

SALT and LIGHT

Mt 5:13; Col 4:6; Eph 5:13;

I. SALT

- A. Remarkable substance, essential for animal life
- B. Savory Flavor, enhances taste, thus for believers:
 - 1. Doctrines proclaimed, exalting Christ as Ultimate Solution of man's needs, satisfying deepest hungers of one's soul, adding essential goodness
 - 2. Ethics lived out, gracing world—cf *Letter to Diognetus*: “Whether Fortune has given them a home in a Greek or foreign city, they follow local custom in the matter of dress, food, and way of life; yet the character of the culture they reveal is marvelous and, it must be admitted, unusual. They live, each in his native land—but as if they were not really at home there.”
 - a. Spiritual & Corporal acts of mercy throughout Church history
 - b. Recent historical research (Rodney Stark's *The Victory of Reason* and *How the West Won*) commending Church for social uplift
- C. Preservative—generally conservative tone to the Christian position, with reverence for tradition (cf Edmund Burke's *Notes on the Revolution in France*, Richard Weaver's *Ideas Have Consequences & In Defense of Tradition*, Russell Kirk's *The Conservative Mind*, and T.S. Eliot's works)
 - 1. Save from putrescence, decay (cf. Col 4:6)
 - 2. Save for benefit of coming generations (cf Iroquois teaching re 7th Generation)
 - 3. Facing a world “Slouching towards Gomorrah” (Robert Bork) there's work to be done in
 - a. Education—contra John Dewey, classics rooted in best of past thinkers
 - b. Music—classical harmonics, uplifting lyrics (remembering Plato's warning)
 - c. Philosophy—classical realism, “perennial philosophy” endlessly valuable
 - d. Theology—Scriptures forever upheld, settled doctrines secured & defended.

II. LIGHT

- A. Marvelous mystery—electromagnetic radiation detectable by human eye
 - 1. Waves or particles?— both!
 - 2. “Light from the [Sun](#) warms the [Earth](#), drives global [weather](#) patterns, and initiates the life-sustaining process of [photosynthesis](#). On the grandest scale, light's interactions with [matter](#) have helped shape the structure of the [universe](#). Indeed, light provides a window on the universe, from [cosmological](#) to atomic scales. Almost all of the information about the rest of the universe reaches Earth in the form of electromagnetic radiation. By interpreting that radiation, [astronomers](#) can glimpse the earliest epochs of the universe, measure the general expansion of the universe, and determine the chemical [composition](#) of [stars](#) and the [interstellar medium](#). Just as the invention of the [telescope](#) dramatically broadened the exploration of the universe, so too the invention of the [microscope](#) opened the intricate world of the [cell](#). The analysis of the frequencies of light emitted and absorbed by [atoms](#) was a principal [impetus](#) for the development of [quantum mechanics](#). Atomic and molecular spectroscopies continue to be primary tools for probing the structure of matter, providing ultrasensitive tests of atomic and molecular models and contributing to studies of fundamental [photochemical reactions](#). (Encyclopedia Britannica)
 - 3. Einstein's singular constant, speed light
 - 4. Michael Denton: “In addition to being perfectly fit for photosynthesis and hence for our kind of oxygen-utilizing advanced life, sunlight is also just right for high-acuity vision, which depends on another set of extraordinary coincidences in the characteristics of visual light. And sunlight is just right not only for any type of high-acuity visual device or eye, but just right in terms of its wavelength for beings of our size and upright android design. What is so significant about the fitness of the Sun's light for photosynthesis and for high-acuity vision is that these are elements of natural fitness exclusively for our type of life—for beings possessing the gift of sight, breathing oxygen (aerobic), and inhabiting the terrestrial surface of a planet like the Earth.”

- B. Theological Dictum/Declaration: God Is Light and He said “Let there be Light,” illuminating all that is—
“In thy light we see light” (Ps 36:9)
1. John said: “This is the message which we have heard from Him [Jesus] and declare to you, that God is light and in Him is no darkness at all” (I Jn 1:5)
 2. To John, God’s Nature is Spirit (Jn 4:24), Love (I Jn 4:8), and Light (I Jn 1:5)—in each verse there is no article, thus not attributes but essence; “They are probably the nearest approach to a definition of God that the human mind could frame or comprehend: and in the history of thought and religion they are unique.” (*Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges*)
 3. “No philosophy, no religion, not even the Jewish, had risen to the truth that God is light. ‘No figure borrowed from the material world could give the idea of perfection so clearly and fully as light. It suggests ubiquity, brightness, happiness, intelligence, truth, purity, holiness. It suggests excellence without limit and without taint; an excellence whose nature it is to communicate itself and to pervade everything from which it is not of set purpose shut out. ‘Let there be light’ was the first fiat of the Creator; and on it all the rest depends. Light is the condition of beauty, and life, and growth, and activity: and this is as true in the intellectual, moral, and spiritual spheres as in the material universe.” (*Cambridge Bible*).
 4. Of the many beautiful and true ideas which the utterance ‘God is light’ suggests to us, two are specially prominent in this Epistle; **intelligence** and **holiness**. The Christian, anointed with the Holy Spirit, and in communion with God in Christ, possesses (1) knowledge, (2) righteousness. (1) ‘Ye know Him which is from the beginning’ (1 John 2:13-14); ‘I have not written unto you because ye know not the truth, but because ye know it’ (1 John 2:21); ‘Ye need not that anyone teach you’ (1 John 2:27); &c. &c. (2) ‘Every one that hath this hope on him purifieth himself, even as He is pure’ (1 John 3:3); ‘Whosoever is begotten of God doeth no sin, because his seed abideth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is begotten of God’; &c. &c. (*Cambridge Bible*).
- D. Christological Revelation: Jesus is the Light of the world and He said “let your light shine”
1. Intelligence Active & formative—uniquely thoughtful dimension to Christian Faith, unlike many *irrational* religions (including postmodern variants)
 2. Truth important—contrary to post-modernism & various “cynical theories” dominating today’s universities & media
 3. Educational endeavors from earliest days of Church
 4. John Paul II *The Splendor of Truth--Veritatis Splendor* charts the way. He began his presentation with this declaration: “Called to salvation through faith in Jesus Christ, ‘the true light that enlightens everyone’ (Jn 1:9), people become ‘light in the Lord’ and ‘children of light’ (Eph 5:8), and are made holy by ‘obedience to the truth’ (1 Pet 1:22)” (p. 9). Given that reality, “No one can escape from the fundamental questions: What must I do? How do I distinguish good from evil?” (p. 10). Ultimately: “We must first of all show the inviting splendor of that truth which is Jesus Christ himself. In him, who is the Truth (cf. Jn 14:6), man can understand fully and live perfectly, through his good actions, his vocation to freedom in obedience to the divine law summarized in the commandment of love of God and neighbor. And this is what takes place through the gift of the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of truth, of freedom and of love: in him we are enabled to interiorize the law, to receive it and to live it as the motivating force of true personal freedom: ‘the perfect law, the law of liberty’ (Jas 1:25)” (p. 104). Those questions are answered, conclusively, by Jesus Christ, who is the answer to all of man’s deepest hunger for truth.
 5. Benedict XVI re Islam
 6. James Tour (Rice University chemist) witness—shedding light re Light
- B. Holiness Evident
1. Personal: saints down through the ages
 2. Institutional: despite flaws, a divine institution, the “mystical body of Christ”