Iconography of Blindness

Images of blindness in western art
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Sampson Blind: St Chapelle 1248

The Apotheosis of Homer 1827 Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres, Louvre

Centrepiece of Roman mosaic depicting the muses; Vichten, Luxembourg. Calliope: muse of epic poetry, with Homer 240 AD
Lucas Cranach the younger; c. 1545
Giovanni Bellini; 1472; oil on canvas; Musei Civici, Pesaro.
Michelangelo, 1542-45: Cappella Paolina, Vatican Palace
"Ananias restoring the sight of Saint Paul"
Pietro Da Cortona – 1631
Capuchin church of S. Maria della Concezione: Rome

God asks Ananias, a Christian from Damascus, to go to the house where Saul lives.

And Ananias went his way, and entered the house; and putting his hands on him said: "Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on the way as you came, has sent me, that you might receive your sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost."

And immediately there fell from his eyes as it had been scales: and he received his sight at once and arose, and was baptized;

*And when he had received food, he was strengthened.* (The Acts of the Apostles 9:3-18)
Blinding as punishment

Lucius Sergius Paulus Proconsul of Cyprus under Claudius
Paul had been invited to preach but is heckled by Elymas, a "magus".
Paul states that God has decided to make him temporarily blind.
A cloud of darkness immediately begins blocking his sight; after this Sergius Paulus is converted to Christianity.

Set of ten cartoons commissioned by Pope Leo X for tapestries for Sistine Chapel hung below Michelangelo's ceiling.
Michelangelo had worked behind locked doors.
Whilst away, his relative, architect Bramante let Raphael see the unfinished ceiling frescos.
Raphael quickly changed his figure of Isaiah he had been working on in the St. Agostino church.
Conscious that his work would be seen beside the recently completed ceiling.
With Michelangelo's ceiling became most famous and influential designs of the Renaissance, and were well known to all artists of the Renaissance and Baroque.
Admiration peaked in C18th and 19th centuries; described as "the Parthenon sculptures of modern art"
Belisarius

Jean-François Marmontel's novel Bélisaire (1767), revived interest in Belisarius—a popular general of Byzantine Empire career was sabotaged by the jealous Emperor Justinian I.

In the novel, the emperor has General blinded becomes a beggar.

Later recognised and aided by former officers and his family.

1710: Legend used as a metaphor in a pamphlet to highlight poor treatment of disgraced Marlborough by ungrateful state.

This dramatic tale of patriotism, injustice, and redemption popular in revolutionary and post-revolutionary France.

Antiroyalist elements in French society found parallels in the court of Louis XVI, which was coming under increased criticism.

Common subject for painters and sculptors

Court of Emperor Justinian with archbishop Maximian Belasarius officials & Praetorian Guards; Basilica of San Vitale in Ravenna, Born in Germania (Bulgaria) becomes commander.

Campaigns increase Byzantine Empire.

Puts down riot in Hippodrome.

563: Accused of plotting to kill jealous Justinian probably innocent, was disgraced.

Restored to favour left in peace until his death.
Nicholas-René Jollain
“Belisarius Begging Alms” 1767

(b Paris, 1732; d Paris, 1804) pupil of Jean-Baptiste Marie Pierre.
2nd in 1754 Prix de Rome competition.
1765: approved at the Académie Royale
Soldier horrified seeing his old commander begging.
Louis Petit de Bachaumont, admired the composition and the motif of the child begging with an upturned soldier’s helmet.
Denis Diderot, on the other hand, dismissed the work as ‘a bad sketch’.

Later legend Justinian ordered Belisarius' eyes to be put out, and reduced to homeless beggar near the Pincian Gate of Rome,
Jean-Baptiste Stouf
Bust of Belisarius 1785 Getty

Heavy eyelids almost completely cover his blind eyes,
Deeply set eye sockets, encircled by wrinkles, caused by enophthalmos, the shrinking of an eye blinded by trauma.

Stouf's mastery of marble carving. Beautifully sculpted beard and hair, wrinkled skin.
Echo classical and Baroque sculpture but also anticipate the Romantic movement of the 1800s.
François-André Vincent (1746–1816)
Belisarius 1776

son of the miniaturist François-Elie Vincent studied under Joseph-Marie Vien.
won the *Prix de Rome* in 1768.
1771-75 studied Académie de France Rome.

secular saint, sharing the suffering of the downtrodden poor

François-André Vincent by Adélaïde Labille-Guiard, painted 1795
Jacques-Louis David:  
*Belisarius asking for alms* 1781

David had just returned to Paris after his sojourn in Rome when he submitted this painting to gain admission to the French Academy (sole right to public exhibitions).

First example of new heroic and austere style Neoclassicism.

Parallels between the actions of Justinian and the repression imposed by contemporary rulers.

"This could happen to anyone traitor to the crown"

Man of virtue destroyed by envy, and David’s painting stands as a warning against a corrupt, envy-infested State.

1768: Political Register: Franklin uses dismembered Britannia: captioned *date obolum Belisario*; highlighting unfair treatment of American colonies.

Combines themes of charity (the alms giver), injustice (Belisarius), and the radical reversal of power (the soldier who recognises his old commander).

*Bélisaire demandant l’aumône*  
*Musée des Beaux-Arts, Lille,*
Belisarius and His Guide
1794: Bronze Metropolitan
Antoine Denis Chaudet 1763–1810:

1791: terracotta model for this group was exhibited at the Salon

contrast between the forms of the sightless but ever-proud mendicant and his weary young guide.

The quality of the bronze led early commentators to suppose Chaudet carried it out himself,

more likely he turned to a professional foundry for the expertise needed to give the metal its range of surfaces
Blind Belisarius carries his guide who is near death bitten by a snake.

The general's young companion is present in Marmontel's novel. But to stress the pathos, Gérard introduced the snakebite.

Gérard's Belisarius does not beg standing and erect, his muscular form in sharp contrast to his guide's weakening body.

The helmet emphasizes the general's heroic past emphasising the injustice of his fall from grace.
Early Greek sculpture in bronze and porous limestone,
Later used Marble
**Naxos**—Best close-grained and sparkling,
**Parian** (from Paros) - rougher grain and more translucent,
**Pentelic** (near Athens) - more opaque turns yellow with age (iron content).

Greek sculpture was not polished but painted
Skin, hair, eyebrows, lips, and patterns on clothing were added in bright colours.
Eyes were often inlaid using bone, crystal, or glass.
Bronze spears, swords, helmets, jewellery, and diadems, some had bronze disc (*meniskoi*) suspended over the head to prevent bird soiling
West frieze, XLVII, 132–136, British Museum

Phidias showing the frieze in the Parthenon to friend Lawrence Alma-Tadema (1836-1912), 1868.
Truth Illuminating
Human Blindness

Volterrano: Italian, red chalk about 1650
Red chalk, heightened with white gouache
drawing for a fresco in a palazzo in Florence:
Getty

Female personification of Truth removes veil
from eyes of an allegorical figure
representing intellectual and spiritual
Blindness. Holds sceptre and crown
Luminous highlights in white lead. Touches
of lead white, and chalk shading define the
cushions but also create the form of left arm.

Not just using contour lines. In 1636:
Medici family commissioned frescoes on the
family history for their villa in Florence;
Volterrano finished them twelve years later
Lady Justice

(Justitia, Roman goddess of Justice, = Greek goddesses Themis and Dike)

Allegorical personification of the moral force in judicial systems

Justitia depicted carrying scales and a sword, and wearing a blindfold.

Iconography courthouses blends the attributes of several goddesses

Roman blindfolded Fortuna (fate)
Hellenistic Greek Tyche (luck),
Nemesis (sword carrying vengeance).

