

# GOD'S ECONOMY IN LIGHT

BY RON KANGAS

**T**he New Testament is a revelation of God's economy. *Oikonomia*, the Greek word translated "economy" in verses such as Ephesians 1:10, 3:9, and 1 Timothy 1:4, is composed of two words: *oikos*, meaning "house," and *nomos*, meaning "law." Hence, *oikonomia* means "household law," implying distribution, and therefore denotes household regulations and household management, administration, and government. This word is used in the New Testament to denote God's household management, His administrative arrangement to carry out His purpose for His good pleasure (Eph. 1:4-6, 9-11). God's good pleasure is the desire of His heart, and God's will is of this desire. According to His will God, in a council among the Divine Trinity, made a counsel, a determined will. Then according to this counsel, this determined will, God made a purpose, and this purpose has become His economy, His plan or arrangement carried out through the divine dispensing. Whereas God's economy is His plan and arrangement according to His desire and purpose, God's dispensing is His imparting of Himself according to His plan and arrangement. In fact, God's goal in His economy is to dispense Himself as the Father in the Son through the Spirit into His chosen and redeemed people to make them His corporate expression. This means that God desires to dispense Himself into His people as their life, their life supply, and their everything so that, in Christ, they may become first the Body of Christ and ultimately the New Jerusalem for the eternal corporate expression of the Triune God.

In my judgment the highest definition of God's economy is that given by Witness Lee in *The Ten Great Critical "Ones" for the Building Up of the Body of Christ*:

God's eternal economy is to make man the same as He is in life and nature but not in His Godhead and to make Himself one with man and man one with Him, thus to be enlarged and expanded in His expression, that all His divine attributes may be expressed in human virtues. (10)

This definition implies a number of crucial elements, the first of which is deification. Deification is suggested in the words *make man the same as He is in life and nature but not*

*in His Godhead*. Deification is the process of God's organic salvation (Rom. 5:10), based upon His judicial redemption, through which He dispenses Himself as life with His nature into His chosen and redeemed people, sanctifying them, renewing them, transforming them, conforming them to the image of Christ, and glorifying them, in order to make them the same as He is in life and nature but not in the Godhead. In His economy God is determined to do nothing less (and also nothing more) than to make us, the believers in Christ, the same as He is in His divine life and divine nature.

Another crucial element in this definition is union, clearly indicated by the words *to make Himself one with man and man one with Him*. This union is not simply a oneness in life or a mingling of natures; it is also a union of incorporation, that is, a union of persons in a relationship of coinherence, of mutual indwelling. The desire of God's heart, His good pleasure, is, without compromising or sharing His deity, to make Himself intrinsically one with us and to make us intrinsically one with Him.

Yet another crucial element in the definition of God's economy given above is expression, emphasized by *thus to be enlarged and expanded in His expression, that all His divine attributes may be expressed in human virtues*. Such an expression, an enlargement and expansion of the individual Christ as the image and expression of God, is the goal of God's economy. God's intention is that His attributes would be expressed in human virtues through a process in which He makes us the same as He is in life and nature but not in the Godhead and by which He makes Himself one with us and us one with Him.

First John 1:5 states that God is light. Consequently, for God to make us the same as He is in His life and nature is to make us the same as He is in light; for God to make Himself one with us and us one with Him is to make us one with Him in light and as light; and for God to be enlarged and expanded in His expression is for Him to be enlarged and expanded through a corporate expression of Himself as light. We need to realize, therefore, the tremendous

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importance of the shining of the divine light. It is the object of this essay to explore the economy of God in relation to the divine attribute of light. With respect to the light of God, we will consider the Triune God, the truth of God, the Word of God, the life of God, the children of God, the judgment of God, the church of God, the kingdom of God, and the consummate expression of the Triune God, the New Jerusalem.

### God is Light

“God is light and in Him is no darkness at all” (1 John 1:5). Light, an expressive divine attribute, is the nature of God in His expression. We may also say that light is the nature of God’s expression. Light is related to God as life, which is of the Spirit (Rom. 8:2). Therefore, God, the Spirit, life, and light are one. Whenever God is expressed, He covers Himself “with light as with a cloak” (Psa. 104:2). Therefore, to see God (Matt. 5:8) is to see light. Vladimir Lossky remarks, “God is Light, and those whom He makes worthy to see Him, see Him as Light; those who receive Him, receive Him as Light...It is impossible that He should appear otherwise than as light” (218).

As light God is invariable. James 1:17 speaks of God as “the Father of lights, with whom is no variation or shadow cast by turning.” With God, who is light, there is no variability. The moon waxes and wanes, and the sun may be eclipsed by the moon, but the shining God, the Father, the source of the heavenly luminaries, is immutable, invariable, unchangeable. We may have confidence in what Torrance describes as “the utterly constant and invariant nature of God’s eternal Being” (83). “The uncreated Light of God,” Torrance goes on to say, “remains utterly constant and faithful, irrespective of the vagaries of our human actions and conceptions” (84). Pelikan’s comment on God’s being light also is illuminating: “When God was said to be light, this made him a shimmering reality beyond the world, unaffected by the world, a reality that could affect the world only by sending a radiance down upon the world” (36).

