

# PART FIRST

## THE RUDIMENTS OF THE WORLD

### CHAPTER V

#### IMMORTALITY, RELIGION, “CLERGY” AND “LAITY”

Immortality in the present state a positive evil—Immortality in misery unscriptural—The professing world religious from fear—The world’s religions useful as a system of Ecclesiastical Police—The Religion of Christ destitute of all worldly goods till his return, when it will possess all things—The doctrine of immortality a divine revelation—The Heathens baffled in their endeavours to discover it—The Mosaic Cherubim God’s throne in Israel—The Cherubim of Ezekiel and John—The Cherubic Veil—The Faces of the Lord—The Flaming Sword—Illustrated by Ezekiel’s description of the glory of the GOD of Israel—The brightness of the Spiritual Body—The Way of the Tree of Life—The etymology of the word RELIGION—False religion based upon the idea of appeasing the wrath of God—God already reconciled to the world—The “Word of Reconciliation” committed to the apostles in the beginning—The apostles the only ambassadors of Christ—“The word” preached by the apostles entrusted to the disciples of Christ—“Clergy” and “Laity” distinctions of the apostasy—Religion defined—Its grand desideratum—No true religion without belief of the truth—The word “faith” scripturally defined—How faith comes—The “religious world” infidel of “the faith”—“Love” scripturally defined by “obedience”—The religious world destitute of the Spirit of God—Religion contemporary only with sin—Summary of principles.

THE LORD GOD, having arranged the foundation of the world, in the sentences pronounced upon the transgressors; and commenced the preparation of the kingdom in the stipulations of the New Law: decreed their expulsion from the garden eastward in Eden. As the Serpent had said, the man had become “as the gods”, or Elohim, “to know good and evil”, in consequence of eating the forbidden fruit. He had known good only in his novitiate; but, being lifted up with pride, he had fallen into the condemnation of the devil, and had come to know also by experience both sorrow and pain. This was a great calamity; but not so great as that a greater might not befall him, even in Paradise. He had eaten of one tree, and his presumption might cause him to take and eat of the other. The consequences of this eating, superadded to the first, would have rendered his situation still more deplorable than it was. He now knew evil, as the Elohim had clone before him; but there was hope of deliverance from it when he should return to the dust whence he was taken; but if he should eat of the Tree of the Lives, this hope would be cut off; and he would live for ever the subject of weeping, sorrow, and pain. The misery of being the subject of evil for ever is forcibly expressed by Job. When reduced to the deepest distress, he laments, saying, “When I say, My bed shall comfort me, my couch shall ease my complaint; then thou scarest me with dreams, and terrifiest me through visions: so that my soul chooseth strangling, and death rather than my life. I loathe it; *I would not live alway*: let me alone; for

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my days are vanity”, But, if Adam had eaten of the Tree of Life, when reduced to such misery as this he would have sought death, but it would have fled from him. He would have found no deliverance. This, however, would not have been the worst of it. He would have involved all his posterity in the same interminable calamity. The earth would at length have become crowded with undying generations of sensual and devilish men; who, if any virtue should survive, would afflict it a hundredfold. For this awful consummation there would have been no remedy but to break up the fountains of the abyss, and cast them down under chains of intense darkness, after the example of the terrene angels who sinned under a previous constitution of the globe.

But the repetition of the scenes of the pre-Adamic drama was not designed, although men were afterwards permitted to imitate it with a similar result; with this difference, however, that the race of the angels was one generation, while that of men was composed of many. To prevent, then, the replenishment of the earth with undying sinners, the Lord God said to Elohim, “Behold, the man *has become as one of us*, to know good and evil: and now *lest he* put forth his hand and take also of the Tree of the Lives, and eat, and *live for ever*: therefore the Lord God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from whence he was taken. So he drove out the man”.

This is a very remarkable passage of scripture. It contains much in a few words. The points which stand out, shining like two stars, are the acknowledgement that *man had become as the gods* by his offence; and, secondly, that he was expelled from Paradise *that he might not live for ever*. I shall defer to another place the exposition of the things suggested by his god-likeness in evil; and after what has already been said on the tree of lives, but little need be added respecting his exclusion from present immortality. I would, however, so far anticipate another part of this work as to say here, that the finality of creation, providence, and redemption is, *man upon earth, glorious, honourable, and immortal, in a state of unmingled good*. It was because God loved man, and out of mercy to him, that He drove him out of the garden. Had He been actuated by malignity (a feeling, by-the-by, that has no place in the heart of God), He would have left him free to involve himself in everlasting misery by eating of the tree of lives. But He did not create the man for such a destiny; nor did He subject his posterity to evil by a stern necessity, that it might in any mode of existence be consigned to interminable torment of mind, of body, or both.

The creed that inculcates this is God-dishonouring, and expresses the foolish thoughts of sinful flesh, unenlightened by His law and testimony. It is the vapouring of the pagan mind, adopted by the Apostasy, and transfused into the symbols of its credulity. As it knows not how to display the divine character in any other light than the propensities, the faintly-illumined intellect, and the perverted sentiments of the flesh exhibit; it presents God to the sons of men as more like the Saturn, or Moloch, of the heathens, who devoured their own offspring, in shrieks and groans, than as one who so loves the world that He beseeches it to be reconciled to Him: and to accept, without money or price, the exceeding great and precious things He has in store. Thus the “*religious world*” is ruled by terror. The little faith it professes, works not by love to the purification of its heart; but by the unceasing apprehension of burning in molten lava through endless ages. It works by “fear, which hath torment”, and debases the soul; so that were it not for its fears, it would be honest and confess that it cared neither for God nor for His religion. But there is no fear in love; for perfect love casteth out fear. The world of professors, therefore, deceives itself in supposing that it loves God. “He that feareth is not made perfect in love.” It loves Him not, for its conscience is defiled. “Love is the fulfilling of the law.” Its “doubts and fears” demonstrate its consciousness of sin uncovered; and that it either knows not what the truth is, or knowing it, neglects, or refuses, to obey it. It is an egregious contradiction to

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confess with the same breath that we love God and are yet afraid of Him! Was Adam afraid of God so long as he continued obedient? As soon, however, as he sinned, fear seized upon him, and he fled from the sound of His voice, and hid himself. The righteous man's fear of God is the fear of offending one he loves. God is terrible only to His enemies. His sons and daughters confide in Him with the affection of children; and He protects them with all the love and jealousy of His holy and blessed name.

