

what is SAVING TRUTH?

AN
INTRODUCTION
TO THE TRUE
EXPOSITION OF
ALL BIBLE
TEACHING

ELPIS ISRAEL

THE real message of the Bible has been confused and neglected by most people down the centuries. This sad situation has been caused by the deliberate attempt of the church system to keep the Bible away from the masses. In former times it was locked away in church vaults, unable to be read by the common person, as the church dominated the minds of its adherents. But in recent centuries this has changed. The Bible has become available to the public, and its message plainly revealed. But even then, it required a deliberate attempt to ignore church teaching, and examine without prejudice the Bible's claims concerning salvation. A remarkable man was led by unusual circumstances to consider the Bible with a view to his personal salvation. He discovered that most teachings of the church did not agree with the clear statements of the Scriptures. This booklet briefly describes his story, and publishes part of his exposition. We hope the reader finds it interesting, and takes opportunity to examine the Bible himself.

HERALD OF THE COMING AGE

A Christadelphian Publication

**DECLARING THE TRUTH OF THE SCRIPTURES REVEALED FOR THE SALVATION OF THOSE
WHO ARE PREPARED TO EXAMINE THE CLAIMS OF GOD'S WORD;
AND PRESENTING THE GLORIOUS MESSAGE OF THE SECOND COMING OF JESUS CHRIST
AND THE ESTABLISHMENT OF GOD'S ETERNAL KINGDOM ON EARTH.**

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NUMBER 1

“ELPIS ISRAEL”

an Exposition of the Kingdom of God



IN the year 1832, a doctor of medicine by name of John Thomas journeyed across the Atlantic from England to seek for his family a new life in America. Nearing the eastern coast of North America, the ship in which he was travelling, *The Marquis of Wellesley* floundered on rocks, and its occupants feared for their lives. Dr. Thomas determined that should he survive, he would examine the purpose and destiny of life. True to his word, on arriving in America, he commenced to read his Bible, and became involved in discussion with a number of religious communities, many being based on the popular millennial teachings of the times. Coming to a clearer understanding of Bible doctrine, he was drawn into controversy on what constitutes saving truth, and was forced to defend his teachings by recourse to the Bible.

Revisiting England, some years later, he presented a number of public lectures on the subject of *The Hope of Israel*, taken from the words of the apostle Paul: “For the hope of Israel I am bound with this chain” (Acts 28:20). Paul found himself bound as a criminal because he stood for the things of Bible truth, and Dr. Thomas asserted the same teachings.

Many people who heard his public addresses, requested Dr. Thomas to put the matters into writing, and in the year 1849 the book *Elpis Israel* was published (the word *Elpis* is the Greek word for “Hope”). It received considerable acclaim, and has remained in print for almost 150 years, many thousands of volumes being distributed. It is today, a fundamental exposition of Bible truth, and constitutes the basis of the beliefs of the

Christadelphian community. The book examines Bible doctrines in a very lucid, direct and thorough manner. It is available from the publishers of this booklet (see inside front cover), and is highly recommended as providing the best exposition of the fundamental teachings of the Bible extant.

The following is a reprint of the first chapter from the book introducing the necessity of a divine revelation to mankind. The reader will observe that Dr. Thomas urges a careful and honest examination of the teachings advanced. We fully concur with this recommendation, and will be pleased to answer any questions or provide further literature to assist in the understanding of the Scriptures. After all, nothing else in life is as important as rendering honour to our Creator, and of seeking eternal life in accordance with the way in which Almighty God offers that great blessing to His people.

For the convenience of the reader, in certain cases we have indicated definitions to words that are no longer commonly used. We have placed these as footnotes on each page, together with the actual listing of the Scriptures to which the writer refers.

The title of his book — *Elpis Israel* — is intriguing. But there is a careful reason for its selection. The first word is from the Greek and means “hope”; the second is from the Hebrew. The author wrote: “It is named *Elpis Israel*, or *Israel's Hope*; for the kingdom of which it treats is that which is longed for by all intelligent Israelites, and for which, said Paul, ‘I am bound with this chain’. *Elpis Israel's* subject matter is national, not sectarian. It treats of a nation, and of its civil and ecclesiastical institutions in a past and *future* age.”

