

“Hide and Seek”
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An Aristotle was but the rubbish of an Adam, and Athens but the rudiments of Paradise.
Robert South (1634-1716)

Among my favorite books are some vintage collections of quotations—where the treasure of clarifying words are stored by author and sometimes indexed by subject. In “Brainy Quotes,” I blush to confess it, I found a new eloquent friend: an English clergyman named Robert South. “The rubbish of an Adam” means the dregs of the first Adam, the apex of degradation in a superlatively revered philosopher, Aristotle. It is disquieting to consider the best of men as the rubbish, as but trash and yet such is the decline of man due to sin, that this thought (this estimation of the best the world has to offer in philosophy is so much rubbish!) is convictingly apt. painful, but suitable. Now conviction is a curious thing—until a man is convicted of his sin there can be no repentance. And where no repentance is, forgiveness cannot be. When I shared the film “Fireproof” with the men from the third floor at KVCC, conviction spread like fire. It began with Caleb and spread to Catherine (the male and female leads who portrayed the dissolution and then restoration of a marriage). Caleb became convicted first of his lack of love of God, then his rejection of God, followed by the sexual sin of pornography (which is but a glossy version of lustful adultery). Then came the realization of how dishonoring a man he had become; first of God and, derivatively, of course, his wife. The conviction humbled Caleb and brought him to faith (acknowledging his need for forgiveness) and surrender to Christ as Lord and Savior. What a relief when we hear from his lips, regarding Christianity, “I’m in . . . all in.” Caleb’s selfish, stubborn pride had to be trashed as thoroughly as the computer which brought porn home to him! We must destroy sin or sin will destroy the sinner.

There was another huge theme in “Fireproof” and that was the theme of doubt. Caleb doubted Catherine and she returned the favor; and they both in the business of getting and spending, in moving on with their married life, they both doubted God. If I might cut to the chase; one of the secrets of the Christian life goes like this: learn, beloved to doubt the doubt! Let me explain by another familiar quote, this time by John Bunyan, the author of that stupendous spiritual guidebook, Pilgrim’s Progress, wrote: “There was a castle called Doubting Castle, the owner whereof was Giant Despair.” And Despair’s wife’s name was Diffidence.” Diffidence means “lack of faith or confidence” which keeps Christian and Hope imprisoned, trapped in her castle—she is mean, cruel, a tormenting spirit. Because of their doubts, of each other and of God, Caleb and Catherine specialize in tormenting each other. The practical atheism of their married life produces both pain and diffidence. Thank God, it doesn’t have to be this way!

Here’s another Robert South quote: “Guilt upon the conscience, like rust upon iron, both defiles and consumes it, gnawing and creeping into it, or does that which at last eats the very heart and substance away.” You really should see the movie for yourself. Perhaps it will work its magic and start some things moving in your spiritual world—as it did among the men who viewed and discussed the film this past Thursday evening. (Pray for us between the hours of six and eight.) They were openly stunned by the power of conviction in the film—“Never experienced anything like it,” one man said. “Amazing.”

Genesis 3. Guilt and shame. Remember how Adam and Eve felt guilty and hid themselves from God when God came calling, **Adam, where are you?** With yearning love God came seeking fellowship with Adam and Eve. It was something important, fellowship, or communion with God—sharing with and listening to each other—is what we were designed for **from the beginning**. When I was a child, I thought the point of “Hide and Seek” was to find the best hiding place and never be discovered. But later, I learned that hiding was but prelude to being found—even to letting oneself be found! That where the real fun, the real joy lay. We hide a lot and actually want to be found—not abandoned, forgotten, or left in our secretive success! The game hinges on the seeker more than on the sought. South is right about guilt, and by extension about shame for Adam and Eve both covered their nakedness (shame) and hid from God (guilt). Now truthfully, their story is our story—and what underlies that story is our sin and pressing need for forgiveness. God wants us with him, not hidden in the bushes, not forever covering up. He wants us running towards him—free, forgiven, pure as light and right—not cringing, cowering. Holy and reverent not in servile fear as Adam and Eve exiled and driven out of Paradise.

Now John 12 got me thinking about the light. **There were certain Greeks among them that came up to worship at the feast.** They were “proselytes of the gate—”that is, they enjoyed the privileges of Judaism. They were likely in the court of the temple—and Jesus was currently elsewhere in the temple but out of view—and they were worshippers. *By association (worship with glorified) we might suggest that if they (an extension of that glory?) wanted to worship Jesus and given that this response is given to the two apostles (Andrew and Philip) carrying the request—some of the strangeness of speech that follows disappears. Jesus may be pondering the dark path ahead that lay before his glorification—that is, his death on the cross. John Gill writes “saying, the hour is come, that the son of man should be glorified; by rising from the dead, ascending to heaven, sitting at the right hand of God, and from thence pouring forth the Spirit upon his disciples, who should go and preach the Gospel to the Gentiles, as well as Jews; and which would issue in the conversion of many of them, and so in his glory, of which the coming of these Greeks was an earnest. But he intimates, in the next verse, that he must first die.”*

He that loveth his life, his self, his soul shall lose it . . . and he who hateth it, shall gain it. (v. 25) This saying appears to be about self-actualization, the highest good and gain of human existence. Jesus self-actualized through enduring the suffering and death on the cross, making his life a life of significance and of achievement—the completion, successful, of his sent mission. “(J)ust for a moment, to ask you to consider the perfect uniqueness of such an utterance as that. Think of one Man standing up before all mankind, and coolly and deliberately saying to them, ***I am the realized Ideal of human conduct; I am Incarnate Perfection; and all of you, in all the infinite variety of condition, culture, and character, are to take Me for your pattern and your guide.*** The world has listened, and the world has not laughed nor been angry. Neither indignation nor mockery, which one might have expected would have extinguished such absurdity, has waited upon Christ’s utterance.”

