

Choose Between the Two Kingdoms: The Eye as the Light of the Soul*



“The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light. But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!”

(St. Matthew 6:22-23)

“If the light that is in thee be darkness,” says the Lord, showing that the light of our body may give off darkness, just as it may give off light. All of the passions and sins enter into our body through the eyes, going first into the mind. Even a sinful incitement which arises from something that is heard develops into visual images from the memory of that which has been seen. Even the blind develop images in the eyes of their mind.

All of the beauty and grandeur of God’s works also enter through the eyes.

The things which we enjoy with our eyes feed our souls, for good or for bad. Where we direct our gaze, how we look at things, and how our mind is trained to interpret that which we see—all of these produce either light or darkness in our souls, our hearts, and our spirits. Our eyes help us to determine where we will store our treasures and which master we will choose to serve: God or the mammon of this world.

Many times in the spiritual writings of the Saints, we are advised to guard the direction of our eyes, to avoid dealing with things which can provoke us to sin or inflame our souls. It is not so much *what we happen* to see which darkens us as it is *where we choose* to fix our eyes and *what we allow* our mind to do with that which we see.

Through our eyes we allow envy into our hearts over the success of our neighbor, for his appearance, for his abilities, or for his possessions. Through our eyes we learn of which things to be covetous, what to desire in a sensuous way, for what earthly material things to yearn. Through our eyes we see our brother’s sins and we judge him. Through our eyes we share in the materialism, corruption, and atheism of the society that surrounds us. All of that will become our own way of life; it will become our treasure and we will attach our hearts to the present age.

Through the same eyes, however, we can see the empty vanity of the world around us, we can see the image of God in our brothers, and we can look with compassionate understanding on the weakness and the failings of

our brothers—seeing God in their virtues and ourselves in their weaknesses. Through our eyes we can see the beauty of the created universe and sense the presence of God in it, seeing and perceiving the spiritual aspect of the universe. These things will lead us to a life of struggle to establish the things of God as our treasure and to store them up in Heaven. These things will lead us to choose to serve the true Lord, and the Kingdom of God will truly be manifested within us.

This appears to be the meaning of this passage: if the Kingdom of God can be within us, then so, too, can Satan's dominion just as easily be within us. We can decide what sort of kingdom to erect in our hearts; and, to a great degree, that which we prefer to see in the world around us, how the eyes of our mind interpret it, and what we allow to enter our hearts by means of our eyes will determine which kingdom will dominate in our hearts. If the light that enters into us through the eyes is the deceptive, false light of the Devil, then it will indeed be manifested in our hearts as a great darkness. If it is the true light of the Kingdom of God, then it will shine as the radiance of eternal life!

*Source: *Άγιος Κυπριανός*, No. 298 (September-October 2000), pp. 346-347.