God, “the blessed and only Sovereign...who alone has immortality” dwells in “unapproachable light” (1 Tim. 6:15-16). If we cannot approach Him, how can we become one with Him and how can we become the same as He is in life and nature? Would not this unapproachable light consume us? Indeed it would, if God approached us, or if we approached Him, apart from Christ. If we met God as disincarnate light, we would be annihilated. However, the very God who is light has embodied Himself in a wonderful lamp, and this lamp is the incarnate Son, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world (Rev. 21:23; John 1:29). The lamp, the embodiment and incarnation of God as light, is the redeeming Lamb. The light, which would consume us, is in the Lamb, the One who has redeemed us. Since God is interested not in destroying

us but in gaining us and in becoming one with us, He, the light, has embodied Himself in Christ, the Lamb-lamp, causing God and Christ to be one light, with the Father in the Son to be expressed through the Son, who is the effulgence of His glory (Heb. 1:3). Now the Lamb, who is the lamp, makes the unapproachable light approachable, lovable, touchable, receivable, and enjoyable. “Without the Lamb’s redemption, God’s shining over us could only kill us...The Lamb as the lamp expresses the light in a very approachable and lovable way” (Lee, *Economy* 396).

First John 4:15 says, “Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him and he in God.” When we abide in God, we abide in light, for God is light. Light is God’s expression; it is God shining. Hence, as we abide in God, who is the shining One, we abide in light. When we live, dwell, and have our being in God, we walk in the divine light, which is the expression of God.

**B**ecause God as light has embodied Himself in Christ as the Lamb-lamp, God is able to dispense Himself into us as life, and this life is the light of humankind (John 1:4). God in Christ is now seeking to dispense Himself into us as the light of life (8:12) in order to constitute us with light and even to make us light in the Lord (Eph. 5:8). Since God is dispensing Himself as life with His nature into us, the more we receive His dispensing, the more we have of His light and the more we become what He is as light. In this way God makes us the same as He is: He makes us light, the nature of His expression.

### Christ, the Light of the World

In the New Testament Christ is revealed not only as the lamp which contains God as light but also as the light itself. In John 1:4 and 5 we see that light is Christ, the living Word of God: “In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.” In Christ the Word, the definition and explanation of God, is life, and this divine life is the light of humankind. When Christ comes as light to shine in the darkness, the darkness cannot overcome it. Darkness cannot extinguish this light, but this light—the shining God Himself—dispels all darkness. When Christ as the light of life shines within us, our darkness cannot prevail against it. Rather, the light disperses the darkness. Furthermore, Christ is “the true light which, coming into the world, enlightens every man” (v. 9). The word *enlightens* here is the same Greek word used in the same way as in Ephesians 1:18 and 3:9. It refers to the inward enlightening which brings life to the ones who receive Christ as the Word.

In John 8:12 the Lord Jesus says, “I am the light of the world; he who follows Me shall by no means walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.” In 9:5 He speaks

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further concerning Himself as light: "While I am in the world, I am the light of the world." Apart from Him, the world, the satanic cosmos, is in the darkness of death. That Christ as light is versus death is revealed by Paul's word in Ephesians 5:14: "Therefore He says, Awake, sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you."

As the light of the world, as the light of life, Christ is not simply a man who is full of divine light; He is the God of light Himself incarnated as a man. "At the moment of the incarnation," Lossky observes, "the divine light was concentrated, so to speak, in Christ, the God-man" (223). Torrance's remarks are helpful here:

Jesus was not just the most perfect man, the most human being that ever lived, shot through and through with divine Light, but God himself in his divine Light living among us as man....The life of Jesus was much more than a human life alive with the Light of God. It was the living Light of God himself actively lived out among us as a human life, which continues to bear directly, personally, intimately upon the ontological depths of our human existence, searching, judging, cleansing, healing and renewing, and remains for ever the one light-bringing and life-giving Life for all mankind....The Life of Jesus is more than a reflection of God's invisible Light, but is that very Light incarnate in our human life. (97)

To say that Jesus Christ is light is actually to say that Jesus Christ is God. His coming to earth in His incarnation was the merciful visitation of "the rising sun...from on high" (Luke 1:78).

**C**hrist is the unique light. Apart from Him, there is no light. The reason so many of today's Christians are in darkness is that they do not have Christ in an experiential way. It is crucial, therefore, that we know and experience Christ in all that He is in His all-inclusiveness. In particular, we need to experience Him as light.

One aspect of Christ's earthly ministry was His shining upon the people in darkness and the shadow of death. At the beginning of His ministry He went to Galilee of the nations. Concerning this, Matthew 4:16, a quotation of Isaiah 9:2, says, "The people sitting in darkness have seen a great light; and to those sitting in the region and shadow of death, to them light has risen." This indicates that His ministry began not with earthly power but with heavenly light, a light which was actually Christ Himself as the light of life shining in the shadow of death. Instead of making a display of power or authority, the Lord walked about seemingly as an ordinary human being. But when He contacted people, such as a group of young fishermen by the Sea of Galilee, He shined upon them as a great light and attracted them to Himself, drawing them, as if by an immense magnet, to become His disciples and follow Him.

Our salvation was the shining of Christ as the great light upon us. When we believed in the Lord Jesus and received Him into us as life (John 3:15), the light of life began to shine in our being. Spontaneously we had the sense of something shining within. This divine radiance is the inner shining of life, the shining of Christ, who as God is the light itself. This inner shining is Christ's saving. The more He shines in us as the light of life, the more we are "saved in His life" (Rom. 5:10).

### **The Holy Spirit and Light**

In the Bible the Holy Spirit is symbolized by fire and also by light (Ezek. 1:4; Acts 2:3-4). The fire symbolizes burning power for purging and motivating in God's economical move. The fire brings in the light, the brightness (Ezek. 1:4). Wherever there is fire, there is also light. The Holy Spirit is both fire and light.

In Luke 15:8-9 the Spirit is likened to a woman finding a lost coin by lighting a lamp, sweeping the house, and seeking the coin carefully. This signifies that the Spirit of God enlightens sinners within their hearts by God's word of light to seek them that they may repent and return to God. (See *The Spirit's Work to Enlighten Us*, page 53.)

