates doubly. For seeing the good to be done, so indicating concerning colors the need for light, Psal. [118:130]: “The declaration of your words gives light: and gives understanding to little ones.” Psal. [18:9]: “The commandment of the Lord, enlightening the eyes.”

Second, for doing the known good so the traveler and any artisan needs light, Luke 1[:78]: “In which the Orient from on high has visited us.” Who in Isai. 60[:1]: “Arise, be enlightened, O Jerusalem: for your light is come.” However, God made this and by himself and by his preachers, Psal. [75:5-6]: “You enlighten wonderfully from the everlasting hills. All the foolish of heart were troubled.” Just as nocturnal birds are disturbed at the brightness of the sun, both moles and the squinting cannot stand the light, John 3[:19]: “The light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than the light.”

Third, he illuminates by the light of glory with the heavenly city, 1 Cor. 4[:5]: “Until the Lord comes” who also we will illuminate without darkness, just as in a mirror reflects if they are marked, thus the journey will be a terrible illumination on the damned of whom they seek evils, but the anxious to please will be in safety, Apo. 21[:23]: “The glory of God has enlightened it.”

¶ Again, Christ is compared to the light and the just man, for just as the light has purity in substance, beauty in form, subtlety in its site of origin, utility in effect of work, so Christ is the purest light because he is without the darkness of fault, John 1[:4-5] God is light and there is not any darkness in him.

¶ Again, light is the most beautiful because of the plenitude of grace, Wis. [7:29]: “She is more beautiful than the sun, and being compared with the light, she is found before it.”

Again, light is the highest because of the unity of humanity with the deity. For nothing can be more sublime because then it would be God, Wis. 7[:26]: “She is the brightness of eternal light.”

Again, light is most useful because of the diffusion of wisdom, Isai. 49[:6]: “I have given you to be the light of the Gentiles.” And Isai. 9[:2]: “The people that walked in darkness.”

¶ Therefore we are eager to participate as brothers in this light that each may be pure through sanctity as for oneself, beautiful through honesty as for the world, sublime through devotion as for God, strong through compassion as for our neighbor. This light, that is, the son of God veiled through the incarnation just as light in darkness, John 12[:46]: “I am come a light into the world.” John 1[:5]: “The light shines in darkness.” A hidden thing comes through his passion like to a lamp under bushel, Hab. 3[:4]: “His brightness shall be as the light.”

¶ Again, “There is his strength hid,” [Hab. 3:4].

¶ Again, a revealed thing comes through preaching, Act. 26[:17-18]: “I send you, to open their eyes, that they may be converted from darkness to light.”

Again, this light is awaited for the final reward, Ose. 6[:5]: “My judgments shall go forth as the light.”

Again, the just man or the teacher is compared to the light first because of purity. For light is purer than charcoal or flame. Therefore, Christ said to his disciples, Matt. [5:14]: “You are the light of the world,” that is, pure preachers because of the salvation of souls. Therefore, he did not say to them, You are charcoal, that is, preachers because of temporal riches, nor a flame, that is preachers because of human favor.

Second, light is said because of its work. For it arouses the sleeping, delights the watchful, and guides the voyagers. So, the teacher arouses those in the sleep of sin, inflames them by good desires, and straightens the wayward.

Third, the teacher is said to be a light because of diffusion. For light, first is contained in moons, then in clouds, in mountains, finally on earth, so the ray of divine grace first was in the apostles as if in the moons of the heaven, then in the first teachers as if in the mountains, then in the simple as if on the earth.

Again, grace is compared to light because it is the guide of the voyager through faith because John 12[:35]: “He that walks in darkness, knows not whither he goes.” Because he does not see the light of the world so the infidel believes he goes to heaven and goes to hell, Eph. 5[:8]: “You were heretofore darkness,” because of infidelity. Now however the light is in the Lord as sons of the light walk to his (light), namely, imitations so that just as we come together in his name and are Christians from Christ, so we come together in work.

Second, light is heat poured out and this through charity. For where there is less light there is less heat, [1] John 2[:9-10]: “He that says he is in the light, and hates his brother, is in darkness. He that loves his brother, abides in the light.” But alas because in Jer. 4[:23] it is said, “I beheld the heavens,” that is, the superiors in the Church, “and there was no light in them,” namely, the concords of charity.

¶ Third, light is the assurance of the timid and this through hope. There are many who are afraid in the darkness, who are not afraid in the light. So, we do not have security concerning future glory unless through hope, Psal. [26:1]: “The Lord is my light and my salvation, whom shall I fear?” Habac. 3[:11]: “In the light of your arrows, they shall go,” that is, in the hope of defense of yours to promised patience, but alas because Job 18[:18] it is said, “He shall drive him out of light into darkness,” that is, concerning vain hope.

