

PONTIFICAL INSTITUTE OF MEDIAEVAL STUDIES



Translated with an introduction by  
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*The Moral Treatise on the Eye*

PETER OF LIMOGES

MEDIAEVAL SOURCES IN TRANSLATION 51

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## CHAPTER THREE

## On the Number of Types of Vision

Perspectivist authors make a distinction between three types of vision with the eye. The first is by means of straight lines, the second by means of refracted lines, and the third by means of reflected ones. Of these, the first is more perfect than the others, the second more certain than the third, and the third less certain.<sup>1</sup>

*On three types of vision among human beings\*.*

In the same way, spiritually speaking, we can describe three types of vision among human beings: The first is perfect, which will exist in the state of glory after the final resurrection. The second is in the soul separated from the body and contemplating the divine essence in the highest heaven until the resurrection, and this vision is weaker than the first. The third is in this life, which is the weakest of all, and it has to take place through reflection, just as the vision by which something is seen in a mirror also has to take place through the intermediary of reflected lines. For this reason, it is also called a mirror-like vision by the apostle Paul. “Now,” he says, “we see through a mirror and dimly; but at the time of glory, face to face,”<sup>2</sup> and after the resurrection we will see with full directness, but before that only at an oblique angle to that directness or fullness, because the soul will not be filled by the directness or fullness of vision before it has been united with its body. For, as Augustine says, among the souls in heaven already blessed by the sight of God there exists a certain “natural longing to restore their bodies to

life,” from which they are held back lest they be brought to God in their totality.<sup>3</sup>

From this it is clear how suitably the wisest Perspectivist spoke, the apostle Paul, when he called the vision of heaven face to face, but the vision of the journey there mirror-like and only partial, First Corinthians 13: “We see now through a mirror and dimly; then, however, it will be face to face. Now I know partially; then I will know just as I, too, have been known.”<sup>4</sup> And just as someone who desires to see his best friend after a long time would not be satisfied if he could see him only in a mirror and could not also see him in person, so in this present moment, although we see God in a mirror, “the eye is not satisfied with seeing,” Ecclesiastes 1:5 But in the future, when we will see God by direct vision, and face to face, that verse by the Psalmist will be fulfilled: “I will be satisfied when your glory appears.”<sup>6</sup> And just as the apostles “rejoiced when they had seen the Lord,” John 20:7 so too will we rejoice when we will see God with our eye, insofar as we will have been made Perspectivists and investigators in glory by then. We will delight ineffably in the greatest good, which we will behold, and with inexpressible joy we will break out with the sound of praise, according to the verse in Isaiah 52: “The voice of your watchmen: they have lifted up their voice; together they will praise, since they will see eye to eye.”<sup>8</sup>

1 Cf. Alhacen, *De aspect*, 4.1 [1.1–2], ed. and trans. A. Mark Smith, in *Alhacen on the Principles of Reflection. A Critical Edition, with English Translation and Commentary, of Books 4 and 5 of Alhacen's De Aspectibus, the Medieval Latin Version of Ibn al-Haytham's Kitab al-Manazir*, Transactions of the American Philosophical Society, 96, Parts 2–3 (Philadelphia, 2006), vol. 1, 3 (Latin text), vol. 2, 295 (English translation).

2 1 Cor 13:12.

3 Augustine of Hippo, *De Genesi ad litteram libri duodecim*, 12.35, ed. Joseph Zycha, CSEL 28.1 (Vienna, 1894), 432, where Augustine's point is that the disembodied souls in heaven have a natural longing to manage their bodies that holds them back from going on in full force to the highest heaven, something they will be able to do only after they are reunited with their spiritual (no longer merely corporeal) bodies at the time of the resurrection. For the first two paragraphs, cf. Roger Bacon, *Persp.*, 3.3.2, ed. and trans. Lindberg, 328. The close verbal parallels between Bacon's text and Peter's are noted in Newhouser, “*Inter scientiam et populum*,” 701–02 (appendix, part C).

4 1 Cor 13:12.

5 Qoh 1:8.

6 Ps 16:15.

7 John 20:20.

8 Isa 52:8.

## CHAPTER FOUR

## On the Means of Vision

Further, as Ptolemy proves in his *Optics*, not only is the intromission of the form of the visible object required for vision, but also the extramission and cooperation of one's own *species* and power.<sup>1</sup>

In the same way, spiritual vision requires not only that the soul receive powers and grace from without, that is to say from God, but that it cooperate with them internally through its own power.

1 Ptolemy is, in fact, an exponent of the extramission theory of vision, which accounted for vision by postulating a visual flux that emanates from the eye. When the flux touches an object, vision occurs. Sight, then, is closely related to touch in its operation for Ptolemy. Cf. Ptolemy, *Optica*, 2.13, ed. and trans. Albert Lejeune, in *L'Optique de Claude Ptolémée dans la version latine d'après l'arabe de l'évêque Eugène de Scile. Édition critique et exégétique augmentée d'une traduction française et de compléments*, 2nd ed., Collection des travaux de l'Académie Internationale d'Histoire des Sciences, 31 (Leiden, 1989), 17; *Ptolemy's Theory of Visual Perception: An English Translation of the Optics with Introduction and Commentary*, trans. A. Mark Smith, Transactions of the American Philosophical Society, 86/2 (Philadelphia, 1996), 74–75. For a combination of the extramissionist and intromissionist positions as found in Plato's *Timaeus*, see Smith's "Introduction," in *Ptolemy's Theory of Visual Perception*, 22–23. Peter's inclusion of the cooperation of the viewer as one of the requirements in the process of vision is important because it emphasizes far more than what is seen in the work of other Perspectivists that the agency of the viewer is a necessary for completed vision. See below, chap. 11.5, p. 134, for the optical discussion of the role of intention in the process of vision. The Latin word *species* is a technical term in Perspectivist optics, which I have retained to denote the visual image representing the form of the object that is viewed as it is conveyed through the visual medium and impinges on the eye.

*It follows that two things are required for the forgiveness of someone who is sinful\*:*

The forgiveness of someone who is sinful requires the action of the free will and harmony with the grace of God.<sup>2</sup> For this reason, Augustine says: "He who created you without yourself will not forgive you without yourself."<sup>3</sup> As an illustration of this matter, the angel of Laodicea was spiritually blind, as is said in Revelation 3: "You say 'I am rich and in need of nothing' and you do not know that you are wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked."<sup>4</sup> The celestial physician said to the angel, "Anoint your eyes with a salve so that you can see."<sup>5</sup> By the salve, which cleanses and rinses the eyes, are signified contrition and remorse for sins and one's own efforts in carrying out good deeds: a human being cooperates with them in order to receive vision with his spiritual eyes. For this reason the *Gloss* says about the previously mentioned passage: "The eyes are anointed with a salve so that we may see, since in order to understand the clarity of the true light we sharpen our intellect with the medicine of good deeds."<sup>6</sup> Furthermore, as a sign of this matter, namely that we must cooperate in order to see spiritually, the Lord wanted Paul, who had been blinded, to pray and fast for three days before he regained his sight, as it is said in Acts 9.7 The same thing is also indicated in the fact that "Tobias spread fish-gall on his father's eyes,"<sup>8</sup> and immediately he regained his sight.<sup>9</sup> Tobit 11.9 In the fish-gall, which is bitter, are designated the bitterness and remorse caused by sins and the indignation against sin, for gall arouses anger. That is what is required on the part of someone who wants to be forgiven, so that his interior vision may be restored.

2 Cf. Roger Bacon, *Persp.*, 3.3.1, ed. and trans. Lindberg, 324. The close verbal parallels between Bacon's text and Peter's are noted in Newhauser, "Inter scientiam et populum," 701 (appendix, part D).

3 Augustine of Hippo, *Sermones*, 169.11.13, PL 38.923.

4 Rev 3:17.

5 Rev 3:18.

6 *Glossa ordinaria*, Apoc. 3:18, in *Bitula latina cum Glossa ordinaria. Facsimile Reprint of the Editio Princeps, Adolph Rusch of Strassburg 1480/81* (Turnhout, 1992), vol. 4, 554a in margin (PL 114:717C).

7 Cf. Acts 9:8–9.

8 Tob 11:13.

9 Tob 11:15.



## CHAPTER FIVE

On the Organ in Which  
Vision Is Completed

As is taught in Perspectivist science, vision is not completed in the eyes, for two different *species* of the same object reach both eyes. Since a diversity in *species* creates a diversity in judgment, because of the perception of a double *species* one object would be judged to be two if vision were completed in the eyes. It is necessary, therefore, that another sentient organ be situated beyond the eyes in which vision can be completed, the instruments of which are the eyes that pass on to it the *species* of the visible object. This organ is the common nerve located on the surface of the brain, where the two nerves come together from the two parts of the anterior portion of the brain. After they come together, they are divided again into two, and in this form they are extended toward the eyes. In that common nerve, therefore, the visual power has its source originally. Since, then, this power is singular at its source, and the powers of the eyes form a continuum with it, for that reason one object can appear as a single thing, although it is seen by two eyes.<sup>1</sup>

*That one should beware of rash judgment\*.*

In the fact that vision is not completed in the eyes, which appear externally, but rather in the common nerve, which is hidden internally, we are instructed morally to avoid rash judgment and not to judge matters as they appear at first sight, but rather to have recourse to an internal judgment through careful consideration. And for this reason concerning the angel of great counsel,<sup>2</sup> whose every action is our instruction according

to Gregory,<sup>3</sup> it is said in Isaiah 11: “Not according to the vision of his eyes will he judge.”<sup>4</sup> For as Seneca says: “It is not enough to give one’s attention to what is before the eyes.”<sup>5</sup> For this reason many things often appear to be foul to the external eyes which nevertheless are clean if they are examined by the internal judgment of reason, a fact that is clearly evident concerning the judgment of leprosy, Leviticus 13: “But if spreading leprosy breaks out in the skin and covers all of the flesh from the head to the feet, and whatever can be seen with the eye, the priest will examine him and will judge that the leprosy he has is very clean.”<sup>6</sup>

1 Cf. Roger Bacon, *Persp.*, 1.5.2, ed. and trans. Lindberg, 62–64. The close verbal parallels between Bacon’s text and Peter’s are noted in Newhauser, “*Inter scientiam et populum?*” 703 (appendix, part E).  
2 I.e., Jesus; cf. Isidore of Seville, *Allegoriae quaedam Sacrae Scripturae*, 119, PL 83:115B. See also below, chapr. 15, p. 190.

3 Cf. Gregory the Great, *Dialogi*, 1.9.7, in *Dialogues*, trans. Paul Antin, ed. Adalbert de Vogüé, SC 260 (Paris, 1979), 80–81 (PL 77:192B). This statement is a commonplace for medieval theologians; cf. e.g. Peter Lombard, *In totum Psalterium commentarii*, *Psalms* 29, 6, PL 191:295A.  
4 Isa 11:3.  
5 Cf. Boethius, *Philosophiae consolatio*, 2.pr.1.15, ed. Ludwig Bieler, CCSL 94 (Turnhour, 1957), 18.  
6 Lev 13:12–13.

## CHAPTER SIX

On 13 Extraordinary Phenomena  
That Are Related to Lessons Concerning Eyesight

It is taught in Perspectivist science, and experience teaches this as well, that an eye situated in foggy air can neither see nor perceive the mist and clouds that surround it; however, when it moves some distance away from this type of misty air and then looks back at it, it will see the misty air which it did not see earlier when it was located within it.<sup>1</sup>

In the same way as long as a sinner is in a state of sin, he, too, does not notice the darkness of his sin, but once he is situated outside the sin and enlightened by the glow of divine grace, then for the first time he will recognize the magnitude of his sin and the mental blindness he suffered. This is exemplified by the ape lying next to a tree trunk who does not perceive the immensity of the trunk until he begins to move away from it.<sup>2</sup> And for the same reason, after David distanced himself through penance from the sin he had committed with Bathsheba, he understood his sin and said, "For I understand my iniquity."<sup>3</sup> As a typological symbol of this state it is said in Exodus 14: "Lifting up their eyes, the Israelites saw the Egyptians coming after them."<sup>4</sup> Now, Egypt is interpreted as "darkness,"<sup>5</sup> and it signifies sin, which is a spiritual darkness that a person understands for the first time when he retreats from sin by doing penance. For this reason, Anselm says in the *Similitudes*: "Vice is an immoral habit that is not easily seen by the person who is weighed down by it, but as soon as this person stops committing a vice and distances

himself from it, then at last he carefully examines what misery and filth he was lying in."<sup>6</sup>

On the second extraordinary phenomenon  
concerning the eye's vision.

It is well known in the science mentioned already that if someone places a finger under his eye and pushes it from its normal position, because of the motion this creates in the eye a single object will appear to the viewer to be two objects.<sup>7</sup>

## That evil advisors and bribes corrupt prelates\*.

It sometimes happens in the same way to prelates of this modern age: When they are pushed from an upright judgment by the instigation of an evil advisor, they judge that someone is worthy of a double benefice, although if they were not deluded in their judgment they would feel that this person ought to be content with a single benefice alone. This often happens because of an evil advisor, who is properly represented as a finger because of the discernment with which he is believed to be endowed.<sup>8</sup> For with his perverse exhortations, as if with a kind of pressure, an evil advisor often pushes someone headlong into error "when he persuades him by twisted *auctoritates* and the examples of despots that all things are allowed to a magistrate or a prince and what is pleasing to a lord has the force of law. And as examples he mentions which despot forced his servant or a member of his household onto what church without an election, which one levied taxes in the dioceses, which one ruined the clergy, which one forced the bishops into silence, finally, which one satisfied the pleasure of his own will on his subjects and made

1 Cf. Roger Bacon, *Persp.*, 1.9.1, ed. and trans. Lindberg, 126.

2 The text reads *ceperit elongari*, the passive of *elongare*, like the reflexive, meaning "to leave, to distance oneself." For apes exemplifying sinners, see Horst W. Janson, *Apes and Ape Lore in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance*, Studies of the Warburg Institute, 20 (London, 1952), 29–71.

3 Ps 50:5; cf. 2Sam 12:13.

4 Exod 14:10. For *figura* as a technical term in typological interpretation, see Erich Auerbach, "Figura," in *Scenes from the Drama of European Literature. Six Essays*, trans. Ralph Manheim (New York, 1959), 11–76.

5 Jerome, *Lib. interp. Hebr. nom.*, Act., ed. de Lagarde, CCSL 72:1143. See below, chapt. 12.7, p. 168.

6 Ps-Anselm of Canterbury, *Liber de similitudinibus*, 99, PL 159:665A (cf. Alexander of Canterbury, *Liber ex dictis beati Anselmi*, 1, ed. Richard W. Southern and Francis S. Schmitt, in *Memorials of St. Anselm*, Auctores Britannici Medii Aevi, 1 [Oxford, 1969], 110).

7 Cf. Roger Bacon, *Persp.*, 1.5.2, ed. and trans. Lindberg, 64. Bacon uses the experiment of pushing against the eye to create a dual image to argue that the visual *species* from the eyes must converge at a single point in the common nerve to achieve a singular image. Moving the eye from its natural place will make the *species* from that eye arrive at a different location in the common nerve than the *species* from the other eye. Peter, on the other hand, attributes the visual effect to the motion created in the eye itself.