Justitia was only commonly represented as "blind" since end of the 15th century. The first known representation of blind Justice is Hans Gieng's 1543 statue on the Gerechtigkeitsbrunnen (Fountain of Justice) in Berne.
Blind justice

“Thrones” Angels of Third Order Humility, Peace and Submission. Reside in the area of the cosmos where material form begins to take shape. The lower Choir of Angels need the Thrones to access God.

**Tradition:** God’s Spirit is shown in a certain manner to these angels, who in turn pass on the message to men and the inferior angels

**Thrones:** in scripture the bringers of justice

Their status in hierarchy is confused, sometimes placed above the Seraphim, sometimes placed at level of Cherubim. Their position makes them some of the most powerful angels

According to St. Thomas Aquinas, they carry out the divine justice

church of St Lawrence in Harpley - west window
George Frederic Watts
Hope 1886

One of a series of allegorical subjects intended for a decorative scheme the 'House of Life'.

Hope is usually identified by an anchor Watts more original approach.

Blind Hope seated on a globe and playing on a lyre which has all its strings broken except one.

Mood of desolation may reflect death of his adopted daughter Blanche's one-year old child.
Blindness and War: James Collinson (1825 – 1881) **Returning Home (Home Again)** Tate Gallery

The return home of a soldier who was blinded in the Crimea.
Blindness of war

Dix, Otto (1891-1969)
Streichholzhaendler I - The Match Vendor
I. 1920: Kunstmuseum, Stuttgart


Shown at the Nazi Exhibition
"Degenerated Art" in the Galeriegebäude am Münchener Hofgarten (July 19, 1937), later destroyed
Gassed: 1919 John Singer Sargent
Sentimentality

Victorian sentimentality and pity, led to the establishment of institutions for blind
1791: First The Royal School for the Blind in Liverpool by Edward Rushton.
End of C19th over 50 such institutions, educated, employed and fed over 1,000 people.
Without education and employment blind children a drain on the poor rates

Useful toil for blind meant the ‘Blind Trades’, basket weaving, brush making, piano tuning.
David Blunkett Former Labour cabinet minister advised best career he could hope for was a piano tuner.
Blind and deaf Institutions ‘depressed the expectations of all their pupils’,

1889: Report of the Royal Commission on the Blind, Deaf and Dumb, &c., of UK Trades employed by institutions for the blind across the UK.

This gentleman is self sufficient, generating enough money to start a family

Michael Frederick Halliday,
The Blind Basket Maker and his First Child, 1856
Children Guiding Their Blind Father Over The Bridge

**William Redmore Bigg (1755 – 1828)***
The Blind Girl (1856)
John Everett Millais

Two itinerant beggars, one of whom is a blind musician, with concertina.
They are resting by the roadside after a rainstorm, before travelling to the town of Winchelsea, visible in the background.

Allegory of the senses, contrasting the experiences of the blind and sighted sisters.

Blind feels the warmth of the sun on her face, and fondles a leaf of grass,
Sighted shields her eyes from the sun and rain
Double rainbow incorrectly coloured when first exhibited in 1856

Inner rainbow inverts the order of the colours.
Later corrected.
The sheet around her neck is captioned "Pity the Blind".
August Sander
Blind Girls 1930,
Blind Children 1930

August Sander made this portrait at a home for the blind in Düren, just west of Cologne.

The younger man on the left was apparently of interest to Sander, who made a detailed enlargement of him, entitled *Blind Man, Congenitally Afflicted.*
Ancient times: Blind people heroic or victims of punishments

_Tuscan Disputations_ Cicero. “The soul may have delight in many different ways, even without the use of sight.

Christian era: Religious models and church control

Hospitals received endowments became rich. Most blind however probably lived without charity in their communities.

Rich source of fascinating images

Some give insights to the cultural perception of disability

Mark P O'Toole: _Caring for the Blind in Medieval Paris: Life at the Quinze-Vingts, 1250—1430_


Sabina Zonno: Image of the blind or blindfold man in some c13-14 european manuscripts

Eric Moormann _Representations of Homer in modern times_

The Blind in French Society from the Middle Ages to the Century of Louis Braille: Zina Weygand

Crime and Punishment in the Middle Ages and Early Modern Age: edited by Albrecht Classen

"Biblical and Theological Perspectives on Disability: Pauline A. Otieno

The Armenian Gospels of Gladzor: The Life of Christ Illuminated By Thomas F. Mathews

Mary V Orna: Artists’ Pigments in Illuminated Medieval Manuscripts: Tracing Artistic Influences and Connections—A Review

**Thank You**
Evidence for painting

Terracotta column-krater (bowl for mixing wine and water) Group of Boston 00.348. Greek, Late Classical, ca. 360–350 B.C.

Artist in cap and exomis tunic bare torso painting a statue of Herakles (club, bow and lion skin)

Encaustic technique: mixture of mineral-based pigments & wax heated colour applied with spatulas kept warm in the charcoal brazier

Zeus, ruler of the gods, and Nike, personification of victory, oversee as Invisible Herakles wanders in on right
Under Hadrian: return to idealised images of Classical Greek sculpture

Important innovation: Sculpting of pupil rendering a more realistic illusion of the eyes in marble.

Previously, pupil and iris had only been painted on to the sculpture.
Now sculpted

Head of Constantine, from the Basilica of Constantine, A.D. 313,
Aristotle (384–322 B.C.) rests his hand on a bust of Homer.
Philosopher, wears the jeweled belt given to him by his pupil Alexander the Great,
Contemplating the life of the poor blind bard

Homer’s blindness is generally considered as a mark of wiseness, spiritual richness,
Not as disabling lack of sight.

Homer’s busts gaze up toward the Olympic heaven where the gods live

Similar gaze in Hellenistic statues of princes, generals philosophers
Sir Thomas Lawrence
Homer Reciting his
Poems 1790

Early work was exhibited in 1791.

Painted for the connoisseur, Richard Payne Knight, subject and style to suit his classical taste.

In a woodland glade, Homer is shown reciting his Iliad to an admiring audience.

The nude youth in the foreground was drawn from a famous pugilist named Jackson.
Tiresias (Τειρέσιας)

Blind prophet of Apollo at Thebes, lived as woman for 7yrs

Two versions of his blindness.

1. Pherecydes of Syros: Athena blinds him after he stumbled on her bathing. His mother a nymph begs reversal. Cannot but cleans his ears instead so he hears the birds. Gift of augery: interpret the Will of gods by studying the flight of the birds.

2. Hesiod: Struck copulating serpents with staff, transformed into woman. 7yrs later, same place she/he tramples on them and released from curse back into a man.

Zeus and Hera arguing over who had more pleasure in sex, the man or the woman: Zeus said the woman, Hera said men. They consulted Tiresias, had life as both sexes, sided with Zeus.

Angered, Hera struck Tiresias blind. Zeus could not undo the act of another deity, he gave gift of prophecy in compensation.
SOPHOCLES' DRAMA *OEDIPUS THE KING*

Oedipus, King of Thebes, consults Tiresias, to learn why Thebes is ravaged by plague.

Tiresias, knows the cause is Oedipus' murder of his own father and incestuous marriage to his own mother, reluctant to reveal his knowledge: 'It is but sorrow to be wise when wisdom profits not.'

Oedipus demands the answer: "Your silence accuses you." Tiresias replies "Miserable man, I speak, because you accuse me, I speak.... The King is the King's murderer."