Being ignorant of "the exceeding great and precious promises" relating to the kingdom of God, the leaders of the people know not in what other way to move them to "get religion", as their phrase is. Hence, they pretend to preach "the terrors of the law". But "religion" got by such a process is worth nothing. Nay; I will retract this. It is worth something. A religion of terror, so long as it is believed, is useful as a system of *ecclesiastical police*; which, associated with the civil and military forces, assists materially in keeping the world in awe. But for the fear of what may be hereafter, professors would be as lawless as the antediluvian giants; and thus, by the ecclesiastical antagonism of society being destroyed, the earth would be filled with violence as before the flood. Superstition is useful in maintaining order until the period shall arrive to supersede it by "wisdom and knowledge", which will be the stability of the times pertaining to the kingdom of God. But as a means of inheriting this kingdom, and of entitling men to the crown of righteousness, a religion which works by terror is utterly worthless. Remove the terror, and the religion's gone; except in so far, indeed, as the possession of it is necessary to the preservation of its "temporalities", "vested interests", and worldly advantages.

But the "pure and undefiled religion" of God has no present temporalities or worldly interests. It has no "lands, tenements, and hereditaments"; nor "states", colleges, or "sacred edifices". It is like the Son of God in the days of his flesh; homeless, houseless, and poverty-stricken among the sons of men. It has great riches, and good things in store for the poor in this world *who are rich in faith*; it promises them the possession of the world with all the honour, and glory, and riches of it, with endless life for the enjoyment of them; but it requires faith in God with filial obedience to His law, in a time of tribulation, as the condition of the inheritance.

It is perfectly absurd to imagine that men who are revelling in all the luxuries, conveniences, and comforts of life; enjoying the honour, glory, and friendship of the world, as do the ecclesiastics of antichristendom in their several ranks, orders, and degrees; to suppose, I say, that such can inherit the Kingdom of God with Jesus, and that "cloud of witnesses", of whom Paul says "the world was not worthy", is preposterous. If men would reign with Christ they must believe his doctrine, and suffer with him, in enduring persecution for the word's sake. They must separate themselves from "the churches", both State and Nonconformist, which have a name to live, but are dead in trespasses and sin. The whole system is rotten; and awaits only the manifestation of the Lord's presence to be abolished with signal marks of his displeasure. Therefore, let all honest men, lay and clerical, who shall believe the truth, come out from among them, and be separate. Better stand alone for the Kingdom of God's sake, than be numbered with the multitude in the day of Christ, who will be denied permission to "eat of the tree of life and live for ever".

When man was expelled from Paradise, the Lord God, apprehending some new act of presumption, placed a guard over the tree of lives. This tree, it will be remembered, was planted *in the midst* of the garden. Now, when Adam was driven out, "the Lord placed *at the east* of the garden of Eden, CHERUBIM, and *a flaming sword* which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life". This would seem to indicate that Adam was driven out in an easterly direction; had he gone westward, Thomas, D. J. (1990). *Elpis Israel: an exposition of the Kingdom of God* (electronic ed.). Part First Chapter 5. Birmingham, UK: The Christadelphian.

the tree of life would have been between him and the Cherubim; so that it would still have appeared accessible, and have tempted him to try to get at it; which would doubtless have been his destruction. The Cherubim and sword were to guard *the Way of the Tree*, so that it could not be approached. If they were disposed to make a circuit to avoid the Cherubim, the flaming sword, or devouring flame, flashed on every side; “it turned every way to keep it” from being invaded by their presumption.

From this arrangement, they either saw the tree of life no more; or, saw it only in the distance. The latter is the more probable. The sight of it from time to time would remind them of what they had lost; and, from what they had learned of the effect producible upon the eater of its fruit, it suggested the possibility of mortal man *putting on immortality*. This was a thing to be desired. But they could not get at the tree; how could they then attain it? There were but two of them, and neither of them could answer the question. There were no scriptures testifying to them as to us, “This is the way, walk ye in it” They were ignorant of “the way leading unto life”; and, if they had not been “*taught of God*”, they would have remained ignorant of it for ever. The thinking of the flesh could never have discovered it; for the obtaining of immortality involved the belief and practice of things which it was utterly impossible for the heart of man to conceive.

We have an illustration of this in the endeavour of the heathen philosophers to solve the problem. Being ignorant of God’s knowledge they ran into the most absurd speculations. They thought that immortality was a sort of ghost inside of a man that went to the fields of Elysium when death dissolved its union with the body. They regarded this innate principle as a particle of the divine essence from which proceeded all virtuous actions; while vice was the natural result of the operation of the matter of the body, which was essentially malignant. The apostle refers to this in part when he says, “Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools”. Hence, he styles “the wisdom of the wise” “foolishness”; and, as the Corinthians had received the gospel of the kingdom, which teaches a very different doctrine, he inquires of them, “Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of the world?” Has He not shown the absurdity of their speculations about “*souls*”, “immortality”, and “*the nature of the gods*”?

They had no idea of immortality being conferred only upon men who might be accounted worthy of a certain kingdom. This was a doctrine which the flesh, with all its thinking, and with all its logic, had no conception of. It never thought of the kingdom of God and the name of a particular personage, as the channel through which immortality was to flow. It was lost in reveries about Elysium and Tartarus: and the river Styx which flowed between them; and about Charon and his ferry-boat; and ghosts; and three-headed Cerberus; and the snake-haired Furies; and Pluto, “king of hell”. But of “glory, honour, incorruptibility, and life”, an incorruptible and undefiled inheritance, the recompense or reward to the subjects of a righteousness by faith—of such a “prize” as this, to be sought after by doing the will of God, they were as utterly ignorant as an unborn babe. Well might the apostle say in the language of the prophet, “Eye hath not seen, ear hath not heard, neither have entered into the heart of men, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them *to us* by his spirit”; that is, to those who received the gospel of the kingdom.