8 Cf. Gregory the Great, *Mor. in Job*, 15.37.43, ed. Adriaen, CCSL 143A:776.

what he himself desired the same as what is lawful?<sup>19</sup> Hence, the verse reads:

Thus I desire, thus I command; let my will be reason enough.<sup>10</sup>

And just as an evil advisor corrupts kings and princes, so too he sometimes corrupts even bishops and other leading figures of the church. For if a prelate has been asked about the advancement of someone who is unworthy and objects that this person has some weakness and therefore cannot rightly be promoted, the evil advisor in attendance will demolish whatever objection has been made, “with *exempla* and the decrees of the fathers that are at variance with it.”<sup>11</sup> For if the prelate were to object, “The person is of low birth; the evil advisor will respond, “But Peter, the pinnacle of the church, never bragged about the splendor of his blood line;<sup>12</sup> If it is said that the person is too young, he will respond that Jeremiah and the Lord’s forerunner were boys, and, again, he will mention the elders damned by Daniel, a boy;<sup>13</sup> The person is illiterate, and he’s never been to Paris or any other city to study” – and he will respond, “Nor does one read that the apostles frequented schools: ‘He’s lacking in eloquence’ – ‘But as one reads in Exodus, Aaron, too, performed the priestly office in place of Moses, who (that is to say, Moses) was of very halting speech.’<sup>14</sup> ‘He’s lustful and frequents whorehouses’ – ‘But Hosea copulated with a whore when the Lord ordered him to do so.’<sup>15</sup> ‘He’s a fool’ – ‘But God decreed that believers be saved through the foolishness of the world.’<sup>16</sup> ‘He’s a thug and has carried weapons’ – ‘But Peter, too, “cut off the ear of the chief priest’s servant with a sword.”<sup>17</sup> ‘He’s a drunkard and given to gluttony’ – ‘But one reads that the Lord

himself said that he was a drinker of wine and an eater of meat,<sup>18</sup> and no servant is greater than his lord.”<sup>19</sup> ‘He doesn’t submit to his superiors; nor is he willing to obey them in anything’ – ‘But one reads that Paul, too, opposed Peter, the chief of the apostles, to his face;<sup>20</sup> ‘He’s contentious and a disturber of the peace’ – ‘But among the disciples of Jesus Christ “contention arose about which one of them was to be regarded as the greater.”<sup>21</sup> ‘He’s carried arms in warfare’ – ‘But Martin, too, served for a time as a soldier under Julian.’<sup>22</sup> ‘He’s a murderer and has spilled blood’ – ‘But Moses, too, killed an Egyptian.’<sup>23</sup> ‘He’s dishonest and has broken his word frequently’ – ‘But the apostle Peter also combined betrayal with perjury.’<sup>24</sup> ‘He’s mute and would be unable to preach’ – ‘But that didn’t exclude Zechariah from the priesthood.’<sup>25</sup> ‘He’s blind’ – ‘But Paul, too, had been blinded when he was baptized by Ananias and consecrated at the Lord’s command.’<sup>26</sup> ‘He’s deaf’ – ‘But that doesn’t prevent him from preaching God’s law. For we seek a preacher, not a listener, and he may proclaim the word of God all the more loudly, and he’ll raise his voice like a trumpet’<sup>27</sup> in his sermons, since it’ll still seem to him that he’s only speaking softly into someone’s ear. ‘His character is despicable’ – ‘But Defensor likewise objected to Saint Martin for this reason; nevertheless, the church didn’t despise him.’<sup>28</sup> ‘He’s sickly’ – ‘But although Gregory had the most debilitating stomach ailment, he governed the church of God in the best way.’<sup>29</sup> ‘He’s proud and vain’ – ‘But so was Brice\*, archbishop of

- 9 John of Salisbury, *Polycraticus*, 7.20, ed. Clemens C.I. Webb, in *Polycraticus sine De nugis curialium et vestigiis philosophorum libri viii* (Oxford, 1909; reprint New York, 1979), vol. 2, 187–88.
- 10 Juvenal, *Saturne*, 6.223, ed. Wendell V. Clausen, rev. ed. (Oxford, 1992), 79 (cf. Walther, *Proverbia*, no. 29559).
- 11 For the source of the long passage beginning here and ending with “as God also did at that time,” see below at n35.
- 12 Cf. 2Pet 1:1.
- 13 Cf. Jer 1:6–7, cf. Luke 1:17 (on John the Baptist), 1:66, 1:80; cf. Dan 13:45–49.
- 14 Cf. Exod 4:10–14.
- 15 Cf. Hos 1:2–3.
- 16 Cf. 1Cor 1:21, 27.
- 17 Matt 26:51, cf. John 18:10.

- 18 Cf. Matt 11:19.
- 19 John 15:20.
- 20 Cf. Gal 2:11.
- 21 Luke 22:24.
- 22 Cf. Sulpicius Severus, *Vita s. Martini*, 2.2, ed. Karl Halm, in *Libri qui supersunt, CSEL 1* (Vienna, 1866), 111. The reference is to Saint Martin of Tours (ca. 316–ca. 397) who was enrolled in the Roman army as a youth and served under Emperor Julian (“the Apostate”, 331–363).
- 23 Cf. Exod 2:12.
- 24 Cf. Matt 26:69–75.
- 25 Cf. Luke 1:22.
- 26 Cf. Acts 9:8–17.
- 27 Cf. Isa 58:1.
- 28 Cf. Sulpicius Severus, *Vita s. Martini*, 9, ed. Halm, CSEL 1:119, who relates that Defensor was one of the bishops who attempted to prohibit Saint Martin from becoming the bishop of Tours.
- 29 Cf. Paul the Deacon, *Vita beatissimi Gregorii papae ubi Roma*, 13, ed. Hartmann Grisar, “Die Gregorbiographie des Paulus Diakonus in ihrer ursprünglichen Gestalt, nach italienischen Handschriften,” *Zeitschrift für katholische Theologie* 11 (1887): 158–72, here 170. The reference is to Pope Gregory the Great (ca. 540–604).



Tours.<sup>30</sup> 'He's sometimes taught heresy' – 'But Augustine declared that he had been a Manichee;<sup>31</sup> 'He's persecuted the church of God' – 'But Paul, too, earlier a persecutor, was later made a preacher;<sup>32</sup> 'He's avaricious' – 'In this way he'll be able to gather up what has been scattered and he won't uselessly squander what has been gathered! Finally, if the prelate objects that in all these matters the person is clearly unsuitable, the evil advisor will respond to this, 'But Sanson, too, swept away the Philistines with the jawbone of an ass.<sup>33</sup> And now, too, God has the power "to raise up children for Abraham from stones;"<sup>34</sup> as God also did at that time."<sup>35</sup>

You see, thus, how powerful this finger is, that is to say, an evil advisor, because by the pressure of his persuasion he can make the eye of the observer, i.e., a prelate, go astray in seeing and in corrupting his judgment. And in this, indeed, the more discerning he is thought to be, the more powerful will he be regarded, so that it may be said about him, "He is the finger of God."<sup>36</sup> Alithophel, Absalom's most corrupt advisor, had this characteristic, and nevertheless it is said about him in 2 Samuel 16: "The advice of Ahithophel, which he gave in those days, was as if someone were to consult God."<sup>37</sup> For what is this if not to say, "He is the finger of God"? For that reason it is said in Ecclesiasticus 37: "From an evil advisor preserve your soul."<sup>38</sup> And David prayed, "Lord, deliver my soul from wicked lips and from a deceitful tongue."<sup>39</sup> These words, too, a prelate should offer in prayer, and request from the Lord.

Now, the eye of the church, i.e. a prelate, is deceived not only by an evil advisor in the manner just mentioned, but also sometimes by the acceptance of bribes, which in a certain manner knock the eye of reason from its place. And so in common parlance we are accustomed to say that whoever has already accepted bribes is crooked and, hence, that he perverts his judgment. These are the fingers about which it is said in Isaiah

59: "Your fingers are defiled by iniquity;<sup>40</sup> and hence it is no wonder if they make the eye of reason deviate from a balanced judgment. For, indeed, above all three things normally corrupt the judgment of someone who is wise, namely an inclination to believe others, the love of bribes, and showing partiality.<sup>41</sup> Thus, it is said in Deuteronomy 16: "Gifts blind the eyes of the wise and alter the words of the just."<sup>42</sup> And about the sons of Samuel\* it is said in 1 Samuel 8: "They accepted bribes and they perverted justice."<sup>43</sup> And the poet says:

For a gift distracts a judge's sagacity from the  
Standards of law, and envelops his mind in a shameful fog.<sup>44</sup>

Therefore, one must mourn and lament if it happens that prelates, who are the judges of their age and the true lights of the world, love bribes. May God prevent it from happening! May retributions follow if they pillage their subjects in order to snatch their purses, if they empty others' purses in order to fill up their own, so that it can be said, "In their hands are evils, whose right hand is filled with bribes!"<sup>45</sup>

Therefore, let the prelates of the church shake "their hands from every bribe"<sup>46</sup> if they desire to be unerring in their judgments, following the example of Eugene who "accepted absolutely no bribe from a person bringing litigation nor from one against whom he believed litigation was pending. For this reason he is also reported to have said, and not without great indignation, to a certain prior who was moderately rich, whose case he had not yet heard, and who was most reverently offering him a mark of gold, 'You have not yet entered the house, and you already want to

30 Cf. Gregory of Tours, *Libri historiarum decem*, 2.1, ed. Bruno Krusch and Wilhelm Levison, MGH, *Scriptores rerum Merovingicarum*, 1/1, 2nd ed. (Hannover, 1951), 37. Saint Brice (ca. 370–444) succeeded Martin as the bishop of Tours in 397.  
31 Augustine of Hippo, *Confessiones*, 3.6.19, ed. Luc Verheijen, CCSL 27 (Turnhout, 1981), 31; idem, *De utilitate credendi ad Honoratum liber unus*, 3.7, PL 42:69.  
32 Cf. 1 Tim 1:13, 2:7.  
33 Cf. Judg 15:15.  
34 Cf. Luke 3:8.  
35 The entire passage reporting the conversation between the prelate and the evil advisor is taken from John of Salisbury, *Policr.*, 7.19, ed. Webb, vol. 2, 175–78.  
36 Exod 8:19.  
37 2 Sam 16:23.  
38 Sir 37:9.  
39 Ps 119:2.

40 Isa 59:3.

41 Cf. 2 Chr 19:7.

42 Deut 16:19.

43 1 Sam 8:3.

44 Walter of Châtillon, *Alexandris*, 1.109–10, ed. Marvin L. Colker, *Thesaurus mundi*, 17 (Padua, 1978), 13 (cf. Walther, *Proverbia*, no. 15729b).

45 Ps 25:10. The passage from "judges of their age" to the end of the paragraph is adopted from John of Salisbury, *Policr.*, 8.17, ed. Webb, vol. 2, 355. The foundation of the wordplay in describing prelates as pillaging (*concupiant*) those entrusted to them in order to snatch (*excuciant*) their purses is found in the passage from Isaiah quoted at the beginning of the next paragraph, in which the man who lives an upright life is said in the Vulgate text to shake (*excutit*) his hands from bribes. This kind of wordplay based on near homonyms was clearly attractive to Peter of Limoges and is found elsewhere in *The Moral Treatise on the Eye*. See, for example, below, chapt. 6.3, p. 27.

46 Isa 33:15.

corrupt the house?" In *On Consideration* Bernard also relates to Eugene something concerning the cardinal-priest Martin\*: "When he was returning from a legation as a pauper, contrary to the custom of the times, Martin accepted a horse from the bishop of Florence which was indispensable for him, but he returned the horse to its donor since he did not know that at the moment the bishop had given him the gift, he had a court case that was being heard in the church at Rome. 'You have deceived me,' Martin said; 'I did not know that you have a case pending. Take back your horse immediately.'<sup>47</sup> Behold the statement of a man who hated the acceptance of bribes! Geoffrey of Chartres, too, accepted no gifts while he carried out the office of legate in Aquitaine, but rather hated them like excrement. He agreed at long last to accept a sturgeon, namely from one of the devout clerics in his legation, only after he counted out the price for the gift he had allowed."<sup>48</sup>

If modern prelates would act in this way, they would be loved like fathers, feared like lords, and cherished like saints: if they collected taxes sparingly, did not love bribes, and did not consider every acquisition a matter of piety. But today "in the houses of many prelates and princes all things are for sale, since avarice rules there."<sup>49</sup> For:

If once the mother of vices gains a hold on the court –

The plague of avarice, which by itself imprisons every kind of virtue –

Then while the rule of law is scorned everyone will run\*

To commit crimes, nor will the court preserve the laws.<sup>50</sup>

Only in vain will you trust in the testimony of your conscience or in your pleasing manners among courtiers of this kind if you have not prepared the way by sending a bribe ahead of you. As Ovid says:

47 Cf. Bernard of Clairvaux, *Tractatus de consideratione ad Eugenium papam*, 4.5.13, ed. Jean Leclercq and Henri M. Rochais, in *Opera* (Rome, 1957), vol. 3, 459. Martin, a cardinal-priest of the Basilica of Saint Stephen on the Celian Hill in Rome near the middle of the twelfth century, had earlier been a monk at Clairvaux.

48 Cf. Bernard of Clairvaux, *Tract. de consid.*, 4.5.14, ed. Leclercq and Rochais, in *Opera*, vol. 3, 459. The entire passage from "accepted absolutely no bribe" to the end of the paragraph is taken from John of Salisbury, *Polita*, 5.15, ed. Webb, vol. 1, 347–49. The Eugene referred to here is Pope Eugene III (d. 1153). Geoffrey of Lèves (d. 1149), an important reformer in the French church and an acquaintance of Bernard of Clairvaux, succeeded Ivo as bishop of Chartres in 1116.

49 For the passage beginning "in the houses of many prelates" and ending with "either barking or biting," see below at n52.

50 Walter of Châtillon, *Alex.*, 1.111–14, ed. Colker, 13 (cf. Walther, *Proverbia*, no. 4411).

Should you yourself, Homer, arrive accompanied by the Muses,  
If you haven't brought anything with you, you will go right back out  
the door again, Homer.<sup>51</sup>

In many courts you will find gatekeepers more unfeeling than three-headed Cerberus, but among the inhabitants of hell there is said to be only one Cerberus. Here, on the other hand, there are as many Cerberuses as there are door-keepers; you will find a whole household of them either barking or biting.<sup>52</sup> And as it is said in Micah\*: "If a person does not put something in their mouths, they prepare war against him."<sup>53</sup> But:

Once the coin has been heard from, as if the greatest prince had  
just come into view,  
The doors will fly open; nothing is heard except: "Welcome!"<sup>54</sup>

One reads in the life of the blessed Anselm that he used to shake "his hands from every bribe,"<sup>55</sup> fleeing from those who accepted bribes as from people who are detestable. And he also said to them frequently, "To take (*pendere*) and to hang (*pendere*) do not differ from each other except in one letter alone. For this reason it is obvious that whoever accepts gifts freely is just a step away from being hanged, unless he accepts them in the right way."<sup>56</sup> Above all, however, each person should beware of receiving

51 Ovid, *Ars amatoria*, 2.279–80, ed. Edwin J. Kenney in *Amores, Medicamina faciei femineae, Ars amatoria, Remedia amoris*, 2nd ed. (Oxford, 1994), 164 (cf. Walther, *Proverbia*, no. 12837).

52 For the passage beginning "in the houses of many prelates," cf. Vincent of Beauvais, *Spec. doct.*, 7.22, in *Speculum quadruplex*, vol. 2, 572a–b. Cerberus, the three-headed dog who guarded hell in Greek and Roman mythology, was said to have allowed none of the souls to leave once they entered hell.

53 Mic 3:5.

54 *Sententia communis* (Walther, *Proverbia*, no. 1740).

55 Isa 33:15.

56 *Vita beati Edmundi Cantuariensis Archiepiscopi et confessoris*, 53, ed. Edmond Martène and Ursin Durand, in *Thesaurus novus anecdotorum* (Paris, 1717), vol. 3, 1807B–C. Peter has Latinized the near homonyms used by Saint Edmund (not Anselm, to whom the well-known anecdote is mistakenly attributed in both *P-78* and *P-1*). The French forms are often reported by other authors, as they are in the life edited by Martène and Durand, with which Peter's text otherwise agrees verbatim. See also the excerpts of the Balliol life of Edmund in Henry W.C. Davis, "An Unpublished Life of Edmund Rich," *The English Historical Review* 22, no. 85 (1907): 84–92, here 89: "Entre prendre et pendre ni ad ke une lettre. Dunt cil ke prent volunteers est mut pres de pendre." Cf. also Thomas de Eccleston, *Tractatus de adventu fratrum minorum in Angliam*, collatio 15, ed. Andrew G. Little (Man-

gifts from those who are evil, lest, having accepted the gift, he be censured as an ingrate if he does not favor them, or be thought of as unjust if he does favor them.

*On the third extraordinary phenomenon.*

*On the examination of sin and its double punishment\*.*

Among the Perspectivists it is well known that if at night someone raises a branch or a finger (or any other kind of object that casts a shadow) between his eyes and a candle and then looks directly at the candle, it will appear to him that where there was one finger, there are now two. And along with this, one ought to observe attentively that if the right eye is closed, the image on the left will disappear, and with the left eye closed, the image on the right vanishes completely. Augustine marveled quite a bit about this matter, and for this reason he says in book 11, chapter 2 of *On the Trinity*: It takes a long time to explain the cause of this optical phenomenon,<sup>57</sup> and it takes a truly long time for a person with no knowledge of Perspectivist science.<sup>58</sup>

In a similar fashion, if a sinner living in the night of sin places his sin before the eye of his contemplation and looks at the lamp of the word of God, concerning which the Psalm says: "Your word is the lamp for my feet,"<sup>59</sup> he will see that each of his sins is in a sense doubled if one takes into account the punishment that corresponds to it. He will see (as long as he is able to be attentive to the light of the word of God) that he has incurred a double punishment for a single sin, in such a way that the guilt requiring torment, so to speak the image on the left, appears to the right eye, with which he should have performed good deeds, while the trophy of heaven that he has lost, like the image on the right, appears to the left eye, with which evil should have been avoided.

