123 Light God illuminates man (*Lux Deus illuminat hominem*)

Light. God illuminates man with a triple light: nature, grace, and glory.

¶ By the light, I say, 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 since human cognition begins from the senses through the work of God which we see, we discern in cognition and commendation of the artificer so that from the greatness and multitude of the creatures we know and commend the insuperable power of the creator, from the disposition of the beauty the infallible wisdom, from the utility and order the incomparable goodness, from the perpetuity and conservation 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 souls, 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. And thus, concerning other things it would be better for such ones that they were not born.

¶ Second, God illuminates man by a light more interior 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 a *Homilia*,[[1]](#endnote-1) man has another thing in common with every creature, because being with the stones, to live with the trees, to feel with the animals, to understand with the angels, 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 common to all men. Prov. 29[:13]: “The poor man and the creditor,” that is, the rich, “have met one another,” that is, in this world, “the Lord is the enlightener of them both.” Again, the light of grace illuminates some not all. They do not wish for these things and this is said because in respect to the evil and in respect to the good. In respect to the evil to this in two ways: because either in respect of the fault or in respect to the penalty. In respect to the fault, to this in two ways: because for expelling sin committed and this through penitence, just as light expels the darkness, the mirror the blemish, Psal. [33:6]: “Come to him,” by the steps of penance, “and be enlightened,” and do it. Therefore, elsewhere it is said in Psal. [12:4]: “Enlighten my eyes,” namely, on the inside, “that I never sleep,” that is, lest I die, “in death,” of the fault just as the lethargic who dies sleeping, [Psal. 12:5]: “Lest at any time my enemy says, I have prevailed against him. If the lethargic sees

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a disturbing dream hardly does he sleep. Augustine,[[2]](#endnote-2) O sinner, if you saw yourself, you would be displeased with yourself and you would please me, but because you do not see yourself, you please yourself, and you displease me, but the day will come when you shall neither, please yourself nor me. Not me because I have died in penitence, [not] yourself because you will be afflicted in hell.

¶ Second, the light of grace illuminates man for avoiding relapsing through constancy. 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,” 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, whom shall I fear.” Again, in respect of the penalty of evil, grace illuminates for sustaining through patience by showing the reward, according to Gregory in a *Homilia*,[[3]](#endnote-3) 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.” In respect to the good, grace illuminates doubly. First for seeing the good to be done. So, for indicating concerning colors, it needs light, Psal. [118:130]: “The declaration of your words gives light.” Again Psal. [18:9]: “The commandment of the Lord, enlightening the eyes.” The writer and almost any artisan needs light, [Luke] 1[:78-9]: “In which the Orient from on high has visited us, to enlighten them,” etc. Isai. 60[:1]: “Arise, be enlightened, O Jerusalem: for your light is come.” However, God made this 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.

¶ Third, he illuminates by the light of glory in the heavenly city, 1 Cor. 4[:5]: “Until the Lord comes who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness,” just as in a mirror they reflect if they are marked, and then there will be a terrible illumination in the damned of whom they will seek the deeds, and beloved in blessedness just as it is said in the *Gloss*,[[4]](#endnote-4) Apo. 21[:23]: “The glory of God has enlightened it.”

¶ Again, light is said to be the just man, on account of three matters. Because of the light of grace freely given by which one is informed, on account of the light of the present life by which we grow, on account of the light of heavenly clarity to which we are ordained. There is however the grace of God just like material light. First for directing the traveler through faith just as he who walks in the night does not know where he goes because the light of this world does have the power as it is said, So the infidel

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believes he goes to heaven and goes to hell, Eph. 5[:8]: “You were heretofore darkness,” because of infidelity. Now however the light in the Lord through faith. Therefore, as sons of the light walk to his [light], namely, in imitation, so that just as we come together in his name and are Christians from Christ, so we come together in work.

¶ Second, it is heat poured out in colors 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, because now there is the turbulence of discord, etc.

¶ Third, it is the assurance of the timid through hope. There are many who are afraid in the darkness, who are not in the light. So, we do not have security concerning future beatitude 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]: “He shall drive him out of light,” that is, concerning vain hope, “into darkness.”

¶ Fourth, 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 Kings 3[:21]: “But considering him, when it was clear day, I found that it was not mine which I bore.” Therefore, Philip. 2[:15]: You know how to converse, “amid a crooked and perverse generation; among whom you shine as lights in the world,” containing the word of life. Fifth, it 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,” that is, your temperance, “shine before men.”

