

The Christian.

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EDITORIAL.

VOLUNTARY SACRIFICE.

"Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father."

—I John x. 17, 18.

Voluntary sacrifice for the benefit of others is the principle and law of salvation.

Some object to the gospel plan because it sets forth the suffering of the *innocent* instead of the *guilty*. Those who thus object, ignore the distinction between what a just law *demand*s and what it *accept*s, and between a *forced* and *voluntary* sacrifice.

A man, for a breach of the Scott Act, is sentenced to a fine of fifty dollars, or so long an imprisonment. He has not the money and must go to jail. There are a number of men around who could pay the fine and let the man free. The law could not say to any of these, you must pay the money and let him off. It could not even recommend it. But a man of his own accord comes forward and *pays* the money. He is asked, "Are you in favor of the crime?" Do you want to encourage such violations of the act?" He answers, "I abominate the crime for its guilt and ruin, but I pity the *criminal*. He is a young man, with a helpless family. He has started life on the down grade. I think he will reform, and I want to give him the opportunity." The man's hopes are realized. The freed criminal turns to a course of industry and virtue. He is now a useful member of society, at the head of a grateful and rejoicing family. Was it a wrong law which *accepted* the money from the benevolent man? To *demand* it would be unjust, but to *accept* of it is just and glorious as all concerned are benefited and none injured.

When Jesus tells of his death for us, he makes prominent the fact, that it was a voluntary offering—that he *gave himself*—"laid down his life for the sheep"—that he came "to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many." Here he says, that no man taketh it (his life) from him—that he laid it down of himself—that he had power to lay it down, and power to take it again—and that he had received this commandment of his Father.

NO LAW COULD CLAIM THE DEATH OF JESUS.

1st. The Adamic law could not take the life of Jesus. In this, as in every other case, the wages of sin is death, and even infants that have not broken any known law of God die because they have a sinful nature: but Jesus had no sin. Although he appeared in the likeness of men, and although in all points he was tempted like we are, he was *yet without sin*. He had no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth. Hence the Adamic law that claimed the death of all others, could not claim his death.

2nd. The law of Moses had no claim on this life. When the high priest tried his utmost to find him guilty of a breach of Jewish law, he failed. He tried him on the sin of blasphemy, and put the sublime question to him in the form of an oath, "*Art Thou the Son of God?*" Jesus says, "I am." "You have heard his blasphemy," he said—put it to the meeting, and they all said, "*He is guilty of death.*" But was that blasphemy? Three years before, the heaven was opened to Jesus, and the eternal God in the presence of the people said to Jesus, "Thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." Not only did the question stand settled forever by the eternal God that Jesus was his Son, but his entire freedom from every wrong. What wicked men called blasphemy was the great rock truth that would hold up the Church and conquer death itself.

3rd. The Roman law could not demand his death. "Art thou the King of the Jews," said Pilate? "I am," he replied, "but my kingdom is not of this world." Pilate could find no fault in him. The Roman law could not take his life.

No body of men could take Jesus' life. When the traitor band came into the garden to take Jesus of Nazareth, and he said unto them I am he, they went backwards and fell on the ground. They had no power to take him by force. So it would be if all the Jews and legions of Rome came for the purpose. If necessary, he could muster in a moment for his body guard seventy-thousand angels. No law, no man, could take his life from him. He must lay it down of himself or not die at all. His whole history shows his willingness to die. He found no fault with his treatment. When the soldiers mocked him he said nothing. When they told him to come forth, he came wearing the purple and crown of thorns, amidst the loud laughter of priests and people. When reviled, he reviled not again.

On the cross he refused the narcotics offered him to deaden pain, but drank the stimulants that prolonged his sufferings. He would take nothing to interfere with the cup the Father gave him to drink. His strength remained till his last loud expiring cry, in which he resigned his spirit into his Father's hand.

When the soldiers came to kill their victims they were surprised to find Jesus so soon dead, and no bone of him was broken. Some time before he had laid down his life. The soldiers had stripped him nearly naked when they nailed him to the cross and were gambling over his coat when he hung bleeding there. Since the fall, shame was associated with nakedness, but Jesus *endured* the cross despising the shame.

The first fact of the gospel is not that Christ was put to death for our sins, but that Christ *died* for our sins, etc. (I. Cor. 15). Nothing can exceed the simple sublimity of Jesus' description of a corn of wheat. (John xii. 24). Delighted with the news which the two disciples feared would

offend him, viz., that certain Greeks wanted to see him, he exclaimed, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone, but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit." He thus describes his own case, and also the law of his kingdom which is to govern its subjects.

We know if a corn of wheat is left on a stone or board it gives out no life, but abides alone. If it is violently bruised, its life is equally wasted. But if it fall into the ground and die, the life it emits spreads and new fruit is the result. So if Jesus remained on earth, or passed into his native heaven without dying, he would abide alone, and sinners would perish. Even if his life were forced from him, others would not be benefited by it. But if he voluntarily gave his life to save others, how grand the fruit that would spring up in consequence till the end of time, not only to the Jews, but to all nations. His work was to be spent for others, even to death; and his people were not to hide their light or live to themselves, but to Him and the good of their fellow-men, and thus gain life forever more.

Jesus was in the beginning with God as the eternal Word. All things were made by him, etc., etc. But the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us. He took on him the seed of Abraham. He who was with God in the beginning did what no other man can do. He took upon him the seed of man, or was made flesh, and the life he took he had power to lay down and had power to take again. No other man has this power, and it was the Father's arrangement that he do so. God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son for this purpose. He spared many others, but spared not his own Son, but gave him up for us all that he might with him also freely give us all things. What manner of love must that be that could be expressed by no smaller gift than his own dear Son? The affection that ever flowed from the Father to his beloved Son reached its swiftest currents when Jesus laid down his life that he might take it again. Jesus has laid down his life and has taken it again in his resurrection, and is doubly dear to his Father for what he has done for us. O that we had more of the Holy Spirit till we would get nearer to God and his church and enjoy more of the blessedness of spending and being spent for the eternal good of others and the eternal glory of God and of the Lamb.

We must not pervert scripture precedents. The story is that a man called upon a rich friend for charity. "Yes, I must give you my mite," said he. "Do you mean the widow's mite?" asked the solicitor. "Certainly," was the answer. "I shall be satisfied with half as much as she gave," said his friend. "How much are you worth?" "Seventy thousand dollars." Give me, then, your check for \$35,000; that will be half as much as she gave; for she, you know, gave her all."