

THE TRUE LIGHT.

It is often objected by persons who profess a great anxiety about their soul, "why there are so many religions now-a-days, that one does not know which to believe, or what way to follow. One says this and another that, and if learned men have so much wrangling among themselves, how can an ignorant man like me be expected to know what is right?" Now this is in reality a very hollow and lame excuse. The question is not whether you are competent to decide upon the contending claims of different religions, or are accountable for the inconsistencies which you see in others, but whether you are responsible for yourself to God. God says you are: as it is written, "so then every one of us must give account of himself to God," (Rom. xiv. 12.) And it is not the *opinions* of men but the *word of God* which must determine.

In truth, it is not the want of light we have to deplore, but the *want of honesty* in men to use it. God says, "this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil. (John iii. 19.) For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reprov'd." v. 20. So it is now, "The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked." (Jer. xvii. 9.) Men may seek, by "good words and fair speeches to deceive the hearts of the simple," and to lull their own consciences into repose; in this they may most fatally succeed, but remember they cannot thus impose upon God. They may, like the stag hard pressed, by thrusting their head into a thicket, think that because they hide from their own eyes their forlorn state, that thus they escape the vigilance of their pursuers; but it is not so. There is an eye of tenderest compassion pursuing them with the proffers of His patient and rejected love—even God from whom they seek to flee because they will not believe His word. And thus acting in their own delusions, it is said of them, "If the light which is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness." (Matt. vi. 23.) This, while men are under its power as if spell-bound (as the Jews that murdered Jesus—see Luke xxii. 53.) prevents them from knowing that they are; but the cause of their darkness is their own sin—even this, because their eye is evil their whole body is full of *darkness*. (Matt. vi. 23)

Want of sincerity and singleness of aim are the source of men's darkness.

If again God had given us no other guide but the *opinions* of men we should be called upon to examine *them*, and in doing so there might be some semblance of excuse for ignorance; but as He never refers us to any source of truth but His own most blessed word, we are only responsible for knowing *that*. As Jesus says, "The word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him at the last day." (John xii. 48.) Now, though all men were in error, which is not the case, and liable to mislead, still it is by the word of God *alone* that we must stand. By that "word" it is we shall be judged; and it is "able to make....wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus." (2 Tim. iii. 15.) Such reasoning, then, such subterfuge, will not avail in judgment with Him who tries the heart: as He says "If I had not spoken unto them they had not had sin; but now they have no *cloke* for their sin." (John xv. 22.)

But it may be asked, "how am I to know whether I understand His word aright? Different people draw different and opposite opinions from it, yet each supports his own by scripture." This is but the same objection under a disguise. It is not with the *opinions* of men, but the *thoughts* of God we have to do. These thoughts—the mind of Christ—He is sure to give to those who seek in simple dependence on His Holy Spirit, for it is written, "the meek will he guide in judgment, the meek will He teach His way." (Ps. xxv. 9.) The same principle you will find in Jer. xxix. 13. Nothing can be more to the point, except what the Lord Jesus Himself says,—“If any man will (wishes to) do His will he shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God;” (John vii. 17.) which leaves man completely without excuse, and places the question where it ever must abide, between the soul and God. Any other ground is only "miry clay," the dishonest refuge of a wicked heart—"we have made lies our refuge, and under falsehood have we hid ourselves." (Isa. xxviii. 15.) Fearful security, when summoned to the bar of Christ! Oh sinner, think!