God Himself is light, and this light is embodied in Christ, the Lamb-lamp, who in John 8:12 speaks of Himself as "the light of the world" and refers to Himself as "the light of life." The Spirit is God reaching us through Christ and applying Himself to us. The Spirit therefore applies to us and brings into us God in Christ as light, enlightening our inner being that we may know our true spiritual condition and open to receive the divine dispensing.

### **The True Light**

The Triune God is light, and the light which He imparts as He enlightens us is the true light. In the words of John 1:9, this is "the true light which, coming into the world, enlightens every man." The phrase *the true light* is used again by the apostle John in 1 John 2:8: "The darkness is passing away and the true light is already shining." The word *true* used to modify *light* in these verses implies the existence not only of natural and artificial light but also counterfeit light.

Counterfeit, or false, light comes from two sources. The first is Satan and his ministers. After speaking of "false apostles, deceitful workers, transfiguring themselves into apostles of Christ," Paul goes on to say, "And no wonder, for Satan himself transfigures himself into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if also his ministers transfigure themselves into ministers of righteousness" (2 Cor. 11:13-15a). In his attempt to deceive God's people and to lure them away from Christ and from God's economy

(vv. 2-3), Satan may disguise himself as an angel of light and through his ministers, the deceitful workers, beguile the believers with counterfeit light. According to the context of 2 Corinthians 11, such “light” may consist of certain religious concepts that are fostered in opposition to the truth of God’s economy. Any “ministry” which opposes God’s New Testament economy and presents itself as acting on behalf of God may actually be a satanic ministry, a misleading work carried out under the instigation of Satan.

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Another source of counterfeit illumination is the self of fallen human beings who kindle a “fire” and generate “firebrands” of false light. Isaiah 50:10-11 is a word regarding this:

Who is among you that fears the Lord,  
That obeys the voice of His servant,  
That walks in darkness and has no light?  
Let him trust in the name of the Lord  
and rely on his God.

Behold, all you who kindle a fire,  
Who encircle yourselves with firebrands,  
Walk in the light of your fire  
And among the brands you have set ablaze.  
This you will have from My hand;  
And you will lie down in torment.

Here we see that one who has no light should trust in the Lord, the only legitimate source of light, and, in fear and obedience, rely on God alone for enlightenment. However, instead of waiting on the Lord for light, some may engender a light from their own corrupt being, kindling a “fire,” encircling themselves with “firebrands,” and walking in the “light” of their own “fire.” This “light” is not from God but from the self, from the fallen mind, emotion, and will. Much so-called light is actually self-generated illumination and is not only useless but also deceitful and destructive. Watchman Nee addressed this matter on more than one occasion. In a message entitled “Obsession and God’s Light” he says, “Spiritual darkness cannot be removed by human fires. Light comes from God alone and does not come from man. Man’s fire will never bring about genuine spiritual sight” (269). Elsewhere he writes:

God’s light [Psa. 36:9] enables man to see light, but the light that comes from man’s firebrands is useless; it cannot give him light. The light that comes from man’s firebrands originates from his own considerations and thoughts and is totally worthless....What we really need is God’s light. Only God’s light can give us true spiritual sight. (“Obsession and Light” 898)

Witness Lee presents the same view in *The Knowledge of Life*:

If God does not enlighten us, we definitely should not manufacture light ourselves nor seek light ourselves....In the entire Bible, this is the passage [Isa. 50:10-11] which speaks most clearly concerning the matter of being enlightened. On one hand, it points out to us the proper way: if we fear God, obey God’s voice, and suddenly fall into darkness and have no light, we should not do anything but trust

in the name of the Lord, rely upon our God, and wait for the light of God to shine. This is because only God is light, only God is the source of light, and only in the light of God can we see light. On the other hand, this verse also warns us that when we have no light we should not find a way out ourselves by kindling a fire or making our own light. For if we do not wait for God, but instead gird ourselves about with self-made light, though we may walk in the light of our own fire for a time, in the end we shall lie down in sorrow. (206-207)

**T**here is a true light—the light that comes from God and that is God—and there is a false light—the “light” that comes either from Satan or from one’s self. If we would be enlightened by God to live in His economy, we must be absolute in the matter of source, repudiating Satan and the self and opening to receive the true light from the true and living God.

### Light and Truth

Many students of the Word of God understand the word *truth* as it is used in the Gospel of John to mean principles, and others claim that it denotes doctrine. These concepts of truth, however, do not match the mystery and profundity of the divine revelation in John’s Gospel. Should we take John 1:14 to mean that the Word became flesh and tabernacled among us, full of doctrine or full of principles? Certain not! Likewise, it would be absurd to say that we should worship the Father in spirit and in doctrine (4:24), that the Lord is the way and the doctrine (14:6), that the Spirit of principle will guide us into all doctrine (16:13), or that the Father will sanctify us in doctrine. Truth in the New Testament as a whole and in the Gospel of John in particular does not denote doctrine (17:17). Rather, truth refers to the shining of light, to the expression of light. “In other words, truth is light expressed. God never comes to us without shining upon us. When God comes to us as light and shines, we immediately have the sense of truth, of reality” (Lee, *Truth* 10).

The divine light is the nature, the essence, of God’s expression,

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it is the source of the divine truth, and the truth shines in the divine light. Chapter eight of the Gospel of John indicates clearly that light and truth are closely related. As we have pointed out, in verse 12 the Lord Jesus says, "I am the light of the world," and then proceeds to speak of following Him and having "the light of life." The One who is the light in verse 12 is the Son in verse 36: "If therefore the Son sets you free, you shall be free indeed." Furthermore, the Son who sets us free is the truth who sets us free: "You shall know the truth, and the truth shall set you free" (v. 32). The Son is the embodiment of the divine life; He is also the light of life and the truth that sets us free. Truth is the shining of light, and light is the issue of life. He who has the Son has the life (1 John 5:11-12); this life shines as the light of life; and the shining of light is truth. Truth, therefore, is not mere doctrine; truth is the shining, the expression, of the light which is God Himself in Christ the Son.