In his *Preface* to the book, Dr. Thomas gave some particularly important advice: “...**the reader must, in justice to himself and the truth, study it with the Bible at his right hand, for he will find but few pages in which frequent reference is not made to its authority, and without which nothing can or ought to be determined**”.

We believe this to be vital. The author claimed absolutely no divine inspiration in the writing of *Elpis Israel*. Instead he wrote:

“I believe, and therefore have I spoken. I perceive what the apostles preached, what they did, and whom they converted. I have ‘full assurance’ that they preached what I understand they

did, and that all bearing the name *Christian* obeyed what they commanded. This full assurance is based upon piles of testimony, and is a full assurance which all partook in the days of the apostles ... The infallibility of the Pope consists in his assumption of competency to decide all spiritual questions whatever, without mistake, independently of the Word. I lay no such claim for myself; but, on the contrary, believe that I can judge nothing aright, unaided by the sure prophetic and apostolic testimony. By this, rationally interpreted, I believe I can be surely guided into all revealed truth, provided I take God as meaning what He says, and do not make void all reason by the dogma of non essentials... I have neither said, nor intended to say, that the possession of *Elpis Israel* is indispensable to the attainment of the kingdom of God... I wrote *Elpis Israel* to clear away the rubbish of the pulpits, with which the reader's mind might be oppressed, that the light of God's Word might enter in. It stands related to this, as Paul's reasonings did to the testimony he declared. 'He reasoned out of the scriptures.' These were his weapons — *reason* and *testimony*, with which he 'pulled down strongholds, cast down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and brought into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.' They are *Elpis Israel's* weapons also, and its author rejoices to know, that though far in arrears of Paul, it has opened the eyes of many to the divine testimony."

The following pages contain the opening chapter of *Elpis Israel*, as originally published by Dr. Thomas. Please read it conscientiously, as the author sets out the plan of his exposition. It will set before the reader the true nature of creation and the divine purpose. If this is of interest — and we hope it will be so — we will be delighted to forward, entirely free of cost, further booklets expounding the saving truths of God's inspired Word, or to answer any questions that might arise. Our only purpose is to draw the attention of thinking men and women to the wonderful plan of Almighty God, and thereby open to them the opportunity of eternal life in the kingdom that Jesus Christ will shortly establish upon this earth.

The Editor.

The Community of Christadelphians

Following publication of *Elpis Israel*, and other writings in the 1800's, there developed groups of Bible believers having a common belief in the one true gospel, embracing "the things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ" (Acts 8:12). Men and women from many different walks of life formed a community of believers known as **Christadelphians**. The name is composed of two Greek words: *adelphiosen* and *Christo*, meaning "brethren in Christ" (Colossians 1:2), who, like their Lord and his apostles of the first century, are eager to contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints (Jude 3).

Christadelphians do not profess to have received any new revelation from God; none of their members claim to be "holy inspired." Rather, they claim to be earnest Bible students, believing that a correct understanding of both the Old and New Testaments are able to make one wise unto salvation (2Timothy 3:15-17).

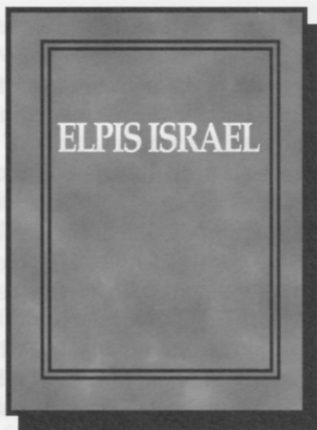
In adopting the practice of Christ and the apostles, the Christadelphians have no paid clergy or hierarchy of any kind. All study and work is conducted entirely on a voluntary basis.

Believing in the divine authorship of the Bible alone, they feel it only reasonable to reject any interpretation which fails to harmonize all parts of the Holy Scriptures. Having found, through independent study, that the creeds of the various sects of Christendom are, in a great variety of ways, opposed to the direct teaching of the Bible, the Christadelphians felt compelled to stand apart.

Christadelphians are found in most parts of the world today, and continue to apply themselves to a daily reading of the Scriptures important for instruction and development in spiritual teachings, and in regular worship. They welcome the interest of others in the saving truths of the Bible.