*Immortality*, then, and *the way to it*, are things about which man must have remained for ever ignorant, so long as their discovery depended upon the thinking of the flesh. In other words, they are matters purely of divine testimony; and as faith is the belief of testimony, men can have no *faith* in them beyond what is stated in the written word of God. The carnal mind, by reflecting upon its own consciousness, may be “of *opinion*” that what it terms “I myself” is immaterial *because it thinks*, and “therefore immortal”; but beyond that it can never go. Opinion implies doubt; for if a matter be

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beyond doubt, it is no longer opinion, but faith or knowledge. Where, then, is the man, be he philosopher or theologian, who can demonstrate the existence of an “immortal soul” in the animal man, by a “thus it is written”, or a “thus saith the Lord”? A few phrases in scripture may be twisted, and tortured into an *inference*—which, however, becomes fighter than vanity before the direct testimonies of the word to the contrary. With these words, then, by way of preface, I shall proceed to offer a few remarks upon

### THE CHERUBIM.

But little is said about the *Cherubim* in the Mosaic narrative. The word is a plural noun, and represents, therefore, more objects than one. But, in what did this plurality consist? I should say, judging from a text in the next chapter, that it had especial regard to a plurality of *faces*; for when the Lord God sentenced Cain to a fugitive and vagabond life, the fratricide answered, “Behold, then, from THY FACES (*plural in the Hebrew*) shall I be hid” that is, “I shall no more be permitted to come before the Cherubic faces, which thou hast placed at the east of the garden, to present an offering for my sin”. As he truly observed, “Mine iniquity is greater than that it may be forgiven”. He was exiled from the Faces of God still further to the east as a murderer doomed to eternal death at the end of his career.

That the faces were connected with the Cherubim seems unquestionable from other passages of scripture where cherubim are described. The Lord spoke of them to Moses in the Mount. Having commanded him to make an ark, or open chest, overlaid with gold, with a crown along its upper margin, he said, “Thou shalt make a *mercy-seat* of pure gold. And thou shalt make *two cherubim* of beaten gold in the two ends of the mercy-seat”. In another place, this is explained thus—“Out of the mercy-seat made he the cherubim on the two ends thereof”. Then it is continued, “And the cherubim shall stretch forth *wings* on high, covering the mercy-seat with their wings, and their *faces* one to another, toward the mercy-seat shall the faces of the cherubim be. And thou shalt put the mercy-seat *above upon* the ark, and *in the ark thou shalt put the testimony* that I shall give thee”.

It is probable that the reason why Moses gave no description of them in Genesis was because he intended to speak more particularly when he came to record their introduction into the most holy place of the tabernacle. In the text above recited they are described as having wings and faces; and being made out of the same piece of gold as the mercy-seat, upon which they looked down, beholding, as it were, the blood sprinkled upon it; it is evident, they were symbols connected with the institution of atonement for sin through the shedding of blood. But they were still more significative. They were God’s throne in Israel. Hence, the psalmist saith, “The Lord reigneth; he *sitteth* between the cherubim”. This throne was erected upon mercy: and for this reason it was, that the covering of the ark containing the testimony, the manna, and the resurrected rod, was styled the Mercy-seat or throne, where the Lord covered the sins of the people. It was also the Oracle, or place from which God communed with Israel through Moses. “There”, said the Lord, “will I meet with thee, and I will commune with thee from above the mercy-seat, from between the two cherubim which are upon the Ark of Testimony, of all things which I will give thee in commandment unto the children of Israel.”

But, though Moses informs us of two cherubim with a plurality of faces and wings each, he does not tell us what kind of faces or how many wings they had. This deficiency, however, seems to be supplied by Ezekiel. Those he saw had each of them *four faces* and *four wings*; a human body with feet like a calf’s, and the hands of a man under their wings. Of their faces, one was like a man’s; a

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second, like a lion's; a third, like that of an ox; and a fourth, like an eagle's. The things of his first chapter, taken collectively, evidently represent *the Messiah upon his throne, surrounded by his saints, and all energized and made glorious by the Spirit of God*. The rings of Ezekiel's wheels were full of eyes; but in the cherubim which John saw, the wheels were not introduced, but two more wings were added, and the eyes were transferred to the six wings. In this place, the cherubim are styled "beasts", more properly, *living creatures* (τὰ ζῶα); and are associated with "twenty-four elders".

Now, by attending to what is affirmed of them in another place, we shall see who are represented by the four cherubim of Ezekiel with four faces each, and their wheels; and the four of John with one different face each, and twenty-four typical elders. It is written, that "they fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps, and golden vials full of odours, which are (or represent) the prayers of the saints. And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof; for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; and hast made us unto our God kings and priests; and we shall reign on earth". From this it is evident that the cherubim, etc., represent the aggregate of those redeemed from the nations in their resurrection state. The Lamb, the four cherubs, and the twenty-four elders are a symbolical representation of what is expressed by the phrase, "them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called saints"; that is, those who have been constituted the righteousness of God in Christ in a glorified state.

The cherubim are the federal symbol; and the eyes, representative of the individuals constituted in him who is signified by the Cherubim. The Lamb is introduced to represent the relationship between the holy eyes, or saints, and the Cherubic Faces; that is, between them and the Lord Jesus; while "the twenty-four elders" are indicative of their constitution as "the Israel of God". There are twenty-four, because the Kingdom of God, being an Israelitish Commonwealth, is arranged with the twelve sons of Jacob as its gates; and with the twelve apostles of the Lamb as its foundations; the former being the entrance into present life of the fleshly tribes, or subjects; and the latter, the foundations of the adopted tribes, or HEIRS of the kingdom; so that twenty-four is the representative constitutional number of the spiritual Israel of God; for without the natural the spiritual could not be; any more than there could be adopted Americans, if there were no American nation.