¶ Sixth, it is repressive of errors by fortitude, thieves and scoundrels restrain themselves for the most part by day, which easily they commit at night according to John 3[:20]: “For every one that does evil hates the light,” etc. Therefore, Rom 13[:12]: “Let us therefore cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light.” But alas because the light of many is the light of a candle which at the least draft is extinguished.

¶ Seventh, it is nutritive for trees through justice. For without light nothing fructifies because light is the vehicle of heat. And according to the Philosopher[[5]](#endnote-5) 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.” *Gloss*,[[6]](#endnote-6)says upon that of Matt. 5[:13]: “You are the salt of the earth. Salt is said before light, because life is before

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doctrine. For life leads something to the knowledge of truth. For whoever fears God, does not lack knowledge. Again, Bernard,[[7]](#endnote-7) to burn only is like light only, it is empty. But to burn as well as to light it is perfect. Again Bernard,[[8]](#endnote-8) [to have] a magniloquent tongue and idle hands, lucent teaching and a dark life, it is a monstrous thing.

¶ Again, the present life is said to be light which is given to us for three goods. First for avoiding the ruin of fault. Thus walking at night, one carries a lamp lest by chance he fall, Job 29[:24]: “The light of my countenance fell on earth,” my love. But alas because Job 38[:15] it is said, “From the wicked their light shall be taken away.”

¶ Second for doing the works of grace, such as reading at night, light is given, Psal. [62:2]: “O God, my God, to you do I watch at break of day.” Isai. 45[:7]: “I form the light,” for working, “and create darkness,” for resting.

¶ Third for persevering in good, so the voyager enjoys the day most, when night comes on he is uncertain for lodging, John 12[:35]: “Walk while you have the light, that the darkness overtake you not.” But alas because they do that in the morning light, namely, sin as they are accustomed to doing.

¶ Again light is said to be eternal, *Gloss*,[[9]](#endnote-9) because it is promised to the elect, Job 17[:12]: “After darkness,” of night, “I hope for light again,” of eternal glory. Tob. 13[:13]: “You shall shine with a glorious light.” And of which it is that light that is said, Apo. 21[:23]: “The city has no need of the sun, nor of the moon, to shine in it.”

¶ Again light is said to be a teacher for a triple cause, on account of the purity because light is purer than charcoal or flames. Therefore, Christ said to the apostolic men, [Matt. 5:14]: “You are the light of the world,” that is, preaching purely on account of the salvation of souls. He did not say to them, charcoal, that is, preaching on account of temporal gain, nor flames, that is, preaching on account of human favor.

¶ Second, a teacher is said to be light on account of his work. For he wakes the sleeping, delights the on lookers, directs the voyagers and the workers. So, a teacher awakes one from the sleep of sin, inflames by good desires, rectifies those going astray.

¶ Third, it is said to be light on account of diffusion. For light if first contained in lamps, then in clouds after that, in mountains, then in the earth. But the rays of divine grace, first were in the apostles as if in lamps, then in the first teachers as if in the mountains, then in the simple

elect as if in the earth.

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. Augustine, ascribed to Bernard, *Bernard, Site videres tibi displiceres, &*[\*](https://quod.lib.umich.edu/e/eebo/A19498.0001.001?c=eebo;c=eebo2;g=eebogroup;id=DLPS1447;lvl=1;note=inline;rgn=div2;view=trgt;xc=1;rgn1=author;q1=cowper)*mihi placeres:* If thou saw thy selfe, thou wouldst be displeased with thy selfe, & shouldst please me. *Sed quia te non vides, tibi places, & mihi displices:*[\*](https://quod.lib.umich.edu/e/eebo/A19498.0001.001?c=eebo;c=eebo2;g=eebogroup;id=DLPS1448;lvl=1;note=inline;rgn=div2;view=trgt;xc=1;rgn1=author;q1=cowper) but because thou seest not thy selfe, thou pleasest thy selfe, and displeasest mee. *Veniet autem dies quand•… nec tibi nec mihi placebis: non mihi quia peccasti: nec tibi quia in aeternum ardebis.* But the day will come, wherein thou shalt neither please thy selfe▪nor mee: thou shalt not please mee, be∣cause thou hast sinned against mee; neither shalt thou please thy self, because thou shalt be punish∣ed with euerlasting fire. in *A holy alphabet for Sion's scholars full of spiritual instructions, and heauenly consolations, to direct and encourage them in their progresse towards the new Ierusalem: deliuered, by way of commentary vpon the whole 119. Psalme***.** By William Covvper **...**(p. 396).[A holy alphabet for Sion's scholars full of spiritual instructions, and heauenly consolations, to direct and encourage them in their progresse towards the new Ierusalem: deliuered, by way of commentary vpon the whole 119. Psalme. By William Covvper ... (umich.edu)](https://quod.lib.umich.edu/e/eebo/A19498.0001.001/1%3A3.22?c=eebo;c=eebo2;g=eebogroup;rgn=div2;view=fulltext;xc=1;rgn1=author;q1=cowper)