Blinds himself with pins from his hanged wife & mother.
Told in a lost work by Hesiod. Giant born in Boeotia, Served King Oinopion of Khios (Chios) as huntsman,

Blinded and exiled from the island after raping the king's daughter Merope Orion stumbled to Lemnos where Hephaestus — the lame smith-god — had his forge. Hephaestus told his servant, to guide Orion to the uttermost East where Helios, the Sun, healed him
ICONOGRAPHY = to write with images
Ancient images of blindness surprisingly common
Less frequent to depict disability nowadays
Musicians
Poets
Pilgrims and beggars
Punishment blinding
Religious Punishment
Miraculous cures

Medical model alone does not help us understand concept of blindness
Religious model of meaning of blindness in medieval world.
Unfortunately no information from the blind themselves.
John Audelay Mentions his own blindness
Gilles le Muisit: Praises cataract surgery
John of Luxembourg: Heroic

Impairment: The sight malfunction
Disability: The added social and political circumstances that make the person with poor eyesight disabled
These constructs may not be shared with modern disabled people e.g. forced begging, institutions

Ancient depictions
Medieval concepts
Biblical Inspiration
Healing the blind
Penal Blinding
Modern Images
Mediaeval depictions of blind

Disability a sign of sin or spiritual imperfection.
1215: 4th Lateran council required hospital patients to confess
   Trust in church and belief in miraculous cure pilgrimage etc.

However more complicated than just a consequence of sin
Portrayed as a divine gift (insight, prophecy, or musical talent)
In medical treatises: physical impairment in need of a cure,
Blindness metaphorically associated with spiritual blindness
Source of humour being deluded, mistaken, or deceived

Jews, pagans, depicted as blind (or wearing blindfolds) incapacity
or refusal to recognize the truth

Blindness indicated by
- Closed eyes,
- Dog on a leash.
- A walking stick,
- Poverty (blind beggars) Rags (loques) and a pot for alms
- Abject postures suggesting a plea for aid or healing (in the case
  of miracle stories).

Some of these iconographies pre-date mediaeval

Drawing of a blind beggar: Pieter Bruegel the Elder holds
a small ceramic pot for alms.
Robert A. Scott *The Making of Blind Men.*
Sociological view: Agencies for the blind, “made” blind people; Blind clients were socialized to become dependent and conscious of their apparent deficit; they learned that they properly occupied a subordinate position.
this did not have to be the case.

“Crippling the Middle Ages, Medievalizing Disability History” models of disability

**Social,** which demands the recognition of the abilities of all

**Medical,** which regards disability as pathological and thus requiring correction.

**Religious,** sees disability as evidence of sin and therefore eligible for cure through spiritual redemption.

Proof that a potential saint had performed miracles while alive needed for canonization paramount among those was the cure of impairments
A measure of holiness is the success with which a saint can relieve a cripple of impairment.
Medieval Christianity often constructed disability as a spiritually impoverished state of absence of the divine where “the works of God [could] be made manifest.”

Modern medicine possibility of cures through developments in research;

Medieval Christianity held out the possibility of cure through freedom from sin and increased faith

Blind had many roles
Poets
Musicians
Beggars
Deserving and undeserving
Increasing suspicion in C14th
Objects of humour
Warriors

Jean Froissart, Chroniques (Vol. I): Edward III counting the dead on the battlefield of Crécy
C13th singing enhanced the liturgy.
Polyphonic music in the Medieval Hospitals
5/93 Legacies to Quinze-Vingts blind hospital give payment to inmates for singing deceased mass.
Legacy of Marguerite: 25 sous (x12= 1 dernier for each of 300 inmates)
Blind singers

**Poetry own blindness:**
**John Gower** (d. 1408)
**John Audelay** (d. c. 1426).
**Blind Harry, the Minstrel**, c.1440-1493 Blind from birth. Records of payments for performances at court 1473-1492.
Manuscript of *Blind Harry's Wallace* (National Library of Scotland)
**Francesco Landini:** C14th Blind musician and poet was active in Florence, where he was famed as a virtuoso on the organetto and the harp

Group of musicians Some of whom may be blind: musician to the left with a satchel and dog holding a begging bowl
Later medieval blind singers and poets

Suspicion of begging and blindness
Blind singer beggars (immoral blind beggar) in C13th farce le Garcon et l’aveugle

William Langland’s Piers Plowman,
Allegorical figure of Hunger miraculously “cures” beggars feigning blindness when the Black Death renders begging useless.

Local beggars marked by badges
Fleur de lile: Quinze Vingts

Parri Ddall, Rhiwabon Blind Parry of Ruabon) blind from birth.
Modern harp started in Italy, 2 rows of strings (Arpa Doppia).
1629: Jean le Flelle was appointed ‘musician for the harp’ at the King’s court. The triple harp adopted by the Welsh harpers living in London during the C17th. By C18th generally known as the Welsh harp"
Two street musicians fight. The man on the left, carries hurdy-gurdy, defends himself with a knife and the crank of his instrument.

The man in the center hits him with a shawm, early oboe, squirts lemon juice to test if truly blind.

Other musicians enjoy the fight. An anguished old woman prays for them to stop.

Composition of figures compressed to create a sense of closeness to the action.

Great detail: rotting teeth, leathery skin, and wild, unfocused eyes.

Textures--fabrics, wood, hair and flesh--realistically painted.
The Blind Fiddler Sir David Wilkie: 1806
An itinerant fiddler is playing for a country family. Only the children pay attention, one imitating the fiddler on bellows.
Blind as source of ridicule

**Romance of Alexander** (Bodley 264 fol. 74v), copied 1339 illuminated 1344 Jehan de Grise

Broad-brimmed hats over a hood; a loose tunic-like overgarment with shoulder-length sleeves over a fitted long-sleeved garment; On the left side of fol. 74v, four blind men armed with a club, are led by a boy.

Paris in 1425, an anonymous bourgeois chronicler recorded the following “entertainment.”

Last Sunday took place an amusement at the residence called d’Arminac in the Rue Saint Honore, four blind people, armed with a stick, were put in a park, where there was a strong pig ... a very strange battle, because they gave themselves so many great blows with those sticks that it went worse for them, because when the stronger ones believed that they hit the pig, they hit each other. On the evening before, the blind people were led through Paris all armed, a large banner in front, where there was a pig portrayed, and in front of them a man playing a bass drum.
Exploitation of blind

The 'lepre', the 'blynde', the 'dumbe', the 'deaff', the natural fool', the 'creple', the 'lame' and the 'lunatick'

Constantly present in everyday life.
Blind made pilgrimages on foot to holy sites in search of relief. Among highest % of people cured. Miracle Registers

Blind relied on charity
Victims of abuse (French farces, illuminations)

Le Garçon et l'Aveugle

Short play Blind man needs a guide, persuades a boy to take the position. The boy, dislikes blind (earlier aside) He disguises his voice in order to slap the blind man incognito and then steal his money and clothes. Humiliation delights audience.

Blind considered unworthy of alms
Scene of a man stealing food from a blind beggar's bowl, through a tube.
Representing blindness

**Eyes:**
- Closed eyes
- Whitened eyes,
- Hollow orbits (enophthalmos, ptosis)
- Asymmetry of eyes or direction of gaze
- Eyes opened after healing;
- Pointing, touching eyes;

**Stance**
- Uplifted head; arms held out
- Unsteady gait
- Bedridden figure
- Seated unoccupied figure next to busy person

**Props:**
- Cane
- Musical instrument
- Led by a Guide
- Child or dog
- Use of dark glasses
- Thickened lenses
- Blindfolds
Guide dogs

Pompeii
poor condition

He faces two women in a market
Not certain the man is blind.
Maiuri, curator of Naples Museum, argues that the man's posture is that of a beggar.

Holds a walking stick in front suggests using stick to find obstacles not a walking aid.
The leash is, loose, and attached a wide collar.

The dog, looks back at the man
Ears pointed like a terrier.

Mural Painting from Pompeii Market scene: blind man with dog Museo Nationale - Naples
Beggars and Street Characters (流民图)
Zhou Chen (周臣, 7-1535), Ming Dynasty

Along the River During the Qingming (清明) Festival – shanghe tu 上河图 “going-along-the-river-picture”, a panoramic 5m long painting by Zhang Zeduan AD 1085-1145

Painted on light-colored silk bearing Emperor Huizong’s signature it depicts life in Capital Bianjing during Northern Song period: 814 humans, 28 boats, 60 animals, 30 buildings, 20 vehicles, nine sedan chairs and 170 trees. Famous because of its geometrically accurate images of boats, bridges, shops, and scenery. "China’s Mona Lisa".
Seeing eye dog

Blind beggar.