But the Mosaic Cherubim were deficient of several of the characteristics which distinguish those of Ezekiel and John. They had simply the wings and the faces. His cherubim were not only of beaten gold continuous with the substance of the mercy-seat; but they were embroidered into the Veil, made of blue, purple, and scarlet, and fine twined linen, which divided the holy and the holiest places of the tabernacle. Now, when "Jesus cried with a loud voice, he expired (ἐξέπνευσε); and the Veil of the Temple was rent in twain from top to bottom". Thus, we see the breaking of the body of Jesus identified with the rending of the Cherubic Veil; thereby indicating that the latter was representative of the Lord.

We have arrived then at this, that the Mosaic Cherubim were symbolical of "God manifest in the flesh". We wish now to ascertain upon what principles His incarnate manifestation was represented by the Cherubim? First, then, in the solution of this interesting problem, I remark, that the scriptures speak of God after the following manner: "God is light, and in him is no darkness at all"; again, "God is a Spirit; and they that worship him, must worship him in spirit and in truth"; and thirdly, "Our God is a consuming fire." In these three texts, which are only a sample of many others, we perceive that God is represented by light, spirit, and fire; when, therefore, He is symbolized as manifest in flesh, it becomes necessary to select certain signs representative of light, spirit, and fire, derived from the Thomas, D. J. (1990). *Elpis Israel: an exposition of the Kingdom of God* (electronic ed.). Part First Chapter 5. Birmingham, UK: The Christadelphian.

*animal* kingdom. Now, the ancients selected the *lion*, the *ox*, and the *eagle* for this purpose, probably from tradition of the signification of these animals, of the faces of them, in the original Cherubim. They are called God's Faces because His omniscience, purity, and jealousy are expressed in them. But the omniscient, jealous, and incorruptible God was to be manifested in a particular kind of flesh. Hence, it was necessary to add a *fourth face* to show in what *nature* He would show Himself. For this reason, the *human* face was associated with the lion, the ox, and the eagle.

These four faces united in one human shape, formed out of beaten gold; and two such, not separate and distinct symbols, but standing one on each end of the mercy-seat, and the same in continuity and substance with it;—taken as a whole, represented Jesus, the true blood-sprinkled mercy-seat, or propitiatory, “in whom dwelleth the fulness of the Godhead bodily”. All four faces were to look upon the mercy-seat, so as to behold the sprinkled blood of the yearly sacrifice. To accomplish this, two cherubs were necessary; so that the lion and the ox faces of the one; and the man and the eagle faces of the other, should all be “mercy-seat-ward”.

It will be seen from this view of things, how important a place the Cherubim occupied in the worship of God connected with “*the representation of the truth*”. They were not objects of adoration; but symbols representing to the mind of an intelligent believer the Seed of the woman as God manifested in the likeness of sinful flesh. This I take it was the significance of the Cherubim which the Lord God placed at the east of the garden; and which became the germ, as it were, of the shadowy observances of the patriarchal and Mosaic institutions; whose substance was of Christ.

#### THE FLAMING SWORD.

“A Flaming Sword which turned every way.”

The things represented by the lion, ox, and eagle faces were visibly manifested in the sword of time. This was light, spirit, and fire flaming around the cherubim as the glory of God. It turned every way to keep the way of the tree of life. This is all Moses says about it; and were it not for other testimonies, we should be at a loss to understand its allegorical signification. The cherubim set up in the tabernacle and first temple were enveloped in a cloud of thick darkness. At night, the cloud, which was visible without the former, appeared like a blaze of fire; but in the day, it towered aloft as a pillar of cloud. Darkness and fire were frequent accompaniments of the divine presence; indeed, always so upon great occasions. The presence, of the Lord upon Mount Sinai was a magnificent and terrible example; and when Jesus expired in blood, Judea was veiled in darkness, and God looked upon it.

With the exception of the thunder, the earthquake, the tempest, and the flashing lightning, God's communings with Moses, and after him with the High Priests, were conducted from between the Cherubim, as upon Sinai—“The Lord descended upon it in fire; and the smoke thereof ascended as the smoke of a furnace; and God answered him by a voice”; so that the thick darkness became luminous and indicated His presence. The illumination of the darkness without the voice would be sufficient to give assurance of acceptance. The Priest having witnessed this on the great day of atonement, when he came out to the people, looking for him with anxiety to know the result, would be enabled to report to them that the Lord had shined forth. This was the sign to them of a typical salvation. Hence, Asaph prays, “Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel; thou that dwellest between the cherubim, *shine forth* ... stir up thy strength, and come and save us. Turn us again, O God, *cause thy face to shine*; and we shall be saved”.

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But the flaming sword in Eden is more strikingly illustrated as to its probable appearance by Ezekiel's description of the cherubic glory. He says he beheld "a great cloud, and a *fire infolding itself*, and a brightness was about it, and out of the brightness thereof as the colour of amber, out of the midst of the fire; whence issued forth the likeness of four living creatures", or cherubim. "The appearance was like burning coals of fire, and like the appearance of lamps: it went up and down among the living creatures: and the fire was bright, and out of *the fire went forth lightning*. And the living creatures ran and returned as the appearance of a *flash of lightning*."

It was customary for the Lord to answer men by fire, when any great principle, or new institution was to be established. Thus, the covenant with Abraham was confirmed by fire; there also came out a fire from before the Lord, and consumed the offering on Aaron's induction as high priest; when the plague was stayed at the intercession of David, the Lord answered him by fire from heaven upon the altar of burnt offering, and thus indicated the place He had chosen to place His name there; and also at the dedication of the temple, fire consumed the sacrifices in the same way. From these examples, I think it is a fair inference, that the flaming sword in Eden was applied to a similar purpose, namely, to flash forth its fire for the consumption of the sacrifices offered by the family of Adam before the Lord.