Torrance perceives that there is some kind of relationship between truth and light. Commenting on the divine light being the ultimate standard of truth, he says, "Apart from such a basis in uncreated Light all our experience and knowledge of things in the universe would finally be meaningless, for they would be devoid of any ultimate standards of truth, goodness or beauty" (78).

According to the divine revelation in the Scriptures, the divine light is not only the standard of truth—it is the source of truth. Whereas the Gospel of John emphasizes the truth as the solid embodiment of light, 1 John emphasizes light as the source of truth. Whereas the Gospel of John reveals that Christ brought truth to us that we might have life (1:14, 17; 3:14-16; 14:6), 1 John reveals that in the fellowship of the divine life (1:3) we are ushered into the source of truth, which is the divine light. In 1 John 1:5 John declares that God is light, in verse 6 he speaks of practicing the truth, and in verse 7 he points out the importance of walking in the light even as God is in the light. When the divine light shines upon us, it becomes the truth realized in us and practiced by us. The last paragraph of a lengthy note in the Recovery Version on the word *truth* in verse 6 is most instructive:

Here in v. 6 *truth* denotes the revealed reality of God in its aspect of the divine light. It is the issue and realization of the divine light mentioned in v. 5. The divine light is the source in God; truth is the issue and realization of the divine light in us.

### Light and the Word of God

"Thy word is a lamp to my feet, / And a light to my path" (Psa. 119:105). "The unfolding of Thy words gives light" (v. 130a). "The commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes" (19:8b). Verses such as these reveal that the God who is light transmits the divine light to us

through the Word of God. The Word, we may say, is the condensation of the divine light. Whenever we come to the Word with an exercised spirit and an open heart, we come to the light, because the Word, being God-breathed (2 Tim. 3:16), is the embodiment of God and the revelation of God, and God is light. Through the Word, therefore, we receive light and are ushered into a realm of light. Because the Word is the condensation of the divine light, whenever we come to the Word with a proper attitude, we sense not only that we are receiving light but also that we are entering into a realm and atmosphere of light. This is comparable to entering a lighted room, where we are not only under light and receiving light but also are in light. When we have fellowship with God through the Word, we enter into light, we come under the shining of light, and we receive light.

As the embodiment of God, the unique light, the Word is a shining light. Since only God is light, the light that shines upon us through the Word is actually God Himself in the Word. In themselves the words of the Bible in letters are not light and cannot supply us with light. The written Word in letters does not have the power of shining light. Light comes only from God Himself. Only as the Spirit of God opens the Word to us does the Word shine upon us and cause us to obtain the light of God. If we would receive light from the Word of God, we must contact God as we read it. The more we do this, the more the Bible becomes to us a book of light. Then in our daily experience of reading and studying the Word, the Bible is a shining light.

### Light and Creation

Light is a means by which God brings created things into existence. In Genesis 1 after God said, "Let there be light" (v. 3), there was a way for Him to bring various forms of living things into being. This indicates that light is for generating life. For God's work of creation in Genesis 1, there was the need of light.

**W**hereas the light in Genesis 1 is for the original creation, the old creation, the light in John 1:4 and 8:12 is for the new creation. The old creation was brought into existence through physical light, and the new creation is brought into being through Christ as the embodiment and expression of the divine light. The physical light in Genesis 1 is a type of Christ as the spiritual light for God's new creation. Christ truly is the light of life for the new creation. When we received the Lord Jesus by believing into His name, we received Him not only as life but also as light, and therefore we became children of God and children of light (1 John 3:1; Eph. 5:8). Second Corinthians 4:6 provides further testimony that we became a new creation through the shining of Christ as the light of life: "Because the God who said, Out of darkness light shall shine, is the One who



shined in our hearts to illuminate the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." God's shining in our hearts has made us a new creation.

### Light and Life

Light makes the believers in Christ a new creation because the divine life and the divine light always go together. Where light is, there is life, and where life is, there is light (Gen. 1:3, 14-18; Psa. 36:8-9; John 1:4; 1 John 1:1-2, 5, 7).

Life comes from the shining of light. Whenever light enters our being, life follows, as in the case of Saul of Tarsus (Acts 9:3; 22:6; 26:13). Where light is, there life is, with the amount of life being in direct proportion to the amount of light. Since this is the situation in our spiritual experience, it is possible to discern someone's level of life by paying attention to their degree of enlightenment. Many believers have stopped growing in the divine life because their degree of light has not increased. They have little growth in the Lord because they have received little light from the Lord. In contrast, as the divine light within the believers becomes intense, the divine life within them becomes fuller. When the inner shining of the light of life penetrates and permeates our whole being, our spiritual life will become full and mature and we will be full-grown sons of God, the same as God in life and in nature but not in His Godhead. From this we see that light is crucial for our spiritual existence. Light is the key to life.

*When the inner shining of the light of life penetrates and permeates our whole being, our spiritual life will become full and mature and we will be full-grown sons of God.*

On the one hand, life comes from light; on the other hand, light comes from life, with the degree of light being in direct proportion to the level of life. In Christ there is the divine life, and this life is the divine light. Life is light. When we have the divine life, we also have the divine light. Therefore, we need the divine light and the divine life in equal proportions. If we desire to grow in the divine life, we need to receive more of the divine light. Likewise, if we want more of the divine light, we need to receive a fuller dispensing of the divine life.