Closed eyes, dog and a stick
Brown patched tunic, pendant sleeves;
Broad-brimmed black hat over a light brown hood.

Carries a satchel and a long cane

Smithfield Decretals (British Library Royal 10 E IV), c. 1340
Folio 110r; bas-de-page scene of a blind beggar and his dog.
France, ?Toulouse
Romance of Alexander (Bodley 264 fol77v), 1338-1344. Two images of a man, holding a staff and the leash of a dog.
Blind beggar
- eyes closed,
- wearing wide-brimmed hat,
- He carries bowl in right hand
- walking stick, held in left hand
- Led by Guide dog
Josaphat Meeting a Blind Man and a Beggar
Tempera colors and colored washes on paper

As in the story of Prince Siddhartha (Buddha), the young privileged prince had wished to see outside Palace.

His father King Avenier persecuted the Christian Church founded by Thomas in India.
Prince Josaphat rides out, witnesses physical maladies for the first time.
His horse stops just before a blind man being led by a dog.
Closed eyes yet the naïve prince waves at him.
Note Buddha like hand position.
A lame man, lifts a cup for alms.
In the upper right, Christians martyred man is hanged another is tortured on the wheel.
Pieter Bruegel the Elder  1568  Museo di Capodimonte, Naples, Mat 15:14
Distemper: Glue binds pigment to linen
Death: I cut you off from your guide;

The blind man: I cannot take a step without my dog

Dance Macabre
Matthaus Merian, 1649
Blindness in the Old Testament

Eyesight failed in old age. (Deut. 34:7 makes a point Moses' eyesight had not failed in old age.
Isaac (Gen. 27:1), Jacob (Gen. 48:10), Eli (I Sam. 3:2; 4:15), and Ahijah the Shilonite (I Kings 14:4),
Helplessness and exploitation
blind, lame, helplessness Sam. 5:6; Isa. 35:5–6; Jer. 31:7,
warned against exploiting (Lev. 19:14; Deut. 27:18; Job 29:15).
Disqualified priests from sacrificing or approaching altar (Lev. 21:17–23)
Sacrificial animals unacceptable (Lev. 22:21; Deut. 15:21;
"the blind and the lame shall not come into the house" (II Sam. 5:8)

Metaphoric: Lack of understanding (Isa. 29:9–10)
Judges warned: gifts blind the eyes of the discerning (Ex. 23:8; Deut. 16:19).
Isaiah: mission to cloud the eyes of Israel so that it will not "see" and repent and be healed (6:10).
Isaiah 56:10 blindness refers to negligence,
Metaphor for oppression and injustice Deut 28:28–29 Isa59:9–10
Derived from Mesopotamian association of sun-god & justice.
Blindness to describe those who dwell in the darkness of prison or captivity (Isa. 42:7, 16–19; 43:8; 49:9; 61:1; cf. Ps. 146:7–8; Also has roots in Mesopotamian royal inscriptions).
(Jeffrey Tigay)

Jerroboam, king of northern 10 tribes of Israel, Son Abijah became sick. Sent wife to, Ahijah, disguised since Jeroboam had forsaken the Lord.
"I will bring disaster on your dynasty and will destroy every one of your male descendants, slave and free alike, anywhere in Israel. I will burn up your royal dynasty as one burns up trash until it is all gone." (1 Kings 14:10)
The Wife of Jeroboam and the Blind Prophet
George Henry Grenville Manton 1888 Guildhall
"an eye for an eye" Exodus and Leviticus (אין יָדָה יָד, ayin tachat ayin)

**Punishment by human** "an eye for an eye" in talion formula (Ex. 21:24; Lev. 24:20; Deut. 19:21)

**Samson** blinded by Philistines and **King Zedekiah** by Nebuchadnezzar (Judg. 16:21; II Kings 25:7; Jer. 39:7; Nahash the Ammonite demanded blinding right eye of the Jabesh-Gilead for sparing the city (I Sam. 11:2).

**Blindness punishment inflicted by God:**
Threatened for Israel's violation of the covenant (Deut. 28:28-29; "negligent shepherd" of Zechariah 11:15-17; Leviticus 26:14-16, punishment for Israel's disobedience "I will bring upon you sudden terror, wasting diseases and fever that will destroy your sight and drain away your life."
The Lord will inflict you with madness, blindness and confusion of the mind. At midday, you will grope about like a blind man in the dark. You will be unsuccessful in everything that you do, day after day you will be oppressed and robbed, with no one to rescue you (Deut. 28:28-29).
Proverbs (30:17) the eye which is disrespectful to parents will be plucked out by birds of prey,
God protects His servants' from assailants with blinding flashes (Gen. 19:11; II Kings 6:18-20)
or permanent blindness of enemy horses (Zech. 12:4)
People: May their eyes be darkened so they cannot see, and their backs be bent forever. (Ps. 69:24)
Egypt the land of the blind

Blindness common in the ancient Near East.

Preventive ointments, especially kohl
Deliberate depiction of blind eyes
Painted
Inlaid
Copper rim opaque quartz, rock crystal.

Private images
Not meant to be viewed as art
Tobit

Jacob van Maerlant (c.1230-c.1288) greatest Flemish poet of the C13th.

Dog has no part in narrative but is ubiquitous in medieval iconography of story.

Tobias heals Tobit from blindness by putting the gall of the fish on his father's eyes.
Chartres Tobit

Tobias on journey with dog and angel
Tobias catches fish
Meeting of Tobias
and Raguel. Sarah's father
Tobias and Sarah his wife praying
Raphael binding demon Asmodeus
Tobias curing his father
A crowned head

Tobit blesses son. Angel appears
Tobit sends son with letters to Gabelus
Tobit conversing with wife
Tobit becomes blind
Tobit burying a jew
Tobit & Son preparing feast
A crowned Head
Caladrius birds

Common in medieval bestiaries.
Lived in the courts of kings,
Usually pure white 'like the swan'.
Sometimes black
The dung of the Caladrius believed to cure blindness,
Direct application of guano in the eyes of the afflicted.

Prognostic abilities.
Brought into a sickroom if it turned away,
that person would die.
If caladrius kept his gaze on the ill person
then flew away would take the illness with it, patient recovery.
Tobit - Rembrandt, 1630: Anna and the Blind Tobit: National Gallery
Abraham de Pape (circa 1620–1666): Nat Gallery: spinning-wheel reference to Anna working for money; bare cupboard to their poverty. Interpreted as a genre scene with an old couple. However, comparison with a similar painting by Rembrandt suggests Tobit Story.

C17th- Holland, paintings sometimes protected by curtains, and illusionistic representations of them.
Isaac tricked blesses Jacob

Isaac and Rebekah two sons: Esau then Jacob. Old blind Isaac is about to die, he wants to bless his elder son, Esau, but is tricked by his mother’s favourite Jacob.

Isaac sent Esau out to hunt for food, But Rebekah instructs Jacob "Go kill two of our goats from the herd, and I'll prepare the meal just the way Isaac likes it, Then you can give it to your father and tell him you're Esau returning from the hunt.

Esau selling his birthright to Jacob; REMBRANDT; 1645, drawing; British Museum
Jacob receives Isaac’s Blessing; Jusepe de RIBERA; 1637; oil on canvas; Museo del Prado, Madrid

Isaac blessing Jacob; Govert FLINCK; 1639; Oil on canvas; Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam
Jacob blesses Ephraim

Severe drought in Canaan, Jacob and his sons moved to Egypt at the time when his son Joseph was viceroy.

