

The Christian.

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EDITORIAL.

THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD.

Jesus says, "As long as I am in the world I am the light of the world." Although the darkness comprehended it not, a light shone from every step of His pathway through the world unto His Father. Before He left the world He placed His disciples in it that they should act for Him and be the light of the world. There can be no greater mistake than for a Christian to imagine that his sole duty is to receive light without letting it shine on others. Jesus does not light a candle to put it under a bushel but on a candlestick, that it may give light to all around. He describes as the greatest darkness the light that a man has and keeps from others. "If the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness." It ruins its possessor, and does for his fellow-travellers to eternity what a darkened lighthouse does for the mariners in the midnight storm—sinks them to rise no more. Hence says Jesus: Take heed that the light that is in thee be not darkness.—Luko xi. 35.

When the gospel is preached and God increases the church this should be its earnest enquiry: How can these young converts most effectually enlighten others or be the light of the world? What helps a young Christian to guard his own life from sin and increases his confidence in Christ is an earnest and continued anxiety for the salvation of others. Others he knows have heard him confess the Lord Jesus, and while they are watching his new life to see whether he holds fast "the good confession" or "denies the Lord that bought him" he feels that he is not living for himself. He is living for others, influencing others for an eternity of joy or sorrow, and he thus reasons with himself: How can I have a saving influence on others unless they see such a change in my life as will convince them that the gospel of Christ is the power of God in saving believers, and that I am one of these? Those who feel most anxious for the salvation of those around them will be the most watchful and prayerful to honor Christ themselves, and the most likely to finish their course with joy.

When persons without much excitement but from calm conviction give themselves to Jesus they feel humble, and look upon themselves as unfit to lead in public prayer. If older members do not look after them and encourage them and see that they take part in prayer meetings many will put it off until they arrive at the conclusion that they have not sufficient talent for it, and their voice will never be heard in public, either in prayer or speaking for Jesus. Many till their dying day regret that they did not in their early Christian life begin to speak and pray before others. It is the duty of the church to look into these matters, and when they find young members too diffident to take part in public prayer meetings to induce them to hold prayer meetings of their own, with or without the assistance of older members as they themselves shall decide. By this method nearly if not every young Christian can be induced to take a part, and although it may be quite a trial at first, as it generally is, it is easier every time it is repeated, until it becomes such a delightful privilege that they would not be induced to surrender it. Having surmounted the first difficulty and gained confidence and strength in Christ they are not afraid to let their voice be heard on His side on any proper occasion; and in this respect they are known as Christians.

The benefit of this early training cannot be over estimated. It encourages young Christians with

the assurance that their brethren love them, and are studying their best interests for time and eternity. It makes them feel that their dearest and best home on earth is the church of the living God; and while they recognize its claims to their best energies they wish their powers to be greatly increased, only that they may sink deeper into its sublime sufferings and rise higher in its superlative achievements. The truth that they are not their own but the redeemed property of Christ being engraven on their own hearts will more or less impress others; and when they are working and striving and sacrificing for the cause of Jesus they are only showing others what others are waiting to see in them. They are thus letting their light shine before men.

The church is greatly benefitted by the Christian activity of its young members. They with angels rejoice when their children and neighbors repent and turn to the Lord; but their joy is greatly enhanced when these children and neighbors grow in grace and in the knowledge of Jesus Christ. They see that young Christians must and will be active. But alas! how often they see these activities running in other channels, and those for whom Jesus died turning to other homes than the church of God in which to spend their energies and from which to seek their enjoyments. How blessed, then, it is for older members to witness their younger brethren laboring for Christ and enjoying the rich consolations of His Holy Spirit. Feeling that they must soon pass away they rejoice to see the Lord raising up others whom they hope and pray may have more influence than they have had in enlightening the world.

While the church sees its young members taking an active part in its worship and its work they learn therefore for which particular portion of the Lord's work these members severally are adapted, and it is in their power to encourage and assist these to follow that part of the Master's work for which they are adapted and to which they are inclined.