The sinful soul is warned to avoid this appalling and extraordinary sight in Jeremiah 2: "Know and see how evil and bitter it is for you to

have left the Lord your God!"<sup>60</sup> To have left the Lord is nothing other than to have sinned, and this sin, although perpetrated (*committitur*) by a single act, is nevertheless accompanied (*comitatur*) by a twin punishment. For it is evil in terms of the deprivation of divine vision and bitter because of the harshness of punishment in hell. And since this extraordinary phenomenon is plainly apparent if someone contemplates the lamp of the word of God, therefore the next passage in the same chapter of Jeremiah says expressly: "See the word of the Lord!"<sup>61</sup> namely so that you will have the power to observe the extraordinary sight\* just mentioned.

*The fourth extraordinary phenomenon. That prelates should beware of becoming a bad example or an enticement to sin\*.*

It is well known in the previously mentioned science that when one part of a rod is in water while the rest sticks out above the water, the rod will appear broken when the eye is located in the air. The cause of this phenomenon, as is demonstrated in this same science, is given as follows: An object that we look at in water appears to the eye to be closer than it is, measured by the actual distance of its location, and thus the part of the rod in the water does not appear to our sight as a continuous and straight extension of the other part, but seems closer to the eye itself, and so the rod appears to be broken.<sup>62</sup>

60 Jer 2:19. Note the wordplay in Peter's description of the soul's double punishment for a single sin as being committed (*committitur*) by a single act, but accompanied (*comitatur*) by a double punishment.

61 Jer 2:31.

62 Cf. Roger Bacon, *Persp.*, 3.2.4, ed. and trans. Lindberg, 308–10; cf. John Peckam, *Perspectiva communis*, 3.6, ed. and trans. David C. Lindberg, in *John Peckam and the Science of Optics: Perspectiva communis* (Madison, etc., 1970), 216 (see Gudrun Schleusener-Eichholtz, "Naturwissenschaft und Allegorese: Der 'Tractatus de oculo morali' des Petrus von Limoges," *Frühmittelalterliche Studien* 12 [1978]: 258–309, here 290n160). Peter's explanation of refraction is taken partially verbatim from both works. Compare, e.g., the following phrase in Peter's text (in the wording of P-7P8): "et ideo pars baculi existens in aqua non apparet visui in continuo et directum partis alterius, sed ipsi oculo apparet esse propinquius" (and thus the part of the rod in the water does not appear to the sight as a direct extension of the other part, but appears to be closer to the eye itself) with its equivalent in Bacon's text: "Et ideo pars baculi que est in aqua non apparet visui in continuo et directum alterius partis, sed propinquius oculo"; and Peter's treatise (following P-7P8): "res, quam in aqua conspiciamus, propinquior apparet oculo quam sit secundum ueram distantiam sui situs" (an object which we look at in water appears to the eye to be closer than it is, measured by the actual distance of its location) with its equivalent in Peckam's work: "pars existens in aqua propinquior apparet quam sit secundum veritatem."

chester, 1951), 93: "Item dixit idem sanctus episcopus, cum offerrentur sibi quaedam pretiosa localia, et monetetur a suis ut ea reciperet, respondit: Si prederem, penderem; entre prendre e pendre non est nisi una litera."

57 Cf. Augustine of Hippo, *De trinitate*, 11.2.4, ed. William J. Mountain and François Glorie, CCSL 50 (Turnhout, 1968), 337–38.

58 Cf. Roger Bacon, *Persp.*, 2.2.3, ed. and trans. Lindberg, 188. The close verbal parallels between Bacon's text and Peter's are noted in Newhauser, "Inter scientiam et populam," 703 (appendix, part F).

59 Ps 118:105.



It happens occasionally in the same way if someone who is truly an upright and God-fearing person should ever, and for whatever reason, make use of the pleasures of this world, which are close to the eyes of worldly people. Although he does not immerse himself completely in the stream of these kinds of pleasures, but only up to a point, since presumably he does not act this way because of the wantonness of his mind, but because of the enjoyment his body finds necessary, nonetheless he sometimes leads many others who see this into temptation, and he is judged by common opinion to be broken spiritually and to have turned aside from moral rectitude.

And using this phenomenon we can explain what one reads in 1 Samuel 18 that Saul said concerning David, “I will give him Michal; so that she might become an enticement for him to sin.”<sup>63</sup> Michal is interpreted as “every water,”<sup>64</sup> and she signifies the stream of carnal pleasures. If any perfect man (symbolized by David) unites himself with these pleasures in love, he is turned into an enticement for many others to sin. And thus those who are perfect ought to be diligently on guard against ostentatious and dissolute acts of this kind in order to avoid being an enticement for others to sin. The apostle Paul, who urged others to imitate him, was paying attention to this fact when he said in 1 Corinthians 8, “Yet be careful, lest perhaps this liberty; namely of eating meat consecrated to idols, “become a pitfall for the weak.”<sup>65</sup> And Paul adds, “For that reason, if food is a temptation for my brother to sin, I will never eat meat, lest I become an enticement for my brother to sin.”<sup>66</sup> For the Apostle knew that the deeds of lords are easily taken as examples by their subjects: The more elevated the place which those of higher rank hold among the people, the greater is the number of those\* to whose sight they are exposed. And for that reason the common man tries eagerly to be like his superior. And so Claudian says:

According to the example of its king does the whole world shape itself.

The unstable mob always changes with its prince.<sup>67</sup>

*The fifth extraordinary phenomenon. From which it follows that sins of the flesh are of greater disrepute than spiritual sins\*.*

It is proven in Perspectivist science that things seen in water appear larger to the eye of the observer, and occasionally some things that the eye could not see at first can be seen when water is poured over them. And anyone can experience this with his senses. For if a penny is placed in a small, shallow dish and moved\* to a distance from which it can barely be seen, if the distance between the eye of the observer and the shallow dish remains unchanged, it will be possible to see the penny when water is poured over it.<sup>68</sup>

In a similar fashion we can see that carnal sins, which are committed in the stream of pleasures, seem larger to the eyes of human beings, for these sins are of greater disrepute than spiritual sins although less blame attaches to them and it is hardly possible to keep them hidden. And frequently, when sinners ensnared by carnal sins think their sin is not seen by others, it comes out in public and is known to all. And for this reason when David believed that the sin he had committed with Bathsheba was hidden from everyone, the prophet Nathan was sent to him in order to say on behalf of the Lord, “You acted in secret, but I shall speak this word openly in the sight of all Israel and in broad daylight;”<sup>2</sup> Samuel 12.<sup>69</sup> And in Isaiah 47 this is what the Lord threatens such people with: “Your disgrace will be revealed and your dishonor will be seen;”<sup>70</sup> and in Nahum 3: “I will reveal your private parts to your embarrassment, and I will expose your nakedness to the nations and your disgrace to every kingdom.”<sup>71</sup>

*The sixth extraordinary phenomenon. From which it is deduced that Holy Scriptures are seen directly by the person who fulfills them in his deeds\*.*

It has also been demonstrated in the previously mentioned science that the eye perceives an object that it sees in a mirror with weaker vision than if it were to discern it by looking at it directly, because reflected forms are

63 1Sam 18:21.

64 Jerome, *Lib. interp. Hebr. nom.*, 1 Reg., ed. de Lagarde, CCSL 72:104.

65 1Cor 8:9.

66 1Cor 8:13.

67 Claudius Claudianus, *Paneg. dict. Hon. Aug. quart. cons.*, 299–300, 302, ed. Hall, 72 (cf. Walther, *Proverbia*, nos. 14986 [the second verse] and 26481 [the first verse]).

68 Cf. Roger Bacon, *Persp.*, 3:2-4, ed. and trans. Lindberg, 312, quoting Euclid. See

Euclid, *De speculis*, assumption 6, ed. and trans. Ken'ichi Takahashi, in *The Medieval Latin Traditions of Euclid's Catoptrica. A Critical Edition of De speculis with an Introduction, English Translation and Commentary* (Fukuoka-shi, 1992), 114–15.

69 2Sam 12:11–12.

70 Isa 47:3.

71 Nah 3:5.



weaker and thus they have a weaker image. And, hence, a person scarcely and poorly recollects his own form that he often sees in a mirror, but he can picture to himself another person's face that he has looked at directly a few times better than his own that he has seen in a mirror, but never directly.<sup>72</sup>

And likewise, in its moral interpretation, by "the face" I understand divine law. For just as a person's internal will is signaled in his face according to the verse:

In a person's face you can read his hidden will,<sup>73</sup>

so also God's will is manifested to us in divine law. And just as the face gives evidence of the person, according to the passage in Ecclesiasticus 19: "You can tell a person by his appearance, and a wise man is known by the first sight of his face,"<sup>74</sup> so, too, do Holy Scriptures give evidence of Christ. For this reason in John 5 the Lord said, "Search the Scriptures: They are the texts that produce testimony of me."<sup>75</sup> This divine face, i.e., Holy Scriptures, is seen directly by the person who fulfills Scriptures in his deeds and then retains them well in memory. But he who only hears Scriptures and does not carry them out to their conclusion perceives them as if in a mirror, and this person then consigns them immediately to oblivion. And therefore it is said in James 1: "Be those who carry out the word and not merely those who listen to it, deceiving yourselves, since if someone listens to the word and does not carry it out, he is comparable to a person contemplating in a mirror the face he has had from birth. For he has examined himself and has gone on his way and has immediately forgotten what he looked like."<sup>76</sup> And therefore if someone wants to make progress in Holy Scriptures and to arrive at a state of being knowledgeable, let him be eager to fulfill in his deeds the things he has read in Scriptures. And therefore David shows by which path he achieved wisdom, saying, "I understand more than those who are old, since I have sought to learn your commandments."<sup>77</sup> And again: "From your commandments I have acquired understanding."<sup>78</sup> The *Gloss* says: "Through

obedience to the commandments he has achieved wisdom in hidden matters."<sup>79</sup>

Therefore, a person ought to have practice in the effort needed for good deeds before he takes up the effort to contemplate truth, for these two efforts are connected. Nor should he separate one from the other, so that, for instance, he might expend his effort in achieving wisdom, but not a good life. The effort needed for good deeds, however, should precede the effort needed for truth, and for this reason the Psalm says: "Teach me goodness and discipline and knowledge, for I have believed your commandments."<sup>80</sup> And hence the verse "Happy are they whose way of life is pure, who walk in the law of the Lord"<sup>81</sup> explicitly precedes the verse that immediately follows it: "Happy are they who investigate his testimonies."<sup>82</sup> Thus it is said in Ecclesiasticus 1: "My son, if you desire wisdom, preserve justice, and God will grant it to you."<sup>83</sup>

### *On the seventh extraordinary phenomenon. On the truth of a trinity and unity.\**

Among the Perspectivists it has been proven and it is commonly known that if the eye looks at the sun in a mirror placed in water, there appear to be two suns; indeed, in this optical phenomenon\* there are, as it were, three suns which seem to come together, namely one existing in the sky and two proceeding from it, i.e., two images of the sun appearing on the water and in the mirror. And nevertheless we know that according to the object itself and the truth of the matter there is only one sun.<sup>84</sup>

In similar fashion, if we use the eye of our faith to contemplate the sun of justice in the water of the wisdom that brings salvation, God will appear to us as threefold and singular. For this reason at the very commencement of divine wisdom God is represented as saying, "Let us make human beings in our image and likeness."<sup>85</sup> "By saying 'let us make' and

79 *Gloss. ord.*, Ps. 118:104, ed. Rusch, vol. 2, 615b in margin. Cf. Augustine of Hippo, *Enarrationes in Psalmos, in Ps. 118, sermo 22*, 8, ed. Eloi Dekkers and Jean Fraipont, CCSL 40 (Turnhout, 1956), 1740.

80 Ps 118:66.

81 Ps 118:1.

82 Ps 118:2.

83 Sir 1:33.

84 Cf. Roger Bacon, *Persp.*, 3.1.6, ed. and trans. Lindberg, 284. The phenomenon that

Peter of Limoges and Roger Bacon refer to here is the reflection of one image of the sun in the surface of the water and another image of the sun in the mirror submerged in the water.

85 Gen 1:26.

72 Cf. Alhacen, *De aspect.*, 4.2 [2.9–10], ed. and trans. Smith, in *Alhacen on the Principles of Reflection*, vol. 1, 6 (Latin text), vol. 2, 297 (English translation).

73 *Sententia communis* (Walther, *Proverbia*, no. 11765).

74 Sir 19:26.

75 John 5:39.

76 Jas 1:22–24.

77 Ps 118:100.

78 Ps 118:104.

'our,' he showed a plurality of persons, but by saying 'in the image and likeness' he demonstrated the unity of his essence."<sup>86</sup> And innumerable testimonies declaring the truth of an ineffable unity and trinity can be made clear to anyone examining the sacred text.

In the similitude just mentioned I judge this worthy of consideration: Since a double image is reflected in the mirror, one reads that in dealing with one of these images quite a few Perspectivists have erred by considering one of them to be an image of some star located, as they believe, near the sun. This is something, however, which is false and erroneous, for it is not a star which appears, but rather a double image of the sun reflected by two surfaces, as must be demonstrated elsewhere.<sup>87</sup>

In similar fashion, in dealing with the third person of the Trinity, i.e., the Holy Spirit, one reads that quite a few have erred. As an indication of this matter, in Exodus 8 the magicians are said to have failed in [producing] a third sign.<sup>88</sup>

*The eighth extraordinary phenomenon. That God is a mirror without blemish\*.*

It has been proven in Perspectivist science that if "the eye is in the center of a concave spherical mirror and it looks at the mirror, it sees only itself." For this reason if the entire heavens were a mirror and if an eye in the center of it looked at the heavens, it would see itself alone. This matter is proven as follows: "Since an object located outside the center has rays which fall obliquely onto the surface of the mirror, and since the angles of reflection and incidence must be equal, it follows that the rays are reflected not to the center itself but to the opposite side."<sup>89</sup>

86 Peter Lombard, *Sententiae in IV libris distinctae*, 1.2.4.2, ed. PP. Collegii s. Bonaventurae, 3rd ed., Spicilegium Bonaventurianum, 4 (Grottaferrata, 1971), 64.

87 Cf. Roger Bacon, *Persp.*, 3.1.6, ed. and trans. Lindberg, 284. Here, again, Peter's text is taken partially verbatim from Bacon's: compare, e.g., "Non est enim stella que apparet, sed est duplex solis ymago a duplici reflexa speculo" (for it is not a star which appears, but rather a double image of the sun reflected by a double mirror) in Peter's text, following the wording of *P7P8*, to the equivalent in Bacon's work: "Quapropter non est stella que apparet, sed est duplex ymago solis vel lune vel candele de duplici speculo reflexa." The "double mirror" referred to here, as Bacon demonstrates at greater length, is the combination of the surface of the water and the mirror submerged in the water, each of which offers a reflection of the sun. *P71* renders this as two reflective surfaces.

88 Cf. Exod 8:18. Cf. Peter Lombard, *Sent.*, 1.3.1.9, vol. 1, 71.

89 John Peckham, *Persp. comm.*, 2.41, ed. and trans. Lindberg, 194 (see Schleusener-

So, too, is it for God to see, in his own way, for as Alan says: "God is an intelligible sphere whose center is everywhere."<sup>90</sup> He is also a "mirror without blemish," as it is said in Wisdom 7.<sup>91</sup> Since the divine eye is the innermost part of each object – being as it were, the thing most present in the center of all things –, therefore, as if in a mirror, it alone understands itself within itself and through itself. But one does not say that God has a knowledge of things within themselves other than himself; lest, as Aristotle says, his intellect become tainted;<sup>92</sup> but he knows and understands these other objects within himself, insofar as he is an exemplar of all things, containing in his essence an ideal likeness of each individual thing.