The fire described by Ezekiel represented the spirit of God in its cherubic relations; for as the fire flashed its lightning so they moved to and fro. It also represented the glory, or brightness, of the Messiah as he will appear upon his throne. "I saw", saith he, "as the appearance of a man above upon the throne: as the colour of amber, as the appearance of fire round about within it, from the appearance of his loins even upward, and from thence downwards, as it were the appearance of fire, and it had brightness round about. As the appearance of the bow that is in the cloud in the day of rain, so was the appearance of the brightness round about. This was the appearance *of the likeness of the glory of the Lord*". The apocalyptic representation of the Lord's glory when seated on the throne of David is a repetition of Ezekiel's, though under some modification, so as to adapt it to circumstances which had arisen out of the things concerning Jesus. "I beheld", says John, "a throne was set in the heaven, and one sat on the throne. And he that sat was to look upon like a jasper and sardine stone: and there was a rainbow round about the throne, in sight like unto an emerald. And out of the throne proceeded lightnings and thunderings, and voices: and there were *seven lamps of fire* burning before the throne, which are *the seven spirits of God*".

From these passages, it is evident, that *fire* which is also *light*, is in symbolic representation significative of the *spirit* of God. If more proof were necessary, the outpouring of the spirit on Pentecost and at the house of Cornelius, would be sufficient to settle the matter. Now, when this appearance envelops men and things, it is called *glory*, or *majesty*. Hence, referring to the transfiguration of Jesus on the Mount, the apostle says, "We were eye-witnesses of his *majesty*; for he received from God the Father *honour* and *glory*". Such glory, or brightness, so beautifully represented by Ezekiel and John, will clothe the saints, as well as the Lord Jesus, when they shall appear in the kingdom of God: as it is written, "They that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever". The apostle also speaks of the brightness of the sun, moon, and stars, as an illustration of the glory of the risen saints; and what is symbolically represented in Ezekiel and John of the glory of the Lord, is plainly affirmed by the prophet in these words: "The moon shall be confounded, and the sun ashamed, when the Lord of Hosts shall reign on Mount Sion, and in Jerusalem, and before his ancients *gloriously*".

From the whole, then, I conclude that the cherubim and flaming sword at the east of Eden's garden were representative, *first*, of God manifest in the woman's nature as "the word made flesh"; and by being bruised in the heel, set forth as the blood-sprinkled mercy-seat, or propitiation for sin; and *secondly*, of God manifested in the spiritual nature, clothed with dazzling brightness, surpassing the sun and moon in splendour. The cherubim were the throne of the Lord in relation to the antediluvian world. There He communed with men. His presence was there, and the altar He had set up. When men went to sacrifice before Him, there they presented their offerings. If these were according to His appointment, He accepted the worshipper; and, probably, answered him by fire flashing forth from the cherubic glory, and consuming the sacrifice upon the altar. If the worshipper were faithless and disobedient, *the faces were hid* by thick darkness, and the offering remained unconsumed. This was the case with Cain. His countenance fell, and he expressed himself with anger. Then the Lord God "answered him with a voice", and the conversation ensued which is recorded in the Mosaic narrative. Having, then, ascertained the signification of the cherubim and flaming sword, I shall proceed now to speak of *the principles of religion*.

### "THE WAY OF THE TREE OF LIFE"

"Strait is the gate, and narrow is the way which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it."

Religion is not coeval with the formation of man; neither had it any existence during his novitiate. Though it was instituted in the paradise, it was not for his observance there; for while he continued the *sinless* tenant of the garden, he stood in no need of the *healing* consolations it affords. Until he ate of the forbidden fruit, there was no *breach* of friendship, no misunderstanding, no alienation, between him and the Lord God; there needed not, therefore, any means, or system of means, for the *reconciliation* of estranged parties. But, as soon as the good understanding was interrupted by disobedience to the Eden law, sentence of condemnation to the dust was pronounced upon the offenders; and *means were instituted* to put them *at one again* with the Lord, that He might bring them back from the ground, no longer naked and ashamed of their condition; but clothed with glory and honour, incorruptibility and life, as a crown of righteousness that should never fade away. These *instituted means* made up the way of life, which Moses terms "*God's way*". David styles it "*the path of life*"; which the apostle, in quoting, renders "*the ways of life*"; ὁδοὶ ζωῆς; that is, the way leading to life in which a man must walk now; and the way into the kingdom from the house of death.

In the beginning, God's way was styled "*the Way of the Tree of Life*"; which in the passage where it occurs, must be taken literally, and then allegorically. In its literal sense, it was the *path* leading to the Tree in the midst of the garden; but allegorically, it signified *the things to be believed and practised by those who desired to live for ever*. To believe and do, is to walk in "the Way which leadeth unto life"; because *immortality* will be a part of the recompense of reward for so doing. Until the crucifixion, the Way was marked out, first by the patriarchal arrangement of things; and secondly, by the Mosaic law; all of which pointed to the Shiloh. But, when Jesus appeared, he announced, saying, "*I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life; no man cometh to the Father, but by me*". Whosoever would attain to life must believe the truth concerning Jesus, and the kingdom, which is the most holy place. Hence, it is written, "We have boldness to enter into the Holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a *New and Living Way*, which he hath consecrated for us, through *the Veil*, that is to say, *his flesh*". The old Way was but typical of the new; but both are purely matters of revelation. Nothing is left to conjecture. Man may corrupt the Way of the Lord; but he cannot improve it: and as surely as he attempts to adapt it to circumstances, he converts it into "the Way which leadeth to destruction",

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which is both broad and easy to walk in, being in perfect harmony with the lusts and thinking of the flesh.