ELPIS ISRAEL

CHAPTER ONE



REVOLVING upon its own axis, and describing an ample circuit through the boundless fields of space, is a planet of the solar system bearing upon its surface a population of nearly a thousand millions¹ subject to sin, disease and death. This orb of the starry heavens shines with a glory similar to that of its kindred spheres. Viewed from them, it is seen sparkling “like a diamond in the sky;” and with the rest of the heavens, declares the glory of God, and shows forth the handiwork of him that did create it ².

This celestial orb, which is a world or system of itself, is styled THE EARTH. It is the habitation of races of animals which graze its fields, lurk in its forests, soar through its atmosphere, and pass through the paths of its seas. At the head of all these is a creature like themselves, animal, sensual and mortal. He is called MAN. He has replenished the earth and subdued it, and filled it with his renown³. His crimes, however, rather than his virtues, have illustrated and distinguished him with an unhappy pre-eminence above all other created things⁴. His heart is evil⁵; and, left to its uncontrolled impulses, he becomes licentious⁶, merciless, and more cruel than the fiercest beast of prey (Jeremiah 10:23).

Such is the being that claims the independent sovereignty of the globe. He has founded dominions, principalities, and

Comments: ¹This was published in 1849; the population of the earth now exceeds that number. ² Psalm 19:1. ³Genesis 1:28. ⁴Ecclesiastes 3:19.

⁵ Jeremiah 17:9. ⁶lacking moral discipline or restraint.

powers; he has built great cities ¹, and vaunted himself in the works of his hands, saying, "are not these by the might of my power, and for the honor of my majesty?"² He repudiates all lordship over him, and claims the inalienable and inherent right of selfgovernment, and of establishing whatever civil and ecclesiastical institutions are best suited to his sensuality and caprice. ³ Hence, at successive periods, the earth has become the arena of fierce and pandemoniac ⁴ conflicts; its tragedies have baptized its soil in blood, and the mingled cries of the oppressor and the victim have ascended to the throne of the Most High ⁵.

Skilled in the wisdom which comes from beneath⁶, he is by nature ignorant⁷ of that which is "first pure, and then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy."⁸ This is a disposition to which the animal man under the guidance of his fleshly mind has no affinity.⁹ His propensity is to obey the lust of his nature¹⁰; and to do its evil works, "which are adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like" (Galatians 5:19-21). All these make up the character of the world, "the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life,"¹¹ upon which is enstamped the seal of God's eternal reprobation. "They who do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God," but they shall die¹².

Such is the world of human kind! The great and impious enemy of God upon the earth¹³. Its mind is not subject to his law, neither indeed can be¹⁴. What shall we say to these things? Is the world as we behold it a finality? Are generations of men, rebellious against God, and destroyers of the earth¹⁵, to occupy

Comments: ¹Genesis 4:16-17; 11:1-6. ²Daniel 4:30. ³an impulsive change of mind. ⁴wild, uncontrolled, uproar. ⁵Genesis 18:20-21; Exodus 2:23-24. ⁶John 8:23; James 3:14-15. ⁷Proverbs 16:25. ⁸James 3:17. ⁹Romans 8:6-8. ¹⁰Ephesians 2:3; 4:22. ¹¹1John 2:15-17. ¹²Galatians 5:21. ¹³Romans 5:6-10; James 4:4. ¹⁴Romans 8:6-8. ¹⁵Revelation 11:18.

it successively through an endless series of ages? Are men to repeat the history of the past for ever? Is the earth always to be cursed¹, and sin and death to reign victorious?² Who can answer these inquiries? If we survey the starry canopy, thence no sign or voice is given expressive of the truth. They declare the eternal power and divinity of their Creator³, but they speak not of the destiny of the earth or of man upon it. If we question the mountains and hills, the plains and valleys, the rivers, seas, and oceans of the earth, and demand their origin, why they were produced, to what end they were created; their rocks, their strata, their fossils, or deposits, afford us no response. Turn we to man and ask him, "whence comest thou, and what is thy destiny? Whence all the evil of thy nature, why art thou mortal, who made thee, who involved thee in the wide-spread ruin and calamity on every side?" Ask an infant of days the history of the past, and he can as well detail it, as man can answer these inquiries without a revelation from him who is before all, and to whom is known from the beginning all he intends shall come to pass.⁴ So true is it, that, unaided by light from heaven, "since the beginning of the world men have not heard, nor perceived by the ear, neither hath the eye seen, O God, beside thee, what is prepared for him that waiteth for him;" but adds the apostle in his comment upon these words of the prophet, "God hath revealed these things unto us by his spirit... which things we (apostles) speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the holy spirit teacheth; interpreting spiritual things in spiritual words" (1Corinthians 2:9, 10, 13).