*On the ninth extraordinary phenomenon, from which it follows that encumbered by our body, we cannot see the divine essence\*.*

It is also proven in the previously mentioned science that when an object is in the center of a concave spherical mirror, it is not seen by an eye located outside its center when it looks at the mirror.<sup>93</sup>

Eichholzer, "Naturwissenschaft," 288n145). Cf. Roger Bacon, *Persp.*, 3.1.4, ed. and trans. Lindberg, 272. The equivalence of the angles of incidence and reflection is discussed, e.g., by Bacon in *Persp.*, 3.1.1, ed. and trans. Lindberg, 254, with explicit mention of Euclid's *Elements*. For Euclid's statement on the eye in the center of a concave mirror, see *De spec.*, proposition xxiv, ed. and trans. Takahashi, 172–75. Cf. Smith, in *Alhacen on the Principles of Reflection*, vol. 1, 59–60 (Latin text), vol. 2, 342–43 (English translation); and on the equivalent angles of incidence and reflection, *De aspect.*, 4.3 [3.2], vol. 1, 9 (Latin text), vol. 2, 300 (English translation).

90 Alan of Lille, *Sermo de sphaera intelligibili*, ed. Marté-Thérèse d'Alverny, in *Textes inédits*, Études de philosophie médiévale, 52 (Paris, 1965), 295–306, here 297; idem, *Theologiae regulae*, 7, Pl. 210:627A.

91 Wis 7:26.

92 For the idea that God knows other things only in himself lest his intellect become tainted (*ens ulesceret intellectus*), with references to Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, cf. Alexander of Hales (and his students), *Summa theologica. Pars prima*, inq. 1, tract. 5, sect. 1, quaest. unica, memb. 3, cap. 6, 2, in *Summa theologica*, ed. PP. Collegii s. Bonaventurae (Quaracchi, 1924), vol. 1, 256; Albert the Great, *Summa theologica. Pars prima*, tract. 15, quaest. 60, memb. 3; ad quaest. 4, ed. Auguste Borgnet, in *Opera omnia* (Paris, 1894), vol. 31, 609. I am grateful to Bonnie Kent for bringing these passages to my attention. Cf. the discussion in Aristotle, *Metaphysica*, 12.9, trans. William of Moerbeke, ed. Gudrun Vulliamin-Diem, Aristoteles Latinus, 25.3.2, Corpus Philosophorum Medii Aevi, 1.2.5.3.2 (Leiden, etc., 1995), 264–66; and *Ibid.*, translatio anonyma sive "Media," ed. Gudrun Vulliamin-Diem, Aristoteles Latinus, 25.2, Corpus Philosophorum Medii Aevi, 1.2.5.2 (Leiden, 1976), 219–21.

93 Cf. Roger Bacon, *Persp.*, 3.1.4, ed. and trans. Lindberg, 272; cf. John Peckham, *Persp.*

Thus we, too, are not capable of seeing the divine essence as long as our sojourn in this life is prolonged<sup>94</sup> and we are separated from God by the heavy weight of our oppressive flesh. And for this reason the Lord answered Moses, who prayed that he might see the face of God, “You cannot see my face, for no human being will see me and live; Exodus 33.<sup>95</sup> When, however, we hasten to achieve understanding in order to fulfill what one reads in 1 Corinthians 6: “Whoever joins himself to God is one with him spiritually”<sup>96</sup> – at which time, too, “God is all in all”<sup>97</sup> –, then no longer outside the center but, as it were, placed in the center of divine steadfastness and, in a certain sense, made one with God through love, “we will see him just as he is,” 1 John 3.<sup>98</sup>

*On the tenth extraordinary phenomenon, from which it is proven that what the world considers favorable is unfavorable in God's sight, and vice versa.\**

To the eye of someone looking in a mirror, shapes appear in reverse and vertical dimensions seem to be upside down. For when it perceives objects in a mirror, the eye judges that what is right is left and vice versa, and what is above is below and what is below is above.<sup>99</sup>

*comm.*, 2.40, ed. and trans. Lindberg, 192 (see Schleusener-Eichholz, “Naturwissenschaft,” 288n147). Cf. Alhacen, *De aspect.*, 4.5 [5.48], ed. and trans. Smith, in *Alhacen on the Principles of Reflection*, vol. 1, 59–60 (Latin text), vol. 2, 342 (English translation); Euclid, *De spec.*, proposition xxvi, ed. and trans. Takahashi, 176–79.

94 Cf. Ps 119:5.

95 Exod 33:20.

96 1Cor 6:17.

97 Cf. 1Cor 15:28.

98 1John 3:2. This brief ninth section of chapter 6 is missing in its entirety from an abbreviation of Peter's work that circulated in manuscripts especially in monasteries in the area of southern Germany and Austria. Perhaps the earliest example of this line of abbreviated text without chap. 6.9, and the earliest dated copy of Peter's treatise known to me, is Sigmaringen, Fürstlich Hohenzollern'sche Bibliothek MS. 12 (anno 1303).

99 Cf. Roger Bacon, *Persp.*, 3.1.3, ed. and trans. Lindberg, 262. At this point in his treatment of optics, Bacon is writing of plane mirrors and observes that “turre videtur in aqua eversa, cum fiat reflexio a plana superficie aque” (towers seem to be upside down in water since they are reflected from the plane surface of the water). Peter's statement (in P-78 and the printed text) that *alitudines videntur everse* (vertical dimensions seem to be upside down) to someone looking in a mirror may look back to Euclid, *De spec.*, proposition vii, ed. and trans. Takahashi,

So also if the eye of our contemplation were judging things according to the mirror of holy doctrine, it would say that those things which seem to be on the left, i.e., unfavorable, are on the right, i.e., favorable, and vice versa in what pertains to the usefulness of misfortune and the danger of prosperity. The eye of our contemplation would also maintain that those things which appear to be above are below and vice versa, i.e., that proud things are worthless and humble ones valuable. And thus it is said explicitly in Isaiah 43: “I will say to the north wind, i.e., to adversity, “Give; and to the south wind, i.e., prosperity, “Do not be a hindrance,”<sup>100</sup> since those things which seem to be unfavorable are favorable and bring us to God, and things which appear to be favorable are unfavorable and hinder us from God.

Thus, one also reads in Genesis 48 that when the patriarch Jacob was about to bless the sons of Joseph, he crossed his arms and placed his left hand on Manasseh, who was on his right, and his right hand on Ephraim, whom Joseph stationed on his left.<sup>101</sup> Therefore, let the rich of this world be fearful – they who rejoice in keeping to the right in the present world – lest they keep to the left on the day of judgment, and at that time also in the presence of God\*. For Manasseh, who is interpreted to mean “oblivion,”<sup>102</sup> signifying the rich who are unmindful of God, was placed on the left. For God placed the poor on the right, but the immoral rich on the left. And thus it is said in Proverbs 3: “Length of days,” i.e., for the poor who live longer than the rich, “is in his right hand, and in his left hand wealth and glory,”<sup>103</sup> i.e., for the rich and those established as glorious in honors. The same thing that Jacob signified by crossing\* his hands was also signified by the angel's positioning of his feet in Revelation 10: “I saw an angel descending from heaven, and he placed his right foot over the sea, but his left one over the land.”<sup>104</sup> By “the sea,” one designates the flood of misfortunes, by “the land,” the prosperity of the world; by the right foot prosperity is symbolized, by the left, misfortune. Thus, the angel placed his right foot over the sea to

134: “Alitudines et profunditates a planis speculis reverse videntur” (Heights and depths are seen reversed in plane mirrors). On the reversal of right and left in a mirror, see *De spec.*, proposition xix, 158–61.

100 Isa 43:6.

101 Cf. Gen 48:13–14.

102 Jerome, *Lit. interp. Hebr. nom.*, Num., ed. de Lagarde, CCSL 72:82. The Hebrew *mensheh* is derived from the root *nashah* (to forget) in Gen 41:51, though the form of the verb in the biblical passage may have been adapted to fit the etymology proposed by the text. See also below, chap. 12.2, p. 150.

103 Prov 3:16.

104 Rev 10:1–2.



show that worldly misfortunes are a matter of good fortune, but he placed his left foot over the land in order to signify that what the world has considered favorable is unfavorable.

The same thing is shown to us in the image of Jesus on the cross, which is raised up in churches like a book for the laity.<sup>105</sup> For he stretches his right hand to the north wind, while he extends his left hand to the south wind. Now, prosperity is signified by the south wind; misfortune by the north wind. In this way one ought to remark that the image of the Blessed Virgin has been placed on the side of the north wind under the right hand of Jesus on the cross, since the Blessed Virgin was exposed to misfortunes in this present life. And for this reason the just Simeon said to her, "His sword will transfix your soul?" Luke 2.<sup>106</sup> We know, however, that she was loved above all others by God and has now been raised up to God's right hand. For the Lord exposes those dear to him to misfortunes and afflictions in this world when he has determined to place them on the right hand of his glory at the end of time.

So, therefore, when we turn our eye to the mirror of Holy Scriptures, the right seems to us the left and vice versa. Likewise, what is thought to be below will appear to be above and also vice versa. For Holy Scriptures bless the poor and raise them up, Matthew 5: "Blessed are the poor in spirit,"<sup>107</sup> and so on, but Scriptures call the powerful and the rich pitiful and humbled: "Go now, you who are rich; weep and wail in your miseries," James 5.<sup>108</sup> He had his attention turned fully to that mirror who said, "I saw servants riding on horses and princes walking on the ground."<sup>109</sup> For those who are held to be princes and lords are, in fact, slaves, subjected to miseries and delivered up to calamities. In book 7 of the *Memorable Deeds*, Valerius Maximus speaks of a certain king of exacting judgment. After the diadem had been given to him and before he placed it on his head, he considered it for a long time and said, "Oh, head band, more renowned than auspicious! If someone fully knew from how many cares, dangers, and torments he would have to recover, he would surely not want to pick it up from where it was lying on the ground!"<sup>110</sup>

Quite rightly did he judge something to be of lesser value which seems to many people today to be of greater worth.

*On the 11th extraordinary phenomenon. That knowing how to differentiate sins is necessary for prelates\*.*

It has been proven in the science I have frequently mentioned that the size of an object cannot be verified when the object is perceived through refracted rays of light, yet it can be if it is seen in direct lines, and namely this concerns any object that is seen at one time in the air and at another in water.<sup>111</sup>

In similar fashion, a sin can be comprehended with certainty according to the degree of its own proper magnitude by someone who looks at the sin directly with the eye of reason. And this is the way a professor or anyone else who is studious looks at sin: by reflecting on and inquiring into the truth through an examination of each and every thing that ought to be known about the degrees of sins. And indeed this concept is necessary above all for prelates, who are required to have the knowledge to differentiate "between different kinds of lepers," as it is said in Leviticus 13.<sup>112</sup> Now, when a sinner commits a sin, he does not see the fault directly yet, but rather through a refracted line, or an oblique line (or obliquely),<sup>113</sup> for he does not perceive the sin's deformity or evil, but rather the pleasure connected with it, since according to Dionysius no one does what he does with an eye to evil.<sup>114</sup> For this reason Aristotle says in the *Ethics* that every evil person is lacking in knowledge, namely since when he sins, he errs in making a choice.<sup>115</sup> And in Proverbs 14: "They err who

111 Cf. Roger Bacon, *Persp.*, 3.2.4, ed. and trans. Lindberg, 312-14.

112 Deut 17:8; cf. Lev 13:2-46.

113 The reading in *Pr1* (*obliquam vel oblique*) is the result of scribal ditrography or an attempt to provide two possible expansions of an abbreviation. *P7B8* reads simply *oblique* at this point.

114 Cf. Ps.-Dionysius the Areopagite, *De divinis nominibus*, 419, trans. Robert Grosseteste et al., ed. Philippe Chevallier et al., in *Dionysiana: Recueil donnant l'ensemble des traductions latines des ouvrages attribués au Denys de l'Aréopage ...* (Bruges), 1937), vol. 1, 236. For the Greek text, see the edition by Beate Regina Suchla, *Corpus Dionysiacum*, 1: Patristische Texte und Studien, 33 (Berlin and New York, 1990), 163.

115 Cf. Aristotle, *Ethica Nicomachea*, 3.2, trans. Robert Grosseteste (textus recognitus), ed. René Antoine Gauthier, in *Ethica Nicomachea*, Aristoteles Latinus, 26.1-3; *Corpus Philosophorum Medii Aevi*, 1.26.1-3/1-5 (Leiden and Brussels, 1974), Fasc. 4, 412.

105 In the *Scholastica historia: Historia evangelica*, 5 (PL 198:1540A), Peter Comestor notes that church paintings are like books for the laity (*libri laicorum*). Peter echoes this phrase here.

106 Luke 2:35.

107 Matt 5:3.

108 Jas 5:1.

109 Qoh 10:7.

110 Valerius Maximus, *Factorum et dictorum memorabilium libri IX*, 7.2. Ext. 5, ed. John Briscoe (Stuttgart and Leipzig, 1998), vol. 2, 446.



perform evil.<sup>116</sup> And because of this fact it sometimes happens that while he is lecturing or making a determination about the magnitude of a sin, a professor will judge most correctly; because he is looking at the sin directly then, but afterwards when temptation attacks him he will succumb and will make an error in judgment by choosing to do what he had condemned earlier while teaching, and it happens in this way because instead of seeing the sin as he had earlier, he perceives it indirectly at that time.

If only our theologians were as judicious in making choices when they measure the quantities of faults as they are in making determinations when speculating on them! Since they are not so judicious, this is possibly the reason why they are found to be lazy in taking action, although they are impetuous in learning. A fool refuted a crowd of these theologians very nicely once at Paris, for when a number of theologians had gathered together in some of the schools in Paris, a fool came in and said, "I ask all of you which one is better: for someone to put into practice what he knows, or for him to learn what he doesn't know?" While they disputed the question he had just put to them and argued *pro* and *contra*, the fool remained silent, listening to their altercation and waiting to see where it would end. At last they came to a conclusion and proved that it is better for someone to do what he already knows than to learn what he does not know, since as the apostle Paul says in Romans 2: "Not those who only hear the law, but those who perform it will be justified."<sup>117</sup> And Isidore says in *On the Highest Good*: "A person who reads properly will be quicker to put into practice what he might read than he is to gain knowledge, for it is a lesser sin not to know what you should desire to know than not to carry out what you know."<sup>118</sup> "Thus," said the fool, "you're all crazy, you who labor day and night only to learn what you don't yet know while you don't care to put in practice what you do know."<sup>119</sup>

*On the 12th extraordinary phenomenon, from which it is deduced that the judgment of a person's sight is deceived concerning the rich and the poor\*.*

Moreover, it is proven in Perspectivist science that a visible object appears to be larger than it actually is when the eye is in a medium of lesser

density, and the reverse happens when the eye is located in a medium of greater density. For this reason a visible object in water will necessarily appear larger when the eye is in the air, but it will appear smaller when the eye is submerged in water and the object is situated in the air.<sup>120</sup>

In similar fashion it often happens that when a poor person living in the dry land of poverty sees someone overflowing with worldly riches, he will consider the rich man to be great, and for this reason the Psalm says: "They have called people blessed who own such things."<sup>121</sup> But he is deceived in the judgment of his sight, and so a certain philosopher says: None of those who are exalted because of their rank are great because of this fact, but they appear great to you because you are measuring them along with their pedestal. And neither is a grain of millet great just because it has been placed on top of a mountain.<sup>122</sup> And Bernard to Eugene: "Because you are the supreme pope, are you therefore supreme?"<sup>123</sup> On the other hand, when someone who is immersed in the transitory riches of this world sees a poor person separated by a great distance from worldly riches, he considers him to be of ordinary size, when in fact he is great to the divine eye that perceives the poor person and does not err in judgment. For this reason it was said about John the Baptist: "He will be great in the eyes of the Lord," Luke 1.<sup>124</sup> In the eyes of the rich, poor people are held to be very small, so they could say what the spies said in Numbers 13: "We saw the sons of Anak there, compared to whom we feel like locusts."<sup>125</sup>

Note that when master Alan, an outstanding professor and still poor, had been invited to lunch by one of his former students who had already been made a bishop, the man observed Alan's poverty and said, "I'm not a little surprised, master, that your students have become important men — one is an abbot, another a bishop, another an archbishop — but you've been abandoned in the ludicrous state of poverty?" As an honest and judicious person, Alan felt just the contrary and is reported to have given the following response: "You don't understand the acme of a most perfect worthiness and a person's true magnitude," he said. "For it's not great to be a bishop, but rather a good cleric. The proof: With the vote of three

116 Prov 14:22.

117 Rom 2:13.

118 Isidore of Seville, *Sententiae*, 3.8.6, ed. Pierre Cazier, CCSL 111 (Turnhout, 1998), 229–30 (PL 83:680A).

119 Cf. Tubach, *Index exemplorum*, no. 4201.

120 Cf. Roger Bacon, *Persp.*, 3.2.2, ed. and trans. Lindberg, 294.

121 Ps 143:15.

122 Cf. Seneca, *Ad Lucilium epistolae morales*, 76.31, ed. Leighton D. Reynolds (Oxford, 1965; reprint 1987), vol. 1, 243. Seneca, however, writes of those who have been elevated by riches and honors, not by rank (*nomen*, in *Pr.1*).