Over 17 years Jacob (Israel) grew old and blind. This time, it is Jacob who is asked to bless his grand-sons, Manasse and Ephraim, children of son Joseph.

Servant supports the aged patriarch as he performs the blessing.

At the far right stands Asenath, Joseph's wife daughter of an Egyptian priest.

Cool, muted palette; simplicity of form and composition.

The resemblance to antique art

Use of classical garments and accessories, and the arrangement of figures within a shallow, frieze-like space, before an architectural backdrop.

American-born painter of religious, and mythological subjects historical painter to George III (1772-1801), a founder of the Royal Academy (1768), and in 1792 he succeeded Sir Joshua Reynolds as its president.
Joseph presents the elder Manasse, Jacob chooses the younger, Ephraim. In order to reverse the benediction, crosses his hands above the heads of the children. See Genesis, Chapter 48, verses 13-22.

Translucent glaze over paint use of light and shadow (Chiaroscuro) draws attention to the main characters while obscuring the background. Creates a halo surrounding Ephraim as he is being blessed. Palette of yellows, browns, and reds.
Ancient Egyptian blind harpists

1768: James Bruce discovered tomb of Ramesses III, two images of a blind harpist

Common theme in Egyptian art.
47 tombs in the Theban necropolis depict blind harp players.
Harpist sang of death and life after death.
Reassuring deceased: Tomb a joyful place dead are happy

1: Eye represented without an iris.
2: Slit-shaped eye with/without an iris.
3: Upper curve only

Blind musician playing harp tomb of scribe Nakht
1422-1411 BC
Healing of blind

ONE BLIND MAN: OUTSIDE THE VILLAGE OF BETHSAIDA
Told only in Mark:8:22-26
Jesus took his patient out of town, put some spittle on his eyes, and laid hands on him. “I see men like trees, walking,” Jesus repeated the procedure, resulting in clear and perfect eyesight.

JESUS HEALS TWO BLIND MEN IN GALLILEE
Only in Matthew: 9:27-31
Early in Jesus’ Ministry as Jesus left the home of Jairus after raising the little girl and returned to the place He was staying.

JESUS HEALING THE BLIND NEAR JERICHO
Each of the three synoptic gospels tells of the third episode of healing on the road to Jerusalem shortly before his passion.
Luke 18:35-43 one unnamed blind man, as Jesus approached Jericho.
Matthew 20:29-34 similar account of two unnamed blind men being healed outside of Jericho.
Mark 10:46-52 - Blind Bartimaeus (Son of Timaeus) as Jesus left Jericho, the last healing in Mark.

JESUS HEALS THE MAN BORN BLIND
John 9:1-7 - Near the Temple of Jerusalem. (Celidonius), “Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?”
“Neither this man nor his parents sinned, but this happened so that the works of God might be displayed in him. As long as it is day, we must do the works of him who sent me. Night is coming, when no one can work. While I am in the world, I am the light of the world.”
After saying this, he spat on the ground, made some mud, and put it on the man’s eyes. “Go, wash in the Pool of Siloam” So the man went and washed, and came home seeing.
'They came to Bethsaida. Some people brought a blind man to him and begged him to touch him.

He took the blind man by the hand and led him out of the village: and when he had put saliva and laid his hands on him, he asked him, can you see anything?'

And the man looked up and said, 'I can see people but they look like trees, walking.' Then Jesus laid his hand on his eyes again; and he looked intently and his sight was restored, and he saw everything clearly.'
Matthew 9:27-31

As Jesus went on from there, two blind men followed him, calling out, “Have mercy on us, Son of David!”

28 When He had gone indoors, the blind men came to Him, and He asked them, “Do you believe that I am able to do this?”
“Yeah, Lord,” they replied.
29 Then He touched their eyes and said, “According to your faith will it be done to you.”

30 And their sight was restored.
Jesus warned them sternly: “See that no one knows about this.”
31 But they went out and spread the news about Him all over the region.

Christ Heals the Two Blind Men on the Road to Jericho;
Basilica di Santa Pollinare Nuovo, Ravenna, Italy; 6th century
And it came to pass, that as he was come nigh unto Jericho, a certain blind man sat by the way side begging:

**Egbert** (ca. 950 – 9 December 993)
chancellor of Otto II in 976
Archbishop of Trier
Trier rivals Mainz and Cologne as the artistic centre of the Ottonian world.

Egbert given illuminated manuscript **Codex Egberti**.

Early form of Romanesque style, probably produced at Reichenaun
And while they were departing from Jericho, a great multitude followed him.

30. And, lo, two blind men sitting near the road, when they heard that Jesus was passing by, cried aloud, saying, Have mercy on us, O Lord, thou Son of David.

31. And the multitude rebuked them, that they might be silent; but they cried out the more, saying, Have mercy on us, O Lord, thou Son of David.

32. And Jesus stood, and called them, and said, What do you wish that I should do to you?

33. They say to him, Lord, that our eyes may be opened.

34. And Jesus, moved with compassion, touched their eyes; and immediately their eyes received sight, and they followed him.
Chora mosaics

Church of the Holy Saviour Outside the Walls, rebuilt C11th
Edirnekapı neighborhood of İstanbul
“Chora=outside the city”

Interior decoration dates from 1312 funded by Theodore Metochites, a poet and man of letters who was auditor of the treasury under Emperor Andronikos II (r 1282–1328).

Mosaic, above door to the nave, depicts Theodore offering the church to Christ.

Chora monastery location important necropolis relics of St Babylas, martyred AD298, with his 84 disciples, in Nicomedia (İzni), buried C4th

Christ Healing Two Blind Men (Inner narthex): On the NW pendentive of dome, St Peter the Apostle next to Jesus healing two seated blind men. Inscription, “Christ healing two blind men”.

The Chora monastery built 536, by Emperor Justinian (527-565) on the ruined cemetery chapel.
Cecus sive Cecitas, Omne Bonum
(British Library Royal 6 E VI, fol. 245), c. 1360-1375
Illustration accompanying definition of blindness.
In an illuminated letter C,
Christ heals two blind men.
Not wearing hats or cloaks No sticks
Gladzor Gospels

Armenia run as Persian Aristocratic feudal society vassal of Roman Empire. C4th Christianised under King Trdat
Alienated by council of Chalcedon, linguistic independence forms idiosyncratic development.

Written and decorated by monks
Outside village of Bethsaida, Christ leads the blind man of Mark 8:27-34 and anointing his eyes with spittle. Toros

Monastery of Gladzor: vibrant artistic center
Toros (Theodore) of Taron: Best known painter at Monastery of Gladzor. Signed his work
Faces painted as cream background with green and white details

Painter of the Green ground: Completely covered the green under-painting with brown, red and white.

Painter of Olive ground: (fourth painter)
Faces painted over a drab olive background overlayd with milky-white and brown-pink highlights enhanced with grey shadows brush stroke is similar to the Painter of the Green Ground, but colours are brighter and faces are lighter.
White sticks

"The Fourth Painter of the Glajor Gospels." (ca. 1300-1307)

Christ holding a scroll blesses two seated blind men
blind men, eyes tightly closed, hold light-colored canes with both hands and each wears a satchel. Their background is a wordly cityscape.

Painter of the Olive Ground (the Fourth Painter)
Alcaeus, aristocratic, warrior poet of Mytilene, city-state on Lesbos; most influential of North Aegean Greek cities, strong navy and colonies

holy/pure, honey-smiling Sappho Poetess listens as he plays kithara.