Fourth, light is of the heavens, that is, of things to be done and avoided as a sign of prudence, so men go to the light with a denarius when it seems either to be good or false, 3 Reg. 3[:21]: “But considering him ... when it was clear day, I found that it was not mine which I bore.” Therefore, it is said in Philip. 2[:15]: “That you may be blameless, amid a crooked and perverse generation; among whom you shine as lights in the world.” The word of life containing in the darkness the filthy is not discerned from the beautiful. Wherefore also false merchants try to sell their merchandise in obscurity so also the devil.

¶ Again, in darkness a serpent is not discerned from a staff, so one existing in sin does not know how to discern, Psal. [81:5]: “They have not known nor understood: they walk on in darkness.” And Ezech. 22[:26]: “They have put no difference between holy and profane.”

Fifth, light is an alleviation of the sick through temperance, just as the sick one commonly considers himself lighter by day than by night. So, sober men feel less moved bestially than those excessively drunk, Matt. 5[:16]: “So let your light shine before men,” that is, your temperance.

Sixth, light is repressive of errors by fortitude, thieves and scoundrels restrain themselves by day, according to John 3[:20]: “For every one that does evil hates the light, that his works may not be reproved.” Therefore, according to the counsel of the Apostle, Rom 13[:12]: “Let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and put on the armor of light.” Luke 13[:6] light is nutritive for trees for without light nothing fructifies. Wherefore the Philosopher says[[3]](#endnote-3) that the sun is the father of plants and the moon their mother, Prov. 4[:18]: “The path of the just, as a shining light, goes forwards,” namely, pouring itself out to each one according to their own virtue, but alas because Zach. 14[:6] it is said, “In that day, that there shall be no light, but cold and frost.” Explain there.[[4]](#endnote-4)

Again, light is said to be eternal glory because it is promised to the elect, Job 17[:12]: “After darkness” of death, “I hope for light again,” of the glory of heaven. Tob. 13[:13]: “He shall shine with a glorious light.” But alas because of Job 38[:15] it is said, “From the wicked their light shall be taken away.”

¶ Note therefore here that three kinds of men need light: those devoting themselves of very expensive work, those about to pass through a dangerous journey, those about to fight against a warlike enemy, but we are all workers, travelers, and fighters. Wherefore against neglectors of this kind the Apostle says, Eph. 5[:14]: “Rise you that sleep,” in the kitchen of gluttony, in the tears of lust, etc., as it was said above, “and Christ shall enlighten you” for working, traveling, and fighting.

¶ Again, light is illuminating and not illuminated, just as the divine light, John 1[:9]: “That was the true light, which enlightened every man.”

Again, light is illuminating and not illuminated, just as the teachings and life of the apostles, Matt. 5[:14]: “You are the light of the world.”

Again, light is illuminated and not illuminating as the light of the moon.

Third, the light of the earth.

Again, certain light is exterior and corporal as light of the sun. There is another light interior and spiritual, namely, working inside according to the Philosopher, second book,[[5]](#endnote-5) a light uppermost and spiritual, namely, the grace of God or divine wisdom and it is a superior light, namely uncreated light.

First, light in an object is spacious, in a subject noble, in the middle copious, in an organ powerful, Isai. 30[:26]: “And the light of the moon shall be as the light of the sun.”

¶ Again, the material sun is the font and beginning of material light, according to Isidore, *Etymologiae,* book three,[[6]](#endnote-6) and its presence makes the day of grace, its absence makes the night of fault, Gen. 1[:3]: “And God said: Be light made,” etc. Some suppose it to shine before this. However, they in the sight of the father are darkness, just as it is evident concerning things that shine by night and concerning rotting wood glimmering by night, so it is concerning the hypocrites and those living wickedly. Wherefore Gregory upon that in *Homilia*,[[7]](#endnote-7) upon that [Luke 18:41]: “Lord, that I may see.” Behold this blind man seeks not gold, but light. He thinks to have little else except for light, because he does not have anything without light, that which he cannot see nor enjoy thereof. Therefore, we do not seek false riches, nor fleeting honors from the Lord, but light. Certainly, not the light which is closed off by place, or finished by time, but that which the angels see, about which [1] John 2[:8]: “because the darkness is passed, and the true light now shines.” The figure for this in Exod. 9[:26]: “Only where the children of Israel were,” where there was light, where in truth the Egyptians there experienced darkness, and such kind of darkness that for three days no one could see his brother, nor warn him about this place, now where there is the darkness of sin man does not see his brother by compassion nor move himself to God by love, [1] John 2[:9]: “He that says he is in the light, and hates his brother, is in darkness.”