By noticing the talents, inclinations, and general life of its members the church can take knowledge of those who are likely to succeed in preaching the gospel, and it is its duty and high privilege to encourage and assist such in their cherished desires.

When it is fully understood by themselves and others that young converts are committed to the work of Christ it is comparatively easy and natural for them to engage in the many activities of the church, such as Sunday schools, caring for the sick, and raising money for the poor and for the spread of the gospel. These things will become to them delightful duties and show that they are earnest followers of the Son of God, and successful candidates for immortal life. We should not forget that what we do must be done quickly. Time is exceedingly short and uncertain, and there is much to be done for Him who did so much for us. A proper view of the honor which the Master has conferred upon us in making us the reflectors of His own light to a world in darkness and His sure promise and presence will banish supineness, silence our fears, and cause us to walk in the light as He is in the light.

Original Contributions.

THE CHURCH.

BY HAMMOND J. SMITH.

This is a progressive age. It has been called the "high pressure" age. This appellation has been given it from the rapidity with which things are executed. That which one hundred years ago required six months to do can now be performed in six days. Great progress has been made in every

branch of industry. Marked advancement can be seen in the arts and sciences. Things have been brought to a state of perfection heretofore unknown, while on every hand great developments have been made in things secular and in matters of religion progress has been made. And this is what we wish to speak of in this article, viz.: Progress in the Church of Christ.

When I speak of the church of Christ I do not mean that the aggregate of all denominations make up the church of Christ; nor do I mean that the Methodist church or any other society is a branch of the church—inasmuch as the church of Christ has no branches. By the church of Christ I mean all those who take the Bible alone for their creed, and who worship God according to the Jerusalem fashion; according to the form established by Christ and His apostles, and not according to man-made systems.

There was a time when there was no church, there was no need of such an institution. During this period man was pure, sinless, holy. It was not until the transgression and expulsion from Eden that any form of worship existed. The gospel was preached in embryo to Adam and his descendants. The declaration, that the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head was a dim intimation of a coming Redeemer. How far His advent was in the future none could tell. For the first two thousand five hundred years the system of worship was that of family worship. For the next fifteen hundred years, or during the Mosaic dispensation, the religion was national, and was much more extensive than that which existed during the patriarchal age. But Christ, by His death, abolished the Jewish economy and introduced a new and better order of things. The Christian system is a perfect system of religion. The church of Christ is a perfect institution, for the simple reason that it has a perfect author, a perfect head. When John closed the book of Revelations everything necessary to the growth, extension and perpetuation of the church of Christ was revealed. "That which was perfect had come, that which was in part had been done away."

The church of Christ was inaugurated on the Pentecost succeeding Christ's ascension, when the three thousand penitents were immersed after crying out "Men and brethren, what must we do?" The church increased, the cause of Christ advanced on every side, men went everywhere preaching the gospel. Yes, they went. They were not sent by any missionary society. They did not go to any particular country, but they went everywhere, preaching the gospel. The church grew, and sinners were converted to Christ in apostolic times without the aid of any societies. It required no props to support it. Christianity, being a perfect system, can never require any outside helps to keep it from decay. "And he that adds or takes away from the things written in this book God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book"—Revelation. But the church became corrupt; meddlesome man could not leave the things alone that Christ had established. He must have his say. "Sects and heresies obscured the true religion and worship of the Lord Jesus. A Roman hierarchy took to itself the supreme authority in things religious. Forms were introduced unknown to the New Testament. The darkness became intense. Paganism, Judaism and Christianity became compounded by imperial Rome. Thus the apostolic age was banished almost from the face of the earth. True, there were some who struggled hard against the advancing tide of sin and corruption. Their influence was almost crushed by the dogs of Rome. But Luther broke the fetters that bound him to the church of Rome and its man of sin. Luther attempted to reform the abuses of the church of his fathers. He did a grand work, but he never attempted to restore apostolic