123 Bernard of Clairvaux, *Tract. de consid.*, 2.7.14, ed. Leclercq and Rochais, in *Opera*, vol. 3, 422.

124 Luke 1:15.

125 Num 13:34.

decadent canons to whom the power of election is given, one man will become bishop, but if all the saints in heaven and all the people on the earth were to say before God with one heart and one voice, 'Martin is a good cleric; that wouldn't be reason enough for Martin to be a good cleric if he still continued in his folly?' For indeed this bishop, whose eye, as it were, had been immersed in the denser medium of riches, considered Alan ordinary (though he was truly great), when he observed him in the thinner medium of poverty. It is also reported that Alan added afterwards: 'I'll prove to you, lord bishop, that a poor person is the king and lord of this world, for the world doesn't obey the rich person's will in all matters, however great his power may be, for he fears to lose what he has and at the same time he wants to get what he doesn't have, and in this way the world is opposed to his will, since he wants to make it impossible to lose what he possesses and to have acquired what he doesn't possess already. But the pauper possesses the world, which is fully responsive to his will, because since he hates riches, he hopes to acquire nothing, and since he possesses nothing, he fears to lose nothing.'<sup>126</sup> And in this way what Fortunatus says is true:

The poor man in his straitened condition rules when he possesses God.<sup>127</sup>

And Seneca, speaking about Diogenes, the greatest harer of riches, who responded as follows to King Alexander when he offered him gifts: "Take them back," he said, "they're not gifts for human beings, but burdens for cattle"<sup>128</sup> – about this Diogenes, I say, Seneca says elegantly: "Diogenes was more powerful than Alexander of Macedonia, who possessed all things. For what Diogenes did not want to acquire was greater than what Alexander was able to give."<sup>129</sup>

Nevertheless, today this very deception of sight has so invaded the minds of the powerful and the rich that among them a person is held to be nothing unless he either is rich or at least is thought to be rich accord-

126 For the dialogue between Alan and his student, cf. Tubach, *Index exemplorum*, no. 3844. The Alan referred to here is presumably the theologian and poet, Alan of Lille (d. 1202). See above, chapt. 6.8, p. 33.

127 Venantius Fortunatus, *Carmina*, 8.3.296, ed. Friedrich Leo, in *Opera poetica*, MGH, Auctores antiquissimi, 4.1 (Berlin, 1881), 189 (cf. Walther, *Proverbia*, no. 20925).

128 Cf. Tubach, *Index exemplorum*, no. 1673.

129 Vincent of Beauvais, *Spec. doct.*, 4.104, 4.148, in *Speculum quadruplex*, vol. 2, 358c, 386a. Cf. Seneca, *De beneficiis libri vii*, 5.6.1, ed. Karl Hosius, in *De beneficiis libri vii*, *De clementia libri ii*, 2nd ed. (Leipzig, 1914), 121.

ing to his appearance. Costabulus records that after a certain philosopher was turned away from coming before a king, he considered the famous poetic line:

The senate is barred to the poor; wealth gives honors.<sup>130</sup>

Then he dressed in the finest clothing and was admitted – as soon as he arrived, the door stood open to him. Having entered, he began to kiss his own clothing reverently and surprisingly before the king. When the king marveled about this and asked him why he behaved so, the philosopher responded, "I honor what is honoring me, since what virtue was unable to get, clothing has obtained. Oh, vanity of vanities," he said, "more is granted to vestments than to virtues, more to beauty than to honesty!"<sup>131</sup> It is written in the *Deeds of the Romans* that the Romans, who used to deify great men, argued in their senate whether Jesus ought to be counted among the number of the gods since he had brought about so many miracles, and at last it was decided that he should not be accepted as a god since he would have no worshippers, for he preached poverty which everyone naturally despises.<sup>132</sup>

### *On the 13th extraordinary phenomenon. And on preserving humility in a lofty position.\**

Alhacen\* reaches in book 7 of his *Optics* that stars located near the horizon to the west or the east appear larger to the eye than when they have risen to the middle of the sky.<sup>133</sup>

130 Ovid, *Amores*, 3.8.55; ed. Edwin J. Kenney, in *Amores*, *Medicamina faciei femineae*, *As amatoria*, *Remedia amoris*, 2nd ed. (Oxford, 1994), 94 (cf. Walther, *Proverbia*, no. 4763).

131 Cf. Tubach, *Index exemplorum*, no. 1113. Cf. Pope Innocent III, *De miseria conditionis humane*, 2.39, ed. and trans. Robert E. Lewis (Athens, GA, 1978), 197–99. The *exemplum* was also used by Stephen of Bourbon; see Jacques Berthoz, "Etienne de Bourbon, *Tractatus de diversis materiis predicabilibus*," in Jacques Berthoz and Marie Anne Polo de Beauhieu, *Les Exempla médiévaux* (Carcassonne, n.d.), 148. Peter attributes the authorship of the narrative to the ninth-century Arabic writer Costa ben Luca, known frequently in Latin as Constabulus or Costabulus; see Hans H. Lauer, "Qusta ibn Luga," *Lexikon des Mittelalters*, 7 (Munich and Zurich, 1995), 378. The *exemplum* also inspired an English reader to record a bit of Middle English verse at this point in the copy of Peter's text that he was reading. See Richard Newhauser, "A Middle English Poem on the Fleeting Nature of Material Wealth," *Medium Ævum* 71.1 (2002): 74–81.

132 Cf. Tubach, *Index exemplorum*, no. 1008.

133 Cf. Alhacen, *De aspect*, 7.7 [7.70–71], ed. and trans. A. Mark Smith, in *Alhacen on*



In similar fashion, the greater the heights of honors which saintly people appear to ascend, the more they denigrate themselves through humility and the more inferior they desire to appear in the eyes of other people, according to the verse in Ecclesiasticus 3: "To the degree to which you are great, humble yourself in all things."<sup>134</sup> As it can be said about such people in an elegant metaphor that was said about Esther: "A small spring grew into a river, and it was turned into the sun and the moon."<sup>135</sup> Namely, even if such people are great in honor, as long as they are not proud because of it, they are small in humility, and for that reason they are metaphorically turned into the sun and the moon, since when they are elevated like the celestial luminaries they become more humble. The glorious Virgin was this kind of person: Although she had been raised to the height of such great honor as to become the mother of God, she immediately showed that she was small, like a star, and dedicated herself as a handmaiden. For this reason we fittingly call her the "star of the sea."<sup>136</sup> Concerning a man named Constantine, who was very small in stature but large in virtue, Gregory relates this in the first book of the *Dialogues*: When a certain man who had arrived in order to meet Con-

stantine said to him with contempt that there was nothing honorable about him, immediately the man of God was exceptionally happy, fell into his embrace, and with the most fervent love began to hug him and to kiss him sweetly, giving him thanks for having judged him in this way. "You," he said, "are the only one who's seen me with open eyes."<sup>137</sup> Constantine had quite clearly ascended to a state of lofty merit and wanted to appear small in the eyes of other people, in the manner of a star in the heavens.

We consider it extraordinary that when a star ascends to the middle of the sky, it appears smaller, although to the eye of the observer it is ascending higher,<sup>138</sup> and in the same way we consider it extraordinary that the more exalted someone is in honor, the more humble he wants to appear, since this is a rare occurrence. For it rarely happens that a degree of honor does not appear as a swelling of the heart in a ruler, for according to Bernard: "It is not great to be humble in a state of abjection; humili-

*Refraction. A Critical Edition, with English Translation and Commentary, of Book 7 of Alhacen's De Aspectibus, the Medieval Latin Version of Ibn al-Haytham's Kitab al-Manazir*, Transactions of the American Philosophical Society, 100, Part 3, sections 1–2 (Philadelphia, 2010), vol. 1, 141–43 (Latin text), vol. 2, 328–30 (English translation). Cf. also Roger Bacon, *Persp.*, 2.3.6, ed. and trans. Lindberg, 226, who refers to both Alhacen and Ptolemy's *Optica* (and see Lindberg's analysis of Bacon and Ptolemy on this optical phenomenon in *Roger Bacon and the Origins of Perspectiva in the Middle Ages*, 378n478). The visual phenomenon by which celestial bodies appear larger near the horizon than they do at higher altitudes in the sky is referred to as the "moon illusion" and is discussed at length on the basis of its treatment by Ptolemy and Alhacen in Abdelhamid I. Sabra, "Psychology versus Mathematics: Ptolemy and Alhacen on the Moon Illusion," in Edward Grant and John E. Murdoch, eds., *Mathematics and Its Applications to Science and Natural Philosophy in the Middle Ages. Essays in Honor of Marshall Clagett* (Cambridge, Engl., 1987), 217–47.

134 Sir 3:21.

135 Esth 10:6.

136 Mary was associated with the north star as early as the hymn *Ave maris stella*, preserved earliest in a manuscript of the ninth century. The text is edited in *Cantiones Bohemicae*, ed. Guido Maria Dreves, *Analecta hymnica medii aevi*, 1 (Leipzig, 1886), 49 (no. 4). See Heinrich Laubsberg, "Ave maris stella," in *Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche*, 1, 2nd ed. (Freiburg i. Br., 1957), 1141–42; Herbert Musurillo, "The Mediaeval Hymn, *Ave Redemptoris*: A Linguistic Analysis," *The Classical Journal* 52.4 (1957): 171–74.

137 Cf. Gregory the Great, *Dial.*, 1.5.4–5, trans. Annin, ed. de Vogüé, SC 260:60–63 (PL 77:180C), who names the protagonist of the narrative "Constantinus," not "Constantine." Cf. Tubach, *Index exemplorum*, nos. 1221, 5016.

138 One can note that the archetype of Peter's text contains an error here. The manuscripts representing the most authoritative line of transmission read at this point (following P7): "Et sicut reputamus mirabile quod stella, cum ascenderit ad celi medium, maior apparet, cum iam ad intuitus oculum non magis accedat, sic eiam ..." (We count it extraordinary that when a star ascends to the middle of the sky, it appears larger, although at the same time it is not drawing closer to the eye of the observer, and in just the same way ...). This, however, contradicts the scientific description of the moon illusion that Peter had just given at the beginning of chapt. 6.13, though it anticipates the moral lesson in humility that is to be drawn from this optical phenomenon. Some scribes who paid attention to the scientific error undertook changes in the text to make it more scientifically accurate, as apparently the scribe of the copy text represented in *Pr1* did (which reads: "Et sicut reputamus mirabile quod stella, cum ascenderit ad celi medium, minor apparet, cum tamen ad intuitus oculum magis ascendet, sic eiam ..."). In P8, the reading of the authoritative transmission is also present, but was later altered, so that *maior* has been corrected to *minor*, *ad intuitus oculum* to *ab intuitus oculo*, and *accedat* to *recedat*, to yield the following: "Et sicut reputamus mirabile quod stella, cum ascenderit ad celi medium, minor apparet, cum iam ab intuitus oculo non magis recedat, sic eiam ..." (We count it extraordinary that when a star ascends to the middle of the sky, it appears smaller, although at the time it is not moving any further from the eye of the observer, and in just the same way ...). The text of *Pr1*, then, takes its place among many other attempts to deal with this crux by revising it to be scientifically accurate.

ity is precisely a great and rare virtue when it is being honored.<sup>139</sup> And as Gregory says: It is great not to desire honor; it is even greater to reject it once it has been offered, but the greatest is to make a habit out of not being proud.<sup>140</sup>

## CHAPTER SEVEN

## On Moral Instruction According to Twelve Properties That Have Been Ascertained in the Corporeal Eye

Now, the eye is doubled in number; each one being exactly like its companion; varied in color; spherical in shape; covered by eyelids; located in the head; receptive to visible *species*; able to perceive another object, but not itself; able to gain knowledge of visible things in different ways according to variations in their distance; able to establish the direction for the entire body; indicative of the secrets of the mind; and drowsy after being awake for a long time.

### *On the value of the communal life* \*

In the first place, then, the eye is doubled in number, and this is so, as Alhacen<sup>1</sup> testifies, so that the one might be strengthened by the other, so that a defect in the one might be made up by the other.<sup>1</sup> And for this reason Bernard Silvestris, speaking in metrics about eyes in book 2 of the *Cosmographia*, the *Microcosmos*, says:

Not in vain are there two of them, for if one grows weary,  
The other will take its place to support the work of its partner.<sup>2</sup>

139 Bernard of Clairvaux, *Homiliae in laudibus Virginis maris*, 49, ed. Jean Leclercq and Henri M. Rochais, in *Opera* (Rome, 1966), vol. 4, 55.

140 Cf. William Peraldus, *Summa de vitiis*, 6.3.39, in *Summa virtutum ac vitiorum Guilhelmi Parvuli Episcopi Lugdunensis de Ordine Predicatorum* (Paris, 1512), vol. 2, fol. 187va, who attributes the following to Gregory: "Aliquantulum facile est humanam laudem non appetere, difficillimum oblatam respicere" (It is a small and easy matter not to desire people's praise; it is very difficult to reject it once it has been offered).

1 On the reason for doubling the eyes, see Roger Bacon, *Persp.*, 1.4.4, ed. and trans. Lindberg, 56, who paraphrases Alhacen, *De aspect.*, 1.8 [7.9], ed. and trans. Smith, in *Alhacen's Theory of Visual Perception*, vol. 1, 70 (Latin text), vol. 2, 388 (English translation). Both authors attribute to the beneficence of the Creator the presence of two eyes so that if one is injured the other remains operational, and they also mention that two eyes make the face more beautiful. They do not refer to the strengthening of the remaining eye when one is injured. The doubling of the eyes is mentioned again below in chap. 12.2, p. 152.

2 Bernard Silvestris, *Cosmographia*, 2.14.37–38, ed. Peter Dronke, *Textus Mirorés*, 53 (Leiden, 1978), 151 (cf. Hans Walter, *Initia carminum ac versuum medii aevi poetarum latinorum*, Carmina medii aevi posterioris latina, 1 [Göttingen, 1959], no. 12118).



## CHAPTER THIRTEEN

On the Four Things Spiritual Eyes  
Should Contemplate Continually

A person should turn his attention most often to these four things, namely the filthiness of his own iniquity, the hardship of another person's misfortune, the bitterness of everlasting punishment, and the recompense of a blessed life, so that in this way he is fitted with eyes for every direction like the living creatures John says he observed in Revelation 4: And there were "living creatures, full of eyes front and back,"<sup>1</sup> and so on. For with the right eye a person should turn his attention to rewards; with the left, to punishments; with the one in back, to the misfortune of his fellow human beings and the unfortunate — as it were, the world's rejects; with the one in front, to his own misdeed, according to the Psalm: My sin is always in front of me.<sup>2</sup> As an image of this matter, Moses is told in Deuteronomy 3: "Go up to the summit of Mount Pisgah, and scan with your eyes to the west and to the north, to the south and to the east, and look."<sup>3</sup> By the east [is meant] the eternal rewards that will, as it were, forever rise anew: by the west [he means] the everlasting punishment into which all temporal happiness sinks and is extinguished; by the south [is meant] the heated passion of sin; by the north, the misfortune of one's fellow human being. Thus, each and every person ought to be fitted with multiple eyes, so that he not only looks at present circumstances, but diligently considers the future. For this reason Boethius says in *The Consolation of Philosophy*: "It is not sufficient to contemplate what is in front of your eyes, but prudence ponders how things will end."<sup>4</sup> This forethought or foresight is appropriate especially for a prince or a prelate. For this reason Aristotle said to Alexander in *On the Secrets of Secrets*: "You should be prudent in foreseeing those things that can happen, for when they come about, everyone will know that your eyes see things from a long way off, and because of this they will praise your wisdom and they will beware of offending your sovereignty."<sup>5</sup>

*On paying attention to one's own sin.\**

First among the four things enumerated above to which someone should pay attention is his own misdeed. For this reason the sinner is told in Jeremiah 3: "Lift up your eyes to the steep heights and see where you are now\* ruined!"<sup>6</sup> For indeed if a traveler raises his eyes and sees a befouled, dangerous, and twisted path, he will turn aside from it, retracing his steps. The path of sinners is befouled because of the filth of lust, dangerous because of the pitfalls of avarice, and twisted because of the distortion of pride, and therefore it is playing it safe to turn back and leave such a path. And for this reason somewhat before this passage the prophet had said first: "Know and see that it is evil and bitter for you to have forsaken the Lord your God!"<sup>7</sup> For a person ought to know by recollecting things in the past, and to see by examining things in the present, that it is evil for him (because he has robbed himself of what God gave freely) and bitter (because he has wounded his conscience) to have forsaken God, who created him when he did not exist, who redeemed him when he died.