The things of the Way of Life constitute RELIGION. As a word, it is derived from the Latin *religio*, from *religare*, which signifies *to bind again*; hence, *religion* is the act of *binding again*, or that which *heals a breach* previously existing between two parties. This traditional idea the Romans expressed by *religio*. They believed as the foundation of their mythology that mankind and the gods were at enmity; but how it originated they had lost the knowledge of. Their impression was that they were angry, but not implacable; nevertheless, so estranged from men that there could be no direct communication with them. Mediatorial converse with the gods was an idea universally prevalent in the world. The pagans had derived it by tradition from the family of Noah; with whom were deposited the revealed principles of the Way of God instituted in the beginning. The idea of *mediate communication for the appeasement of divine wrath* was incorporated in all the domestic and temple worship which constituted their religion. They poured out abundantly the blood of victims; and, from the tradition of Abraham's sacrifice of Isaac in obedience to the divine mandate, the Carthaginians, who migrated from Palestine, probably concluded that the most acceptable offering for sin was that of human life. Be this as it may, the principle that "without the shedding of blood there is no remission", which is an axiom of God's truth, took deep root among all the descendants of the sons of Noah. Their system was a corruption of God's Way. They were without faith, and erred, not knowing "His thoughts".

The word used by the Greeks for *religion* was *θρησχεία*, from *θρησχεύω*, *to worship*. This may be derived from *σζευός*, taken metonymically for a *minister*; and *θρέω*, *to shout or make a clamour*; because, in that worship which results from the thinking of sinful flesh, the performers rend the air with their *shouts*; and if idolaters, they "call upon the name of their gods" with frantic cries, "cutting themselves with knives and lancets till the blood gushes out upon them". The worship of God recognizes no such practices as these. When persons make their meeting houses to echo with clamorous prayers, such as may often be heard among some who profess the religion of Christ—shouting, I say, like the priests of Baal, as though God were "talking, or pursuing, or on a journey, or peradventure sleeping, and needed to be awaked"—such persons evince that they are *σχεύη ὀργῆς*, *vessels of wrath*, who comprehend not the genius of the truth; and not *σχεύη ἐλέους*, *vessels of mercy*, whose thoughts are in harmony with the divine law.

How different was the prayer of Elijah! From him ascended the "still small voice" of fervent, but tranquil supplication. He knew that God was neither deaf nor asleep; but a God everywhere present by the universality of His spirit. His words were few. He did not expect to be heard for his much speaking; knowing that God is not to be moved by "vain repetitions", or volubility of speech; but by the love He has for His children, and for the glory of His name.

While men consider that there is a want of harmony between them and divine wisdom and power, and admit that they are deserving of divine wrath; they do not understand, that *as offenders they have no right to institute the means of reconciliation*. They act upon the principle, that God has left it to them to worship Him according to the dictates of their own reason. Hence the world is full of modes of worship as diversified as the thoughts of sinful flesh. The notions that men may invent religious services; and that the divine displeasure can be appeased by human contrivances are fallacies which are characteristic of false religion wherever they are found. Men have no right to invent religions, or modes of worship. Even reason dictates this when the question is viewed as a breach between friends. When a misunderstanding occurs between such, the initiatory of a reconciliation of right appertains to the party offended; and he only has the privilege of dictating the terms of agreement. Hence, in the Thomas, D. J. (1990). *Elpis Israel: an exposition of the Kingdom of God* (electronic ed.). Part First Chapter 5. Birmingham, UK: The Christadelphian.

breach between God and man, it is God's prerogative alone to prescribe; and all that men have liberty to do is to accept, or reject, the conditions of amity and peace.

This view of the case precludes entirely the idea of appeasing the wrath of God by human ingenuity. God needs not to be appeased by man; and every system, therefore, which is predicated upon the notion that it is necessary, is not only unscriptural, but *essentially* false. He is already reconciled to the world, which He has always loved; although it acts the part of, and therefore is, the enemy of God. "He so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." The fact of a divine religion being instituted is proof of the love He bears the human race. He seeks to appease men by His goodness, which invites them to repentance. His love is manifested in all that He has done for the world. He has sought to enlighten it, and to exalt it to a participation in the divine nature by the ameliorating influences of the truth. He has sent messengers to it with their lives in their hands, ready to lay them down in the divine work of beseeching mankind to be reconciled to God. Is it not strange that men should besiege heaven with vain and clamorous repetitions, "praying and beseeching" God to "come down and convert these soul-stricken penitents" whom they are "bearing up in their arms before a throne of grace"; representing them as quite ready and willing to be reconciled if He would only grant His spirit, and so assure them that all was peace between them:—is it not extraordinary, I say, that this should be the order of things in the face of the revelation that "God was in Christ, *reconciling the world unto himself*, not imputing their trespasses unto them"; and so "winking at the times of their past ignorance"?

The case is exactly the reverse of the pulpit theory. This represents the world as reconciled, while God is unreconciled and hard to be persuaded. Hence, the world is full of religions, all of which have been invented, and continue to be observed for the purpose of appeasing His wrath, and disposing Him to peace. He is represented by pulpit orators as in a rage; as ready to launch mankind into the flames of hell, and only prevented from hurling His thunderbolts at them by Christ seizing Him by His arm, as it were, and pointing to his wounds! But this is purely mythological. God stands in no such attitude to the world, nor Christ to Him. The Lord Jesus is not contending with the Father upon any such principle. There is no antagonism between them. They agree in one; and what God conceived is committed to the Son to execute. The world is not reconciled to God; nor has it the least disposition for reconciliation upon any other principles than it has itself decreed. These principles are subversive of His supremacy in the universe; they are annihilative of His truth; they demoralize His character—therefore He will accept no homage predicated upon them.

He has long since proclaimed the conditions of peace, which He is waiting to ratify in every case where they are accepted. This proclamation is styled "*the Word of Reconciliation*", which, saith the apostle, "God hath committed unto us". Not, be it most distinctly understood, to me; nor to the ecclesiastics of any sect, party, or denomination, extant. The Word of Reconciliation hath been committed to no man, or set of men now living. It was committed to the apostles and their divinely inspired co-labourers, and to them only. So that they could say in the words of one of them, "We are of God: he that knoweth God heareth us: he that is not of God heareth not us. Hereby know we the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error". And they were perfectly justified in saying so. For Jesus said to them, "It is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you"; therefore he said in another place, "He that heareth you, heareth me; and he that heareth me heareth him that sent me".

