

THE LIGHT OF TRUTH
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Then Jesus spoke to them again, saying, "I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life." (John 8:12)

Did you ever wonder how young the Lord was when He first knew that His life would not end peacefully? How young was He when He knew that His work was leading to a final conflict that would end in His death? We don't really know. The prophecies of Old Testament foretell that it was to happen. From prophecies He could have known when He was still very young what would occur. Jesus told His disciples over and over that He would suffer and be put to death. Conflict was inevitable. Good and evil cannot dwell together peacefully. One or the other must dominate.

The Pharisees could not let Jesus continue to do what He was doing. They hated the Lord and what He said. They could not have peace while He lived and taught. His work threatened them constantly. The Lord did not seek the earthly power that Pharisees wanted. He was not concerned with His reputation as they were. But everything that He did brought a threat nearer to them. As the Lord told Nichodemus:

And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and people loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed. But he who does the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be clearly seen, that they have been done in God. (John 3:19-21)

The Lord came bringing the light of truth, but not to do harm to anyone. The teachings for the New Church state:

The light which is life from the Lord in heaven is called Divine truth, because it shines in the minds of those who are there, and therefore shines before their eyes. In the Word "light" means Divine truth, and intelligence and wisdom from that truth, and the Lord Himself is called "the Light." (*Apocalypse Explained* 186:11)

The light of truth from the Lord can be a tremendous blessing to anyone who receives it. Nevertheless that light was a threat to the Pharisees. They were threatened even though Jesus wanted only good for them. He hated no one. But they hated Him. Hated Him enough to want Him dead.

The Pharisees knew what trouble the light would cause them. The light of truth threatened to destroy the dearest parts of their lives. It threatened their power. It threatened their reputations as true followers of God. It threatened to change their ability to do the things that they wanted to do and they wanted none of it. Conflict was inevitable.

Yes, they could have ignored one man, but as long as Jesus taught and performed miracles anyone could know what He knew. Anyone could get the light of truth. Jesus was specifically a threat to the Pharisees because He was bringing that light to so many people. People were learning what was true and good. They could see the sham of the Pharisee's life. The Pharisees wanted people to think they were the more obedient to Jewish law than anyone else, but the Lord showed that they were

hypocrites. They followed parts of the letter of Law of Moses, but they consistently broke its intent. And the Lord made this perfectly clear.

The Lord knew this would bring conflict and a lack of natural peace. The Lord wants nothing to do with the peace that comes from ignorance of danger. The half-awake soldier peering out into darkness may have peace while the enemy silently stalks him. The Lord would not stand by to let a false peace continue. He would bring a bright light that would expose the enemy. He came with the light of truth to help all who needed it.

Standing in the light is not always comfortable. Imagine someone watching over your shoulder to see how you spend your time each day - watching each moment of your day. Do you feel comfortable with your priorities? Would the observer encourage you in what you are doing and maybe even remind to make time for self? Or would you feel threatened by what that person would notice? Would light of objective observation defend or threaten your life?

The Lord said "I have come as a light into the world, that whoever believes in Me should not abide in darkness." (John 12:46) Although He wanted nothing but good things for all people conflict was inevitable. The Pharisees were going to seek his death. They wanted peace, the quiet of ignorance, the peace of subjection. Good and evil cannot get along together. They do not get along together within us. Conflict is inevitable.

The Pharisees tried to end the Lord's power by many means. They tried to cast doubt on ideas that He taught. They tried to make Jesus contradict Himself. They questioned whether His life reflected a correct obedience to Old Testament law. They pointed out that He ate with sinners and publicans. They pointed out that His disciples didn't strictly follow ancient traditions of washing or that they broke the strict rules about work on the Sabbath. The Pharisees tried to end the Lord's power by many means. But the Lord could not be hurt by them. The Pharisees could not extinguish His light or hid from its revealing rays.

Part of each of our minds is like the Pharisees. It is threatened by the light of truth. This part of our mind would like to destroy the power of truth. It would like to destroy the power of the Lord's Word. But this destruction cannot be done quietly. To destroy it, Jesus must be crucified. Something living within each of our minds must be deliberately put to death. Oh, yes, the Pharisees had their reasons, their justifications. But what they did was murder. It did not fit within even a broad interpretation of the Law of Moses by which they pretended to guide their lives. By their own standards, the Pharisees broke the law many times in their arrest and trial of Jesus. But the same day they scrupulously avoided entering Pilate's home, the home of a non-Jew, lest they make themselves unclean for the Passover. The same day, Jesus was discovered to be dead when they came to hasten His death lest anyone be on a cross during the Sabbath celebration. They kept the law at their own convenience.