To the Bible, then, all must come at last if they would be truly wise in spiritual things. This is a great truth which few of the sons of men have learned to appreciate according to its importance. A man may be a theologian profoundly skilled in all questions of "divinity;" he may be well versed in the mythology of the heathen world; be able to speak all languages

Comments: ¹Genesis 3:17-19. ²1Corinthians 15:26; Romans 6:23; 5:14.

³Romans 1:20. ⁴Isaiah 42:9; 41:1-9.

of the nations; compute the distances of orb from orb, and weigh them in the scales of rigid calculation; he may know all science and be able to solve all mysteries, — but if with all this, he be ignorant of “the things of the spirit;” if he know not the true meaning of the Bible; he seemeth only to be wise, while he is, in fact, a fool. Therefore, the apostle saith, “let no man deceive himself. If any man among you seemeth to be wise in this world, let him become a fool, that he may be wise. For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. For it is written, He taketh the wise in their own craftiness. And again, the Lord knoweth the thoughts of the wise, that they are vain. Therefore, *let no man glory in men*” (1Corinthians 3:18-21). If our contemporaries could only attain to the adoption of this great precept “let no man glory in men,” they would have overleaped a barrier which as a fatal obstacle prevents myriads¹ from understanding and obeying the truth.

But while God lightly esteems the wisdom of the reputed wise, there is a wisdom which he invites all men to embrace. This is styled “*the wisdom of God in a mystery*;” it is also termed “*the hidden wisdom* which God ordained before the world, which none of the princes of this world knew.”² It is said to be hidden in a mystery, because until the apostolic age, it was not clearly made known. This will appear from the following texts: “now to him that is of power to establish you according to the revelation of THE MYSTERY,³ *which was kept secret* (χρόνοις αἰώνιαις) in the times of the ages, but *now* (in the time, or age, of the apostles) is made manifest, and by the scriptures of the prophets made known to all nations *for the obedience of faith*” (Romans 16:25-26). “By revelation God made known unto me, Paul, THE MYSTERY, which in other ages (former ages under the law of Moses) was not made known unto the sons of men *as it is now revealed* unto the holy apostles and prophets by the spirit, *that the Gentiles should be fellow*

Comments: ¹an indefinitely large number. ²1Corinthians 2:7-8. ³a truth known only through faith or revelation, being incomprehensible to human reasoning.

heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel" (Ephesians 3:3-6). Here is "the knowledge of God," in which are contained "exceeding great and precious promises," the understanding of which is able to make a man wise, and "a partaker of the divine nature."¹ Now, although these hidden things have been clearly made known, they still continued to be styled the mystery; not because of their unintelligibility, but because they were once secret. Hence, the things preached unto the Gentiles, and by them believed, are styled by Paul, "the mystery of the faith," and "the mystery of godliness," some of the items of which he enumerates; such as, "God manifest in the flesh, justified by the spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory" (1 Timothy 3:9, 16). Thus an *intelligible mystery* characterizes the once hidden wisdom of God, and becomes the subject matter of an enlightened faith.² This, however, is not the case with regard to religious systems which are not of the truth. Unintelligible mystery is the *ultima ratio*³ for all difficulties which are insoluble by the symbols of ecclesiastical communities, whose text of universal application is, that "secret things belong to God, but the things which are revealed, to us and to our children."⁴ This is true; but, then, these things which were secret in the days of Moses, have been revealed by God to the apostles and prophets for our information. No one has any right to set up his own ignorance as the limit of what God hath revealed.⁵ A thing may be unknown to such a man, but it does not therefore follow that it is either absolutely unintelligible or a secret. He may not know of it, or, if explained to him, he may not have intellect enough to comprehend it, or his prejudices, or sectarian bias⁶ may darken his understanding — this by no means makes the thing unintelligible or mysterious to other people. All that such persons have a right to say is, "we do not know anything about

Comments: ¹ 2 Peter 1:2-4. ² Matthew 3:10-17. ³ last resort. ⁴ Deuteronomy 29:29. ⁵ Acts 17:30-31; Eph. 4:18. ⁶ narrow or bigoted denominationalism.

