

# AS LORD . . . JESUS IS THE LIGHT

Ge 1:1-4; Is 9:2; Mt 2:2; I Jn 1:5; Jn 8:12; Jn 1:5; Rev 21:23; II Cor 4:5-6; Rev 1:8

- Marcus Aurelius: “Ask yourself, What is this thing in itself, by its own special constitution? What is it in substance, and in form, and in matter? What is its function in the world? For how long does it subsist?” (*Meditations*, Bk. 9).

## I. GIVEN LIGHT’S NATURE/ESSENCE & PROPERTIES/ENERGY

- A. Its Essence
1. A section/band-width of Electromagnetic Energy (along with x-rays, microwaves, radio, TV, etc.
  2. Particles (Newton)—photons (“energy bundles”) shooting through space
  3. Waves (Huygens)—undulating movement through vacuum (apparently without need for material medium! bends when passing through gravity field!)
  4. Einstein’s constant, evident in  $e=mc^2$
- B. Its Energy
1. Whereas other fundamental forces (gravity; strong & weak nuclear forces) are *centripetal*, light (and electromagnetism) *centrifugal*, explosive, empowering
  2. Evident as/in: lightning; photosynthesis; photoelectric cells
  3. Illuminating/Revealing all creation—i.e, Cosmic Background Radiation showing singularity of creation (“the discovery of the century, if not of all time” said Stephen Hawking)

## II. INASMUCH AS GOD IS (*analogia entis*) LIGHT (I Jn 1:5)

- A. Pure Act: actualizing all that is, since *HE IS* the Creator (Ex 3:14)—N.B. Aristotle re act & potency
- B. Non-material/Spiritual, thus passing through matter, transcendent
- C. One/Simple— $e=mc^2$  & all “relative” to speed of light, singular, constant
- D. Immutability—changeless essence—“from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God” (Ps 90:2); purity (unadulterated)
- E. Omnipresent—pervasive throughout known universe
- F. Powerful—whether lightning or laser beams, empowering, heating, cleansing
- G. Illuminating—“in thy light we see light” (Ps 36:9); splendor evident in “show of lights”
- H. Good—Ge 1:4: “God said . . . good” (constant contrary: dark evil, deprivation)

## III. SO, JESUS IS (as the Eternally-Begotten Son of the Father) THE LIGHT (fulfilling Is 9:2) as, indeed He said: “I AM THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD”); thus, thinking *analogia entis*:

- A. Pure Act—“all things came into being by Him” (Jn 1:3, NASB); “before Abraham was, I am” (Jn 8:58—*ego eimi* equates Jesus with JHWH, OT LORD, who also said *ego eimi*)
- B. Non-Material Word, providing information (cf John’s Prologue); further note: Risen Lord passing through walls, instantly appearing & disappearing
- C. One—to St. Paul, there is “One Lord” & Jesus said He & the Father are “One” and “no one comes unto the Father but by me”
- D. Immutable—“Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and today, and forever” (Heb 13:); “I am the “Alpha and the Omega,” says the Lord God, “Who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty” (Rev 1:8).
- E. Omnipresent—“For where two or three are gathered together in my name, I am in the midst of them” (Mt 18:20)
- F. Powerful—“All power is given unto me in heaven and earth” (Mt 28:18)
- G. Illuminating—John the Baptist came to “bear witness to the Light” (Jn 1:7); Bethlehem star guiding Magi (Mt 2:2); at the Transfiguration “his face did shine as the sun” (Mt 17:2); heavenly lamp” providing light (Rev 21:23); revealing “Glory of God in the face of Jesus” (II Cor 4:5-6)
- H. Good (Ge 1:4)—“Good Master” said the rich young ruler & Jesus: “there is none good but one, that is, God” (Mt 19:17)

## John Polkinghorn: *Quantum Physics & Theology*

As a long-time University of Cambridge Professor in mathematical physics, John Polkinghorne—a member of the Royal Society, knighted by the Queen, honored to deliver the Gifford Lectures, frequently mentioned in discussions regarding the Nobel Prize for his work in quantum phenomena such as quarks—was one of the 20th century's finest scientists. He also was ordained a priest in the Church of England. In *Quantum Physics and Theology: An Unexpected Kinship* (New Haven: Yale University Press, c. 2007) he stands, quite comfortably, with a foot in both camps, for he believes that “there are significant degrees of cousinly relationship between the ways in which science and theology conduct their truth-seeking enquiries into the nature of reality” (p. x). Both scientists and theologians search for truth. Thus they share a common goal: discerning what really *IS*, the ultimate nature of Reality. It is amazing that man understands something of the Mind of God through scientific inquiry. Indeed, “this remarkable human capacity for scientific discovery ultimately requires the insight that our power in this respect is the gift of the universe's Creator who, in that ancient and powerful phrase, has made humanity in the image of God (Genesis 1:26-27). Through the exercise of this gift, those working in fundamental physics are able to discern a world of deep and beautiful order—a universe shot through with signs of mind” (p. 8).

The world of physics is endlessly fascinating to Polkinghorne, but he also admits that scientific work “does not affect my life in any significant way outside the pursuit of intellectual satisfaction in the study or the laboratory. In contrast, my belief that Jesus Christ is the incarnate Son of God has consequences for all aspects of my life, as much in relation to conduct as to understanding. Religious belief is much more demanding than scientific belief—more costly and more ‘dangerous’, one might say” (p. 13). The Mind—the Word—that shaped the Cosmos appeared in human form in Christ Jesus, and seeking the Truth as revealed in Him leads to three basic questions: “(i) Was Jesus indeed resurrected on the third day, and if so, why was Jesus, alone among all humanity, raised from the dead within history to live an everlasting life of glory beyond history? (ii) Why did the first Christians feel driven to use divine-sounding language about the man Jesus? (iii) What was the basis for the assurance felt by the first disciples that through the risen Christ they had been given a power that was transforming their lives in a new and unprecedented way?” (p. 31).

To answer these questions, to get at the truth revealed by Jesus, requires theological reasoning that is much akin to scientific reasoning. You take the evidence as given, try to develop meaningful hypotheses, and then establish reasonable convictions. Both scientific and theological understandings develop through time as thoughtful practitioners ponder the evidence. “As in quantum theory, so in Christian theology, much greater significance came finally to be recognized than had been apparent at the start of the process of searching for truth” (p. 55). Thus Polkinghorne carefully investigates the claims regarding Christ's Resurrection, finding (along with his friend N. T. Wright) the New Testament accounts quite credible. The tomb really was empty. The miracle of miracles actually occurred.

Given the great miracle, the second question that concerns Polkinghorne (why did early Christians make divine claims for the Christ) finds its answer. Moved by the miracle, “the first generation of Christians produced three of the greatest figures [Paul; John; the author of Hebrews] ever in the history of theological thought. Their brilliant insights have shaped the form of Christian theology in the manner that the believer will see as the result of providential inspiration by the Holy Spirit, guiding the use of individual human gifts” (p. 68). Only the sheer facticity of the Resurrection explains the intellectual profundity and power of the New Testament apostles.