

The Christian.

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EDITORIAL.

THE LIGHT OF MEN.

In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. John i. 4.

Every thinking man desires to know his origin, and asks, "Whence came my life and the life of the race?" Moses tells us that "in the beginning God created the heaven and the earth and every living thing, both herb and animal." John tells by whom God made everything that is made. It was by the word that was in the beginning with God and was God. By receiving the testimony of Moses and of John the mind is at rest on the origin of life, but rejecting that testimony the enquirer is left in utter darkness, tossed to and fro on the contradictory and ever-changing theories of men, for "the life is the LIGHT of men." The Bible traces all life back to Him who was in the beginning with God and no farther. From Him it sprang and with Him it rests.

When the word was made flesh and dwelt with men, the candid saw His complete control of the currents of animal and vegetable life. He spoke to the fruitless fig-tree and it immediately dried up from the roots. His vitality accompanied His command to the man with the withered hand, and it was "the light" to all who were in the synagogue. (Mark iii. 5). When He raised to life the widow's son, and called Lazarus from his grave, many saw the light, and it still shines to all readers as His certain promise that all the believing dead shall live at the resurrection, and living believers shall never die. "I am the resurrection and the life."

In Christ is spiritual life, and that life also is the light of men. It lights both Old and New Testaments. The Jews were strictly forbidden to eat blood for two reasons: 1st. The life of the flesh was in the blood; 2nd. It is the blood that maketh an atonement for your souls. (Levit. xvii. 10, 11, etc., etc.)

Just before Jesus' death Andrew and Philip told Him of certain Greeks who asked to see Him. Instead of Jesus being offended, as they feared, at the presumption of these Greeks, He said, "The hour is come that the Son of Man should be glorified. 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 rejoiced at the near approach of His terrible death, for by it He would give spiritual and eternal life to countless millions of both Jews and Gentiles. He came to minister and to give His life a ransom for many. When He signified the death He should die, He said, "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me." On the cross His life and blood flowed out, not to be lost, but to be kept unto life eternal. (John xii. 23, 24, 25, 32).

The life in Christ explains why Abel's sacrifice was accepted and Cain's rejected. Cain's had no blood in it, no atonement, and there was no remission. It tells us why almost all things are by the law purged with blood, and without shedding of blood is no remission. (Heb. ix. 22). The sacrifices which God ordained pointed to the sacrifice of His own dear Son. He was "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world," so that His life was the light of men. The elders who, through faith, obtained a good report, saw through their yearly and daily gifts and offerings for sins the one great offering of the Son of God, the complete sacrifice that would forever sanctify and purge from sin every one who came to God by Him.

How glad Abraham was when he saw Jesus' day afar off and received his beloved Isaac from the dead in a figure. How glad the Israelites were when they sprinkled the blood of the paschal lamb on their door posts and were at once delivered from the angel of death and Egyptian bondage. This light shines in the history, type and prophecy of the Old Testament, so that when Christ died for our sins it was according to the scriptures, and He rose again the third day according to the scriptures. He urged men to search the scriptures for the grand reason that they testified of Him. How meaningless would be all the offerings of the Patriarchal and Jewish dispensations without Jesus' light! How empty all the ceremonies of these preparatory institutions! His light was the glory even of that system "which is done away," being eclipsed by the gospel; as the stars, glorious at night, lose all their brightness by the rising glory of the king of day (II. Cor. iii.)

Many to-day wonder how a just God did in past ages pardon sinners and make them saints when it was not possible that the blood of bulls and goats should take away sins. (Heb. x. 4). But the life in Christ explains it all. It seems as if the intelligent universe were called to the cross of Jesus. "Whom God HATH SET FORTH to be a propitiation through faith in His blood, to DECLARE His righteousness for THE REMISSION OF SINS THAT ARE PAST through the forbearance of God. To declare, I say, at this time His righteousness that He might be just, and the justifier of him which believes in Jesus. (Rom. iii. 25, 26).

In giving His Son to die on the cross, God not only declares His intense hatred of sin and His ardent love for the sinner, but also that the dignity of the person who died to save others is such as to justify Him in pardoning believers who died before Christ came and also in saving Him who now believes in Jesus. Oh! the glory that shines from the cross. No wonder that Moses and Elias talked of it with Christ "in the holy mount." By it they were forgiven and glorified.