it." They may confess their own ignorance, and resolve to look into the matter, or not; but they are presumptuously overstepping their bounds of propriety to venture to do more. This, however, is not the practice of those who have no secondary interests to subserve apart from the truth. They only desire to know that they may believe and do; but where to know more, would jeopardize the "vested interests" of a sect,¹ and extort the confession of its leaders and members, that they were in error and knew not the truth, investigation is discouraged, and the things proscribed as too speculative and mysterious for comprehension, or, if understood, of no practical utility.²

In this way mankind infold themselves as in the mantle of their self-esteem. They repress all progress, and glorify their own ignorance by detracting from things which they fear to look into, or apprehend are far above their reach.

Beside glorying in men, this unfortunate peculiarity of the human mind has developed the organization of a system of things impiously hostile to the institutions and wisdom of God. It is a system of many subordinate parts.³ It is animated by one spirit⁴ which under various modifications, pervades and actuates⁵ the whole. It is an evil spirit, and may be detected wherever the dogma⁶ of unintelligible mystery is at work. The name of this system is "MYSTERY."⁷ Its baneful⁸ effects began to be visible in the apostolic age. It was then styled "*the Mystery of Iniquity*"⁹, which, as was predicted, has like a cancre, eaten out the truth¹⁰, and substituted in place thereof, a civil and ecclesiastical constitution, styled, "Harlots and the Abominations of the Earth," such as we behold on every side.

"Wisdom," say the scriptures, "is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom; and with all thy getting get understanding. Exalt her, and she shall promote thee: she shall bring thee to honour, when thou dost embrace her. She shall give to thy head an ornament of grace; a *crown of glory* shall she

Comments: ¹ group of religious people. ² a use to satisfy man. ³ lower in order, importance. ⁴ state of mind. ⁵ arouse, incite. ⁶ theological doctrine. ⁷ Revelation 17:5. ⁸ venomous. ⁹ 2Thessalonians 2:7. ¹⁰ 2Timothy 2:16-19.

deliver to thee.”¹ If thou would'st, O reader, get this wisdom, happy art thou if thou findest it. “For the merchandise of it is better than the merchandise of silver, and the gain thereof than fine gold. She is more precious than rubies, and all things thou canst desire are not to be compared to her. Length of days is in her right hand; and in her left hand riches and honour. Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace. She is A TREE OF LIFE to them that lay hold upon her; and happy is every one that retaineth her” (Proverbs 3:14-18). Before the Son of God sent forth his apostles to proclaim the gospel of the kingdom in his name, “He opened their understanding that they might understand the scriptures.”² If thou would'st gain the knowledge of the wisdom of God which is so inestimable,³ and which is contained in the word they preached, thou must also be subject of the same illumination.⁴ This is indispensable; for there is no obtaining of this commodity except through the scriptures of truth. These “are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. For all scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable for teaching, for conviction, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works” (2Timothy 3:15-17). What more dost thou want than perfection, and a crown of life and glory in the age to come?⁵ Search the scriptures with the teachableness of a little child, and thy labour will not be in vain.⁶ Cast away to the owls and to the bats the traditions of men, and the prejudices indoctrinated into thy mind by their means; make a whole burnt offering of their creeds, confessions, catechisms, and articles of religion; and, after the example of the Ephesian disciples, hand over your books of curious theological arts, and burn them before all (Acts 19:19). These mountains of rubbish have served the purposes of a dark and barbarous age; the word, the word of the living God alone, can meet the necessities of the

Comments: ¹ Proverbs 4:7-9. ² Luke 24:45. ³ too valuable to be measured. ⁴ spiritual enlightenment. ⁵ Revelation 2:10; John 5:39; Matthew 18:3-5.

times. Let the example of the noble-minded Bereans be ours. They searched the scriptures daily to see if the things taught by the apostle were worthy of belief; "therefore they believed" (Acts 17:11-12). If then, not even the preaching of an apostle was credited unaccompanied by scriptural investigation, is it not infinitely more incumbent on us¹ that we should bring to a like test the opinions and precepts of the uninspired and fallible professional theologians of our day? Let us believe nothing that comes from "the pulpit," "the altar," or the press, not demonstrated by the grammatical sense of the scriptures. Let us be contented with nothing less than a "thus it is written," and a "thus saith the Lord;" for He has laid it down in his law, that no one is worthy of belief who does not speak after this rule. "To the law and to the testimony, if they speak not according to THIS WORD, it is because there is no light in them" (Isaiah 8:20). If then their light be darkness, how great is that darkness.²

