

Shadows of Light

By Jacob Palicka

“He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.” (Psalm 91:1 KJV)

“The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light: they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined.” (Isaiah 9:2)

Unlike other scriptural metaphors, this one loses its force if understood merely by analogy. By empirical rendering, the night of earth is a period of quietness in which we are alleviated from direct contact of the sun by the gentle mitigation of the moon. While in this sense we are made aware of the beauty in the original creation, night has also acquired an aspect no longer solely serene since the fall of man. Instead of being sought for the solace of temporary isolation, it is fled to for fear of discovery (Joshua 10:12). Rather than inducing reflection over the undiscovered mysteries in the realm granted us, it entices our debauched souls into forbidden activities both necromantic and carnal. Whereas the darkness of earth is not entire, nor evil, that which is cast over the soul is absolute, horrifying, and loathsome.

Consequent to this discrepancy, it is best to conceive of this darkness in a simile more closely aligned to its literal meaning. Similar to Jesus' explanation as to what manner of involvement between men and the world constitutes culpability (Matthew 15:11), so can it be distinguished that what corrupts man is not the defects of the world but the depravity of his own soul. Although this world may have a suppressive effect upon the elect, the final responsibility always lies in the individual. Just as a babe recognizes from birth what is light and what is dark, even so, from the dawn of consciousness a child perceives what is permissible and what is not, though he have ever so weak a will to decide. Therefore, this darkness is to be regarded not as being imposed from without but accepted from within.

If similarity is to be found between the darkness which meets the eyes and that which befalls the soul, one must view it from a spiritual outlook. However, before this approach is used, progress toward a unified understanding may result from considering yet one more empirical difference. Despite encountering dreary weather, one's temperament may be undeniably jaunty or unsusceptible to a climate's typically adverse influence. In these instances as in the incarnation of Christ, we find that there can exist a remarkable incongruity between the nature of a situation and the soul which is experiencing it. Regardless of the circumstance, we encounter evil when we find someone dull of perception and wanting in kindness (Ecclesiastes 11:7), attributes present in light, lacking in the soul. In this spiritual darkness there is no kinship with God. Furthermore, without our ever being capable of possessing consummate enlightenment, the daily guidance of the Holy Ghost ensures we remain in the way of spiritual light even when called to tread paths dark to our comprehension or cold to our heart (John 16:13).