The word of reconciliation, then, was committed to the apostles, whom God appointed as His ambassadors to the world. And, be it observed, that their ambassadorial character did not rest upon assumption, like that of their pretended successors. God attested them, as He had done His Son before Thomas, D. J. (1990). *Elpis Israel: an exposition of the Kingdom of God* (electronic ed.). Part First Chapter 5. Birmingham, UK: The Christadelphian.

them. Their credentials were in the miracles which accompanied their word. They produced the signs of their apostleship; and multitudes acknowledged them, as Nicodemus did their Lord, saying, “We know thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him”. They would not have been received as ambassadors of heaven if God had not attested them by His power; but being so attested, they were prepared, and did present themselves at Satan’s court—that is, before Caesar—to invite the world to be at peace with Him.

The pulpit orators of this age are either greatly deceived, or, if their eyes be open, most egregiously impose upon the credulity of the public, in pretending to be Christ’s ambassadors to the world. Why, they are the world’s allies; the friends and supporters of the institutions of Satan’s kingdom; whose subjects pay them their wages on condition of *preaching such doctrine as suits them!* Talk of being ministers and ambassadors of Jesus Christ, how perverted must their own minds be to imagine it; and how spoiled by “philosophy and vain deceit” the people, who can acquiesce in so unfounded a pretension. “Have they seen Jesus?” or what special message have they to the world from God, that men cannot read for themselves in the scriptures of truth? If they have any *new* light from Him, He will attest it as He has always done by a display of power. Men will then be justified in receiving them as plenipotentiaries of the Divine Majesty, provided always that what they speak be in strict accordance with what Paul preached; otherwise not. “God hath given to *us*”, say the apostles, “*the ministry* of reconciliation. Now then *we* are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech by us; we pray in Christ’s stead, be reconciled to God.” These are the men whom He appointed, who sought not to please the public, but to enlighten them; “for”, saith one of them, “if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ”.

The church was associated with the apostles in the ministry of reconciliation. By “the church”, I mean, not that multiform thing called “the church” by the world in these times; but that one, undivided body of disciples, collected together by the personal labours of the apostles and evangelists; and all through subsequent generations, who should believe and practise *the same truth*. To this “*one body*”, energized by the “*one spirit*”, and “perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment”, and styled “THE BRIDE”—is committed the work of making known “the manifold wisdom of God”, as contained in the word; and of inviting the world to be reconciled to God. No member of this body is exempt from the obligation of co-operating in this work. It is the duty and privilege of every one in his own sphere to endeavour to turn men to righteousness; for there is no distinction of “*clergy*” and “*laity*” in the family of God.

In the days of the apostles, things were very different to what they are now. There were many congregations, or churches, but they were all *one flock*, or “denomination”, and men endowed with spiritual gifts were their rulers. But even these were not distinguished from their brethren as “clergy”, or priests; but as *ministers*, or servants. Well knowing the presumption, pride, and arrogance of the flesh, the Spirit commanded them especially to feed the flock, and not to fleece it; to oversee it willingly and of a ready mind, but not for the sake of compensation; and to be examples to the flock, and not to lord it over *the heritages*.

The word “*clergy*,” as the title of an order, is assumed by men who have no right to it. It is a word which comes from the Greek κλήρος, *a lot or portion*; and is applied by the apostle in the text quoted to a single congregation of disciples; so that when he speaks of all the *congregations* of the flock, he styles them “*the heritages*”, τῶν κληρῶν. But, in after years, the ministers of the heritages, or clergies, disregarded the commandment, and set themselves up as lords of the heritages, which they fleeced, and oppressed for lucre’s sake. They even made the clergies of God believe that they were nothing

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more than mere commoners; while they themselves, the usurpers of the believers' rights, were God's peculiar lot, or portion, as the tribe of Levi were among the Israelites; and the distinction was then set up of "clergy" and "laity", from οἱ λαοί, *the multitude!* But the distinction belongs to the apostasy, and not to God's oppressed and scattered sheep. When "clergy" get in among them, it is "as grievous wolves, not sparing the flock, but speaking perverse things to draw away disciples after them" for their own worldly gain. They have nothing to do with the word of reconciliation except to pervert it, and to bring it into disrepute.

The principles of the apostasy, and indeed of all false religion, are such as result from the thinking of the flesh when left to its own communings. This is illustrated in the case of Adam and Eve. They sought to cover their sin by a device of their own. "They sewed fig-leaves together, and made themselves aprons." Their shame was covered, indeed; but their consciences were not healed. But it was the best they could do in their ignorance. They were as yet unacquainted with the great principle that without the shedding of blood there could be no remission of sin. They were not aware of this necessity; for it had not been revealed: neither did they understand that as offenders they would not be permitted to devise a covering for themselves. They had everything to learn as to the ground of reconciliation with God. They had no idea of *religion*; for hitherto they had needed none. It yet remained to be revealed as *the divinely appointed means of healing the breach which sin had made between God and men.*

Man having been made subject to evil, and consigned to the bondage of a perishing state, the Lord God repudiated their fig-leaf invention, and "appointed coats of skins" for their covering. In this testimony there is much expressed in few words. To appoint coats of skins implies a command for the sacrifice of animals whose skins were converted to this purpose. It also implies that Adam was the priest on the occasion, who presented himself before the Lord with the mediatorial blood. When the sacrifice was accepted, the offence was *provisionally* remitted; for the scripture saith, that it is not possible for the blood of animals to take away sins. It was impossible, because sin was to be condemned in sinful flesh. This required the death of a man; for the animals had not sinned: so that, if the whole animal world, save man, had been made an offering for sin, sin would still have been uncondemned in his nature. Besides the necessity of a human sacrifice, God deemed it equally necessary that the victim should be free from personal transgressions; and that when he had suffered, he should rise from the dead so as to be "a living sacrifice".