The scriptures can do everything for us in relation to the light. This is known, felt, and keenly appreciated by all interested in the support of error. Hence, in the days of Diocletian, one of the pagan predecessors of Constantine, a decree was issued commanding the surrender of all copies of the Holy Scriptures: for it was found that so long as they obtained circulation the christian doctrine could never be suppressed. The Popes, as deadly, and more insidious, enemies of the truth than the pagan Roman emperors, followed the example of Diocletian. The bible and popery are as mutually hostile as the light of the sun and the thick darkness of Egypt that might be felt. But it is not paganism and popery alone that are practically hostile to a free and untrammelled³ investigation of the word of God. The Protestant world, while it deludes itself with the conceit that "the Bible, the Bible *alone*, is the religion of protestants" — while it spends its thousands for its circulation among the nations in their native tongues — is itself hostile to the belief and practice of what it proclaims. The

Comments: ¹ our obligation. ² Matthew 6:23. ³ unrestrained.

"Bible alone" is not its religion; for if it were, why encumber¹ its professors with the "Common Prayer," Thirty-nine Articles, and all the other "notions"² of a similar kind? To believe and practise the bible alone would be a sufficient ground of exclusion from all "orthodox churches." When Chillingworth³ uttered the sentiment, there was more truth in it than at this day; but now it is as far from the fact as that protestantism is the religion of Christ. To protest against an error, such as Romanism, and to affirm that every man has a right to worship God according to the dictates of his own conscience, is a very different thing to believing and obeying the gospel of the kingdom of God, and walking in all the institutions of the Lord blameless. To do this would unchristianize a man in the estimation of state churches and sectarian denominations; for the bible religion requires a man to "*contend earnestly for the faith once delivered unto the saints*" (Jude 3), which in these times cannot be done without upheaving the very foundations of the selfcomplacent, self-gloryifying, and self-laudatory⁴ communions of the antipapal constitution of things. It is true, that no man or power, has a right to interfere between God and the conscience, but it is also true, that no man has a right to worship God as he pleases. This is a Protestant fallacy.⁵ *Man has a right to worship God only in the way God has himself appointed.* "In vain do ye worship me teaching for doctrines the commandments of men."⁶ This is the judgment pronounced by the wisdom of God upon all worship which he has not instituted. He declares it to be *vain worship*; concerning which the apostle to the Gentiles says, "Let no man judge you *in meat, or in drink, or in respect of a holy-day, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath*; let no man beguile you of your reward in a *voluntary humility* and worshipping of angels. Be not subject to dogmatisms (δογματίζεσθε) after the commandments and traditions of men; which things have indeed a *show of wisdom in WILL-WORSHIP* and humility" (Colossians 2:16-23). These

Comments: ¹ place a burden. ² opinions, hastily formed theories. ³ an English theologian, 1602-1644. ⁴ self-praising. ⁵ John 4:24. ⁶ Matthew 15:9.

exhortations apply to all faith and worship, papal and protestant. If popery judges men in meats, protestantism doth the same in drinks, and in the sabbath; they both judge men in holy-days and “movable feasts;” and though protestantism repudiates the worshipping of angels, it proclaims in its “fasts,” “preparations,” “concerts,” etc., a voluntary humility, and celebration of “saints and martyrs,” renowned in legendary tales for “the pride that apes humility.” Let the reader search the scriptures from beginning to end, and he will nowhere find such systems of faith and worship as those comprehended in the papal and protestant systems. The gospel of the kingdom of God in the name of Jesus is not preached among them; they are communions which are uncircumcised of heart; theological dissertations on texts, called “sermons,” are substituted for “reasoning out of the scriptures”¹ — for “expounding and testifying the kingdom of God, and persuading men concerning Jesus, both out of the law of Moses, and out of the prophets” (Acts 28:23, 31). Puseyism,² Swedenborgianism,³ and all sorts of isms, to which in apostolic times the world was a total stranger, run riot among them; the lusts of the flesh, of the eye, and of the pride of life have extinguished even the energy and zeal of the antipapal rebellion out of which they have arisen; they are dead, twice dead, plucked up by the roots, and therefore the time is come to cut them off as a rotten branch from the good olive tree (Romans 11:17, 20, 22). Let therefore every man that would eschew the wrath which is begun,⁴ and who would become an heir of the kingdom of God,⁵ save himself from the unholy, lifeless, and effete⁶ denominations of these “Latter Days.” By remaining in them, a man partakes of their evil deeds, and subjects himself to their evil influences.⁷ The word of man has silenced the word of God in their midst;