Thus, a person should inspect his own misdeed, but do so in order to find it detestable, not pleasant. On occasion, the mere recollection of sin proves lethal. In a sign of this, Lot's wife perished, since she looked back at Sodom which she had left behind, Genesis 19.<sup>8</sup> Therefore, Augustine says: "Oh humankind, if you were to see yourself, you would displease yourself and please me. But now, you who do not see yourself, you please yourself and displease me. The time will come when you will displease both yourself and me equally: me, since you will be judged; you, since you will burn."<sup>9</sup> For sinners do not see the danger of their situation now, nor is that surprising, since they are blind, 2 Kings 6: "Strike this people with blindness."<sup>10</sup> And there follows: "Lord, open the eyes of these people so that they may see? And the Lord opened their eyes and they saw that they were in the midst of Samaria,"<sup>11</sup> among enemies. Likewise, if a sinner would open his eyes, he would see that he is in the midst of enemies, i.e., of demons. For the devil puts much effort into first making

6 Jer 3:2. *Pr* follows the Vulgate text in reading *ubi non prostrata sis* (where you are not ruined), but *P7P8* demonstrate a change in the wording that fits the present context. See below, chap. 14-3, p. 187.

7 Jer 2:19.

8 Cf. Gen 19:26.

9 Manegold de Laubenbach (?) (Ps.-Bede the Venerable), *Exegesis de Palmorum libro*, In Ps. 49, PL 93:746C; cf. Augustine of Hippo, *Enarr. in Ps.*, In Ps. 49, 28, ed. Dekkers and Fraipont, CCSL 38:596.

10 2Kgs 6:18.

11 2Kgs 6:20.

1 Rev 4:6.

2 Cf. Ps 31:5; cf. Ps 49:8.

3 Deut 3:27.

4 Boethius, *Phil. cons.*, 2.prl.1.5, ed. Bieder, CCSL 94:18.

5 Ps.-Aristotle, *Secretum secretorum*, 1.17, ed. Steele, 55.

someone blind so he cannot see his own sin, just as a thief who has broken into a house will normally first put out the light. For this reason one reads that Antiochus entered the temple and carried off the “candelabrum of light;” 1 Maccabees 1:12. For just as Samson, who was deceived by Delilah and taken captive by the Philistines, was first stripped of his hair, after that blinded, and third bound with ropes,<sup>13</sup> in the same way, the sinner, who is deceived by his flesh and taken captive by the devil, is first robbed of his virtues; second, made blind in his interior eyes; and third, tied up by the ropes of sins. And just as a bear, made blind by the glow of a basin-shaped lamp,<sup>14</sup> sports before the eyes of its master, so a sinner, made blind by what he thinks of as pleasures, indulges wantonly in sin before the eyes of demons. For this reason one reads in Judges 16: After the Philistines had blinded Samson, “they ordered that Samson should be called and should make sport before them.”<sup>15</sup> And just as the king of Babylon slew the sons of Zedekiah before his eyes and tore out Zedekiah’s eyes,<sup>16</sup> so also the king of disorder, the devil, eradicates good deeds through sin and makes a sinner spiritually blind, since after a person ceases to perform good deeds, the light of grace is removed from him and he is blinded internally. Now, sinners are blinded to the extent that they have lost the power of discernment, and they are signified by the people of Sodom, who, as it is said in Genesis 19, having been stricken with blindness, were unable to find Lot’s door.<sup>17</sup> For Lot is interpreted to mean “turning aside,”<sup>18</sup> and they do not know how to turn aside from sin.

*On paying attention to the misery of one’s fellow human being\*.*

Second, the misfortune of one’s fellow human beings must be considered, Ecclesiasticus 4: “Do not turn your eyes away from a pauper.”<sup>19</sup> And again: “Do not avert your eyes from the needy.”<sup>20</sup> The author repeats the same idea in order to warn us all the more to feel compassion. For there are few who look on paupers with sympathy, but there are many who avert the eyes of mercifulness from them and cannot see their wretched-

ness. For an eye which is in the light does not see someone who is in darkness. So, too, the rich man who is in the light of affluence does not see the pauper who is in the gloom of misfortune. And for this reason as long as the chief butler was in the darkness of prison, he acknowledged the mistreated Joseph and was his companion, but after the butler had gotten out into the brightness of prosperity, he did not know Joseph any longer, but rather, “once a time of good fortune followed, the chief butler forgot the interpreter of his dream,” Genesis 40:21. I understand that when a certain lady had seen paupers in a field collecting plants to eat during a time of famine, she said, “Surely they could eat peas with lard, couldn’t they?” A man\* standing nearby responded, “No doubt they could, if they had them.” Indeed, since this woman’s eye was located in the light of affluence, she did not see the indigence of the poor persisting in darkness. For:

A full belly does not know what an empty one would seize on.<sup>22</sup>

We see that if someone who has been in the light for a long time approaches a person suffering in darkness, he does not acknowledge him at first until after he has been with him for a while. And in the same way, someone who spends his life in the light of affluence does not look with an eye of compassion on people who are located in the darkness of misfortune, nor does he recognize them, nor does he have pity on them, until he joins with them in sympathy so that he suffers with them in his mind in the same way that they suffer in their bodies. These matters are represented in Exodus 3, where one reads that as Moses was about to go to see a great vision, the Lord said, “Remove the shoes from your feet,”<sup>23</sup> as if he were saying, “You will not be able to see this vision unless you first put your shoes to one side.” After he put them to one side, he approached to see the vision – why the bush was burning and was not consumed by the flames. The burning bush that is not consumed by the flames is a person poor and sick in poverty and misfortune, not one crushed through lack of patience but who remains unmoved because of his patience, something which wealthy people wearing their shoes consider a miracle and a great vision. To see this bush with a compassionate eye is not possible for a wealthy person, crammed full of riches and pleasures and not consumed by misfortunes, unless he first removes the shoes that protect his feet from impediments, i.e., the provisions for his flesh, which hinder the mind’s good-will so that it does not go on to compassionate deeds. And

12 1 Mac 1:23.

13 Cf. Juddg 16:19–21.

14 Cf. above, chapr. 8, 5, p. 92.

15 Juddg 16:25.

16 Cf. Jer 39:6–7.

17 Cf. Gen 19:11.

18 Jerome, *Lib. interp. Hebr. nom.*, Lucr., ed. de Lagarde, CCSL 72:140.

19 Sir 4:1.

20 Sir 4:5.

21 Gen 40:23.

22 *Sententia communis* (Walther, *Proverbia*, nos. 16561 and 16562).

23 Exod 3:5.

for this reason the chief butler, who was mentioned earlier, was as it were barefoot in prison, i.e., he was separated from pleasures: he clearly saw the bush that was on fire and was not consumed by the flames, i.e., Joseph, who suffered but was not led astray. But after the chief butler put on shoes of prosperity and pleasures again, he no longer recognized Joseph anymore.<sup>24</sup>

Do you want to see someone who is generous to the poor and never turns his eye from their needs? Observe the blessed Job and hear what a just man and one who “feared God and turned away from evil”<sup>25</sup> says. He does not say, “Actors and mimes converged on me, sycophants and zealous seekers of useless fictions.” He does not say, “I have kept bears; I have trained monkeys and young dogs.” Rather in Job 31 he says, “Let my shoulder fall out of its socket, and let my arm be crushed with all its bones”<sup>26</sup>; “If I have denied the poor what they wanted, if I have caused the eyes of the widow to wait with apprehension, if I have eaten my morsels alone and the orphan has not eaten of them.”<sup>27</sup> And a bit earlier he says, “I was an eye to the blind and a foot to the lame. I will be a father for the poor” and not a robber, Job 29.<sup>28</sup> And so that you will have all the more abundantly a heart of compassion, observe also another person who in a resemblance of the blessed Job did not cause the eyes of the widow to wait with apprehension. In the *Deeds of the Romans* it is recounted that when Trajan had already mounted his horse and was about to march out to war with his army, a certain very poor widow caught his foot and called out to the emperor saying, “Lord, give me justice for the one who killed my son.” He said to her, “When I return, I’ll show full justice.” And she said, “What if you don’t return?” And he said, “My successor will give you satisfaction.” She said to him, “It’s you who are indebted to me; you will receive according to what you deserve, and it’s deceit not to give back what’s owed. Your successor will be rewarded for a gracious judgment, but another’s justice will not release you.” Moved by these words, the emperor got off his horse and made his entire army wait: He sat at the head of the tribunal, diligently looked into the widow’s case, and alleviated her grief with commendable satisfaction.<sup>29</sup> Therefore – and this has

been spoken of as a miracle – when God observed him with the eye of his compassion, he recalled him from hell at the entreaties of the blessed Gregory.<sup>30</sup> “Blessed are the merciful, for they will obtain mercy.”<sup>31</sup> This man could truly say with the blessed Job: “If I have caused the eyes of the widow to wait with apprehension”<sup>32</sup> (Job 31), “I have also comforted the widow’s heart”<sup>33</sup> (Job 29).

*Then follows paying attention to punishment in hell\*.*

Third, punishment in hell must be considered. After the prophet Jeremiah had seen “a boiling pot and it was facing away from the direction of the north,” and after he had heard the Lord saying, “From the north all evil will spread out,”<sup>34</sup> Jeremiah 1:3, he then urged others to gaze attentively at the same sight, Jeremiah 13: “Lift up your eyes and see, you who are coming from the north,”<sup>35</sup> and so on. By the north, the most inclement region and the one furthest from the sun, we are fittingly given to understand punishment in hell, where one will find a bitter punishment and the separation from the sun of justice because divine vision is missing there. This punishment was well observed by Jerome who said: “When I consider Job sitting in the dung-pit,<sup>36</sup> John suffering hunger in the wilderness,<sup>37</sup> Paul slain by the sword,<sup>38</sup> Peter hanged on the gallows,<sup>39</sup> then I think about what he will do in the future to the damned if he afflicts people he loves in such a way in the present world.”<sup>40</sup>

This sight is useful, both for avoiding a misdeed and for reflecting on the mildness of the present punishment. For this reason Isidore says in book 1 of the *Soliloquies*: “Lay out for yourself the fire of future torments as a way to counteract the ardent desires of the flesh: Recalling to mind

30. On the legend of Trajan and Pope Gregory the Great, see Tubach, *Index exemplorum*, no. 2368.

31. Matt 5:7.

32. Job 31:16.

33. Job 29:13.

34. Jer 1:13–14.

35. Jer 13:20.

36. Cf. Job 2:8.

37. Cf. Luke 1:80.

38. Cf. Eusebius of Caesarea, *Chron.*, trans. Jerome, anno 2084 (from Abraham), ed. Helm, 267 (in Jerome).

39. Cf. *ibid.*

40. Cf. Thomas of Ireland, *Manipulus florum*, Tribulatio AC, ed. Chris Nighman, available at <http://info.wlu.ca/~www/whist/faculty/cnighman/index.html> (accessed December 10, 2010), where the quotation is attributed to Gregory.

24. Cf. Gen 40:1–23.

25. Job 1:1.

26. Job 31:22.

27. Job 31:16–17. The text from the beginning of the paragraph through this citation from Job has been taken, partially verbatim, from John of Salisbury, *Policr.*, 8, 13, ed. Webb, vol. 2, 322–23.

28. Job 29:15–16.

29. Cf. John of Salisbury, *Policr.*, 5, 8, ed. Webb, vol. 1, 317–18 (cf. Tubach, *Index exemplorum*, no. 4989).



hell's burning heat drives out the burning passion of lust.<sup>41</sup> We see that when someone burns his finger, he brings it close to the fire so that the lesser heat can be drawn out by the greater one. So, too, if a sinner inflamed by the fire of sin brings himself close to the fire of hell through self-reflection, the lesser heat can be drawn out by the greater one, Ecclesiasticus 7: "Remember the end awaiting you," i.e., the torments of hell, "and you will never sin."<sup>42</sup> This contemplation also makes someone think his present punishment is very mild. For this reason Bernard says: "You fear the vigils and fasts and the manual labor, but these are mild to anyone considering eternal flames."<sup>43</sup> Bede relates in the *Deeds of the English* that after a certain proprietor of an estate had died in England at the time of Emperor Constantine the Younger, the proprietor's soul was led before the dais of the everlasting judge where at last through the intercession of God's mother he was allowed, first, to witness the pains of hell and, afterwards, to return to his body. Thus, he who had died came to life again, and after he had related the wonders he had seen and had disbursed his property to the poor and had paid his respects to his relatives as well as\* his servants, he departed for a certain forest where he performed such penance that he demonstrated in word and at the same time in deed how great the torments were that he had witnessed. Even at the height of winter he used to immerse himself naked in a river, and when his friends and acquaintances rebuked him for this, he would respond, "Leave me be, for I have seen more severe things."<sup>44</sup>

The contemplation of punishment in hell causes the mind's eye to open, for according to Gregory "punishment opens the eyes which a misdeed closes."<sup>45</sup> And it not only does this when it is experienced (as is clear in the case of the rich feaster who, "after lifting up his eyes when he was in the midst of torments,"<sup>46</sup> saw Lazarus, from whom he had turned his eyes earlier when he was in the midst of wealth), but it also does so when it is diligently examined with the eye of contemplation. For just as a salve clears up the eyes, so does the contemplation of the torments of hell make things clear to the heart and mind. And for this reason Job's

eye was so sharp-sighted that he could say to the Lord, "Now my eye sees you," Job 42,<sup>47</sup> as if he had anointed it with a salve so that he could see. For he says in Job 17: "My eye carries in bitterness."<sup>48</sup> A salve is something sharply bitter\* for the eye. Thus, that person's eye carries in bitterness who diligently considers the bitterness of punishment in hell and through the contemplation of this bitterness he recovers the vision he had lost. And so as a symbol of this, one reads that Tobit recovered his sight by an anointment of gall, Tobit 11.1.<sup>49</sup> And therefore sinners, who do not think about the torment of hell, are like condemned prisoners who are led blindfolded to the gallows. For he is blind who does not look at his own sin so that it displeases him, nor at the reward of heaven so that it pleases him – and likewise he is blind who does not see eternal punishment so that it deters him. And it is surprising that people do not give thought to the sufferings in hell, or, if they do, that these sufferings do not terrify them, since even "the demons believe, and they quake with fear" as it is said in James 2.50 One reads in the *Lives of the Fathers* that when the spirit of fornication was sorely tempting a particular saintly father, he prayed to the Lord that the tempting spirit should appear to him visibly. Then a demon appeared to him with a human face. When he saw him, the holy man said, "What profit do you get from tempting me? For this is the greatest folly. Surely you know that when you bring someone down in sin, you increase your own sin and, as a result, your punishment. Nevertheless your zeal is aimed completely at bringing people down in sin, and thus, as a result, at the accumulation of your punishment." In response, the devil said, "You should know what you say is true, but I'll tell you the reason for my tempting. I know that the more people I cause to sin, the longer I'll delay the day of judgment, and I dread that day more than anything, on which I expect to hear the hard sentence: 'Go, cursed ones, to the eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and all of his angels.'<sup>51</sup> And since I'm able to delay for at least a while the calamity of that sentence, for that reason I strive so much to tempt people."<sup>52</sup>

### *On paying attention to life in heaven\**

Fourth, one must pay attention to the reward of life in heaven. For this reason in Hebrews 11 it is said in reference to Moses: "For he looked to

41 Isidore of Seville, *Synonym*, 1.46, ed. Elfassi, CCSL 111B:37–38 (PL 83:837D–38A).  
 42 Sir 7:40.  
 43 Bernard of Clairvaux, *Ep.*, 1.12, ed. Leclercq and Rochais, in *Opera*, vol. 7, 10.  
 44 Cf. Bede the Venerable, *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum*, 5.12, ed. and trans. Bertram Colgrave and Roger A.B. Wynnos, in *Bede's Ecclesiastical History of the English People* (Oxford, 1969), 488–98 (cf. Tubach, *Index exemplorum*, nos. 1818 and 2512).  
 45 Gregory the Great, *Mor. in Job*, 25.5.6, ed. Adriaen, CCSL 143B:1233.  
 46 Luke 16:23.