There is a line through the Scriptures which continually speaks of life and light together. Obvious instances are John 1:4 and 8:12, and an outstanding illustration is Psalm 36:9: "For with Thee is the fountain of life; / In Thy light we see light." In the divine dispensing of the Triune God as life into His redeemed tripartite people, the Father is the fountain, the Son is the spring as the emergence of the fountain, and the Spirit is the flow, the river. As the source, the origin of the divine life, the Father is the fountain of living waters (Jer. 2:13). As the embodiment and expression

of the Father, the Son is the spring of water of life that gushes up in the believers into eternal life (John 4:14). As the flow, the Spirit is the river of water of life flowing into us, through us, and out from us (Rev. 22:1; John 7:37-39). This is the Triune God in the divine dispensing of the divine life—God the Father as the source, God the Son as the course, and God the Spirit as the flow imparting Himself as life into us. Through the Son and in the Spirit we have access to the Father as our unique source (Eph. 2:18). This means that through the Son as the spring and in the Spirit as the river we may come to the Father as the fountain. With Him is the fountain of life, and in His light we see light. In Lossky's words, light "is both that which one perceives, and that by which one perceives" (218). Through our experience and enjoyment of the Triune God as life, we enter into a realm of light where we are enlightened to see the true nature of things and to know the divine reality:

This shows us that through God's light, a man sees light and the true condition of things. "In Your light we see light." The first light is the enlightening light, and the second light denotes the true nature of things. This means that we can only see the true nature of anything when we are in the light of God. One only sees the true nature of something when he lives in God's light. (Nee, "Obsession and God's Light" 269)

Only those who receive the dispensing of the divine life and live in the divine light will see, and only those who live in divine light can discern the true nature of things.

### Children of Light

Because life and light go together in the spiritual experience of the believers, the children of God are the children of light (John 1:12-13; 1 John 3:1; Eph. 5:8b). As believers in Christ, as those who have received the Lord Jesus into us through faith, we have been born of God to be the children of God possessing the life and nature of God. We became children of God by receiving Christ as the shining light of life. John 1:12 says, "But as many as received Him, to them He gave the authority to become children of God, to those who believe into His name." If we consider this verse in its context, we will see that *Him* here refers to *the light* (v. 8) and *the true light* (v. 9). *He*, the true light, was in the world, yet the world did not know *Him* as the light (v. 10), and *He*, the light, came to His own, yet they did not receive *Him* as the true light (v. 11). However, according to verses 12 and 13 those who receive Him as the true light, the light of life, are born of God to become children of God. This reveals a marvelous fact: Whoever receives

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the shining light, which is Christ the Son of God Himself, has the divine life conveyed by this light and thereby is born of God to become a child of God and a child of light. As God is light (1 John 1:5), so we, the children of God, are children of light. As children of God, who are simultaneously children of light, we should be “without blemish in the midst of a crooked and perverted generation,” among whom we “shine as luminaries in the world” (Phil. 2:15).

Both the Lord Jesus and the apostle Paul spoke of the believers as sons of light. In Luke 16:8 the Lord Jesus contrasted “the sons of this age,” the unsaved ones, with “the sons of light,” the saved ones. In John 12:36 He spoke emphatically about becoming sons of light: “While you have the light, believe into the light, so that you may become sons of light.” The light, of course, is Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the light of the world. To believe into the Son—that is, to enter into an organic union with the Son through faith—is to have eternal life (3:15, 36), and to believe into the light—that is, to enter into an organic union with the light, which is God in the Son—is to become a son of light. Through believing into Christ—that is, to have our being merged into His that we may be one with Him organically—we have been born of God to become sons of light. Now in Paul’s words we “are all sons of light and sons of the day” (1 Thes. 5:5).

### Becoming Light in the Lord

The New Testament reveals not only that we are children of light but also that we have actually become light. “For you were once darkness but are now light in the Lord” (Eph. 5:8a). Formerly, we were not only dark and in the darkness—we were darkness itself. Now, in Christ, we are not only in the light nor only children of light—we are light itself.

**O**ur being light in the Lord implies deification. God is light (1 John 1:5). In John 8:12a the Lord Jesus, speaking as God, the great I Am, said, “I am the light of the world.” Clearly, Christ is what God is: God is light, and Christ, who is God, is also light. In Matthew 5:14 Jesus made a striking statement not about Himself but about us, His believers: “You are the light of the world.” The Lord Jesus did not say that we resemble the light of the world or that we have certain properties and functions in common with the light of the world; He declared that we *are* the light of the world. Paul, who once was darkness but who became light after seeing the Lord as light, assures us that we are, in fact, light in the Lord. Do these verses not indicate that, in a very real and wonderful sense, we have become what God is as light? They cannot properly be understood in any other way. God is light, and now we, the believers in Christ, are also light. We are the same as God in light as the expressed element of God. But how can we, who once were darkness, become, with Christ, the light of

the world? How do we become light in the Lord? The word of the Lord Jesus in John 12 reveals that we become light by being born of the very God who is light. The Lord Jesus came as a light into the world, that those who believe into Him would not remain in darkness (v. 46) but by their believing into Him would become sons of light (v. 36). Having been born of God, who is light, we are now light in the Lord.

In Ephesians 5:8 the phrase *in the Lord* bears a particular significance. We are light in virtue of the fact that we are in the Lord. In ourselves and of ourselves we cannot be light. Apart from Christ and outside the organic union with Christ as the life-giving Spirit in our regenerated spirit (1 Cor. 6:17), we cannot be light. The Lord is light in Himself; we are light only by being in Him. Satan is darkness, and everyone in him is darkness. God in Christ is light, and everyone in Him is light. “As light is God, so darkness is Satan. We were darkness because we were one with Satan. Now we are light because we are one with God in the Lord” (Recovery Version, Eph. 5:8, note 1).

