248 Night (*Nox*)

Sometimes night designates the time of the old testament because it was burdensome and impeding. For it was burdened by many traditions, but insufficient for promoting salvation and life, Heb. 7[:19]: “The law brought no one to perfection.” Also, night is said to be the appearance of fault because the appearance of night is cold, obscure for working. For it lacks the heat and light of charity, the splendor of truth, and the vigor of probity. For it cools love, obscures reason, and disables working.

Concerning the first, John 13[:26-30] “When Judas had received the morsel, he went out immediately,” it is said however that “it was night.” Because Judas was then cold and empty in charity.

Concerning the second, John 12[:35]: “Who walks at night” offends because there is no light in him.

Concerning the third, John 9[:4]: “The night comes, when no man can work.” Because of these things,[[1]](#endnote-1) justly it is called night (*nox*) from I do harm, -you do harm (*noceo, -ces*) because it does harm. For to work at night does more harm to man than during the day, and nevertheless night work has less value. Wherefore also the apostles said to Jesus, Luke 5[:5]: “We have labored all the night and have taken nothing.” The reason of this can be because the sun is the principle of generation, so also to the introduction of work and the comfort of members for working because of which deservedly the status of fault can be integrated with night, it is dark and harmful in which one who labors is vexed and profits little. Wherefore also the foolish virgins wished to buy oil for themselves at night, but they could not, Matt. 25[1-13]. So, says the soul wishing to rise from the state of fault, Can. 3[:1]: “In my bed by night I sought him whom my soul loves: and found him not.” Deservedly therefore it is said in the preceding authority, [Luke 5:5]: “We have labored all the night and have taken nothing.” In which authority the state of sin is compared to night because it is dark because of the darkness of blindness, which is noted when it is said, “All the night,” because it is laborious on account the narrowness of the penalty. Therefore, it is added, “We have labored,” and because it was unfruitful on the account of the vanity of sterility, therefore it is said, “We have taken nothing.” In truth therefore, sin is compared to night because it strikes fear, it brings coldness, increases languor. So, sin renders one fearful for undertaking hard things, disdainful for seeking lasting things.

Concerning the first, Job 4[:13-14]: “In the horror of a vision by night, when deep sleep is wont to hold men, fear seized upon me.

¶ Concerning the second, Bar. 2[:24-25]: “The bones of your kings, should be removed to the frost of the night”

Concerning the third, Job 3[:3]: “Let the day perish wherein I was born, and the night in which it was said: A man child is conceived.”

Again, according to the Philosopher, book 7, *De animalibus*,[[2]](#endnote-2) fish are more easily caught at night than by day, that this because of the darkness. So, the devil more easily captures men in the night of fault than in the light of grace. Wherefore “Saul said,” 1 Kings 14[:36] “Let us fall upon the Philistines by night and destroy them till the morning light.” According to the naturalists,[[3]](#endnote-3) the wild donkey brays when the day begins to be longer than the night. For he wishes to have the nights longer for eating. So, the devil who is rewarded more in the state of fault than of grace wishes it to be prolonged. Wherefore also the disciples were tempted to evil because it was in that night by which he was betrayed, Matt. 26[:70-72]. And Peter in that night “denied” his Lord. And the owl[[4]](#endnote-4) flies more at night than the day for seeking its prey, so also the devil. Here however it is to be noted that although night is somewhat obscured, so it can be illuminated by the moon and the stars, so then man can do some work. And it is another night that is so obscure that it cannot be illuminated, and in such a one man cannot work. So, it is the night of fault and night of hell in which first night light can be somewhat received, as by the preachers, Psal. [135:9]: “The moon and the stars to rule the night.” But the second night, namely, hell is capable of no light. Wherefore Wis. 17[:5]:

¶ “Neither could the bright flames of the stars enlighten that horrible night.” Therefore, concerning this night, it is said in John 9[:4]: “The night comes, when no man can work.” And Exod. 10[:22] it is said that for three days it was as if night for the Egyptians. And Psal. [103:20, 23]: “You have appointed darkness, and it is night.”

¶ And it follows, “Man shall go forth to his work, and to his labor until the evening,” as if saying, as the beasts work at night; man ought to work during the day. Augustine narrates, book 21, *De civitate*,[[5]](#endnote-5) about a certain fountain that is hot at night so that it cannot be touched. So, illuminated by the son Christ they do not touch the waters of hell.

¶ Again, Chrysostom, homily 27, *Super Mattheum*,[[6]](#endnote-6) the valleys are in shadow before the mountains, that is, the secular men before the clergy, but with day declining you will see the mountains in shadow, then there is no doubt that the day has passed.

1. Cf. Hugh of Pisa*, Derivationes* N 40 [9] (2:834): et hec **nox** -tis: vel dicitur a noceo -es quia noceat oculis propter discretionem rerum, vel per contrarium quia non noceat oculis sed potius prosit.

   Cf. Isidore, *Etymologiae* 5.31.1-2 (PL 82:217): Nox a nocendo dicta, eo quod oculis noceat. Quae idcirco lunae ac siderum lucem habet, ne indecora esset, et ut consolaretur omnes nocte operantes, et ut quibusdam animantibus quae lucem solis ferre non possunt ad sufficientiam temperaretur. Noctis autem et diei alternatio propter vicissitudinem dormiendi et vigilandi effecta est, et ut operis diurni laborem noctis requies temperaret. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. Aristotle, *History of Animals* 8.19 602b6-11 (Barnes 1:941): Fishes are caught in greatest abundance before sunrise and after sunset, or, speaking generally, just about sunset and sunrise. Fishermen haul up their nets at these times, and speak of the hauls then made as

   the 'nick-of-time' hauls. The fact is, that at these times fishes are particularly weak-sighted; at night they are at rest, and as the light grows stronger they see comparatively well. [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. Cf. Bartholomeus Anglicus, 18.76 Onager (1505, col. 466a): De quo dicit philiologus xxv. die marcii duodecies in die et totiens in nocte rugit per cuius rugitum equinoctium apud afros discernitur et dicit quod totiens semper rugit de die quod dies habet horas. similiter et de nocte.

   Cf. *The Medieval Bestiary*, “Onager” On March 25 the onager brays twelve times to signal the spring equinox; he brays both in the night and the day, and the number of brays marks the hour.

   <http://bestiary.ca/beasts/beast211.htm> [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. Cf. Isidore, Etymologiae 12.7.39-42 (PL 82:464): Noctua dicitur, pro eo quod nocte circumvolat, et per diem non possit videre. Nam exorto splendore solis visus illius habetatur. [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
5. Augustine, *De civitate Dei* 21.5.2 (PL 41:716): aut futurum fontem, cujus aqua in refrigerio noctis sic ardeat, ut non possit tangi. [↑](#endnote-ref-5)
6. (Pseudo-)Chrysostomus, *Opus imperfectum in Mattheum* 34.20 (PG 56:818): Ubique tenebras vides, et dubitas diem transisse? Prius etenim in vallibus fit obscuritas, die delinantre ad occasum. Quando ergo colles videris obscurari, quis dubitate quin jam nox est? [↑](#endnote-ref-6)