

## **THE SECRET OF ILLUMINATION**

### **Ted Schroder, January 31, 2010**

The Sun is the star at the center of the Solar System. It is the size of 109 Earths. It contains 99.86 percent of the mass of the Solar System. It is composed three-quarters of hydrogen, and most of the rest is helium. It is 149.6 million kilometers from our planet. Light travels from the Sun to the Earth in about 8 minutes and 19 seconds. The energy of this sunlight supports almost all life on Earth through photosynthesis, and drives Earth's climate and weather. The outer temperature of the Sun is 11,000 degrees Fahrenheit.

We are completely dependent on the Sun for life. Without light and the heat generated by the Sun's rays, we could not survive. The universe is fine-tuned with absolute precision in order for life to develop and be sustained. The forces of gravity and electromagnetism had to be precisely balanced if the sun and other stars were not to burn themselves out before life had time to evolve, or burn so feebly that they would not produce enough energy for life to evolve. Earth is the third nearest planet to the Sun. Any nearer and we would be scorched. Any further away and we would freeze. Pluto, the furthest away is described as a celestial snowball. Mercury, the nearest, is super-heated during the day, and freezing at night.

Light is necessary for life. Every seed buried in the ground seeks for light, and reaches forth to grow up toward the sun. Just as the Sun, in the order of nature, is the light of the world, so God is light, and the source of all life. "This is the message we have heard from him and declare to you: God is light; in him is no darkness at all." (1 John 1:5) "And God said, 'Let there be light.' And God saw that the light was good, and he separated the light from the darkness. God called the light 'day' and the darkness he called 'night.'" (Genesis 1:3,4) In an age influenced by astrology and sun-worship the Scriptures taught that the stars did not determine our destiny, for God made the light. He is the ultimate source of light and life. To reject God as the source of our lives is as foolish as rejecting the Sun as the source of light and physical energy.

How does the light and warmth of the Sun reach us in this world? It comes to us through the Solar System. We cannot travel to it. We would be blinded and scorched and shriveled by its power if we attempted to do so. The myth of Icarus reminds us that if we were to fly too high, too close to the Sun, we would be destroyed, as the wax on his wings melted, and he plummeted to the sea and was drowned. Likewise, we cannot directly approach God. "God...lives in unapproachable light, whom no one has seen or can see." (1 Timothy 6:16)

The Sun must come to us, for we cannot go to it. It sends forth its rays, and comes down to the earth, filtered through the atmosphere, so that we can bear its radiance and benefit from it. The light that we enjoy is one with the sun and yet it touches the earth. We study its effects and yet we cannot fathom all its mysteries. Job is questioned by God: "Have you comprehended the vast expanses of the earth? Tell me, if you know all this? What is the way to the abode of light? And where does darkness reside? Can you take them to their places? Do you know the paths to their dwellings?" (Job 38:18-20)

For us to know the source and nature of the light, it must come to us. John tells us about Jesus: "In him was life, and that life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it...The true light that gives light to every man was coming into the world." (John 1:4,5,9)

If we wish to live morally and spiritually; to come out of darkness, and grow to our full potential; to blossom, flourish, and be fruitful, we have to open ourselves to this light. He has come down to us, just as surely as the light of the Sun. “For God who said, ‘Let light shine out of darkness, made his light shine in our hearts, to give us the light of the glory of God in the face of Christ.’” (2 Corinthians 4:6)

Just as the light of the Sun made life on Earth possible, at the command of God, so the brightness of the glory of God in Christ, makes the new creation of the soul and spirit possible. Jesus said, “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.” (John 8:12) “I have come into the world as a light, so that no one who believes in me should stay in darkness.” (John 12:46) Jesus is claiming to be the fundamental source of the world’s illumination. If we wish to live in the light, he says, we will follow him – staying close to him, learning from him. Just as the people of Israel followed the pillar of fire in the wilderness on their journey to the Promised Land, we will follow Jesus who leads us to his kingdom.

Why is it that many do not follow the light? “This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but men loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil. Everyone who does evil hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear that his deeds will be exposed. But whoever lives by the truth comes into the light, so that it may be seen plainly that what he has done has been done through God.” (John 3:19-21. NIV)

“This is the crisis we’re in: God-light streamed into the world, but men and women everywhere ran for the darkness. They went for the darkness because they were really not interested in pleasing God. Everyone who makes a practice of doing evil, addicted to denial and illusion, hates God-light and won’t come near it, fearing a painful exposure. But everyone working and living in truth and reality welcomes God-light so the work can be seen for the God-work it is.” (John 3:19-21. *The Message*)

As a young man, Holman Hunt shook the artistic world in 1854 when he exhibited his remarkable painting “The Light of the World”. It caused a sensation in both the religious and artistic establishments, being both attacked and admired. John Ruskin described it as “one of the very noblest works of sacred art ever produced in this or any age.” There are two copies, both of whom I have seen. One in the chapel of Keble College, Oxford, and a second, painted much later and four times larger, in St. Paul’s Cathedral, London, where I was ordained to the Christian ministry. This larger painting was sent on a world-wide tour. In Australia and New Zealand alone, over four fifths of the population saw it.

*The Light of the World* depicts Jesus as a King/Priest, wearing a crown of thorns, knocking on a door at night. The only light shines from a lantern he holds. The door at which he is knocking is all overgrown with dead weeds, trailing ivy, and rusting hinges. On the ground is to be seen rotten fruit. The door has been shut and unused for a long time. There is no latch, bolt or handle on the outside of the door. It represents the entrance to the human heart. The door to our lives has to be opened by us from within, by our response to Jesus knocking. Christ lights up himself, the doorway, and the way ahead. To those living in spiritual darkness he is waiting and wanting to enter their lives and flood it with the light of eternal life.

If we want to live in and by the light we will push open the door to our hearts, and invite Jesus in every day, every hour, every minute. This is the secret of illumination.

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