When the life was to be manifested, John the Baptist came to prepare the way of the Lord. John was the last Jewish prophet, and he was the greatest because he was nearest "the light." His preaching and his life were so far superior to all others that many were ready to regard him the Christ till John informed them better. He was not worthy to untie His shoes. He was sent to bear witness of that light. The light seemed to be too much for any man till previously trained for it. Jesus chose twelve men, and for years prepared them to receive the light and give it out to others. His first miracle in Cana manifested forth His glory, and His disciples believed on Him. They were astonished to behold His power over vegetable and physical life. They saw their Master raise the dead even from the grave. They seemed to think He had power to escape from the hands of His murderers, that He could even come down from the cross. But He did neither, and their last hope was buried with His dead body. They had not the remotest thought that He would rise again. When He foretold them of His resurrection their greatest puzzle was to know what He meant by it. Their minds were so entirely closed against it that when the devoted women declared that He was risen and had actually talked with them, they treated their testimony as idle tales; and when the ten apostles told Thomas that every one of them had seen Him alive, he made up his mind that they were ten false witnesses rather than believe the Lord was risen. Not an apostle ever believed that Jesus rose until His eyes had looked upon him. But they were new men after that with new hope—a living hope of an incorruptible inheritance. They were not preachers of good news which others told them, but what they had seen and heard themselves, and knew to be true.

What they had seen of the life in Jesus was a light to them that the very shadow of death could not eclipse, and their grand labor and life was to spread that light among men.

Hear what one of these men exclaims late in life: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which, according to His abundant mercy, hath begotten us again into a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you," etc. Their first hope died when Jesus died, but they were begotten again of God unto a living hope by Jesus' resurrection—a hope that never dies. (I. Pet. i. 3, 4). Hear what another apostle still later says: "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the word of life; for the life was manifested and we have seen it and bear witness, and show unto you that eternal life which was with the Father and was manifested unto us," etc., etc. (I. John i. 1, 2, 3).

This light shines in the institutions of the New Testament. We meet for worship on the first day of the week, because it is the day on which Christ arose and triumphed over death. Before the sun rose this day to give light and heat and gladness to the earth, the Sun of Righteousness arose with healing in His beams. He met His disciples on this day and they were begotten again unto a hope of eternal life. His life lights this day, and it steadily and continuously proclaims to civilized nations that the living One is victorious over death.

It is the light of the Lord's supper. Just before He was betrayed Jesus took bread and blessed and brake it and gave it to His disciples, saying, Eat ye all of it. In like manner He took the cup, telling all to drink of it, and always, when they did so, to remember Him. To remember that His body was broken and His blood was shed for the remission of sins. His life and death make this institution a blessing from that night until the Lord comes.

So with Christian baptism. To many it is an unmeaning ceremony, and they look no farther than the water into which the believer is buried. But the life in Jesus is the light of men on baptism. He died for our sins, was buried, rose again the third day according to the scriptures. He was pleased to appoint an ordinance that symbolized His death, burial and resurrection, and to command that ordinance to be obeyed by every one that believed in Him, saying, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." (Matt. xvi. 15, 16). This promise stands sure always and everywhere, not because there is virtue in water, but because "in Him is life."

In this world of darkness and death the Christian daily needs a life and a light divine. In himself he is too weak without the one, and too blind without the other. But in Christ is all he needs, and he has the very best encouragement to look to Jesus. "For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more being reconciled we shall be saved by His life." (Rom. v. 10). How can we sink if fully committed to Him who ever liveth and by His own blood has entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us? (Heb. ix. 12) How blessed it is to realize that to sinful desires and pleasures we are dead and our life is hid with Christ in God. What a hiding place! What safe keeping till Christ, who is our life, appears and we appear with Him in glory? But that light that hath so long shined in darkness, and the darkness comprehended it not—that men refuse because their deeds are evil is destined to shine brighter and brighter for evermore. Jesus is called the Lamb, because of His death for our sins. When the Holy Spirit occasionally drew aside the