### Walking in the Light

As those who have believed into Christ to become sons of light and even to become light in the Lord, we should now walk in the light. In the words of 1 John 1:7 we need to “walk in the light as He is in the light.” To walk in the light is to live, move, act, behave, do things, and have our being in the light, which is actually God Himself. As the sons of light, we should live in the light, walk in the light, remain in the light, and be persons altogether in the light. All of our daily activities, whether carried out alone or with others, should be in the light. All our movements in the Lord’s work and in His ministry should take place in the light. This implies that we should live a life of transparency in the Lord, loving the light and coming to the light that our “works may be manifested that they are wrought in God” (John 3:21).

God is in the light because He is light. Actually, to walk in the light is to walk in God as light. Alford remarks:

Notice that this walking in the light, as He is in the light, is no mere imitation of God, but is an identity in the essential element of our daily walk with the essential element of God’s eternal being: not imitation, but coincidence and identity of the very atmosphere of life. (1697)

To be sure, “an identity in the essential element of our daily walk with the essential element of God’s eternal being” implies an intrinsic, organic oneness with God in light as the nature of His expression. Only those who have been born of God to be children of God with the life of God and who have become light in the Lord can walk in the light as God is in the light.

Proverbs 4:18 is a helpful word concerning walking in the light: "The path of the righteous is like the light of dawn, / That shines brighter and brighter until the full day." Significantly, in this verse righteousness and light go together. Whether we are right is determined not by reasons and arguments but by light. If we are walking in a righteous way before God, we will sense that we are in the light, and the further we proceed on our course, the brighter the light will become. The light will shine brighter and brighter "until the full day." However, in our daily living our actual situation may be quite different. We may feel certain that what we are doing or that the way we are taking is right. When we have such a consideration, we would do well to consider whether the light is increasing or decreasing as we continue in this way. The crucial issue is not a matter of right—it is a matter of light. We may be assured in ourselves that we are right, but if we are in darkness and if the way that we are taking is leading us further into darkness, that darkness is a sign that we are wrong in the eyes of God. As believers in Christ we need to learn to walk in the light as God is in the light and not walk according to our self-made righteousness.

First Peter 2:9 says that God has called us out of darkness into His marvelous light. Whereas darkness is the expression and sphere of Satan in death, light is the expression and sphere of God in life. God has called us out of and delivered us from the satanic realm of darkness and death and has called us into and delivered us into the divine realm of light and life. To walk in the light as He is in the light is to live, behave, and have our being in God's marvelous light.

### Light and the Judgment Seat of Christ

One aspect of walking in the light is realizing that our living as believers today will one day be manifested before the Lord for His judgment. This suggests that God's light is related to His judgment, that God judges us by enlightening us:

The divine light becomes the principle of our understanding; in it we come to know God, and we come to know ourselves. It searches out the depths of the person who attains to union with God, it is for that person the judgment of God, before the Last Judgment. (Lossky 233)

Perhaps one of the least popular truths in the New Testament is the truth concerning the judgment of the believers at the judgment seat. In Romans 14 Paul reminds us that "we will all stand before the judgment seat of God" (v. 10), and "then each one of us will give an account concerning

himself to God" (v. 12). In 2 Corinthians 5:10 he speaks of this again: "We must all be manifested before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done through the body according to what he has practiced, whether good or bad." The word *manifested* indicates clearly that what we are and what we have done will be brought to light for all to see. Paul expresses a similar thought in 1 Corinthians. First, in 3:13 he warns us that the "work of each will become manifest; for the day will declare it." Then in 4:5 he goes on to advise us, saying, "So then do not judge anything before the time, until the Lord comes, who will bring to light the hidden things of darkness and make manifest the counsels of the hearts, and then there will be praise to each from God." The day of judgment will be a day of enlightenment, at which time the hidden things of darkness will be exposed, brought to light, and the counsels of the hearts will be made manifest. At this juncture, we may cite St. Symeon the New Theologian quoted by Lossky:

For those who hate the light, the second coming of Christ will...make manifest everything which has been concealed. Everything which today we hide, not wishing to reveal the depths of our hearts in repentance, will then be made open in the light, before the face of God; and the whole world, and what we really are will be made plain. (234)

A believer may live in darkness today, but each one will be fully in light on that day. How wonderful it would be if we all lived our Christian life and carried out our Christian work in light of the coming judgment, a judgment not only for reward but also for discipline (1 Cor. 3:14-15). Since the hidden things will be brought to light on that day, we should open our entire being to the Lord and allow Him to search and enlighten us today. This should be an incentive for us to walk in light and live in light today.

### The Kingdom of God as a Realm of Light

To walk in God as light is actually to live in the realm of the divine light where, under the shining of God in Christ as light, we live in the reality of the kingdom of God.

This claim is based on the truth that, in its essential reality, the kingdom of God is the shining of the Lord Jesus over us to deliver us from the authority of darkness (Col. 1:12-13). The kingdom is the shining of the reality of the Lord Jesus Christ. Whenever He is shining over us and in us and we are under this shining and open to receive it, we are in the kingdom. Where light shines, light rules.

Central to this understanding of the relationship of light and the kingdom

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of God is the connection between light and order. Torrance has some grasp of this: "The universe would have no ultimately reliable base for its rational order, if the primacy and constancy of physical light were not ultimately grounded in the self-sufficient uncreated Light of eternal God" (81). An intimate relationship exists between order, the kingdom of God, and "the self-sufficient uncreated Light of eternal God." When light is present, everything is in order. As we grow in life, we acquire a greater degree of the light of life. Under this light everything is kept in order, and everyone is at peace.

