Light Prayers:

3. The Shape of Light

Isaiah 45:7 NIV “I form the light . . .”

One of the most delightful memories of my childhood was living next door to a potter, in the town of Icoaraci. I still savor the memories of watching the entire process.

Periodically his whole family would float their bulky barge-like boat upriver for an unpleasant day of hacking clay out of a riverbank and loading it onto the boat. When the tide was right, they floated it back down to the potter’s shed and began the equally odious task of manually unloading random shaped chunks of clay.

Eventually portions of the cache were placed in a depression in the earth where feet kneaded water into the stiff mass until sticks, roots and stones could be felt and extracted.

The end goal was a row of clean balls of clay, each half the size of a soccer ball. They were covered with a cloth and kept damp over the succeeding days.

I lived for design day.

The potter would never tell me what he was going to make, but I got to sit on the little bench opposite the potter’s wheel and watch. He would scrape the wheel vigorously, wet the center a little bit, then go get a ball of clay.

His leathered right foot would set the table spinning while he turned the ball over and over in his hand. Then he would slam it down with accuracy in the middle of the table.

Both hands were dipped in the bowl of dirty water off to his right. Then with a master’s sense of the audience he would envelop the ball with both hands, slowly squeezing it into absolute uniformity.

I always wondered whether he knew what he would make before he started and he just enjoyed tormenting me with expectation, or whether he truly was debating what THIS piece of clay was supposed to be.
Eventually, long after I was past ready, the two powerful thumbs were lowered over the center of the ball and the miracle happened one more time. Under his seemingly effortless touch, the ball became a vessel. Usually within a couple of minutes I could tell whether it was going to be a bowl, or a vase, or a water pot, or . . .

His hands could make any of them from a lump of clay.

Now let’s up the game.

We don’t have a verb for a potter exerting his skill on a ball of wet clay. To potterize the clay doesn’t really sparkle. We use the cheap and tawdry verb, “to make” a pot out of the clay.

How plebeian!

The Hebrew does capture the concept with its own word: yatsar.

This is the word used for the Master Designer forming man out of the soil. No rectilinear Gumby doll here. With a skill that relegated Michelangelo to the ranks of a mere amateur, the Master Sculptor drew into visibility and perfect balance every rippling muscle and sinew, every fold of the skin over the facial bones, padded with exactly the right amount of subcutaneous soft tissue and each bony joint, from the hip bone down to the smallest joint of the little finger or toe.

He formed. He molded. He sculpted. He designed. He crafted.

We lack the word yatsar in our language. It is all of the above and more.

Now take the exquisite attention to detail captured in the word yatsar and apply it to light, because that is the precise word in Isaiah 45. God formed, molded, sculpted, designed, crafted light.

Ever tried that? It is horrifically difficult for a rank amateur. And I am just talking about the successful distribution of light from a lamp not crafting light as an essence!

Our video studio is one pathetic monument to ineptness. We have a bunch of lights and endless gels and umpteen adjustments on every single fixture. And we have horrible hot spots, endless rebellious shadows and dark spots on my face when I turn a particular way.

We can’t even DISPLAY light well.

Imagine being asked to form it.

What shape of light would God use to cause the two key people to find me? Round light? Sharp light? Pointed light? The diffused light of a sunrise seen in the clouds on the western horizon?
How would God form the light to release to me the secret of the left atrium of the heart?

Or better yet, what texture or contours would the light have that would reveal the things I don’t know that I don’t know when I am so not looking for them?

Now think about the pleasure people have in creating shapes and forms.

I think of Dad hand-planing a piece of wood for any one of the three outboard motor boats he built from scratch. He would shave just a little bit more off five or six times until there was a perfect fit. And it was a point of pleasure, not pain, to that craftsman.

Think of the lady decorating the cake and the joy she finds in the perfectly symmetrical twirls and swirls produced by the uncommon partnership between eye and hand, graced by dozens of large and small muscles.

What about the great golfer partnering with a designer to craft the surface of that new golf course that will give the discerning professional a new flavor of pleasure?

How much joy is there in the concept division of the Porsche or Lotus factories as the engineers experiment with radical new forms and shapes for the next generation of male legitimacy crutches?

A thousand different trades find deep fulfillment out of shaping, forming, sculpting, designing and molding new shapes.

And each one of those tradesmen received that capacity for gratification from God who Himself finds pleasure in the world of shapes.

“Father of Heavenly Lights, we invite You to experience pleasure of a divine magnitude on the playing field of Sapphire Leadership Group. We desire to bring this team of Noble Subjects into perfect alignment with your metric for light: let them see and be seen according to your design and desire.

“But we ask You to bring immense glory to Yourself by the ways in which You form the different kinds of light needed. We will most likely not be able to see the shapes and textures of Your finely crafted masterpieces, but the spiritual realm will see them clearly and can celebrate them for us.

“We invite You to create shapes and forms of light You have never used before so that the Twenty-four Elders who worship continually will be exposed to some new facets of Your infinite wisdom.

“Let the mastery of the art of shapes which brought this universe into being be applied to the field of light on behalf of SLG, we ask, in one accord, with deep anticipation.”

Copyright January 2014 by Arthur Burk

From the Hub