The Lord comes to each of us, in many parts of our lives. He comes to bring us the light of truth. He comes to protect us from evil, to protect us from unnecessary sadness. But this light would reveal the ugliness of things we want, at things that we think and that we do. These things are evil. The light of truth threatens parts of our lives.

The Lord had quoted from the prophet Micah when He said,

For I have come to "set a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. And a man's foes will be those of his own household." (Matt. 10:35-36, cf. Micah 7:6)

The life of your mind is like an extended family. Some of your thoughts are related to following thoughts like a father is related to a son. Some of your affections are related to affections that follow from them like a mother is to a daughter. These thoughts and affections will not be at peace with each other unless the conflict is resolved. We hope that the power of evil loves and false ideas will be destroyed in our minds. The alternative is terrible: the power of good and truth can be crucified. We can recognize the conflict. An angry thought can be followed and challenged by one calling for more mercy. A selfish desire can be followed and challenged by one that calls us to give to others. A commitment to do what is good and true can be challenged by a host of related doubts and desires like a person finding his foes to be members of his own household.

The Lord called on people to use the light. He said:

A little while longer the light is with you. Walk while you have the light, lest darkness overtake you; he who walks in darkness does not know where he is going. While you have the light, believe in the light, that you may become sons of light. (John 12:35-36)

And again He said:

Are there not twelve hours in the day? If anyone walks in the day, he does not stumble, because he sees the light of this world. But if one walks in the night, he stumbles, because the light is not in him. (John 11:9-10)

Which part of us will respond to the light the Lord offers each of us? The part that can be protected by the light? The part that someday could be with us in our lives as angels? Or will our response come from the part of us that is endangered by the light. Will evil be destroyed or will an attempt be made to destroy the truth?

The disguise of evil is unfortunately the disguise of goodness and righteousness like the Pharisees tried to show everyone. Unfortunately evil feels like us, like our kith and kin. We are tempted to accept self-justification. To protect our own bad habits because they don't look all that bad to us. They feel rather familiar, like our very lives. Getting rid of significant bad habits feels at times like we are losing our very lives. But we know well that the Lord said "He who loses his life for My sake will find it." When we lose our natural life we will actually leave behind the death of hell and find the life of heaven. This doesn't happen easily.

Conflict is inevitable in our lives. It is inevitable in our daily choices. Conflict will come in our decisions about the things that we want. It will come in our decisions about acting patiently or angrily. It will come in our decisions about choosing an easy but unhealthy course or standing up for what is true. Conflict is inevitable.

We all know that it takes effort to get to heaven, but it is also true that no one goes to hell by accident. The Lord was not crucified by accident. It was the result of choices by people. Choices that arose from a conflict, from a conflict that must take place. The Lord did not come to bring

peace. He brought the light of truth. He brings that light to each of us. Let us look for it in our lives. Yes, part of us will feel threatened by it. A part of us that needs to be destroyed.

The Lord came as a light for the people of this world. He came that we might have life and have it more abundantly. Let us welcome Him into our thoughts and actions. AMEN.

Lessons: John 1:1-14, 8:12, *Arcana Caelestia* 6000:2

John 1:1-14

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made. In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it.

There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. This man came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all through him might believe. He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light. That was the true Light which gives light to every man coming into the world. He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him. He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him. But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.

John 8:12

Then Jesus spoke to them again, saying, "I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life."

Arcana Caelestia 6000:2

The meaning of "the night" as obscurity and also falsity may be seen in addition from the following places in the Word: In John,

Jesus said, Are there not twelve hours in the day? If anyone walks in the day he does not stumble.

But if anyone walks in the night he stumbles, because the light is not in him. John 11:9, 10.

"Twelve hours" stands for all states of truth. "Walking in the day" stands for living in the truth, and "walking in the night" for living in falsity. In the same gospel,

I must work the works of Him who sent Me while it is day; night is coming when nobody will be able to work. John 9:4.

"Day" stands for truth coming from good, and "night" for falsity coming from evil. The first period of the Church is what is meant by "day", for at this time truth is entertained by people because they are governed by good. But the final period of the Church is what is meant by "night", for at that time no truth at all is entertained by its members, because they are not governed by good; and when someone is not governed by good, that is, by charity towards the neighbor, then even if told perfect truths he does not entertain them. In this situation there is no perception at all of what truth is, because the light of truth falls on matters of a bodily and worldly nature, to which alone such people give their attention and which alone they love and consider to have any reality. It does not fall on things of a heavenly nature because they are considered to be of little or no value at all compared with other things.

Consequently the light of truth is swallowed up by and snuffed out in what is a mass of thick darkness, like sunlight falling on an object that is black.