**I**n order to understand the connection between light and the kingdom of God, we need to see, from the account of the transfiguration in the Gospel of Matthew, that Christ's coming in His kingdom is linked to His transfiguration. Where His transfiguration is, there is the coming of the kingdom. In Matthew 16:28 the Lord said, "Truly I say to you, There are some of those standing here who shall by no means taste death until they see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom." According to Mark 9:1 the Lord Jesus said that some of the ones standing there would "see the kingdom of God having come in power." Not long after He spoke these words, He took with Him Peter, James, and John and brought them up to a high mountain privately, and there "He was transfigured before them, and His face shined like the sun, and His garments became as white as the light" (Matt. 17:2). Then Moses and Elijah appeared to them and conversed with the Lord Jesus (v. 3). Here we have a demonstration of the reality of the kingdom and a miniature of the manifestation of the kingdom. Through His transfiguration—the saturation of His humanity by His divinity—Christ demonstrated to three of His disciples what the reality of the kingdom of God is: The kingdom of God is the shining of the transfigured and glorified Jesus over us, in us, and through us. The Lord's transfiguration on the mountain was the coming of the kingdom. On the mountain with the transfigured Jesus, Peter, James, and John were given a foretaste of the coming kingdom as a realm of light with life and authority. What is described in Matthew 17:2-5 is a miniature of the kingdom of the heavens in the coming millennium. In this miniature we see that the center is the glorified Jesus, and with Him are the Old Testament saints, represented by Moses and Elijah, and the New Testament saints, represented by Peter, James, and John.

We may say that what we have in Matthew 17:2-5 is the transfiguration of the Lord Jesus or the shining of the Lord Jesus in glory, but He Himself said that this transfiguration, this shining, was the coming of the kingdom. The crucial point here is that the transfiguration, the shining of the Lord Jesus on the mountain, was the coming of the kingdom in power. This reveals that, in essence, the kingdom is the Lord Jesus shining over us. The Lord rules by shining; His shining is His reigning in His kingdom. The more He shines on us and in us, the more He

rules over us, not by outward regulations but by His regulating and governing light. To abide under the shining of this light is to dwell in the kingdom of the Son of God's love (Col. 1:13), where the Lord Jesus rules over us in life, light, and love. This is a lovely, beautiful, and heavenly realm—a realm of radiance, peace, joy, delight, order, harmony, fellowship, and oneness of the believers with the Triune God and with one another in the Triune God. In this realm we have a foretaste of "the economy of the fullness of the times," God's plan "to head up all things in Christ, the things in the heavens and the things on the earth, in Him" (Eph. 1:10).

### **Light, Reality, and Truthfulness**

When we walk in the light and live in the kingdom of God as a realm of light, the divine things become real to us in our spiritual experience, and we become persons of truthfulness.

Divine light and divine reality are intrinsically connected. Light makes us conscious of the divine reality and enables us to see, know, enjoy, and experience the divine reality. Hence, it is absolutely vital for us to realize that only as we walk in the divine light and live under the shining of the divine light in the realm of the divine light can we know the reality of the divine things. "Christ is the one reality of all, / Of Godhead and of man and all things else" (*Hymns* 452). Although this is objectively true, it is true to us only when we walk in the light. Likewise, Christ, the One in whom all the fullness of the Godhead, dwells bodily (Col. 2:9), is unsearchably rich in Himself (Eph. 3:8), but His riches are realities to us only when we walk in the light. Furthermore, the grace of Christ, which is with our spirit, is all-sufficient (Gal. 6:18; 2 Cor. 12:9), but this grace is made real to us only in the shining of the light of life. The more we live in the divine light, the more of the divine reality we will know, and we will see and experience one reality after another.

**H**owever, whenever we are in darkness and walk in darkness, nothing is real to us; rather, as far as we are concerned, the divine things become vain and empty, altogether devoid of reality. From this we see that just as reality is related to light, so vanity is related to darkness. In contrast to the divine light, the light of life which causes us to sense the divine reality, the satanic darkness, the darkness of death, causes us to feel that everything is vain, that life is absurd, and that the universe is a chaos. If a believer, cut off from fellowship with God in the divine life, allows himself to descend into darkness and to be engulfed by darkness, he will lose all consciousness of the divine reality. It may seem as if the reality of the Triune God and the all-inclusive Christ and every positive thing revealed in the Word of God have disappeared from view. Instead of enjoying the divine reality in the divine light, such a believer may dwell in the murky

depths of the fallen mind, groping for reality and meaning, yet tempted to succumb to the suggestion that all is empty and vain.

Whether we live in light or in darkness is not a theoretical, theological issue. On the contrary, it is a matter of utmost significance for our spiritual existence and well-being. To be in the light is to know the divine reality; to walk in darkness is to live in vanity and emptiness.

On the one hand, the shining of the divine light brings us into the realm of the divine reality. On the other hand, the shining of the light of life brings the divine reality into us and constitutes us with it. As the divine light shines into us, it infuses the divine reality into our being, transforming us into persons of truthfulness. Whereas our living in the divine light causes the divine things to be real to us, the shining of the divine light into us causes us to become real in the divine things. If we are in the light and allow the light to shine in us, we will become real, and whatever we do will be real.

When the Lord Jesus Christ as the great I Am comes into us as life, He shines in us as light, and this light infuses us with the divine reality (John 8:12, 32). This shining brings the reality of what God is into our being. Such a reality has its source in God as light. The more this reality—the divine element imparted into us and realized by us—is infused into us, the more we are liberated from what is false and unreal and are constituted with what is true, real, and genuine. As a result, we become sincere, genuine, truthful people, and we worship the Father in truthfulness (4:23-24) and love one another in truthfulness (2 John 1). *Truthfulness* in the verses just cited denotes the revealed divine reality—the Triune God dispensed into us in the Son, Jesus Christ—becoming our genuineness and sincerity that we may live a life that corresponds to the divine light (John 3:19-21) and worship the Father according to what He is (see Recovery Version, notes on 2 John 1 and John 4:24). Therefore, if we want to be real in the sense of being constituted with the revealed divine reality and if we want to worship and love in truthfulness, we must open our being to the shining of the divine light, allowing the light of life to penetrate, permeate, and saturate us until our whole being is full of light (Luke 11:36). Then we will not only be conscious of the divine reality—we will be soaked and saturated with it. The radiant God will be wrought into us with His life, light, reality, and sincerity to make us the same as He is in life and nature (not in the Godhead) for His corporate expression in the church, the kingdom, and the New Jerusalem.

