

# Light in the darkness

a sermon preached on

31 December 2009

## Ringling-in the New Year

at

### St Luke's in the City, Christchurch

by Fr David Moore

parish priest

Lecton: Revelation 21:1-14,22-24, John 8:12-19

On such a night, when our awareness of the passage of time is heightened, we can hardly fail to notice the astonishing times in which we live. What a time of tumultuous upheaval! Everywhere, in every field of human endeavour, there appears to be such foment – in political aspirations, in economic theory, in science, in ethics, in the family, in the nation state, and in religion too. Truly, as many wise observers have remarked, we are at the turning point of an aeon.

And yet, as with every such turning point, it is as though we are temporarily blinded – no longer able to clearly see where we have come from, unable to see where we are going. Everything which held life together in the past is failing, no longer able to contain the vast energies which are erupting in the creation, under the influence of the Spirit who blows where she will. And yet neither do we have a clear map, a tidy plan for what is unfolding in human consciousness. Consciousness itself is undergoing a paradigm shift, a great quantum leap. Yet, common to all evolutionary development, during the period of the turning all is chaos, and the new form remains obscured from sight. The leading phylum of development is, at this moment, but one among many competing forms.

This makes for exhilarating, and anxious times! In spite of unprecedented freedoms, mobility, and wealth, there is a tremendous, and at times overwhelming, sense of darkness ahead and around. We see as though through a mirror dimly. We gape as into a darkness, straining to see the emerging true light. That light has already come into the world, according to the evangelist John, but was not seen, not received.<sup>1</sup>

The quest for that light has tended to be an external quest – for a light emanating from above the clouds of a three-decker, pre-Copernican cosmos; for a light located in a single, once-and-for-all individual locked into a single historical moment; for a light preserved in a religious institution and its authority. This externalised quest has energised the Christian aeon, without doubt. However, in this turning of the aeons, in this time of great foment, of evolutionary upheaval, and of searching, it is abundantly clear that the religious institution and the externalised authority are losing their capacity to energise the leading phylum of developing humankind. Anyone with a keen eye and an honest mind and heart can observe this empirical fact – the data is everywhere to be seen, in the external events and in the inner landscape of our souls.

Of course, faced with this disturbing reality we ought to expect a reactionary religious rearguard, just as we can observe the same reactionary rearguard in other domains of life. The gospels repeatedly testify to this same reactionary rearguard behaviour in the many testy encounters between Jesus and the religious experts. Temporarily blinded as we are, it is to be expected that reactionary religion will attempt to impose itself, in an increasingly-desperate attempt to 'keep it all together', to preserve its fading authority, to shore up its power and confidence and coffers. It's a case of more heat than light! Nevertheless, it is increasingly-clear to many people that no light is to be found among religious institutions and its leaders. At this turning of the aeons, which this turning of the year draws into sharper focus, our common human predicament is the quest for the light in the midst of the darkness of a quantum leap in evolutionary development in human consciousness. Where is the light to be found?

---

<sup>1</sup>

John 1:9-10

Intimacy between Jesus and the One who sent him is the dazzling, incandescent, illuminating, transforming light for evolving humanity – this is the testimony of the doctrine of Incarnation. He knows where he has come from, and where he is going.<sup>2</sup> The light of life which cannot be overcome by darkness is to be found within the darkness of the invisible and mystical union between Jesus and the One who testifies on his behalf. “See,” the Apocalypticist writes, “the tabernacle of God is among mortals.”<sup>3</sup> This is, of course, a paradox as it is bound to be – just as all religious truth is, by definition, paradoxical by nature.

The story of Jesus amply illumines both the problem and the necessary solution. The rational knowledge of historical religious facts and figures, the reliance on an externalised authority, the power of an institutional structure – these do not illuminate, because they fail the requirements of Incarnation, which is the mystical union of Divine and human, that is, embodiment. That is precisely what the gospel testifies to in the interchange between Jesus and the religious experts in the Jerusalem temple at the Feast of Tabernacles – they know neither Jesus the embodied Word, nor the Divine father who testifies to embodiment.<sup>4</sup> They cannot see what Jesus sees because they are looking backwards to a mere rule and outwards to an externalised authority.

Those who desire to follow Jesus the light of the **κοσμου** the *cosmos*, to do his will which is the will of the Father, must be willing to suffer the darkness of the same intimate union – to which the *via crucis* and the sacrificial offering of Christ’s Body and Blood testify. These symbols of ultimate truth illuminate eternally, insofar as they call forth from each of us a conscious, willed, individual embodiment of the light – found by facing the upheaval, by willingly entering into the deep and dazzling darkness of the invisible and mystical union between the human and the Divine.

The light which shines in the darkness of this turning point in the aeon can no longer be merely in a 2000 year old historical figure, nor in a messiah who embodies full humanity *instead* of us – but willing, conscious, sacrificial embodiment, enfleshment in you and me, in all humankind. “The one who believes in me,” Jesus declares, “will also do the works that I do and, in fact, will do greater works than these.”<sup>5</sup> That seems to be the human vocation at this turning point in the aeons.

[david@stlukesinthecity.org.nz](mailto:david@stlukesinthecity.org.nz)

---

<sup>2</sup> John 8:14  
<sup>3</sup> Revelation 21:3b  
<sup>4</sup> John 8:19  
<sup>5</sup> John 14:12