

Therefore justice is far from us,
And righteousness does not overtake us;
We hope for light, but behold, darkness,
For brightness, but we walk in gloom.
We grope along the wall like blind men,
We grope like those who have no eyes;
We stumble at midday as in the twilight,
Among those who are vigorous we are
like dead men.

Isaiah 59:9-10

Part Five
in a
Series

LIGHT IS BOTH A BLESSING AND A BANE—a comfort and an accuser.

When we pass unwillingly through the shadows, when the dark cavern of our despair seems an endless journey of pain and unrequited longing, what we long for is light—a brighter exit from our stumbling gloom. Consigned to the shadows, we seek a glimmer of relieving white to pierce through the thick, oppressive walls of our darkness.

But while light relieves, it also *reveals*.

“This is the judgment, that the Light has come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the Light, for their deeds were evil. For everyone who does evil hates the Light, and does not come to the Light for fear that his deeds will be exposed.”

John 3:19-20

Those who hate the darkness long for light, but those who take comfort in the dark hate the light. There is ugliness best kept in the shadows, and those who embrace ugliness often keep it there. They resent anyone who dares cast a bright spotlight on their furtive activities.

False Brilliance

Just as our eyesight eventually adjusts to the dark surroundings in which we find ourselves, so man has gradually become accustomed to the darkness in which he lives. Step from the brilliance of noonday sun into a small darkened room, and the new enclosure seems utterly black. But remain a few moments and, as the eyes adjust, the details of the room emerge. Soon the black has been replaced by a dim light previously unnoticed.

Step from the illuminated interior of a house into the exterior black of night. At first glance there are few stars salting the night sky. But remain a while, standing in the darkness while the eyes adjust to the dim surroundings, and soon the arch overhead is populated by myriad bright lights.

Man has lived so long in the tepid gloom of his habitation that he imagines it to be normal. He imagines the dim, gray light to which he is accustomed to be the pinnacle of brilliance, the best it can be. And so he is satisfied. He is as satisfied as the complacent frog swimming in a beaker of gradually warmed water, who doesn't notice when his bath becomes sufficiently hot to cook, rather than cleanse, his flesh. He is as satisfied as the blind fish swimming so deep that light does not penetrate the gloom, so eyes are unnecessary. So man has become blinded by his own mediocrity.

But even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them.

2 Corinthians 4:3-4 NKJV

Jesus came to replace the false brilliance of man's mediocrity with the true brilliance of His saving light. He came to show the people of His own creation that they needn't settle for the dim tawdriness of their self-imposed destiny, but could, instead, rise into the light of His salvation. He came to be a shining light to those trapped in darkness.

The darkness of man's surroundings represents the full brilliance of his own light. Jesus came as a blinding white light to a people more accustomed to the dim glow of their own faint illumination. His arrival hurt their eyes. And when man is suddenly confronted with painful brilliance, he covers his eyes and turns away.

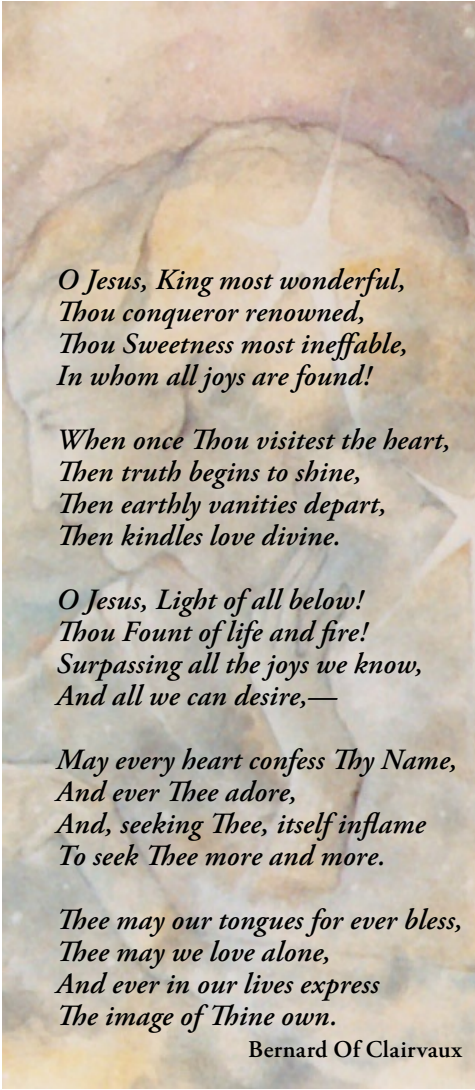
The Holy Light of Heaven

Heaven is illuminated by the unfading light of God's resplendent glory. It has no external source of light: There is no sun or moon. There are no light bulbs. God Himself illumines His dwelling place with a brilliance we cannot yet imagine. Without benefit of the believer's bodily resurrection—in which we will be utterly changed—we would

certainly be blinded for all eternity by the contrast between earth's dim light and the white clarity of heaven.

When Jesus came to earth as the Savior of man, He not only brought light with Him, He *was* the Light.

In Him was life, and the life was the Light of men. The Light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did



*O Jesus, King most wonderful,
Thou conqueror renowned,
Thou Sweetness most ineffable,
In whom all joys are found!*

*When once Thou visitest the heart,
Then truth begins to shine,
Then earthly vanities depart,
Then kindles love divine.*

*O Jesus, Light of all below!
Thou Fount of life and fire!
Surpassing all the joys we know,
And all we can desire,—*

*May every heart confess Thy Name,
And ever Thee adore,
And, seeking Thee, itself inflame
To seek Thee more and more.*

*Thee may our tongues for ever bless,
Thee may we love alone,
And ever in our lives express
The image of Thine own.*

Bernard Of Clairvaux

not comprehend it. There came a man sent from God, whose name was John. He came as a witness, to testify about the Light, so that all might believe through him. He was not the Light, but he came to testify about the Light. There was the true Light which, coming into the world, enlightens every man.

John 1:4-9

But just as our bodies will be adapted to heaven in the resurrection, so the Son's body was adapted to earth in His incarnation. Among other supernatural changes, the overpowering, blinding light of His presence was temporarily dimmed so that He might dwell with man. Even so, though dimmed His light was still brighter than anything else, and sufficient to both relieve and reveal the hearts of men.

From the moment He entered this fallen world the holy light of heaven shone from Jesus. And with Him He brought a brighter path.

Then Jesus again spoke to them, saying, "I am the Light of the world; he who follows Me will not walk in the darkness, but will have the Light of life."

John 8:12

And being admonished by these books to return into myself, I entered into my inward soul, guided by thee. This I could do because thou wast my helper. And I entered, and with the eye of my soul—such as it was—saw above the same eye of my soul and above my mind the Immutable Light. It was not the common light, which all flesh can see; nor was it simply a greater one of the same sort, as if the light of day were to grow brighter and brighter, and flood all space. It was not like that light, but different, yea, very different from all earthly light whatever. Nor was it above my mind in the same way as oil is above water, or heaven above earth, but it was higher, because it made me, and I was below it, because I was made by it. He who knows the Truth knows that Light, and he who knows it knows eternity. Love knows it, O Eternal Truth and True Love and Beloved Eternity! Thou art my God, to whom I sigh both night and day. When I first knew thee, thou didst lift me up, that I might see that there was something to be seen, though I was not yet fit to see it. And thou didst beat back the weakness of my sight, shining forth upon me thy dazzling beams of light, and I trembled with love and fear.

Augustine, *Confessions*