“Is it not even more singular that He should venture to present His own companionship as the sufficient recompense for every sorrow, for every effort, for all pain, for all pilgrimage? To be with Him, He thinks, is enough for any man and enough for all men.

Who did He think Himself to be?

What did He suppose His relation to the rest of us to be, who could thus calmly suggest to the world that the only thing that a heart needed for blessedness was to be beside Him?

And we believe it, too little as it influences our lives. ‘To be with Christ ’is ‘very much better’; better than all beneath the stars; better than all on this side eternity.’ (Maclaren)

“Father, save Me from this hour; but Thy will, not Mine, be done; for this cause came I unto this hour, that Thy name be glorified; Father, glorify Thy name.”

No wonder his soul was troubled. **And I, if I be lifted up** (signifying death by crucifixion) **from the earth, will draw all men unto myself.** (v.32) **Yet a little while is the light with you. Walk while you have light lest darkness come upon you.** (v. 35)

There are several kinds of light, which fall short of the gospel light, in this world and each leave us in a sometimes fatal obscurity: First there is the pre-light of Creation which God spoke into being before the creation of stars and sun and moon which do give natural light to the earth. This latter light, we call natural light. Thirdly, there is the light of general revelation, or the light attendant on pagan philosophy.—this light is carnal, full of self-importance and swelling pride; it vaunts itself as “scientific, or ‘true’ knowledge. It is materialistic in nature, skeptical in tenor and sometimes is labeled as “secular humanism.” Fourthly, we come to the “light” of enthusiasm which is like a wild-fire, it surges and bewilders the mind and at times produces an obstinacy that is hard to eradicate. Fifthly and finally, there is “Christ Light, the Light of Life” which is a pure, unadulterated and unchangeable light. It is centered in Christ and emanates from him. This light is the light alluded to in John 12:35. Our felicity and our brightest hopes are discovered by this light.

And also a word about the **darkness referenced here. It is a darkness of the heart.** Its symptoms include gross ignorance, a mind perfectly uninformed. Such was the condition of the Sadducees who knew neither the Scriptures, nor the power of God. Another symptom is vanity of heart, a heart puffed up with its own consequence. Self-righteous (“I am a good person.”) and self-sufficiency (“I don’t need the crutch of religion.”) are evidences of *positive darkness* (which refers to the hidden or unacknowledged aspects of ourselves that, when explored and integrated, can lead to significant personal growth, healing, and a deeper sense of wholeness—the Jungian “shadow,” or repressed consciousness) dwelling within. Romans 10:3-4: **For not knowing about God’s righteousness and seeking to establish their own, they did not subject themselves to the righteousness of God. 4 For Christ is the [a]end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.** Matt. 23:1-4: **Then Jesus spoke to the crowds and to His disciples, 2 saying: “The scribes and the Pharisees have seated themselves in the chair of Moses; 3 therefore all that they tell you, do and observe, but do not do according to their deeds; for they say things and do not do them.** When a mentally-ill patient claims to be royalty, delusions of grandeur, we smile; but self-righteousness (as in “I’m a good person.”) in a sinner ought to produce astonishment and grief. They know neither their state, nor their need for salvation. We can be too, too proud.

If we can be too proud, we would do well to look well within and wisely about ourselves. Pride bars the door to truth, like stained glass which colors pure common daylight. An attitude, belief, or impression formed beforehand, *what we know as prejudice, or bias*, can cloud the mind—to our great disadvantage. We cannot be objective, or clear if our organs (eyes, ears, minds) of perception are cluttered, impaired or dysfunctional! Prejudice can render the beautiful deformed, and ugly leading to rejection. We also have the obstructions of negligence and unbelief. Negligence: Hebrews 6:11-12 **And we desire that each one of you show the same diligence [a]so as to realize the full assurance of hope until the end, 12 so that you will not be sluggish (negligent), but imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.** And as for unbelief: Hebrews 3:12 **Take care, brethren, that there not be in any one of you an evil, unbelieving heart [a]that falls away from the living God. 13 But encourage one another day after day, as long as it is *still* called “Today,” so that none of you will be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. 14 For we have become partakers of Christ, if we hold fast the beginning of our assurance firm until the end.**

Above all, in these matters, resist not conviction because:

- The infidel’s boasted light may prove worse than Egyptian darkness
- The proud, self-righteous and Pharisaical find his self-exaltation built on sand. Let him seek both light and life in Christ while he still can.
- Let the profane sinner see his defilement, repent and go to Jesus to obtain righteousness and grace.

Mental darkness of our understanding is an affliction of darkness. It produces enmity towards God which is both a curse, and an expression of divine wrath. It feeds rebellion, and rejection of God’s ways. We are comfortable asserting that God is pro-life in terms that transcend our cultural abortion debate, let us also freely be “pro-light!”

- Set a just value by it. Buy it at any price and sell it not.
- Labor to gain more and more of it.
- Communicate it to others to the full extent of your ability.
- Remove obstacles to its shining when and wherever you can.
- Triumph in the happy victories which the light and truth of God provide anywhere and any time amongst anybody.
- Look forward to its final and complete triumph—in unfading and eternal splendor!
Amen.