

Dominus Illuminatio Mea.

No. 2.

S. John's Gospel begins with a Prologue (v. 1–18) in which the main purpose of the book is set forth in detail, and we shall find each of the indications in the Prologue worked out fully in the Gospel. Taking the "Word" as the keynote, the object of the Gospel is to reveal this "Word" in the searching, teaching, inspiring, condemning, forgiving, restoring, vivifying aspects of the character of our Lord Jesus Christ which the "Word" includes.

If we read the Gospel, feeling that we have the key in the first verse, we shall see far more deeply into meaning of it than if we read it more at random, though perhaps in a no less devout spirit. The "Word" contains the solution of all mysteries, comforts all sorrows, cures all diseases, and, above all, gives life. We have (v. 2) a confirmation of the statement in verse 1, and the repetition, on account of its rare use, is very impressive. Again (v. 3, R.V.), we go back to the beginning of all things. "Without Him was not anything made that hath been made." "Hath been" takes in all time. No true picture, poem, invention or discovery "hath been" made for the use of man but by the "Word." All things done perfectly are the result of two persons—the origin and the agent. But, if "all things" have been made by Him, whence come evil, sin, misery, sickness, death? Many thoughtful people consider that evil is absence of good, that, as the absence of life in the animal and vegetable world means death, and death putrefaction and mortification, so in the spiritual world absence of life means loathsome things of the spirit, hatred, malice, and all uncharitableness. Even acknowledging this as true, we do not find the answer complete. We are born with possibilities good and evil, but the testimony of the "Word," and our own experience of sudden suggestions of evil, and then of overflowings of ungodliness, should bring conviction of the access to our spirits of an evil spirit. There is a feeling abroad to-day that there is no external evil personality; that man's good and evil exists in himself. Let us beware of "spiritual weakness in high places." Our conception of Satan is largely Milton's. We have little or no information as to the origin of evil. But to this problem also the answer is "In the beginning was the "Word." Our rightful curiosity is not satisfied, but our fears are appeased and we have, if not the light of knowledge, the rest of perfect confidence.

Again, (v. 4), we come to another of those problems for which no solution has yet been found—the origin of life. We can chemically analyse protoplasm and recombine the elements, but the result is not life. Seeing there are so many things we cannot know our need for humility is great.

"I know not the way I am going,
But well do I know my Guide."

We do not know the meaning of life or death, but we may learn to know Him in whom are all things.

Light and life are associated; where there is life there is light—the light of the mind, clear undoubting intelligence; the light of the heart, confidence and peace. Light and life arise from the personal presence of our Lord and are not the inheritance of any *denomination*. By this Light we see our Brother, and coming into contact with earnest seekers after truth, who do not speak out shibboleths, we shall not judge them, but think rather “Lord is it I” who offend? The “darkness apprehendeth it not” (v. 5). These words are as true in our day of professing Christianity as when they were first spoken. Nothing is more curious than the total failure of the outsider to understand the aims and motives of the Christian life.

We recollect the beautiful history in the earlier Gospels of a birth previous to that of our Lord. Here we find its inner meaning. A man was born with a purpose—“sent from God” to bear witness of the Light (v. 8). May we not believe that we too are born with a purpose, and that the purpose is the same? We also are sent from God to bear witness of the Light. How can we bear witness? By shining. We must shine, not by efforts to shine, but by keeping in the Light, shining as a planet shines by the light of the sun, thus witnessing to the existence of the sun to a world which has turned away, and so the source of light is invisible. S. John the Baptist proclaimed (v. 8) that he was not shining by his own power, for he said, “I am not the Christ,” “I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness.” The Revised Version (v. 9) has “the Light that lighteth every man *as he* cometh into the world.”

“The thoughts of God are wider than the measures of man’s mind,
And the heart of the Eternal is most wonderfully kind.”

We think of the heathen as sunken in wickedness, and yet, in spite of unspeakable crime and darkness, we find among savages virtues that put us to shame. It is said that religion is a matter of climate, race, custom, and that the various peoples are best left to their own religions. These peoples shine, so far as they have any virtue, in “few, faint and feeble” glimmerings of that “Light which lighteth every man,” but it is the part of Christians to help them to stand in the fuller light of the knowledge of Christ.

There is another question which is the cause of inquietude. Many lead upright, self-denying, beautiful lives, who yet refuse to acknowledge Christ. These also have the “Light which lighteth every man,” and they dimly see the way, but refuse to raise their eyes to the source of the light.

We know the story of the thirty years in Palestine, “over whose acres walked those blessed feet,” how “He came to His own,” the Jews—the people whom God had been educating for thousands of years—and they received Him not. The Jews possess, above other peoples, two virtues, which our gracious Queen, with her usual insight, recognised when, for the walls of the Albert Memorial Chapel, she chose Jacob with his piety and family affection to represent two virtues which she saw in her beloved Consort. But (v. 14) to those who received Him, to them gave He power to *become* the children of God. “*Become*” implies progression, eternal progression we may believe towards that goal which our Master has set before us as children of God—“Be ye perfect, as your Father which is in Heaven is perfect.” We realize some of the joy of the eternity before us when we regard it as an opportunity for endless progress in love, in power, in intelligence, in successful endeavour, in glorious activities, in the knowledge of God and Father, we wonder how the universe itself can afford scope for the full life of such beings

as it lies before us to “become” as children of God. And what is the first step in this “becoming?”—that we “receive,” or believe, in the “Word.” The two terms appear to be synonymous: to receive is to believe in, and to believe in is to receive. We use “accept” in a somewhat similar sense when a woman accepts her future husband. Such reception of our Lord is an act of recognition, and to know another we must think about, consider, ponder that other. There was once a man suffering the extreme of bodily anguish, torn by remorse for the past and the terrors of the judgment to come, who was so arrested by the personality of another that he forgot himself and pondered upon that other for three hours. Then he was able to say “Lord.” The thief on the cross is a parable for us. If we would receive and believe on our Lord, even so must we ponder upon Him to the forgetting of ourselves, even of our sins and shortcomings.

(From notes taken down by a Student.)

NOTE.—There will be no “Meditations” for 6th inst., as Miss Mason is ill. The next will arrive, all being well, for Sunday, 13th inst.