¶ Again the light is said to be the Blessed Virgin because she is the bringer of joy for the sad. For the nature of light is to make happy, Prov. 15[:30]: “The light of the eyes rejoices the soul,” but the garden of Mary brought joy in the highest degree. Because thus it is evident if you have lost what one loves to the highest degree, it will be a sorrow for you as to him, the light will be lacking to you. Against that you will find a greater sorrow will approach. Who therefore takes away the light from you will bring joy to you because of the hope of finding it. If therefore through that you find what you seek you will be made doubly happy, but we through sin have lost God, Eccle. 9[:18]: “He that shall offend in one, shall lose many good things.” But with Mary mediating Christ has been found, Luke 2[:16]: “And they found Mary and the infant.” Deservedly therefore Mary is said to be the light, Esther 8[:16]: “To the Jews a new light seemed to rise.” Therefore, in a sign of good mediation it is designated by the mother when she is holding the child in her bosom.

1. Gregory, *XL Homiliarum in Evangelia* 2.29.2 (PL 76:1214): Si ergo commune habet aliquid cum omni creatura homo, juxta aliquid omnis creatura est homo. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. Gregory, *Moralia* 3.33.64 (PL 75:631): Et rursum consideratio munerum cogitationis asperae impatientiam refrenet, dicens [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. Aristotle, cf. Roger Bacon, *Operis Majoris* pars quarta, ed. John Henry Bridges (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1897) (1:380): quia dicit Aristoteles in Libro Vegetabilium, quod Sol est pater plantarum et Luna mater.

Note 1: Bridges surmises that this is a misstatement of Aristotle’s *On Plants* 1.6 821a20-24 (Barnes 2:1259): It will perhaps happen that the wind will bear the odour of the male to the female palm, and then the dates will come to maturity; the foliage of the male will also cohere to that of the female palm when they catch in one another. [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. This may be a note to self, that this passage needs to be revisited. Higden would probably have gone to Jerome, *Commentariorum in Zahariam* 3 (PL 25:1526): Manifeste de secundo Salvatoris praedicatur adventu, de quo et Joannes in Apocalypsi sua [Al. sic] loquitur: Ecce veniet cum nubibus, et videbit eum omnis oculus et qui eum compunxerunt (Apoc. I, 7). Et Dominus in Evangelio pronuntiat venturum Filium hominis in nubibus coeli cum fortitudine et gloria multa (Matth. XXIV). Veniet cum nubibus, id est, angelis, qui sunt ministri spiritus, et ad diversa mittuntur officia, et cum prophetis atque apostolis, de quibus scriptum est: Veritas tua usque ad nubes (Psal. XXXV, 6). Cumque dies adventus ejus fuerit impletus, non erit [Col.1526D] lux, sed frigus et gelu, refrigerata omnium charitate, et prae multitudine malorum quae superventura sunt, frigescentibus cunctis, et calorem pristinae fidei perdentibus. [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
5. Aristotle, *On the Soul* 2.7 418b9-14 (Barnes 1:666): Of this substance light is the activity-the activity of what is transparent so far forth as it has in it the determinate power of becoming transparent; where this power is present, there is also the potentiality of the contrary, viz. darkness. Light is as it were the proper colour of what is transparent, and exists whenever the potentially transparent is excited to actuality by the influence of fire or something resembling 'the uppermost body'; for fire too contains something which is one and the same with the substance in question.

Cf. Caleb G. Colley (2014), *John Pecham on Life and Mind* (Doctoral dissertation, University of South Carolina), (p. 86 n. 206).

 Retrieved from https://scholarcommons.sc.edu/etd/2743 [↑](#endnote-ref-5)
6. Isidore, *Etymologiae* 3.51.1 (PL 82:175): Sol oriens diem facit, occidens noctem inducit; nam dies est sol super terras, nox est sol sub terris. Ex ipso enim sunt horae; ex ipso dies, cum ascenderit; ex ipso etiam nox cum occiderit; ex ipso menses, et anni numerantur; ex ipso vicissitudines fiunt temporum. [↑](#endnote-ref-6)
7. Gregory, *Homiliae in Evangelia* 1.2.7 (PL 76:1084): Domine, ut videam. Ecce caecus a Domino non aurum, sed lucem quaerit. Parvipendit extra lucem aliquid quaerere, quia etsi habere caecus quodlibet potest, sine luce videre non potest quod habet. [↑](#endnote-ref-7)