WHILE YE HAVE LIGHT

The book of Genesis opens with these words: "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters." (Genesis 1:1, 2) After God created the world, He created light. "And God said, Let there be light: and there was light." (Genesis 1:3) God created light, but He did not create darkness. Darkness is not a thing in itself; it is but the absence of light. As Augustine wrote in his *Confessions:*

> Where then light was not, what was the presence of darkness, but the absence of light? Darkness therefore was upon it, because light was not upon it; as where sound is not, there is silence. And what is it to have silence there, but to have no sound there? (Augustine, *Confessions,* 12.3)

What is true physically is also true morally, Augustine argued. God did not create evil, which is to say, He created no substance of evil, He created no principle of evil. Evil is not a thing in itself, but rather the absence of good. Augustine wrote in his *City of God*, "For evil has no positive nature; but the loss of good has received the name 'evil.'" (Augustine, *City of God,* 11.9) When God would judge the nation of Israel, He said through Isaiah the prophet, "I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace, and create evil: I the LORD do all these things." (Isaiah 45:7) In this passage, however, God does not here refer to His original creation of the world out of nothing, but rather to His bringing calamity, natural evil, upon them that rebel against Him. He does create evil in this sense.

When Adam sinned against God, his nature changed from righteous to sinful, and every one of his descendants is born with the same nature. Every man comes into the world "dead in trespasses and sins." (Ephesians 2:1) Every man comes into the world totally depraved. This does not mean that every man behaves as sinfully as he might, but rather that every man is sinful through and through. His mind, emotion, and will are all corrupted by sin. Not only his doing, but his thinking is sinful. His thinking is like a man walking in darkness, groping and stumbling along. God reveals Himself to all mankind through His creation, but men, because they are sinful, refuse to acknowledge HIm. Saint Paul wrote to the Romans of them that reject God, "Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools." (Romans 1:21, 22)

God has revealed Himself in His work, but He also reveals Himself in His Word. In the Book of Psalm it says, "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path." (Psalm 119:105) Men receive light by the Word of God written.

God's greatest revelation of Himself, however, is the Word of God incarnate. Saint John wrote, "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him." (John 1:18) No man has ever seen God in all His glory. Jesus, the incarnate Son of God, has revealed Him, so that, to see Jesus is to see God. (John 14:9) Jesus is the one that for men illuminates the truth; he enlightens them. Jesus said, "I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." (John 8:12) When Jesus healed a man born blind, He said, "As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world." (John 9:5) When Jesus set out for Judea to raise Lazarus, his disciples reminded that the Jews were seeking to kill Him. He replied to them, "Are there not twelve hours in the day? If any man walk in the day, he stumbleth not, because he seeth the light of this world. But if a man walk in the night, he stumbleth, because there is no light in him." (John 11: 9, 10) Jesus meant that He had more work to do, and could not be

killed until His work was finished. After Jesus triumphantly entered into Jerusalem, He told the people that His time to die had finally come. When the people objected that the Christ would live forever, He said:

> Yet a little while is the light with you. Walk while ye have the light, lest darkness come upon you: for he that walketh in darkness knoweth not whither he goeth. While ye have light, believe in the light, that ye may be the children of light. (John 12:35, 36)

Jesus meant that He, the light of the world was with them, and that they should believe in Him, and obey Him. He warned them that, if they did not, then they would be left in spiritual darkness. Saint John comments that, although Jesus did many miracles, the people did not believe in Him, and that, because they would not believe in Jesus, God placed them under judicial blindness, so that they could not believe in Him. In this was fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah who, when He foresaw the glory of Christ said, "He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart; that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart, and be converted, and I should heal them." (John 12:39-41) Some of the chief rulers did believe in Jesus, but they would not say so publicly, because they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God. (John 12:32-43) Then Jesus said, "I am come a light into the world, that whosoever believeth on me should not abide in darkness." (John 12:46)

If anyone would escape spiritual darkness, if he would be enlightened, if he would not perish, but have eternal life, then he must believe in Jesus, the light of the world, and obey Him. Saint John, in the prologue to his gospel, wrote of Jesus, "That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world." (John 1:9)

> Now unto the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords; who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen nor can see: to whom be honor and power everlasting. Amen.