Alma-Tadema copied the marble seating of the Theater of Dionysos in Athens, substituting names of members of Sappho's sorority for the Athenian officials

Walters Art Museum: Baltimore

Sir Lawrence Alma-Tadema (1836–1912)

“the worst painter of the 19th century” John Ruskin,
paintings were "about worthy enough to adorn bourbon boxes." consigned to obscurity: 1881.
Mark’s Bartimaeus
the blind beggar of Jericho

Christ and Peter halos, background of gold over green.
Young disciple ultramarine background takes hand of the seated blind beggar
Bartimaeus holds eyes tightly closes, Satchel and hat.

recipients of healing, are usually anonymous
“Bartimaeus, son of Timaeus” (ὁ γιὸς Τιμαίου Βαρτιμαῖος, ho huios Timaiou Bartimaios).
‘bar’ is Aramaic for ‘son of’ suggests that ‘son of Timaeus’ is the partial translation of ‘Bartimaeus’.

Alternative root could be Aramaic word κακίς (tma), meaning ‘unclean’, ‘impure’, ‘abominable’.

In this sense, ‘Bartimaeus’ could mean ‘son of blind (impure) man’.

Bigotry against those with disabilities that they inherited a parental fault or sin.

Injunction against the blind sacrificing as priests (Lev. 21.18-20).

Book of Isaiah several references to blindness indicating a lack of spiritual understanding.
The Healing of the Blind;
The Healing of the Possessed
Armenian, Lake Van, Turkey, 1386
Black ink and watercolors on paper
Getty
Matthew 12:22-28

- Then they brought him a demon-possessed man who was blind and mute, and Jesus healed him, so that he could both talk and see.

The Très Riches Heures du Duc de Berry,
A book of prayers to be said at canonical hours
Commissioned by Jean, Duc de Berry painted by the Limbourg brothers.
Scene set in a chapel
Christ blesses the possessed youth struggling in his mother's arms,
Demon leaves the boy's head as a dragon.

Paul de Limbourg Dutch, fl. 1385–1416 two brothers, Jean and Herman.
1411: Limbourgs permanent members of Berry’s household.
They all died in 1416
Mark:8:22-26

Duccio di Buoninsegna ca. 1255 – 1319
The Healing of a Blind Man; Nat. Gall
Christ is centre of composition
Same man shown as blind then healed (throws away his stick).

Part of the artist's grand altarpiece, the Maesta, Siena Cathedral.
The back predella illustrated scenes from Christ's life and ministry.
Predella: lower part of a retable
Rear part of an altar;

Figures are becoming more individual than flatter iconography of Byzantine art.

Evolution of Gothic art reaches a transitional stage here: Byzantine characteristic gold leaf background – is pushed out by architecture and believable scenery.
El Greco (Domenikos Theotokopoulos)

b. Heraclian 1540–1614 d. Toledo:
*Dormition of the Virgin* 1567 standard Byzantine formula depicts Mary’s death and the *transitus* of her soul into heaven. Small used for solo contemplation.

1567: Cretan icon painter arrives in Venice to master colour, he went to Rome influenced by Michaelangelo.

Giulio Clovio letter Nov 16, 1570, introduces to Cardinal Alessandro Farnese a “young discepolo of Titian from Candia” recently arrived in Rome.

**Christ Healing the Blind**

Popular subject in Counter-Reformation because the healing of blindness is emblematic of the revelation of the true faith, manifestation of light as divine grace.

Theatrical effects gestures and perspective make religious narrative a story as well as a devotional image.

Intelligent use of ancient Roman architecture in the Parma *Christ Healing the Blind*.

1576 denigrates Michelangelo’s *Last Judgment* in the Sistine Chapel, suggests tearing fresco to the ground and to replace a better more decent version.

fled to Spain: Paravicino, “Crete gave him life and his paintbrushes; Toledo gave him a better country, where he began with his death, to attain eternity.”

Venice’s Cretan population largest ethnic minority in Italy.

Construction of San Giorgio dei Greci 1539-73, Greek artists worked for both Venetian and Cretan clients.

The earliest, an unsigned panel in Dresden, generic motifs of a dog, sack and pitcher in the foreground, eliminated in subsequent versions.

Parma version, has been cut and the group on the right is incomplete.
The third and largest version, in Metropolitan is Roman period, after 1570.
Christ healing a blind man by anointing his eyes. The two figures in the foreground the blind man’s parents. The upper left unfinished.
C16th Italian style: Use prints for compositional inspiration. The inspiration is from Venice. The dramatic use of recession behind the figures in the foreground is Tintoretto’s invention. Knowledgeable use of Roman architecture. Borrowing some ideas, but using an original composition. On extreme left, is young El Greco.
"Jesus Healing the Blind of Jericho": Nicolas Poussin - c1650 Louvre
Jesus violates four rules of Sabbath: plowing (spittle rolling on the dirt), kneading (making the clay), anointing (putting clay on the man's eyes), and healing (illegal unless a life-threatening emergency). Healing in this manner purposefully violated Sabbath rules to wake up the Pharisees. However they metaphorically remain blind.
Blind Homer?

Homer 750-700 BC. Bronze age author of *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, epic poems of heroes Achilles and Odysseus.

Passage describing blind bard, Demodocus, in the court of the Phaeacian king, stories of Troy to the shipwrecked Odysseus “the muse stripped of sight but gave the man the power of stirring, rapturous song”. Self-portrait?

Age before realistic portraiture.

Homer portrayed for the first time 2nd quarter C5th BC, Greeks started to make portraits of important persons from the past.

Standardised images, an ancient could even tell which school of philosophy an idealised portrait represented.

Popular image: 13 surviving copies in marble.

The poet (Head turn and slightly parted lips) is represented as a blind man.

Dignified not decrepit.

Hair held by fillet (often denoted a poet) and knot prevents forelocks coming down.

Bronze statue was the original.

One of which was present in the Baths of Constantinople as late as 500AD.

Christodoros “He was like an aged man but his age was mild for an infinite grace suffused him
Pennington and Bridgen

*Christ healing a blind man* 1886

Rectangular terracotta panel of seven figures
189 cm high x 305 cm long approx
Royal Eye Hospital, Manchester

Ceremonial bronze door, St. James Cathedral, Seattle, by Ulrich Henn.
Careful interpretation

The parish church of Saints Ippolito and Cassiano
Pieve dei Santi Ippolito e Cassiano SE of Pisa.
970, rebuilt 1180. **Biduino** famous sculptor makes and signs the architrave of the central portal.
3 scenes: “healing of the blind” raising of Lazarus and entry into Jerusalem. Stories that occur sequentially in John.
Scene in the box on the left, a bearded man extends an arm to two smaller figures.
In fact pulling hair and one is reading! Similar to sculpture of a female Grammar holding a flail (1 of 7 liberal arts) on the west façade of Chartes.

**St Cassian of Imola** teacher refused to worship at pagan alters put to death by his students stabbing him with stylus, the patron saint is being honoured.

Cf St Angelo in Campo Lucca and San Leonardo al Frigido also in Western Tuscany. Major pilgrim routes.

Dorothy Glass in Reading medieval images Sears Michigan

Sarcophagus inscription **HOC OPUS QVOD CERNIS BIDVINVS DOCTE PEREGIT**. Biduinus did this work in a learned fashion.
Medieval Hospices for blind

Hospitals almshouses set up to give care.
Archbishop Lanfranc St John's Canterbury, care to men and women 'oppressed by various kinds of infirmities'.

By the later Middle Ages, London and York 35 hospitals each, Norwich 15, Exeter 10 and Canterbury 9 Some specialised

Medieval religious orders cared for their own sick. In the C7th century, the monastrey of Whitby, a building 'to which they used to take those who were infirm, or who seemed to be at the point of death'.

Archbishop Thurstam (1114-40) Hospital of St Mary Magdalen in Ripon, blind priests.
1250: Louis IX Quinze-Vigns: 300 blind residents and their sighted guides

Attitudes to disability were mixed.

