

The Inscrutable Question: Immutability of God, James 1:17; Difference between Light & Light-Bearing Bodies

James 1:17 - Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning.

- 1) James makes the point that the only perfect gifts are from God and all others are imperfect because they do not come from God.
- 2) Gifts that find their origin in this universe are flawed because they are of human origin.
- 3) The instability inherent in worldly gain or prosperity is compared to the variations of the heavenly bodies, which the “Father of lights” created.
- 4) These variations are manifestations of a fallen universe. But our Creator is not a God of variation nor is He One Who moves back and forth from light to darkness.
- 5) The words being emphasized are first of all “variation,” the Greek noun:

παράλλαγή / *parallage* / - “to change; to go from one condition to another.”

This is accompanied by the negative particle **οὐκ / *ouk*** / which is used for summary negation. This particle is commented on in:

Dana, H. E. and Julius R. Mantey. *A Manuel Grammar of the Greek New Testament*. (Toronto: The Macmillan Co., 1927,1955), 264:

It is a statement of downright fact. It denies the reality of an alleged fact. It is clear-cut, point-blank negative, objective, and final.

Thus the translation is an emphatic “No variation,” “No change,” “No vacillation.” God is immutable and cannot change. Therefore, with Him there is no “shadow of turning”:

ἀποσκίασμα / *aposkiasma* / ; **τροπή / *trope*** / -

“shadow of turning.”

Plutarch, the first century A.D. Greek biographer, used this term to refer to the ever-changing shadow cast by the gnomon of a sundial as the earth’s rotation moves it toward or away from the sun. James’s literal meaning is most likely the changing phases of the moon since such an example is applicable in every generation. However, his point is that unlike the constantly changing light and darkness caused by the rotation of heavenly bodies, God the Father, Who created the lights in the heavens, is incapable of change nor can others change him.

- 6) Thus we find that God is immutable. He is light and the Father of lights and in Him is no darkness.
 - 7) On the other hand, Satan, sin, and the cursed universe are the domain of darkness. Darkness fills the universe until the Lord Himself provides the light required for restoration by His Shekinah Glory.
- 33- Therefore, we must conclude that the light that appears in Genesis 1:3 is mandated by God, and the Member of the Trinity that we can identify as being the source of such all pervading light is Jesus Christ as the Shekinah Glory.

Genesis 1:3 - Then God said, “Let light [**אור / *or*** /] be,” and light was.

v. 4 - God saw the light was good and caused a separation between light and darkness [**חשך / *hoshek*** /].

v. 5 - God called light day [יום / *yom*] but darkness He called night [לילה / *layelah* /]. And it became evening [ערב / *arab* /] and it became dawn [בקר / *boqer* /]—Day One [יום + אחד / *yom + ehad* /].

- 1- In this passage we see the events that occur on Restoration: Day 1. The Lord's first order of business is to restore light but not to banish darkness.
- 2- The latter is retained but separated from light thus setting up an ongoing visual aid demonstration of the angelic conflict which rages outside the boundaries of visible light.
- 3- In order to bring this aspect of the restoration into focus we need to compare light and darkness. Our major source will be:

Botterweck, G. Johannes and Helmer Ringgren (eds.). *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*. Rev. ed. Vol. 1. (Grand Rapids: Wm B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1977), pp. 147-167 passim.

- 4- First of all we must distinguish between “light” and “lightbearers” in the Hebrew language. The word for “light” is:
אור / *or* / - “light”

This is the word found in Genesis 1:3 and does not refer to the sun or any other heavenly body nor does it imply that any of these objects are the source of this light. Instead it makes reference to visible light but not to any celestial source.
- 5- The word for “lightbearer” is the Hebrew noun:
מאור / *maor* / - “lightbearer” or “luminary”
- 6- This refers to heavenly bodies that either radiate light, such as the sun or stars, or reflect light, such as the moon or planets. These luminaries are the subject of Genesis 1:14–19.
- 7- Because a heavenly body emits or reflects light does not imply that it is the ultimate source of light. Their light is a part of the original creation and thus classified among the “laws of nature” that were invented and put in place by the Master Physicist, Jesus Christ. (Colossian 1:17 cp/w John 1:3; 1 Corinthians 8:6)
- 8- An important principle in distinguishing between **אור / *or* /** and **מאור / *maor* /** is the fact that in Hebrew thought the “light of day” is never associated with “light from the sun.”
- 9- This concept is obvious in Genesis 1. The “light of day”—**אור / *or* /**—in verse 5, precedes the “lights in the heavens”—**מאור / *maor* /**—in verse 14.
- 10- In Genesis 1:15, the luminaries are assigned the function of supplying light upon the earth. But these luminaries do not constitute day and night but rather are considered to be attributes of the day and of the night.
- 11- In Genesis 1:3 we see the reintroduction of light to Planet Earth. We do not have a creation verb but rather the phrase, “Then God said” followed by the qal imperfect verb **היה / *hayah* /** used as an imperative, “let there be.”
- 12- Throughout the first chapter there are eight occurrences of the phrase “Then God said.” These are followed by such phrases as, “And God created” or “and God made (*asah*).” These describe the work of the Holy Spirit or Jesus Christ in the restoration.