

**"LEX MUNDI": AND OTHER
TRACTS FOR THE
TIMES ON SWEDENBORG
AND MODERN THOUGHT**

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"Lex Mundi": And Other Tracts for the Times on Swedenborg and Modern Thought by L. P. Mercer

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OTHER TRACTS FOR THE TIMES

ON

SWEDENBORG AND MODERN THOUGHT

By REV. L. P. MERCER

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“LUX MUNDI”

*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God,
and the Word was God.*

In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. John 1: 1, 4.

ONE of the most significant books of the times bears this title, “Lux Mundi.” It is a “Series of Studies in the Religion of the Incarnation,” by certain Oxford clergymen, who found themselves “compelled for their own sake, no less than that of others, to attempt to put the Catholic faith into its right relation to modern intellectual and moral problems.” The result is interesting, as showing a keen appreciation of the “new points of view” and “new questions,” which science and the rational tendencies of thought have introduced into theology, and at the same time the utter futility of all attempts to trim the lamps of a past age to light the travelers through the more complicated ways of thought in the present.

The Oxford Clergymen say: “We are sure that Jesus Christ is still and will continue to be the ‘Light of the World.’ We are sure that if men can

rid themselves of prejudices and mistakes (for which, it must be said, the Church is often as responsible as they), and will look afresh at what the Christian faith really means, they will find that it is adequate as ever to interpret life and knowledge in its several departments, and to impart not less intellectual than moral freedom. But we are conscious also, that if the true meaning of the faith is to be made sufficiently conspicuous, it needs disencumbering, reinterpreting, explaining."

This is indeed a frank statement of the case, as all see and feel it, who retain their love for the Gospel and faith in Jesus Christ. And this frankness runs throughout the book so far as the recognition of the need for disencumbering and reinterpreting the Christian faith is concerned. But the authors in this volume "have written as the servants of the Catholic Creed and Church, aiming only," they say, "at interpreting the faith we have received." They have bound themselves by the Nicene and Athanasian Creeds; and while stripping away some of the grosser falsifications of later theologic developments, find themselves committed to the same old and impossible problems of reconciling a Trinity of three co-equal and co-eternal persons with the Unity of God and the Divinity of Jesus Christ, and of harmonizing the doctrine of the vicarious and propitiatory Atonement of Christ with any just intellectual and moral conception of One Divine Personality,

who is of the nature of an infinitely good and true Heavenly Father. They fail here, as all must fail, for the simple reason that this is not the Gospel. Instead of going back to the doctrine of Him who is the "Light of the World," they accept to begin with, as final, the first official and effectual extinguisher which the early Christian Church put upon the light of that doctrine.

The task they set themselves is hopeless. What they need, and what the Christian world needs is, not explanation of the so-called Catholic Creeds, but explanation of the Word of God. Not "revision," but revelation! Not a new interpretation of an old error, but exposure of the error and an unveiling of the mind of Christ.

Jesus Christ is the "Light of the World," because He is the Truth; because He speaks the words of truth for men; and because His life in them is the light by which men are able to see the truth of what He teaches.

If this was ever true it is true always. If "the epoch in which we live is one of profound transformation, abounding in new needs, new points of view, new questions," He must reveal its solutions as He did when He appeared among men.

How shall this be?

He appeared among men as God in manifest human personality; in direct relations with men and spirits and angels; with manifest power in heaven

and on earth; speaking the words of life, showing the way of life and giving the wisdom of life to as many as received Him. He *was* the "Light of the World" when he appeared, because he could tell men what they needed to know, and could gift them inwardly with power to see and do what He taught. He *is* the "Light of the World" for the same reason—because He is present by His Spirit with all men, and has power in heaven and on earth to use all things of both worlds that are necessary to instruct and enlighten men in what they need to see and do. He did not work without the use of means, and He does not; but He has power to adapt the means to the conditions and needs of men.

If then, there are changed conditions in our day, and new developments of need with men, those who believe in Him as the "Light of the World" may expect that new and adequate truths will be provided by Him.

One of the most amazing features of current thought is, that those who seem to recognize most clearly the need of new truths, and who, at the same time cling most devoutly to Christ as the "Light of the World," do not seem to have entertained the idea that He has taught, or can, or will teach anything new, or other than the letter of the Gospel on which the Christian Church was founded.

He taught that He had many things to say for which they were not then prepared; that faith