- Punishment for sin,
- Serendipity: born under the hostile influence of Saturn.
- State of Grace: disabled people were closer to God - suffering purgatory on earth rather than after death and would get to heaven sooner.
- Exploited: 1297: residents of the leper house in West Somerton mutinied against the thieving abbot
Healing of the blind

Roman Sacophagus of an Eye Doctor
Ravenna, San Vittore 100AD
Ophthalmology Tradition kept up in Byzantium

Lapsed in Western provinces
Increasingly dependent on the Church for alms and occasional cures

Deserving poor: Widows, orphans aged and those who gave up wealth for religious reasons
Non-deserving: those vagabonds capable but refusing to work

Driven by ethical obligation of Christians to relieve the poor and suffering

Eschatological motivation: Charity could cleanse sin at end of world.
In absence of coherent medical system blind sought out itinerant magicians, holy people or went on pilgrimage

Miracles de Nostre Dame (BNF NAF 24541, fol. 160v), c. 1330-40 scene of pilgrimage a blind boy with a white staff walks towards a golden reliquary on a cloth-covered stand.
Adult in travelling clothing (hat, hood & long overgarment like a gardecorps).
St Remy heals Blind Hermit with his mothers milk

Chartres C13th

In C5th Laón: A blind saintly hermit concerned over the situation of Religion in France, devastated by the Vandal persecution.

Old Celina doubted his words “Know this, you will give birth to a son and while you are nursing your child, you are to anoint my eyes with your milk, and so restore my sight.”

As predicted. St. Remigius was born into the noble house of his parents, Emilius, Count of Laón & St. Celina,
The hermit’s sight was restored.

The pulpit everywhere dwelt with unction on the reality of fetish cures,
Annibale Carracci (Bologna 1560–1609)

*Healing the Man Born Blind* 1605
Mural Fresco from Hererra Chapel transferred to canvas

*Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya*

Admired painter in his time

1602: Juan Enriquez de Herrera dedicated chapel in Santiago, to Diego de Alcala.

1604 began preparatory cartoons, became ill work was finished by his collaborators, With his cousin Ludovico (1555–1619) and his older brother Agostino (1557–1602)—transformed Italian painting, artificiality of Mannerist painting, challenged by return to nature

Combining naturalism of Renaissance northern Italian painters Correggio, Titian, and Veronese creates **Baroque style**.

Contemporary in Rome Caravaggio, unsuited to large compositions and fresco
Religious model

Religiosity dominated Medieval life
Multi-sensual experience of the pilgrims
burning incense,
Ringing bells,
Kissing of relics
Chants of priests, plainsong
Magical lighting through stained glass
Dazzling images
Gold reflecting candle light

St. Augustine’s De Genesi as literram (401-415),
St. Gregory’s C8th edict on use of images
St. Bernard’s Cantica (1088-1102);

Medieval seeing was thought to provide the beholder with the sense of touching the object of their vision, creating an affective power.

As the pilgrim entered gorgeous imagery communicated the identity and power of the saint
Authenticating holiness of the relics.
Reinforced by imagery of the windows, walls and ceilings surrounding the reliquary.

1414: St. William Window North Quire Aisle of York Minster
one of the most important pieces of medieval stained glass in the world. 72 x 14 feet
100 panels illustrating the life and miracles of William fitzHerbert constitute one of the largest pictorial cycles of the life of a saint ever
Making a saint from a controversial man

**William Fitzherbert** York Minster’s treasurer; relative of King Stephen elected Archbishop 1141-47 and from 1153-4.

Political football between factions squabbling for the throne of England during the Anarchy (1135-54).

Unsavoury character appointment was controversial but it ended in miracles and sainthood.

Opposition from Cistercians, after election of Cistercian Pope Eugene III, deposed in favour of unpopular austere Cistercian **Murdac** died 1153

Re-elected returns in triumph but poisoned by wine at Mass a month later

Osbert de Bayeux, archdeacon accused. Due to death of King Stephen trial never took place

**Miracles:** Sweet-smell from tomb during a fire

Body not decayed or burnt in the fire.

The papal bull lists the miracles: "oil flowing from the tomb which had healed many people of their infirmities; three dead people brought back to life; **five blind people** given their sight; and **new eyes given to a man** who had been unjustly defeated in a duel and blinded"

1227: canonised in Rome by Pope Honorius III

‘William heals a blind woman’ York Minster
Healing the blind

**St. Bernard heals a blind boy**, Jörg Breu the Elder, c. 1495-1505. The boy, long loose red gown (similarly dressed children in C15th art) and carries a red hat with a folded brim. He wears simple black shoes; by his feet sits a small white dog.

St. Bernard, also shown healing a boy on crutches;

**Le petit aveugle**: Guillaume de Saint-Pathus, *Vie et miracles de Saint Louis*; C15th BnF, département des Manuscrits.

Illustration combines episodes.

Thomas is dressed in typical boys long russet gown wears a pilgrim's broad-brimmed hat (pilgrim's badge, shell of Santiago de Compostela?)

Eyes closed

Carries a wooden cane and a wooden bowl for alms.

A brown bag around his waist (similar to a shepherd's budget) and a costrel is hung around his neck.

- Thomas and a pilgrim walk in the street;
- The man guides Thomas to the shrine
- A bearded man holds something out to Thomas;
- Thomas kneels near an altar, next to a reliquary.
Hellenistic portrayal of Homer

334-323 B.C., Alexander conquered much of the known world, to India. Exposed Greek artistic styles to new exotic influences.

25 surviving Roman copies of this 'portrait' were made in the Roman period. Curly hair frames face in the ancient style, Fillet holds the hair: Full, heavy beard The deep-set eyes, furrowed brow.

Copies of highest quality may be least like (lost) original: Later artistic interpretations and represent Roman taste of the age.

This type of copy emphasizes the intricate forms of hairstyle, archaising rounded locks at temples Intentional attempt depict unkempt mass of hair.

Boston, Flavian date, active features

Naples: Late Antonine copy, impression is of the frailty of old age

Το γαρ οραν το φως ηλιον ζην εστι (living is to see the light of the sun) Homer, Iliad

Homer was not born blind, descriptions of colours

50 B.C. to 50 A.D. Marble
Museum of Fine Arts, Boston,

ca. 100 BC-ca. AD 79
Naples Famese Collection (Type)

Charioteer of Delphi, also wears a fillet headband, bronze statue (478-474 BCE).

Head of a prophet
St Denis 1140
Three Miracles of Saint Zenobius: c1500 **Sandro Botticelli**
The panels illustrate episodes from Fra Clemente Mazza's 'Life of Saint Zenobius', first printed in 1487.

5th bishop Zenobius, one of Florence's patron saints, made as domestic decorations for a patrician family (two other panels survive).

Painted in the last decade of Botticelli's life in abstract style
Florence was under influence of mad monk Savonarola:
Exorcises devils from two youths possessed as a result of their mother's curse;
resurrects a dead boy, here lying in the lap of his wailing mother;
restores the sight of a blind pagan who had promised to convert to Christianity.
Pilgrimage

Blind are depicted in similar clothes to pilgrims. Are these blind people on pilgrimage in some cases, they are or does it represent a generic sort of beggar's clothing? Are they disguised as pilgrims to obtain marginal benefits?

C14th increasing hostility to beggars and disabled

Archbishop Jacques de Vitry: Story for the use of preachers: "Two lazy beggars, one blind, the other lame, try to avoid the relics of St. Martin, borne about in procession, so that they may not be healed and lose their claim to alms.

The blind man takes the lame man on his shoulders to guide him, but they are caught in the crowd and healed against their will."

(BNF NAL 868, fol. 28v: A blind pilgrim healed at the tomb of St. Elizabeth of Thuringia)
1271-1282: Posthumous Miracle of St Louis IX

**Agnès of Pontoise:** Domestic servant until
1271 Blinding eye disease begs for a living
4 years later cured and started work as a spinner.