Comments: ¹ Acts 17:2. ² Edward Pusey, 1800-1882, an English theologian who favoured a return to Catholic doctrines. ³ Emmanuel Swedenborg, 1688-1772, a Swedish mystic philosopher and scientist whose followers claimed special revelations from God. ⁴ Ephesians 5:6; 2Thessalonians 1:7-10. ⁵ James 2:5. ⁶ exhausted, spent. ⁷ 2John 11.

and religion has degenerated into a professional commodity sold for cash according to the taste which most prevails in the soul-makers of the world.

Let us then "cease from men, whose breath is in their nostrils, for wherein are they to be accounted of?"¹ "They be blind leaders of the blind"² in whom is no light, because they speak not according to the law and the testimony of God. Let us repudiate their dogmatisms; let us renounce their mysteries; and let us declare our independence of all human authority in matters of faith and practice extra³ the word of God. The scriptures are able to make us wise, which the traditions of "divines" are not. Let us then come to these scriptures, for we have the assurance that he who seeks shall find;⁴ though, we must also bear in mind, that "many shall seek to enter in but shall not be able."⁵ We must seek by the light of scripture, and not permit that light to be obscured by high thoughts and vain imaginations which exalt themselves against the knowledge of God.⁶ Great is the consolation that "the wise shall understand," and "shall shine as the brightness of the firmament;"⁷ be this then our happiness, to understand, believe, and do, that we may be blessed in our deed, and attain to the glorious liberty and manifestation of the sons of God.

To the Bible then let us turn, as to "a light shining in a dark place,"⁸ and, with humility, teachableness, and independence of mind, let us diligently inquire into the things which it reveals for the obedience and confirmation of faith. The object before us then will be, to present such a connected view of this truthful and wonderful book as will open the reader's eyes, and enable him to understand it, and expound it to others, that he may become "a workman that needeth not be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth;"⁹ and be able intelligently to "contend for the faith;" and by "turning many to righteousness, to shine as the stars for ever and ever."¹⁰ In effecting this

Comments: ¹Isaiah 2:22. ²Matthew 15:14. ³outside of. ⁴Jeremiah 29:12-13. ⁵Luke 13:24. ⁶2Corinthians 10:5. ⁷Daniel 12:1-3. ⁸2Peter 1:19. ⁹2Timothy 2:15. ¹⁰Daniel 12:3.

purpose, we must proceed as we would with any other book, or in teaching any of the arts and sciences; namely, begin at the beginning, or with the elements of things. This was the method adopted by the spirit of God in the instruction of the Israelites by Moses. He began his revelations by giving them, and us through them, an account of the creation of the heavens and the earth; of animals; and of man. This then would seem to be the proper place for us to start from; and as we have the system completely revealed, which they had not, we may extend our enquiries into the reason, or philosophy, of things farther than they. Be this then our commencement; and may the Lord himself prosper our endeavours to decipher and understand his will and testament, and to disentangle them from the crude traditions and dogmatisms of contemporary theologies.¹ useful in their beginning as “*oppositions*” to the Mystery of Iniquity, but now “waxed old and ready to vanish away”² with the thing they have antagonized; but which, though consumptive³ of the civil and ecclesiastical tyranny of the Image of the Beast,⁴ have by their glosses⁵ in effect taken from the people “the Key of Knowledge,”⁶ and thus shut up the kingdom of heaven against men. Our endeavour will be to restore this “Key” that they may understand “the mysteries of the kingdom,”⁷ and have “right to the tree of life, and enter in through the gates into the city” (Rev. 22:14). And this we will do if God permit.

Comments: ¹ positive or arrogant assertions, as of belief without proof.

² Hebrews 8:13. ³ destructive, wasteful. ⁴ Revelation 13:15. ⁵ deceiving explanation. ⁶ Luke 11:52. ⁷ Matthew 16:1.

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