

and always will be the creative power of the Godhead. Whoever will not accept Christ as being divine in the highest sense must part company with John at the very threshold of his gospel.

THE LIFE AND LIGHT OF THE WORLD

John declares that in Christ was and still is the source of life. Life proceeded from him. Even in its lowest forms of animal and vegetable vitality it is an impartation from Him. But particularly all spiritual life has its origin in him. Man is a living soul because Christ the Creator imparted his own highest life to him. And this life, given to them in creation, is "the light of men." Because they have a life in them higher than that of vegetable or animal, even the life of spirit, they have spiritual consciousness, and consciousness is light. A dog has light up to the range of the kind of life that is in him. But that life, and so its light or consciousness, is not that of the spirit. It is of light in this inner fundamental sense that John is here speaking. It is spiritual consciousness, a spiritual awareness, that comes by virtue of being a spirit of the same essence as He who created him. This tells in what sense the Word is "the light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world." Every man is born with the life of God in him, and so with the light of God in him. And that light fails when and to the extent to which the life fails. This is a primary truth that runs all through John's gospel, and is fundamental to Christianity. The order cannot be changed. It is light through life, never life through light. That is, men may not be illuminated or instructed into life, but the life that is in them must be developed into knowledge.

THE LAMP AND THE SUN

John was a lamp, not the sun; he was a reflector, not a self-luminous body. Jesus said of John (5, 35). "He was a burning and a shining light." But Jesus was the "light of the world," the source of all lights. The two Greek words used express this difference. When Christ is called "the Light," the word used is *phos*, which is light or luminosity in the most primary sense.

But when John is called "a light," the word is *luchnos*, which means lamp or candle. John was a great lamp—but what a little thing is that compared with the sun! And the greatest human genius has never gone beyond that. We measure them by the scale of candle power. But who has measured the candle power of the sun?

AN UNRECOGNIZED LIGHT

The Word was in the world before he became flesh, as the source of all spiritual light. Men for the most part did not know that their knowledge of truth was a divine illumination within them. And when the Word became flesh and Jesus appeared among men, his own, those to whom in creation he had given the light of life, did not recognize him. Even the people to whom in preceding centuries he had made special revelation did not recognize nor receive him. The original word for "receive" here used has the force of opening the door and welcoming one into the house. Jesus was to them as a stranger whom they shut out of their hearts.

THE GREAT RIGHTS

We talk much in our civil life of "rights," England's Great Charter and our Federal Constitution are declarations of fundamental civil rights. But we have here a statement of a right higher than any in all charters and constitutions—the right to become the children of God; for John says, "As many as received him, to them gave he the right to become the children of God." Not power simply, but the right. And children, not sons; for the New Testament word for "son" refers to a relation that may be established by adoption, while the word for "child" refers always to a birth relation. It is therefore the right to be born into the higher life of the spirit. The chrysalis has a right to become the butterfly; the bulb has a right to become the lily; the acorn has the right to become an oak. And it was for the conferring of this right upon men that the Word became flesh and dwelt among us. By the incarnation God has been so interpreted or translated (for such is the meaning of "declared") that it is easier for men to receive him.

The Lesson Prayer

Divine Word, the Revealer of God, the Light and the Life of men, we thank thee for thy beloved disciple, to whom it was granted to lean upon thy bosom, and in love's spirit and with love's understanding to interpret thy life. But we shall miss the fine and great meaning of this last and most spiritual of the gospels, except we have within us the light which springs from thy life. We are thine own; forbid that, coming to us, we also should not receive thee. May the darkness that is in us be swallowed up in the light of thy coming, and grant that, joyfully availing ourselves of the right bestowed upon us by thee, we may enter by the new birth into the ranks and the fellowship of the children of God. Amen.