The light you need, immortal soul, is only to be found in Jesus. "God is light and in Him is no darkness at all;" (1 John i. 5.) and Jesus is "the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person." (Heb. i 3.) When He entered this world of darkness and of sin, the Holy Ghost announced Him as "the day Spring from on high," (Luke

i. 78) "the true light." (John i. 9) "a light to lighten the gentiles, and the glory of His people Israel." His manifestation in coming into the world was to "lighten every man. (John i. 9) and the guilt of men was and still is that they will not be enlightened by Him. He said, "As long as I am in the world I am the light of the world" (John ix. 5,) and men would have been enlightened by Him *then*, were it not for the same cause that keeps them from believing on Him *now*. "In Him was life, and the life was the light of men; but men *loved darkness*, rather than light—death rather than life—*because their deeds were evil*" (John iii. 19) "The God of this world"—Satan—"hath blinded the minds of them which believe not." (2 Cor iv. 4.) All the excuses that sinners make are but of Satan to keep their souls from Jesus. Their pleasures are but so many bribes, presented by the enemy of Jesus and of them, to lure their hearts from Him. Men, by choice, keep their hands so completely full of business, and their minds of cares of this life, that they have not, because they do not wish to have, one calm and solemn hour to think on Him whose thoughts are ever of compassion upon them. As it is written, "and even as they did *not like* to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient." (Rom. ii. 28. Read to the end of the chapter.) What an awful exhibition of the state of man! How ripe for judgment. Perhaps, reader, it applies to you. Strangely consistent with that "common sense" of which they boast so much—men hazard their eternal doom upon the peril of a single throw—gamble away the awful realities of immortality for the vanities of time, or, to speak more truly, insure their life in this for damnation in that to come! This may appear at first too strong; yet do but reflect one moment, reader, and peradventure you will find it true.

"As long as Jesus was in the world, He was the light of the world," but as He said himself, "now I am no more in the world.....I come to thee." (John xvii. 11.) Or as it is written of Him, "When He had by himself purged our sins sat down on the right hand of the majesty on high." (Heb. i. 3.) He is in heaven now, set forth "a lamb as it had been slain," (Rev. v. 6.)—God's Lamb; and "the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven," (1 Pet. i. 12.) is by the mouth of men, calling upon sinners to "Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the *sin* of the world." (John i. 29;)—that God is now dealing with men in forbearing love, waiting

to be gracious—"reconciling the world to Himself not imputing unto men their trespasses." (2 Cor. v. 19.) Those who believe what *He* says about Jesus, have His assurance of pardon, for what God has proclaimed to the world, and is still proclaiming is, that through this man (Jesus) is preached unto you "*the forgiveness of sins*," (Acts xiii. 38.) and that, "by Him, all that believe are justified from all things" v. 39. Is it by *only* believing! Yes, reader, this is the assurance of God to you. He wants you to trust Him with your salvation: simply to take Him at His word. You would receive the evidence of an honest man to a fact in which you were concerned. Surely you can plead no reason for refusing God's. "If we receive the witness (or evidence) of men, the witness of God is greater; for this is the witness of God that He hath testified of His Son." (1 John v. 9.) God has not only raised Jesus from the dead, (Rom. iv. 24,) but *He* is the witness of the fact Himself—the act was His, the evidence of it is His also.—This is faith—simply to believe God; if you do, you are saved; and the evidence that you are saved to you, is just that God says so, and you believe Him "who cannot lie." You have the evidence, "the witness in yourself," that you are saved *because God says it*, and you believe. Jesus has been "raised by the glory of the Father," (Rom. vi. 4.) to shew poor sinners how God has dealt with sin, viz, that He has "condemned sin in the flesh," in the person of His own dear Son, (Rom. viii. 3) and Jesus who voluntarily "endured the cross, hath put away sin" by His own blood. His blood has washed it out. "It is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul." (Lev. xvii. 11.) Jesus has "put away sin" from His own person by bleeding on the tree—not His own, but man's guilt—and God has raised Him from the tomb to tell you that sin has been condemned, and that He will not condemn you if you believe His word—*His* witness of *this* fact. The risen Jesus is *now* the source of life, and way to glory—in resurrection from among the dead, He "became the author of eternal salvation to all them that obey Him." (Heb. v. 9.)

"Behold He cometh with clouds, and every eye shall see Him." (Rev. i. 7.) May you, precious soul, through the washing of His blood, find mercy at that day, and see his face with joy. Amen.