

Thoughts on Words of Light

From the blog of Michael Haldas

“As I explore the themes of spiritual light and darkness I have been wondering if we can consider the words we think, speak (hear), or write (read) to be sources of darkness-dispelling light. While we don’t usually associate these concepts, the Scriptures do indeed connect them. Depending on their origin and use, word/thoughts are said to have the power to bring either light or darkness. In Psalm (119:105) we are told that God’s word is a lamp and a light on our path. The Psalmist goes on to say that as these divine words are revealed, they give light and understanding. Jesus said, “I am the light of the world: he that follows me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life” (John 8:12). On the day of Pentecost divine light is given to all nations by means of words in their own languages. During the Vespers of Pentecost we proclaim Now the tongues have become apparent, as a sign for all... We who are from the Gentiles have been counted worthy of the divine light, for we were strengthened by the words of the Disciples, who declared the glory of God the benefactor of all.” (Fr. Edward Rommen)

“The Greek word for “darkness” refers to spiritual ignorance and moral corruption...Those who dwell in such darkness shun the light of truth and goodness lest their deeds are exposed (John 3:20; Ephesians 5:13)...Paul warns that the faithful must have nothing to do with the “unfruitful works of darkness” of these wrongdoers (Ephesians 5:11). Rather, they should “cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light” (Romans 13:13).” (Fr. Basil)

“The warning Walk while you have the light, so that the darkness may not overtake you operates on at least two different levels: (1) To the Jewish people in Jerusalem to whom Jesus spoke, the warning was a reminder that there was only a little time left for them to accept Him as their Messiah. (2) To those later individuals to whom the Fourth Gospel was written, and to every person since, the words of Jesus are also a warning: There is a finite, limited time in which each individual has opportunity to respond to the Light of the world (i.e., Jesus); after that comes darkness. One’s response to the Light decisively determines one’s judgment for eternity.” (NET Bible, John 12:35)

“Indeed, there are many words. Words carried by the voices of greed, selfishness, disbelief, anger, and the like. These words and thoughts function as blinders and distract us from the light of God’s words. Depending on their intensity or density they create so much interference (environmental noise) that our attention is drawn away from the words of God and are rendered spiritually deaf. St. Paul warns us not to allow this to happen since our thinking will then become futile, leading to foolishness of heart and spiritual darkness (Rom 1:21). Letting these anti-light words override the words of God blocks our view of the Light mediated by those very words. And so, not hearing and not seeing we are left spiritually deaf and spiritually blind.” (Fr. Edward Rommen)

“Light without source emanates from the “Jerusalem above,” as revealed to Saint John the Evangelist: “The city had no need of the sun or of the moon to shine in it, for the glory of God illuminated it. The Lamb is its light” (Rev 21:23). Such light informs our iconography, for there is no external source of light nor any shadows in icons. God the Word, who is light, is not Himself created; rather, light is among His energies. As the sun creates the light of the moon by reflection to our physical eyes, so the Son creates light without a source. Where He is, light is.” (Dynamis 3/16/2021)