

THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD  
Is Not of This World  
By Metropolitan Ephraim of Boston

We have been complaining about the role of Rationalism — or, as Saint Paul might call it, "Greek wisdom" — in the field of Theology. What is the exact nature of our complaint? After all, God gave us the ability to reason and to think things through reasonably and rationally. Is this wrong? Are we being unreasonable about Rationalism?

Perhaps a small explanation is in order here.

We use our reason everywhere. We need it to get along in this world. We need it to be able to write and read this article. We need it to pay our grocery bill (and not get short-changed); we need it in order to discern good from evil.

But sometimes our reason falters.

We cannot see distant stars and galaxies, except with help, i.e., a telescope.

Our senses have physical limitations. So, for example, if we want to see something small better, we use a magnifying glass. If we want to hear better, we get a hearing aid, or special listening devices (especially if we work for the CIA or KGB).

Our human reason also has its limitations, and therefore needs help, or rather, doesn't work at all, in certain applications.

For example, when the newly-appeared Saints Raphael, Nicholas and the young girl Irene began in the 1960's to reveal the facts about their martyrdom on the Greek Island of Lesbos, their revelations overturned the very foundations of Rationalism.

People "dead" for some 550 years, appeared and began to tell us how they were inhumanly put to death by their Moslem tormentors.

Several people — about seven — on the same island had the same dream on the same night about the formerly unknown Saints.

Saint Raphael told them, "If you dig here, you will find the skeleton of my body." So, the villagers who saw these dreams hired workers to dig where the Saint had indicated that his bones were. The workers — most of them unbelievers and Communists — started digging in the cement-like earth to excavate the bones, and they complained bitterly to those who had hired them to work, "Look. You're wasting our time and your money. This earth is rock hard. It has never been touched. We're not going to find *anything* here."

The villagers who hired them responded, "It's our money, and since you are being paid well to do this, just continue digging. If we find nothing, it is our loss."

Grumbling, the workers continued until — *viola!* — they discovered a skeleton with no skull. The skull was about a foot away. But there was no jawbone. "You will have to dig over *here* to find the Saint's jawbone, because that is where the Moslem Turks threw it, as the Saint told us," explained the villagers.

The now contrite workers began again to dig in the rock-solid earth. When, at length, they discovered the jawbone also where the Saint had indicated (over 30 feet away, and almost five feet down), the formerly unbelieving workers solemnly made the sign of the cross. The jawbone was not with the Saint's skull, because, as the Saint had revealed, his executioners had cut off his head by sawing it off through his mouth.

When they found the jawbone, it had the marks of the saw on it. Many of the formerly unbelieving workers were weeping openly now.

Then the Saints appeared again and told the villagers, "If you dig here, you will find the Light of the world." Now, what could this cryptic message mean? You dig in the earth to find light?

Once again, with pick-axes and shovels, the workers began to dig. After they had gone down some feet, one worker began to shovel out the clods of earth from the hole in order to clear out the digging area. One clod of earth sailed through the air and smashed on the surface. A shiny object glinted in the bright sun where the clod had landed and broken, and so someone went over to see what it was. He brushed off the dirt and saw that it was a coin. In fact, it was a Byzantine coin from the fourteenth century — about sixty years before the time when Saints Raphael, Nicholas and Irene had suffered martyrdom. On the coin was an image of our Saviour, Jesus Christ — the Light of the World.

Human rationality *cannot* handle information like this.

Our eyesight is not engineered to handle seeing the radio waves and television waves that saturate our atmosphere. The fuses of our eyes would "blow out" from the over-load of information pouring into our brains.

In like manner, our rationality cannot reach into the supernatural world. It needs divine grace to replace its "abilities". Or, as we chant in the Great Doxology, "*In Thy light we shall see light.*" That is to say, *in Thy grace*, we will *see* grace and the mysteries of God.

The birds who live in the trees are able to see and hear all sorts of things that we cannot. They are able to perceive a spectrum of colors that our eyes cannot see. They can pick up sounds that are far beyond our range of hearing. So, although we live side by side — they in their trees, and we in our houses — we each live in a very different world because we perceive different things around us.

Like the birds in the trees, the Saints see and hear things that we cannot — unless God and those who partake of His grace choose to reveal them to us. Or, unless God gives *us* His uncreated illumination.

That, essentially, is our complaint about Rationalism. In spiritual matters, it doesn't go where we need to go. It will not get us to our destination.

As Saint Isaac of Syria would say in his description of the "Three Degrees of Knowledge:"

1. In the First Degree (the sciences and the knowledge of the world), Rationalism works fine.
2. In the Second Degree (the life of piety and love for God), Rationalism gives a helping hand — *sometimes* — to our faith.
3. In the Third Degree (divine revelation, God's grace), Rationalism falls flat on its face.

Our reason is darkened, and cannot perceive or comprehend the Light of the world.

"In Him was life; and the life was the Light of men. And the Light shineth in darkness; *and the darkness comprehended It not.*"

(John 1:4)