Cf. F.N.M. Diekstra, *The Middle English* Weye of Paradys *& the Middle French* Voie de Paradis: *parallel-test edition*, Commentary on F 21, 17 (p. 392): Possibly it is an allusion to the pseudo-Bernardian treatise *De Interiori Domoi,* xv: *Nam qui sibi displicet, Deo placet: et qui sibi vilis est, Deo charius est.* (PL 184:520). [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. Gregory, *Moralia* 3.33.64 (PL 75:631): Et rursum consideratio munerum cogitationis asperae impatientiam refrenet, dicens [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. *Glossa ordinaria* Apo. 21:23  nam claritas Dei interl.| id est Trinitasilluminabit eam et lucerna eius

interl.| id est lumine scilicet continens deitatem. [Glossae Scripturae Sacrae-electronicae (Gloss-e) (cnrs.fr)](https://gloss-e.irht.cnrs.fr/php/editions_chapitre.php?id=liber&numLivre=83&chapitre=83_21) [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
5. 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-5)
6. Glossa ordinaria on Matt. 5:13: Vos estis

interl.| dat causam quare non debent deficere

sal terre.

interl.| secundum intellectum et scientiam

marg.| VOS  ESTIS  SAL. Hic iam ostenditur apostolicum officium, scilicet quod sunt sal terre et lux mundi

marg.| Hoc specialiter ad apostolos, qui predictis virtutibus paupertate scilicet et aliis debent ornari, ut sint sal optimum condientes alios doctrina et vite sue exemplo.

marg.| Sal salus a corruptione. Unde propheta: «Posui te in lucem gentium, ut sis salus mea usque ad extremum terre».

marg.| Ubi corruptio culpe desiccatur sale sapine vermes non demoliuntur.

marg.| VOS  ESTIS etc. Quia terra, id est humana natura per eos conditur verbi sapientia Sal facit sterilem terram, unde ira victorum destructas urbes sale seminabat ne quod in eis germen oriretur. Ita apostoli destructo regno peccati, germen vitiorum compescebant. Sal cibos condit, carnes siccat, predicatio vero a vermibus et a putredine vitiorum illesam servat suo creatori humanam naturam. Ut non est cibus sapidus nisi sale conditus, ita sermo non est utilis sine documento apostolice doctrine. Unde in Levitico: ‘In omni sacrificio sal offeres’, id est in omni quod dicis vel facis, apostolicam sapientiam habe. Ex aqua et igne sal conficitur, ita isti ex aqua Spiritus sancti, et igne tribulationis. Vel per aquam baptismi et ignem caritatis in saporem sapientie sunt nati. [Glossae Scripturae Sacrae-electronicae (Gloss-e) (cnrs.fr)](https://gloss-e.irht.cnrs.fr/php/editions_chapitre.php?id=liber&numLivre=55&chapitre=55_5) [↑](#endnote-ref-6)
7. Bernard, *Sermo in nativitate S. Ioan. Bapt. n. 3* : Est tantum lucere vanum, tantum ardere parum, lucere et ardere perfectum. [↑](#endnote-ref-7)
8. Bernard, *Ad eugenium* libro iio: ‘Monstruosa res [est](https://cdn.ymaws.com/www.medievalacademy.org/resource/resmgr/maa_books_online/steiner_0032.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22ma0032_footnote_nt280) . . . sedes prima et vita yma, lingua magniloqua et manus ociosa, sermo multus et [fructus nullus](https://cdn.ymaws.com/www.medievalacademy.org/resource/resmgr/maa_books_online/steiner_0032.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22ma0032_footnote_nt281).’  [↑](#endnote-ref-8)
9. Glossa ordinaria, on Job 17:12: et rursum post tenebras spero lucem.

interl.| quia vicissim prospera et adversa alternant

marg.| ET  RURSUM  POST  TENEBRAS. Lux post tenebras speratur, quia post noctem vite presentis eternum lumen prospicitur. [↑](#endnote-ref-9)