47 Job 42:5.  
 48 Job 17:2.  
 49 Cf. Tob 11:8–13.  
 50 Jas 2:19.  
 51 Matt 25:41.  
 52 Cf. Tubach, *Index exemplorum*, no. 2573.



the reward?<sup>53</sup> And therefore it is said in Isaiah 33: “Your eyes will see Jerusalem, an opulent dwelling-place.”<sup>54</sup> This is the city that Bernard describes in the *Meditations*: “Oh celestial city, secure habitation, a country containing all things that are pleasing, a populace without complaint, its inhabitants at peace, its people wanting nothing. How glorious are the things spoken of you, city of God!<sup>55</sup> ‘Dwelling in you is, as it were, a matter of all rejoicing.’<sup>56</sup> There is:

Peace, piety, goodness, light, virtue, magnificence, integrity,  
Joy, the sweetness of rejoicing, life everlasting,  
Glory, praise, calm, love, and the harmony of peace.<sup>57</sup>

Thus, what madness compels us to drink the wormwood of vices, to pursue the shipwreck of this world, to bear the lordship of an ungodly tyranny, and not rather to fly to the company of angels, the splendor of the saints, the esteem of a powerful king, the beauty of celestial glory?<sup>58</sup> For this reason the eye of our heart should be fixed on heavenly matters through meditation and longing, something the upright posture of the human body also teaches. And that is what the poet says:

And while the other animals, bent over, look at the earth,  
He gave humankind a lofty countenance, and commanded him to  
View the heavens and to lift his upright gaze to the stars.<sup>59</sup>

or this reason, too, when Empedocles was asked why he had been born, he responded: “So that I might contemplate the heavens and the stars.” Bernard Silvestris also recollects his saying when he writes:

To one inquiring why he was alive Empedocles said, “To gaze  
At the stars; take away the heavens and I’d be nothing.”<sup>60</sup>

One reads in the *Lives of the Fathers* that when the blessed Arsenius was dying, he was asked by the brothers to leave an edifying sentence to

53 Heb 11:26.

54 Isa 33:20.

55 Ps 86:3.

56 Ps 86:7.

57 *Sententia communis* (Walther, *Proverbia*, no. 21054).

58 Ps-Bernard of Clairvaux, *Medit. piissimae*, 4:11–12, PL 184:492C–93A (cf. Vincent of Beauvais, *Spec. hist.*, 28:21, in *Speculum quadruplex*, vol. 4, 1149a).

59 Ovid, *Met.*, 1:84–86, ed. Anderson, 4 (cf. Walther, *Proverbia*, no. 22655).

60 Bernard Silvestris, *Cosmogr.*, 2:1445–46, ed. Dronke, 151.

remember him by before he went to the Lord. He said, “There, where.” And once he said this, he gave up the ghost. After he passed away, the brothers were eager to understand the meaning of his words and sent for an explanation to a certain other man advanced in years who wrote back to them: “This, I believe, is the meaning of his words: Our hearts are bound fast there where our true joys lie.<sup>61</sup> Jerome exhorts the virgin Eustochium to this thorough examination of celestial matters by saying in one of his letters: “Come out for a little while from your prison, and picture before your eyes the reward for your present labor, which the eye has not seen nor the ears heard.<sup>62</sup> What will that day be like, when Mary, the mother of the Lord, will meet you accompanied by choirs of virgins, when, with the Red Sea behind her and pharaoh drowned with his army, holding a timbrel<sup>63</sup> she will sing before those who respond, ‘Let us sing to the Lord, for he is gloriously honored;<sup>64</sup> and so on? At that time, too, your bridegroom himself will meet you and say, ‘Arise, hurry, my love;<sup>64</sup> and so on. At that time, the angels will also marvel and say, ‘Who is she who goes forth like the dawn?<sup>65</sup> Daughters will see you, and they will implore you,<sup>66</sup> and so on. Sarah will come to meet you with the wives, Anna with the widows. Children will also call out, ‘Hosanna in the highest.’<sup>67</sup> As often as the empty flattery of the world delights you, as often as you see something to glory in, ascend in your mind in this way to paradise.”<sup>68</sup>

61 Cf. Tubach, *Index exemplorum*, no. 358.

62 1 Cor 2:9.

63 Exod 15:1.

64 Cant 2:10.

65 Cant 6:9.

66 Cf. Ps 44:13.

67 Mark 11:10.

68 Jerome, *Ep.*, 22:41.1–5, ed. Hilberg, CSEL 54:209–10.

## CHAPTER FOURTEEN

On Three Visible Things  
That Delight the Corporeal Eye

There are three things that the corporeal eye looks at with delight, namely the translucence of water, the beauty of flowers and plants, and the radiance of a mirror. For this reason the verse reads:

Delightful to the eye: clear water, verdure, a mirror.<sup>1</sup>

By water I understand for the present purpose the glorious Virgin, by flowers and plants, the company of saints; by the mirror, our Lord Jesus Christ. For indeed the Blessed Virgin is called “a garden fountain, a well of living water,” Song of Songs 4.<sup>2</sup> For just as water is the common possession of all, according to the verse:

Water is for the benefit of all,<sup>3</sup>

so also the Virgin is blessed for the just and the sinners. For this reason the blessed Bernard said: “Mary was made all things for all people so that everyone would receive something from her fullness: prisoners, their release; the diseased, their cure,<sup>4</sup> and so on. And Anselm says in the *Meditations*: “Oh Lady, the joyful assembly of the just comes to you and praises you, the frightened crowd of the guilty flees to you. If only my heart could sleep in your love, my soul melt, my flesh disappear!”<sup>5</sup> For next after God, the most important thing is to see you and contemplate

you, to delight in your praises. For this reason Mary reveals herself to all in the likeness of water, saying in Ecclesiasticus 24: “Cross over to me, all you who desire me, and be filled with my fruits,”<sup>6</sup> as if she were saying what is written in Isaiah 55: “All those who thirst, come to the waters,”<sup>7</sup> and so on. The eyes of the blessed soul are all fixed in delight on the sight of this water, according to the passage in Song of Songs 5: “His eyes are like doves beside brooks of water that linger near rivers flowing at full strength.”<sup>8</sup> Nor is it surprising if the sight of her brings delight, for “the eye will gaze in wonder at the beauty of her radiance,” as it is said in Ecclesiasticus 43.<sup>9</sup> She is Queen Esther, about whom it is said: “She was exceptionally becoming and of unparalleled beauty, finding favor in the eyes of all.”<sup>10</sup> Esther 2.

There was a certain cleric who was very devoted to the most Blessed Virgin and who gave careful attention to what is written in Song of Songs 4: “How beautiful you are, my love, sweet and elegant!”<sup>11</sup> And the verse in chapter 7: “How beautiful you are, and elegant in delights, dearest!”<sup>12</sup> Hearing that all these passages are understood and explained as references to the Blessed Virgin, he asked her to consider him worthy enough to appear to him. He thought he would be blessed if just once he were able to look at someone so beautiful. After a long period of time, an angel came to him appointed on behalf of the Blessed Virgin and saluting the cleric said to him, “The Blessed Virgin has heard your prayer and sends word that she’ll come to you on a particular day and hour and you’ll see her. But you must know that after your eyes have seen her beauty and splendor that exceeds all others, it’s extraordinarily improper and shameful for them to see anything worldly and transitory.” The cleric said, “I don’t care if I become blind from then on after I have beheld her once.” But after the angel had left, out of weakness the cleric became very concerned, and he thought about what he would do after he had lost his eyesight. “For the rest of my life,” he said, “I won’t be able to earn my bread by writings; rather, I’ll wind up even more miserable and beggarly, I’ll be without all comfort, and I’ll be able to say with Tobit, ‘What kind of joy do I have, since I sit in darkness and do not see the light of heaven?’”<sup>13</sup> At

1 *Flos medicinae Scholae Salerni*, 9.17.1939, ed. Salvatore de Renzi, in *Collectio Salernitana: Ostia documenti inediti, e trattati di medicina appartenenti alla scuola medica Salernitana, raccolti ed illustrati da G.E.T. Henschel, C. Darenberg, e S. de Renzi* (Naples, 1852; reprint 2001), vol. 1, 509.

2 Cant 4:15.

3 Ovid, *Met.*, 6.349, ed. Anderson, 135.

4 Bernard of Clairvaux, *Sermo in Dominica infra octavam assumptionis*, 2, ed. Jean Leclercq and Henri M. Rochais, in *Opera* (Rome, 1968), vol. 5, 263.

5 Anselm of Canterbury, *Orations*, 6 and 7, ed. Franciscus S. Schmitt, in *Opera omnia* (Edinburgh, 1946), vol. 3, 15, 24.

6 Sir 24:26.

7 Isa 55:1.

8 Cant 5:12.

9 Sir 43:20.

10 Esth 2:15.

11 Cant 4:1 and Cant 6:3.

12 Cant 7:6.

13 Tob 5:12.

length he considered and said, "When the Blessed Virgin comes, I'll open one eye to see her and shut the other, and in this way I'll lose only a single eye, and since I'll have one eye left over, that'll be enough for me." But when the blessed and glorious Virgin appeared at the designated hour, he beheld such beauty and splendor that it can be neither expressed nor contemplated, and when he removed the hand he had placed over\* one eye (so as not to see her with it) in order to open that eye and thus behold her more completely, the glorious Virgin disappeared and he did not see her any more. Then he was deprived of one eye (the one, that is to say, with which he had seen her) and the other one was whole (with which he had not beheld her), but he rebuked himself bitterly and was very dejected, saying through his tears, "Alas, I'm miserable, why did I shut one eye? Why didn't I open both? Oh, if only I'd been all eyes so that I could've seen her more completely!" And he begged the Blessed Virgin for a long time to reveal herself to him once again so that he could look at her entirely; at least with his remaining eye, wishing to be deprived of both eyes in order to gaze upon her once more. Then the angel was sent to him again and said, "My Lady, whose messenger I am, sends word to you: 'Friend, why do you seek more? Do you want to be deprived of your remaining eye by seeing me\* once again?'" He said to the angel, "By all means, sir, even if I had a thousand eyes, I would choose to lose them for all time, so that I could see her completely." The angel said to him, "And she who is most merciful sends word to you that you'll see her again, and you won't lose your remaining eye at all, but rather you'll actually recover the lost one." And this is what happened not much later, for once again the gentlest Virgin appeared and revealed herself to him to be seen and contemplated and she restored his lost eye to him.<sup>14</sup> From this we can judge how great the glorious Virgin's beauty is and how delightful it is to see her with one's eyes. For this reason Anselm also says in the *Meditations*: "Mary is beautiful to look at, lovely to embrace, charming to delight in."<sup>15</sup>

*The second thing that delights vision signifies that one should carefully consider the verdant examples of the saints\*.*

The second thing that delights the eyes is the beauty of flowers and the loveliness of plants. For this reason it is said in Ecclesiasticus 40: "Your eye will desire grace and beauty, and more than this, green fields growing."<sup>16</sup> Eccle-

siasticus 39: "Bloom, flowers, and grow verdant in grace!"<sup>17</sup> For since the saints blossomed internally by their holy vows and blossomed externally by their exemplary deeds, therefore they are pleasing for the eye to see.

Indeed, the eye of the righteous man is delighted when it perceives the roses of martyrs, the violets of confessors, and the lilies of virgins. For according to Pliny, the rose blossom maintains a position of pre-eminence among the other flowers, and therefore it is customary that the most important part of human beings, namely the head, is crowned with rose blossoms.<sup>18</sup> For the rose blossom is beautiful to the sight and fragrant to the sense of smell; indeed, by its beauty it restores the sight and by its fragrance it attracts the sense of smell, and the pre-eminence of the martyrs is appropriately designated by it. And for this reason a flower-basket filled with blood-red roses adorned the coffin of the first martyr Stephan, as the account of the discovery of his relics has it.<sup>19</sup> And in Ecclesiasticus 50 this is said concerning Simon, whose name is interpreted to mean "obedient,"<sup>20</sup> and who stands for any martyr who was obedient to God the father to the point of death: "Like a rainbow he gleamed among the clouds of glory, and like rose blossoms on spring days"<sup>21</sup> For a rainbow gleams in the midst of the clouds, and the holy martyrs have a reddish glow in the midst of their torture, and they are said to be among the clouds of glory since while they were being tormented, their thoughts were on heavenly glory. And they are said to smell sweetly like blossoms on spring days because of their re-enactment of the Lord's passion which took place during the springtime.

When the violet blossom reaches maturity, it bends its head and lets it hang down, and it compensates for the slowness of the material it is made of with the grandeur of its virtue and fragrance, and it stands for the holy confessors who were exceedingly humble. For this reason one of them says: "Whoever gathers together the rest of the virtues without humility, it is as if he were carrying dust in the wind."<sup>22</sup> And another

17 Sir 39:19.

18 Cf. Pliny the Younger, *Nat. hist.*, 21.4(10).14–21, ed. von Jan and Mayhoff, vol. 3, 385–87.

19 Cf. Stephanus Leodiensis, "L'office de l'Invention de S. Etienne," ed. Riva Jonsson, in *Historia. Études sur la genèse des offices versifiés*, Acta Universitatis Stockholmiensis. Studia Latina Stockholmiensia, 15 (Stockholm, 1968), 214.

20 Jerome, *Lib. interp. Hebr. nom.*, Act., ed. de Lagarde, CCSL 72:148. The etymology of Hebrew *shimon* is doubtful; cf. Gen 29:33 where the name is derived from Heb. *shama* (he heard), a linguistically correct derivation for the first letters of the name.

21 Sir 50:8.

22 Gregory the Great, *Expositio in septem psalmos penitentiales*, 3.3, PL 79:569C.

14 On this narrative, cf. Tubach, *Index exemplorum*, no. 4365.

15 Anselm of Canterbury, *Orat.*, 7, ed. Schmitt, vol. 3, 21.

16 Sir 40:22.



one says: "From my youth there is nothing I have tried to avoid as much as a puffed up heart and an unbowed neck, things that provoke God's hatred against them. For I know the Lord my master said in the humbleness of his flesh, 'Learn from me, since I am gentle and humble in heart.'<sup>23</sup>

But according to Pliny nothing is more agreeable in color, more sweet-smelling in its odor, and more powerful in its virtue than the lily blossom.<sup>24</sup> The lily blossom has this property: As long as it remains unfilled and untouched, it gives off a sweet smell, but once it is broken off and chafed by the hands, it reeks horribly.<sup>25</sup> And it appropriately stands for virginity: Nothing is more agreeable than virginity, nothing more fragrant, as long as it remains unimpaired, but it reeks to God and humanity if it has been violated through unchasteness. Thus, the saints blossomed during their earthly pilgrimage by the purity of their way of life,<sup>26</sup> and they blossom now in the heavenly homeland by attaining a state of blessedness for the soul.<sup>26</sup> For this reason the Psalm says: "They were planted in your house,"<sup>27</sup> Lord, and so on. Finally, they will also blossom in their body through the gift of incorruptibility. For this reason the Psalm says: "They will blossom from city" to city "like hay from the earth,"<sup>28</sup> i.e., in the likeness of blades of grass. For just as grass dies during the winter and is reborn at the time of renewal, so also the body of a human being is reduced to dust in this present life and in the future one will rise again in incorruptibility.

Clearly, that person who is not delighted by the sight of flowers of such great beauty appears to be spiritually blind. And just as the appearance of flowers and plants invigorates and strengthens corporeal sight, so also the life and the glory of saints increases the spiritual strength of those who regard them attentively. For this reason Gregory says: "If we reflect on the deeds of those who came before us, the things which we endure will not be burdensome."<sup>29</sup> Thus, let us concentrate on the roses of the martyrs' patience and rid ourselves of laziness and bear the fruits

of good deeds. Ecclesiasticus 39 advises us to do this: "Listen to me, Godly fruits, and be fruitful like a rose planted by streams of water."<sup>30</sup> Let us also concentrate on the violets of the humble confessors and reject pride and be pleasing to the Lord through the sweet smell of humility, so that we can say the verse in Song of Songs 1: "While the king was on his couch, my nard gave off its odor,"<sup>31</sup> and so on. Nard is a moderate-sized and aromatic plant and as the *Gloss* says it signifies humility, which is most agreeable to God.<sup>32</sup> Let us also concentrate on the lilies of virgins and cast off uncleanness and put on sanctity, Ecclesiasticus 39: "Bear flowers, and like the lilies give off your odor!"<sup>33</sup>

Thus, whoever wants to restore the eyes of his mind ought to raise them to the saints and say with the Palmist: "I have raised my eyes to the mountains from where help will come to me,"<sup>34</sup> i.e., to the saints exalted through the loftiness of a heavenly way of life. In these mountains he will discover such pleasantness that he will despise worldly comforts, in the manner of the wild donkey, about which Job says in chapter 39: "He scorns the masses in the city; he looks around the mountains for pasture, and he searches for every growing plant."<sup>35</sup> For on the mountain of the martyrs he looks around for the pasture of patience; on the mountain of the confessors, for the pasture of humility and obedience; on the mountain of virgins, for the pasture of chastity.

