

"I AM THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD"

Jn 8:12; 1:4-5-9; 3:19-21; I Jn 1:5-7

I. A CURIOUS BUT REVEALING, WORLD-WIDE, PHENOMENA: SUN-GOD RELIGIONS

- A. Widespread historical, human awareness
 - 1. Egypt: Sun-god Re; pyramids & hope for immortality; monotheistic moment with Akhenaten
 - 2. Sioux sun dance & Wakan-Tanka awareness
- B. Rooted in understand that Light stimulates & sustains life, warms and illuminates world

II. ENLIGHTENING MOMENTS—"EUREKA!" "AHA!"

- A. Personal: *The Big Fat Surprise*; Toynbee re churches; socialists subverting environmentalism
- B. Plato's enduring "Analogy of the Cave"
 - 1. Human predicament: living in darkness
 - 2. Philosophical prescription: think rightly & overcome ignorance
 - 3. Ultimate/Eternal/Divine dimension: Light=Good
- C. Scientific insights abound
 - 1. Archimedes—water displacement & density of gold
 - 2. Poincare—mathematical insights in unexpected moments, usually at leisure
- D. Contemporary philosophers change views
 - 1. Anthony Flew: *God Exists*—famous atheist changes his mind
 - 2. Thomas Nagel: *Mind & Cosmos*—Mind evident
 - 3. Edward Feser: *The Last Superstition: A Refutation of the New Atheism*—Aquinas rediscovered
- D. Christian Tradition Endorses Testimonies
 - 1. Aristotle stresses importance of testimony in *Topics*
 - 2. Rich record of Christian testimonies
 - a. St Paul on Damascus road—light came and Saul becomes Paul
 - b. Constantine—"by this sign conquer" & toleration & Eusebius' favorable portrait
 - c. Augustine in Milan garden—"take up and read" & emotional conversion
 - d. Pascal's memorial
- E. Understandable inasmuch as human heart hungers for answers re eternal verities

III. HISTORICAL EXCURSUS: THE ENLIGHTENMENT'S IMPORT

- A. Secular: Reason enshrined, inspiring science, political revolutions, and much of the modern world
- B. Religious: Reason aligns rightly with Faith
 - 1. Nathaniel Culverwell's *An Elegant and Learned Discourse of the Light of Nature* (1645)
 - 2. Jonathan Edwards' works (e.g. *The Wisdom of God Displayed in the Way of Salvation* and *Christian Knowledge*) exemplify balanced concerns; Wesley's reforms & medical interests

IV. AS THE "LIGHT TO THE GENTILES (Lk 2:32) JESUS IS THE ANSWER

- A. "Where did this all come from?" (**Cosmology**): "All things came into being by Him" (Jn 1:3); "Then God said: Let there be light" (Gn 1:3)
- B. "Who am I? (**Anthropology/Psychology**): "Last Adam" reveals both original and ultimate design—"The first man Adam became a living being. The last Adam became a life-giving spirit" (I Cor 15:45)
- C. "What can I know?" (**Epistemology**): Word informing all that is reveals a designing Mind—"in thy light we see light" (Ps 36:9); "The understanding of man is the Candle of the Lord" (Prov 20:27)
- D. "How ought I think?" (**Logic/Right Reason**)—the *Logos* (cf. II Tim 2:14—"rightly dividing the word of truth" & Rev 1:16 re Christ's "sharp, two-edged sword")
- E. "What should I do?" (**Axiology/Ethics**): follow His commandments (revealing Natural Law); "But if we walk in the light as He is in the light" (I Jn 1:7)
- F. "What's really Real?" (**Ontology/Metaphysics**): "God is light" (I Jn 1:5); Jehovah ("I Am") and Jesus' "before Abraham I AM" declaration (Jn 7:58)
- G. "For what may I hope?" (**Eschatology**): eternal life (John 3:16), resurrection—"It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body" (I Cor 15:44); "a new heaven and a new earth" (Rev 21:1); "And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it; for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof" (Rev 21:2)