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## Light and the Church

The goal of God's economy is the corporate expression of Himself in Christ, an expression that includes the all-inclusive Christ with all His believers. In the present age this corporate expression is the church, the Body of Christ. According to the revelation in the New Testament, the church is the enlargement of Christ, the increase and expansion of Christ. If we enter into Paul's view of the church and his understanding of it,

we will see that as the Body of Christ the church is actually the corporate Christ. "For even as the body is one and has many members, yet all the members of the body, being many, are one body, so also is the Christ" (1 Cor. 12:12). The note on *the Christ* in the Recovery Version is worthy of attention:

Referring to the corporate Christ, composed of Christ Himself as the Head and the church as His Body with all the believers as members. All the believers of Christ are organically united with Him and constituted with His life and element and have thus become His Body, an organism, to express Him. Hence, He is not only the Head but also the Body. As our physical body has many members yet is one, so is this Christ.

Since the church is the corporate expression of Christ and Christ is light, the church is the corporate expression of light. Furthermore, since the church is the corporate Christ and Christ is light, the church is a corporate light. This may be the reason that the Lord Jesus likens His believers as the kingdom people—those living in the reality of the kingdom as a realm of life and light under the shining of Jesus and in the practicality of the kingdom in the proper church life (Rom. 14:17)—to a city set on a mountain. "You are the light of the world," He tells us in Matthew 5:14a, and then He says, "It is impossible for a city situated upon a mountain to be hidden" (v. 14b). As a corporate entity, the believers are such a city (which will consummate ultimately in the holy city, the New Jerusalem—Rev. 21:10-11, 23-24). In Matthew 5:16 the Lord Jesus goes on to give us a particular charge: "Let your light shine before men, so that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in the heavens." We, the children of light, are a shining city of light, the church as the corporate expression of Christ, who is the light of the world.

Further evidence that the church is the corporate expression of the divine light is found in Ephesians, a book that unveils, in a most profound way, the church as the Body of Christ. It is in the context of such a revelation concerning

the church that Paul says in 5:8, "You were once darkness but are now light in the Lord." This word is addressed not mainly to individual believers but to the church, the Body of Christ. If we consider Paul's word in this way, we will realize that the light in 5:8 is a corporate light. We, the corporate Christ, the duplication and multiplication of the unique, individual Christ (John 12:24), are light in the Lord.

### Light in the Millennium

This light will be intensified during the coming millennial kingdom, the thousand-year reign of Christ as King on earth with all His overcomers as the co-kings (Rev. 3:21). The Lord's word in Matthew 13:43a refers to this time of glorious, intensified shining: "Then the righteous will shine forth like the sun in the kingdom of their Father." *The kingdom of their Father* denotes the manifestation of the heavenly kingdom in the millennium as a reward to the overcomers. The righteous, the sons of the kingdom (v. 38), will shine forth like the sun. They will be manifested with Christ in Christ, and He will shine out from within them in splendor:

All will become light, all will be penetrated by uncreated light. The bodies of the saints will become like the glorious body of the Lord, as it appeared to the apostles on the day of the Transfiguration. God will be all in all, and divine grace, the light of the Holy Trinity, will shine forth in the multitude of human hypostases, in all those who have acquired it; they will become like new suns in the Kingdom of the Father, resembling the Son, transfigured by the Holy Spirit, the Giver of Light. (Lossky 235)

As such shining ones, they, the glorified sons of God (Heb. 2:10; Rom. 8:29-30), will reign with their shining King. Isaiah 30:26 seems to indicate that even the natural environment will reflect the glory of this millennial reign: "The light of the moon will be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun will be seven times brighter, like the light of seven days."

### Light in the New Jerusalem

God's economy in light will have its consummate fulfillment in the New Jerusalem in the new heaven and new earth. Far from being a material city, the New Jerusalem will be a composition of the Triune God with His redeemed, regenerated, sanctified, renewed, transformed, conformed, and glorified tripartite elect. As such, the New Jerusalem will be a city of light: "The city has no need of the sun or of the moon that they should shine in it, for the glory of God illumined it, and its lamp is the Lamb. And the nations will walk by its light" (Rev. 21:23-24a). The constituents of the city, all of whom will be glorified sons of God (v. 7), will dwell for eternity under

the shining of God as light in the Lamb as the lamp: "Night will be no more; and they have no need of the light of a lamp and of the light of the sun, for the Lord God will shine upon them" (22:5a). There will be no need of natural light (the sun) nor of artificial light (a lamp) for God Himself will be the light and the redeeming Lamb will be the lamp, and the city itself will be the diffuser, spreading this blessed light over all the nations in the new heaven and new earth.

At the time of this glorious consummation, God, who is light, will have carried out His eternal purpose and will have satisfied the desire of His heart to produce, through His work of creation, redemption, and organic salvation, an eternal corporate expression of Himself in Christ. In eternity and for eternity, the Lord God will enjoy the issue of His economy—His plan and arrangement—to make His chosen, redeemed, regenerated elect the same as He is in life and nature but not in His Godhead and to make Himself one with them and them one with Him, thus to be enlarged and expanded in His expression, that all His divine attributes may be expressed in human virtues. This is God's economy in light. LFC

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