Because of what has already been said, the saints are appropriately symbolized by the green branches partly stripped of bark that Jacob "placed in the water troughs." At the sight of them the sheep conceived speckled offspring, as one reads in Genesis 30:36.<sup>36</sup> These branches are the saints who were elevated to the heavens, insofar as they were able, although they were on the earth. They are called green since they were always young and fresh in performing good deeds, and when they achieved the greatest perfection, they considered themselves still in their beginning stages. They are said to have the bark partly stripped off since their holiness has not been revealed to us completely, but only partially. And many more things are lying hidden within them internally than are apparent to us externally, Song of Songs 4: "Besides what lies hidden internally,"<sup>37</sup> These branches are placed in water troughs since they have

23 Matt 11:29; Jerome, *Ep.*, 76.1.1-2, ed. Hilberg, CSEL 55:35.

24 Cf. Pliny the Younger, *Nat. hist.*, 21.5(11).22-23, ed. von Jan and Mayhoff, vol. 3, 387-88.

25 Cf. Bartholomeus Anglicus, *De prop. rer.*, 17.91, sig. z2ra (Middle English trans. by Trevisa, ed. Seymour et al., vol. 2, 982).

26 Peter uses the common trope that contrasts the earthly journey *in via* (on the way) with reaching the end of that journey *in patria* (in the heavenly homeland).

27 Ps 91:14.

28 Ps 71:16.

29 Cf. William Peraldus, *De erud. prin.*, 5.35, available at <http://www.corpus Thomisticum.org/xrec.html> (accessed December 10, 2010).

30 Sir 39:17.

31 Cant 1:11.

32 Cf. *Gloss. ord.*, Cant. 1:11, ed. Rusch, vol. 2, 710a in margin (PL 113:1134A).

33 Sir 39:19.

34 Ps 120:1.

35 Job 39:7-8.

36 Cf. Gen 30:37-41.

37 Cant 4:1.

been entrusted to texts about the saints, and a knowledge of the saints flows to us, as it were in troughs of water, by texts of this kind. We ought to have the way of life of the saints before our eyes so that by emulating them we are able to conceive the speckled offspring of good deeds. Now, after the eye of our mind has examined the splendor that the saints possessed on their earthly pilgrimage, this eye should be raised so that it can be delighted more fully by gazing also on the splendor that the saints themselves beheld now in their heavenly homeland. About this, Hugh says in book 4 of *The Soul's Cloister*: "The verdure of the meadow that is in the midst of the heavenly cloister invigorates the eyes of its divine residents and always strengthens them with its freshness. For nothing will be aged or fleeing there, but rather without doubt it will remain forever in the freshness of its verdure. The tree of life is located in the middle of the meadow to ensure a pleasurable life. For the tree of life is the wisdom of God the father; its fruit maintains health and preserves life. When a person reaches this tree, he will have nothing further to seek. For iniquity will cease then, love of one's fellow human beings will abound, nor will anything be wanting where each and every person possesses all things by possessing them in himself. Nothing could be lacking when the wisdom of God will look after all things for all people. No one will be lacking anything there within his own station, since each and every person will read in the book of divine wisdom, in which the order of nature has been inscribed."<sup>38</sup>

*On the third thing that delights vision. That we should frequently look in a mirror, i.e., Jesus Christ\*.*

The third delight for the eye is looking in a mirror. In book 2 of *On Mirrors* it is shown through demonstration that the eye is naturally disposed to take delight in a mirror, for it is only in a mirror that it observes itself, insofar as the rays of light are collected together at the endpoint of contact and are reflected in the surface of the mirroring body.<sup>39</sup> And likewise, the contemplative eye, taking delight in the mirror of eternity, never ceases to reflect upon itself, and it continually cleanses blemishes in the conscience by contemplating the purity and cleanness\* which it has observed in that mirror. About this mirror it is

said in Exodus 25: "Look at it, and act according to the pattern which has been shown to you on the mountain."<sup>40</sup> And therefore in Jeremiah 3 it is said to the soul itself: "Lift up your eyes to the steep heights; that is to say, to look in this mirror, and see where you are now ruined!"<sup>41</sup> For since God and the soul are in the same image, when the soul contemplates God's purity, it carefully considers its own vileness. And therefore, after Job had looked in this mirror, he considered his faults and rebuked himself. And therefore he said, "Now my eye sees you. And for that reason I despise myself and I do penance in dust and ashes."<sup>42</sup> In common parlance it is said that an ugly person does not willingly gaze in a mirror lest he be saddened by perceiving his own ugliness. So, too, many who have persisted in their sins and unclean acts do not willingly look into this mirror, but rather turn away from the sight of it, and in this way they pay no heed to their unclean acts in order to stop doing them. And therefore in Jeremiah 2 the Lord says, "They have turned their back to me and not their face."<sup>43</sup> And after a few verses, this one follows: "How very vile you have become, going back over the same ways!"<sup>44</sup> And why is it surprising if the face that did not look in the mirror to discern its own blemishes has become vile? And therefore people who neither hear God's words willingly nor look at his deeds and achievements with their eye become disgusting in their sins like "pack animals standing in their dung."<sup>45</sup>

And therefore we ought to look in that mirror frequently so that we can discern in ourselves the blemishes of our mind and cleanse them. And therefore it is said in the Psalm: "Look into the face of your messiah!"<sup>46</sup> Blessedness, human and angelic, consists in the unobstructed view of this mirror, John 17: "This is eternal life: that they know you, God alone,"<sup>47</sup> and so on, and 1 Peter 1: "On whom the angels desire to look."<sup>48</sup> Nor is it surprising that that mirror is of the purest quality: "For it is the glory of eternal light, and a mirror without blemish," Wisdom 7.<sup>49</sup> It is

38 Hugh of Saint-Victor, *De claustr. an.*, 4:34, 35, 36, 42. PL 176:1172D, 1173A, C, D, 1174C, 1176C, 1181B.  
39 It is unclear which book on mirrors Peter refers to here; cf. Schleusenener-Eichholz, "Naturwissenschaft," 264n25, 287.

40 Exod 25:40.  
41 Jer 3:2. Note that the Vulgate text reads *ubi non prostata sis* (where you are not ruined). See above, chapr. 13.1, p. 171.  
42 Job 42:5-6.  
43 Jer 2:27.  
44 Jer 2:36.  
45 Joel 1:17.  
46 Ps 83:10.  
47 John 17:3.  
48 1Pet 1:12.  
49 Wis 7:26.

also something that is able to depict all things. Gregory says: “What is it that they do not see, they who see the one seeing all things?”<sup>50</sup> And therefore the blessed in the homeland who have been made watchmen of his magnitude for this kind of observing, praise God and exalt him with praises. For this reason it is said in Isaiah 52: “The voice of your watchmen: They have lifted up their voice, and likewise they will praise, since they will see eye to eye.”<sup>51</sup>

#### CHAPTER FIFTEEN

### On the Sevenfold Eye of the Divine Gaze

John says in Revelation: “I looked and, behold, in the midst of the throne there was a lamb standing, as if it had been slain, with seven horns and seven eyes.”<sup>1</sup> In the slain lamb we understand Christ, who was most innocent and gentle, and who was sacrificed for us on the altar of the cross. In the seven eyes of the lamb are understood the seven properties of the divine gaze.

#### *That the divine eye looks at everything\*.*

First, the divine eye is one that can observe all things, the Epistle to the Hebrews: “All things are open and laid bare to his eyes,”<sup>2</sup> and Ecclesiasticus 23\*: “His eye sees all things.”<sup>3</sup> Peter Damiani\* relates that a certain man stole his neighbor’s pig. Now, this man was exceptionally hospitable and since “the merciful are blessed because they will obtain mercy,”<sup>4</sup> the Lord Jesus, who never forgets compassionate people, instantly appeared to him in the likeness of a poor man. And since he had long hair, he asked for a barber\*. The man immediately stood up with reverence before a pauper, picked up his scissors, and began to give him a haircut. When he did this, he discovered two eyes concealed in the back of the pauper’s head. The sight of them made him intensely frightened and he asked what this was supposed to mean. Jesus said to him, “My name is Jesus. I observe everything everywhere. And these are the eyes with which I’ve seen the pig that you hid in the cave.” Then immediately he disappeared, and the man felt remorse and gave back the pig.<sup>5</sup> And thus it is said in

1 Rev 5:6.

2 Heb 4:13.

3 Sir 23:27.

4 Matt 5:7.

5 Cf. Peter Damiani, *Epistolae*, 70, ed. Kurt Reindell in *Die Briefe des Petrus Damiani*,

MGH, *Die Briefe der deutschen Kaiserzeit*, 4/2 (Munich, 1988), vol. 2, 318–19 (= *Opuscula varia*, 42–5; Pl. 145:671D–72A) (cf. Tubach, *Index exemplorum*, no. 1018).

50 Alan of Lille, *De fide catholica contra haereticos libri iv*, 1–73, PL 210:374D

(cf. Gregory the Great, *Mor. in Iob*, 19.12.20, ed. Adriaen, CCSL 143A:971).

51 Isa 52:8.



Ecclesiasticus 23: “The eyes of the Lord are much brighter than the sun, observing the ways of men in their hiding places.”<sup>6</sup>

*The divine eye’s second [property of] sight, by which it inspires awe, with the example of the sun.\**

Second, the gaze of God’s eyes is awe-inspiring and because of this it causes people to refrain from sinning. For a thief would not dare commit a theft if he knew he was being watched by a judge, Proverbs 20: “A king who sits on the seat of judgment\* puts all evils to flight by a glance;”<sup>7</sup> and Amos 9: “Behold, the eyes of the Lord are upon the sinful kingdom, and I will destroy it from the face of the earth.”<sup>8</sup> No one would dare commit fornication in front of other people’s eyes; how much more disturbing should it be to perform any misdeed in God’s sight! Bernard: “Oh mankind, in every location, in every district, in every corner, show respect for your angel who watches over you, so that in his presence you would not do something that you would not dare do in my sight!”<sup>9</sup> This is the angel of great counsel to whom every corner is accessible.<sup>10</sup> And someone has said:

When you do something evil that would make you blush if I were to see you,  
Why do you not blush all the more about it since God sees you?<sup>11</sup>

Thus, in all transgressions that we commit by thought or word or deed, we ought to fear the gaze of the highest judge, since even if our vices are sometimes not apparent to other people, to his eyes “all things are open and laid bare.”<sup>12</sup> And just as we see that where the sun turns its gaze, it dries out the mud, but where it does not gaze, mud remains plentiful, so too when people pay no heed to God’s presence, thinking he does not see the disgraceful deeds they commit, they spend their life in the filthiness of sin. For this reason the Psalmist says: “God is not before his eyes; his paths have been defiled for all time.”<sup>13</sup>

- 6 Sir 23:28.
- 7 Prov 20:8.
- 8 Amos 9:8.
- 9 Bernard of Clairvaux, *Serm. in Ps. “Qui habitat”* 12.6, ed. Leclercq and Rochais, in *Opera*, vol. 4, 460.
- 10 Cf. Rev 7:2. On the angel of great counsel, see above, chapr. 5, p. 16.
- 11 *Sententia communis* (Walther, *Proverbia*, no. 4360).
- 12 Heb 4:13.
- 13 Ps 9B:5.

*The divine eye’s third [property of] sight produces tears of penitence, with the example of fire.\**

Third, the divine gaze is something which produces tears of penitence. About this matter it is said in Revelation 19: “His eyes are like a flame of fire.”<sup>14</sup> Now, a sinner is frozen by the frost of sin and has been made cold and hard as if he were ice. And therefore, just as the glare of fire melts ice, so God’s gaze dissolves a sinner into tears. For this reason it is said in Luke 22: The Lord looked at Peter “and he went outside and wept bitterly.”<sup>15</sup>

*The divine eye’s fourth [property of] sight, which promotes hard work, with the example of a vineyard, and so on.\**

Fourth, the divine gaze is something which promotes hard work, and for this reason Boethius says in book five of *The Consolation of Philosophy*: “If you do not wish to misrepresent it, a great necessity for honest behavior has been imposed on you since you do everything in the sight of a judge who perceives all things.”<sup>16</sup> The Lord is like the head of a household who makes his laborers work all the harder because he observes them in the vineyard.<sup>17</sup> For he watches over the church as over a vineyard. And so he says of the vineyard of the church, “I, the Lord, am the one who preserves it,” Isaiah 27.<sup>18</sup> And in the Psalm it is said: “The eyes of the Lord are on those who are righteous.”<sup>19</sup> And not just any righteous people are spoken of here, but those who work at it, Romans 2: “Not the hearers of the law are the ones who are righteous before God, but the doers of the law will be justified.”<sup>20</sup>

*The divine eye’s fifth [property of] sight confers spiritual strength, with the example of the stars.\**

Fifth, the divine gaze is something which confers spiritual strength, 2 Chronicles 16: “The eyes of the Lord contemplate the whole earth, and they give strength to those who believe in him with a righteous

- 14 Rev 19:12.
- 15 Luke 22:61.
- 16 Boethius, *Phil. cons.*, 5.pr.6.48, ed. Bieler, CCSL 94:105.
- 17 Cf. Matt 20:1–16.
- 18 Isa 27:3.
- 19 Ps 33:16.
- 20 Rom 2:13.

heart.<sup>21</sup> For if by its aspect a planet strengthens another star, either fixed or moving, so that it comes to have greater efficacy and power,<sup>22</sup> it is not surprising if the gaze of the most powerful and steadfast God gives power to the faint-hearted soul and increases the steadfastness and vigor of those who are not faint-hearted.

*The divine eye's sixth [property of] sight heals the infirmities of the soul, with the example of the caladrius.\**

Sixth, the gaze of God's eyes is something which heals the infirmity of the soul, Ecclesiasticus 11: "One man is feeble," since he has been severely afflicted by the malady of a misdeed; "needing the restoration of his health," since he has been plundered of his spiritual goods; "lacking in strength," since he has been robbed of his powers of doing good; and "abounding in poverty," since he has been encumbered by a lack of spiritual goods; "and the eye of God has looked on him with good intentions," since by his gaze God has removed his malady and has restored the health he was missing.<sup>23</sup> For this reason the *Physiologus* says: "The *caladrius* is a bird with a white color. Its nature is said to be such that if it is brought to a sick person and closely observes the patient's face, this means he will live; but if it turns its eyes away from the sick person, this foretells his death."<sup>24</sup> And likewise, if Christ, pure in his way of life – as it were white in color – looks at a sinner with an eye of compassion, this not only means he will be healed, but it also brings it about, because if he were not to look at the sinner, the sinner would die for all time. Therefore, it is said in Ecclesiasticus 34: "The eye of the Lord is on those who fear him,"<sup>25</sup> and this phrase follows: "Giving health and life and blessing."<sup>26</sup>

21 2Chr 16:9.

22 "Aspect" in astrology refers to the angle between heavenly bodies in the chart of the zodiac, certain angles being thought to enhance the effects of the planets involved.

23 Sir 11:12–13.

24 *Physiologus*, 26 (V).2–3, 5–9, ed. Maurer, 89; cf. Hugh of Fouillois (Ps.-Hugh of Saint-Victor), *Aviarium*, 2:53, ed. and trans. Clark, 228–31; Honorius of Autun, *Speculum ecclesiae*, De ascensione Domini, PL 172:958B–C.

25 Sir 34:19.

26 Sir 34:20.

*The divine eye's seventh [property of] sight leads to the everlasting kingdom of glory.\**

Seventh, the gaze of God's eyes is something that leads to the kingdom of glory, Job 36: God "does not withdraw his eyes from the righteous, and he places kings on the throne forever, and they are exalted there."<sup>27</sup> To that kingdom may he lead us, he who lives and reigns without end. Amen.\*

27 Job 36:7.