

Jesus and Non-Visible Reality

Spirituality 101 was about the non-visible side of reality. Now I want to use an analogy with light to explain further this other aspect of reality.

A Flashlight—the Light of Christ

Think about a flashlight. When you press the switch, the light comes on. It does this every time you flick the switch. If you asked people, “Do you see the beam of light?” when the flashlight is turned on, they would say yes. That is not correct, however. No one can see the light itself. You only see the results of the light hitting solid objects, physical reality. This is basic physics. When a beam of light hits an object, even a small dust particle, it releases energy. It is this energy that you see, not the light itself.

The Properties and Value of Light

Think about this now. Light is real. It is dependable. It appears when you want it to. Everybody agrees when light is present because everybody sees the result of the light hitting objects you aim at. Light is important in our lives. Without artificial light, our lives would be much less productive and less fulfilling. Without it we could work and interact with others only during the daytime. As my grandpa used to say, we would, “go to bed with the chickens and rise with the dawn.”

The Gospels and Light

Light is an important part of non-visible reality. We don't think of it being the miracle that it is because we are so used to it. Light is an important, dependable part of non-visible reality that everybody agrees exists, but nobody can see. This is why John's Gospel, in particular, uses the analogy of light to talk about God being incarnate (shown to exist by his influence on the physical universe). The very word "incarnate" means "in the flesh."

What Does Jesus Say?

John 8:12 has these stunning words being said by Jesus, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness but will have the light of life." Jesus says this to the Sadducees, those who rejected the concept of an immortal soul. Jesus says, further: "You do not know where I come from and where I am going" (John 8:14). He is saying life is like light. You see the effect of life coming into and leaving the physical body.

Other Beliefs about Life

For thousands of years people have tried to figure this out. Where did life come from? Where did it go? People were tortured and killed in an attempt to understand this. Cut off an arm, and a person doesn't die, at least right away. Cut off his head and he dies quicker. What's going on? The Mayan kings investigated this. I am told they actually did experiments such as this to try and understand death. As the person slipped away, they worked to keep him conscious. "Tell me what you see, what you experience," was the question. What did the Mayans conclude? Like the Pharisees who kept kosher, their conclusion was the life is in the blood. The only sure way to terminate life was to remove the blood. The

faster the blood was removed, the quicker the death. This was the basis for kosher killing of animals. You don't eat animal flesh with the life-force still in the flesh. You drain the blood first. Kosher butchers do this. My speculation is that there were once some Canaanites who were vampires of a sort. They tried drinking the blood of victims to gain the life force. Unfortunately, that doesn't work. The life is not in the blood.

Jesus Corrects the Teaching

Jesus corrects this error in his teachings. He's saying the life is not in the blood. The life is in the presence of God. God gives that presence to the person and then later withdraws it. This is a much older concept from Genesis 2:7, "Then the Lord God formed humankind from the dust of the ground and breathed into its nostrils the breath of life, and the human became a living being." This is the source and start of human life—God's presence animating physical reality. The end of human life is similar. Genesis 6:3 states, "The Lord said, my spirit shall not abide in mortals forever."

This is just like the light, just like Jesus is saying, "You do not know where I come from and where I go" (John 3:8). Those who hear this teaching are confused. They don't understand where he is going (John 8:22). Jesus says, "If I have told you about earthly things and you do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you about heavenly things?" NRSV commentary connects the earthly things of this passage to Jesus' earlier parable of the wind coming and going and you do not know where it comes from and where it goes (John 3:12). Jesus is using wind (an earthly thing) to explain heavenly things, supreme spiritual realities you cannot feel or see.

The Two Aspects of Reality

This is a powerful teaching. There is a physical reality and a non-physical reality and they are intertwined. The animating principle behind all

that is alive in physical reality is the non-visible presence of the life force that comes from “the other side”. We are born and take our form on the basis of this non-visible side of reality. We grow strong and become very physical in our outlook about reality—we wax physical. After a while, the physical aspect of us begins to diminish, as it is programmed to do. We eventually pass back into the non-physical reality from whence we came. We do not cease to exist; we just change form from visible to non-visible. Why is this so hard for people to grasp? Where do babies come from? Eggs and sperm, people say. Where do eggs and sperm come from? You say from the preceding generation, the parents. Where did the first egg and the first sperm come from? From the non-visible source of life I call God.

This perspective is the type of thing that was confusing to Nicodemus, a ruler of Israel. Nicodemus tended to confuse teachings about spiritual reality (such as being born again) as if they were meant to apply to physical reality. That is the story (John 3: 1-13) within which Jesus uses the parable of the wind to teach about the two realities.

Christian Mystics

The validity of this perspective has been affirmed by the common religious experience of all Christian mystics who have been blessed with the gift of the “beatific vision”, the direct sensing of the energies of God’s presence. What they all say is, “I was God, but I wasn’t all there was to God. You, too, are God. The trees, the rocks, the animals are also part of God, but God was much more than the sum total of all this, much more than just being present in physical reality, and Wow! I live forever!”

Yin and Yang

This perspective is the teaching of the moon—waxing and waning. This is the oriental teaching of the Yin and the Yang and the experience of

Christian mystics. Existence is much more than just that which we call physical reality. There is a non-physical component to reality also. Existence is a dance between these two aspects of reality. This is the divine dance. Do you wonder where you will go when you die? Don't you remember where you came from? You live forever! Jesus taught this to us.