3 scenes; Agnès (wears green hairnet)
First scene, sitting on a bench, examined by 2 oculists/barbers.

Second, wears a dark blue kirtle with a pink sideless surcoat; with one hand, she holds the dress of an older woman (who touches Agnès’ shoulder and whispers in her ear) and with the other, she holds part of her surcoat to raise the hem, making it easier to walk.

Third, Agnès (now wearing a simple red kirtle, and sitting with a young boy) raises her hand
Priest raises communion wafer during Mass.
Initial T: The Healing of the Blind after Touching the Body of Saint Anthony

Master of the Brussels Romuléon, Illuminator Flemish, Brussels or Bruges, 1465 - 1470 Getty Tempera colors, gold leaf, gold paint, and ink on parchment

Manuscript of the Romuléon, a French text concerning Roman history, Royal Library in Brussels.
Stylized figures with wide-set eyes and pointed chins, dressed in exotic costumes,
Deliberate Blinding

Warfare
Gladiators
Punishment

Legal Blinding

The Blinding of Polyphemus
Greek Amphora C7th BC.

Polyphemus Painter:
670-640BC innovator in Attic art, introduced several mythological themes.

Eleusis Amphora Athens
Odysseus and his companions blinding Polyphemus.
Detail of a proto-Attic amphora. 660BC
Blinding

7th BC Aristonothos crater, made for mixing wine
One side the blinding of the Cyclops by Odysseus and his men, and on the other a naval scene.

Blinding of the Cyclops (resulted from Odysseus tricking him to drink wine)
Oldest pot to bear the maker's name. "Aristonothos made me".
Punative blinding

Babylonians, Assyrians and Persians blinded prisoners. Left hand he holds a cord with a hook inserted into the prisoners lips. Thrust the point of spear into the eye.

Cyrus the younger, blinded criminals became spectacles along the highway. 488AD: Persia; Kavadh blinds his deposed uncle as he takes the throne.

Diocletian 303AD introduces blinding for Christians, abolished by Constantine.

Justinian II 705AD has the Patriarch of Constantinople Kallinikos blinded before expulsion to Rome. Used to prevent succession.

Bernard King of Lombards revolts against his uncle Louis the Pious and is blinded along with fellow conspirators.

Process of blinding (carried out by means of pressing a red-hot stiletto to the eyeballs) proved so traumatic that Bernard died in agony two days after the procedure.
Biblical blinding

Age 21 Zedekiah made king of Judah by Nebuchadnezzar.
revolted against Babylon, allied with Egypt.
Nebuchadnezzar siege of Jerusalem in 589 BC.
lasted 30m, "every worst woe befell the city,
which drank the cup of God's fury to the dregs".
Zedekiah and his followers attempted to escape,
captured on the plains of Jericho and taken to Ribalh.
after seeing his sons killed, Zedekiah was
blinded, bound, and taken captive to Babylon,
where he remained a prisoner until his death.

Zedekiah is chained and brought before Nebuchadnezzar: 1670
Petrus Comestor's "Bible Historiale" Bodleian Library
Frideswide (d.727) daughter of the king became an abbess, pursued by the lecherous king Algar of Leicester.

Frideswide went into hiding, when Algar tried to enter Oxford he was struck blind.

The punishment (l'abbacinare) Italian origins red hot metal over eyes, until blind, eyes destroyed.

Penal blinding introduced by a statute of William I! Rarely used.

More common in Ireland and France.

French, “aveugle” ob oculus = “deprived of eyes.”

No cognates in any other Romance language.

Connected blinding as legal punishment in France 1036: Alfred brother of Edward (later confessor) blinded by hot pokers on orders of Earl Godwin, sent to Ely dies of wounds.

1107: King Henry I orders blinding of Robert, Duke of Normandy after a failed attempt to escape imprisonment from Cardiff

Late C12th and 13th, groups of judges sent from central courts at Westminster to all the counties of England, except Durham and Chester where the royal jurisdiction did not extend, to preside over local courts.

Counties were grouped into circuits, with a group of justices assigned to each one; and the circuits, as well as the courts themselves, were known as eyres.

The Eyres Rolls show that blinding was rarely enforced in England
Legal Blinding

1166: Assize of Clarendon:
Angevin King Henry II of England: "anyone, who shall be found, on the oath of the aforesaid [jury], to be accused of being a robber or murderer or thief, or a receiver ... be taken and put to the ordeal of water."

Ordeal of boiling water
Requires the accused to retrieve a stone from boiling water
The depth from which the stone had to be retrieved was up to the wrist for one accusation and up to the elbow for three.
In church, witnesses, praying God to reveal the truth.
Hand was bound and examined after three days to see whether it was healing or festering.
If God had not healed his wounds, the suspect was guilty of the crime

1248: Blinding of Sampson: St Chapelle
Marble terminal bust of Homer. Roman copy of a lost Hellenistic original of the 2nd c. BC. From Baiae, Italy. BM

The Hellenistic blind-type portraits similar style to figures of the Pergamon Altar
Pliny the Elder (AD 24-79) Hellenistic blind-type portrait invented in BC for the library of the Attalid kings of Pergamon.

Third popular type, probably Late Classical in origin, showing Homer with the wide-open eyes of the seer and long hair at the nape of the neck (Apollonios type)

C5th Blind men allowed to discuss politics in the Athenian Assembly
Plato and Aristotle argued they should have no place in the polis because they couldn’t serve in the army.

bronze coin head of Homer issued by city of Amastris: 101 and 200 AD. Apollonius of Tyana Type Homer
North Aisle, Trinity Chapel, Window 5, medallion 3:

Eilward of Westoning, steals from his neighbour, Fulk, to pay off his debts, and is brought before the magistrate.

Sentenced to blinding and mutilation.

St. Thomas appears, makes the sign of the cross over his bed, restoring Eilward’s sight. Miracles took place in 1171-3, recorded by William and Prior Benedict and used by the glaziers 1213-20.
Monreale, Cathedral Cloister, Capital, Blinding of Samson.
Blinding of Sampson

Popular theme for sculpture and painting
**Rembrandt (1606–1669)**

The Blinding of Samson

1636 Frankfurt

Painted in Amsterdam in 1636, one of the artist's most ambitious and dramatic works.

Violence in this painting as we see a Philistine gouges Samson's right eye.

The artist himself looking on in horror.
The act of watching the violent destruction of someone else's eyes is unsettling.

Many Nurses prefer to work in other departments because of this deep rooted cultural attitude to eye injury.
Bay of Martyrs: Chartres

St Thos of Canterbury
St Blasius flayed alive

Saint Leger blinded
St Vincent washes ashore
St Lawrence on gidiron
St Cheron with his head

Leodegar of Poitiers: 615-679: Martyred Burgundian Bishop of Autun: opponent of Ebroin, leader of the faction of Austrasian nobles in the struggle over the waning Merovingian dynasty.

The blinding of St. Leger, Bishop of Autun: French Bible of c. 1200

Roundel with Martyrdom of Saint Leger. Date: ca. 1490. Upper Rhineland. Colourless glass, vitreous paint and silver stain. Cloisters Museum
The Conversion of St Paul; Fra ANGELICO; c. 1430; missal illumination

Saul, who persecutes the Christians, asks to go to Damascus to arrest a few of them.

As he came near Damascus: suddenly there shined around him a light from heaven: And he fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying to him: "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?"

Saul arose from the earth; and when his eyes were opened, he saw no man: but they led him by the hand, and brought him into Damascus.
And he was three days without sight, and neither ate nor drink.
Blinding by God

The Conversion of St Paul; PARMIGIANINO; c. 1552; oil on canvas; Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna,
The Conversion on the Road to Damascus; CARAVAGGIO; 1601; oil on canvas; Cerasi Chapel: Santa Maria del Popolo, Rome.