If the death of a transgressor would have sufficed, then, Adam and Eve might have been put to death at once, and raised to life again. But this was not according to the divine wisdom. The great principle to be compassed was *the condemnation of sin in sinful flesh, innocent of actual transgression.* This principle necessitated the manifestation of one, who should be born of a woman, but not of the *will* of man. Such a one would be the Seed of the Woman, made of her substance, with Him for his Father who by His over-shadowing spirit should cause her to conceive. He would be Son of God by origination; and Son of Mary by descent, or birth of sinful flesh. Now, it is not to be supposed that Adam and Eve did not understand this: God doubtless explained it to them; for they had none to teach them but Him; and without His instruction, they would not have known what they should believe. It was from them that Abet derived the knowledge which was the foundation of his faith, to which God testified in the acceptance of the firstling of his flock and the fat thereof.

Adam and his wife had faith, or God would not have accepted the sacrifices with whose skins they were clothed; for it was as true then as it is now, that "without faith it is impossible to please God". Faith, then, in the Seed of the Woman, first as a sacrifice for sin, wounded to death by his Thomas, D. J. (1990). *Elpis Israel: an exposition of the Kingdom of God* (electronic ed.). Part First Chapter 5. Birmingham, UK: The Christadelphian.

enemies; and afterwards the destroyer of the sin-power; in connexion with the sacrifice of animals as representative of the bruising of his heel—was the ground of their acceptance with the Lord God. It was the Way of Life. If they walked with God in this way, they would be as pleasing to Him as Enoch afterwards was, who was translated about 57 years after Adam's death. It was the way which was corrupted by the antediluvians; and although the sacrifices have been interrupted, the faith and hope which gained celebrity and commendation to Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Moses, and a cloud of other witnesses, comprehended substantially the same things, but less in detail than in that faith which was preached by the apostles as the gospel of the kingdom and name of Christ, for the justification of all who should believe. The things believed by Abel as compared with the faith preached on Pentecost, were as the acorn to the oak. The gospel of the kingdom in the name of Jesus was the revelation in full of the things communicated in the beginning; and afterwards more considerably amplified in the promises made to the fathers of the people of Israel. When the saints are all gathered into the kingdom, they will not find themselves in an unexpected situation. They will all be there by virtue of believing the same things; though some, contemporary with the later history of the world, will have had the advantage of more abounding testimony. Their sins will have been covered upon the same principle—*by the raiment of righteousness derived from the sacrifice, by faith in whose blood they had been cleansed.*

There is no true religion without faith; nor any true faith without the belief of *the truth*. Now, although a scriptural faith is the scarcest thing among men, it is exceedingly simple, and by no means difficult to acquire, when it is sought for aright. Paul gives the best definition of faith extant. He says, "*Faith is a confident anticipation (ὀπίσταςις) of things hoped for, a full persuasion (ἔλεγχος) of things not seen.*" This is the faith without which, he tells us afterwards, God is not, and cannot by any possibility be, pleased. It is a faith which lays hold of the past and the future. The person who possesses it knows what is testified concerning Jesus by the apostles, and is fully persuaded of its truth; he also knows the exceeding great and precious promises which God has made concerning things to come, and he confidently anticipates the literal fulfilment of them. Laying hold of these things with a firm faith, he acquires a mode of thinking and a disposition which are estimable in the sight of God; and being like Abraham in these particulars, he is prepared, by induction into Christ, to become a son of the father of the faithful, and of the friend of God.

This faith comes by studying the scriptures; as it is written, "Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God". This word contains the "testimony of God". When this testimony is understood, and allowed to make its own impression in "a good and honest heart", faith establishes itself there. There is no more mystery in this, than how one man comes to believe another guilty of a crime when he is made acquainted with all the testimony in the case. The ability to believe lies in a sound understanding, a candid disposition, and knowledge of the testimony of God. Where there is ignorance of this there can be no faith. It is as impossible for a man ignorant of God's word to have faith, as it is for a man to believe another guilty of an alleged crime who knows nothing at all about the matter.

But, one may say, there are multitudes who believe in Christ who are very ignorant of the scriptures. Yes, they believe in Christ as Turks believe in Mohammed. But this is not the faith defined by Paul. The mere belief that Jesus is the Son of God is not believing in him. To believe in him is to believe what God testifies concerning him. The faith of the "religious world" is like a stool with only one leg. It *professes* to believe in Jesus; but it is ignorant, and therefore faithless, of *the message* he was sent to deliver to Israel. His message had relation to "the things hoped for"—to the things of the

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kingdom which the God of heaven will set up upon the ruin of the kingdoms which now exist. Men are invited to believe in the Messenger of the Covenant, and in the message which unfolds the things of the covenant. To believe the one and reject the other is stultification. The “religious world” has placed itself in this predicament; and unless it believes the whole truth, which is not likely, it will be cut off as was Israel in the days of old.

“Love is the fulfilling of the law.” “He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me”; “If any man love me, he will keep my words”; and “He that loveth me not, keepeth not my words”. In the face of these sayings of Jesus, what is the love of “professors” for God and His Son worth? It is like their faith, of no account whatever. God asks men for their hearts; but they give Him only their lips. They profess to love Him, but give their affections to the world. From the ecclesiastical throne, or pulpit, to the humblest “layman”, can they give a scriptural demonstration of obedience to the faith? They offer verbal sacrifices without end; at least *they* do, who are compensated for their words; the “laity” are possessed of a legion of dumb spirits, and sit only as the listless hearers of the “eloquence” presented according to their taste:—but where is obedience to the gospel of the kingdom in the name of Jesus? Who ever thinks of obeying this? And yet he comes to take vengeance on all who obey it not.

I cannot too earnestly commend the words of Samuel to the attention of the reader in this place. “Hath the Lord”, saith he, “as great delight in burnt-offerings and sacrifices as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than a sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams. For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry.” A great principle is set forth in these words. It is that which can alone place men in harmony with the religion of God. Without it a man may indeed know the truth; but he must believe *and do* if he would inherit the kingdom which has been preparing from the foundation of the world.

Religion is of two kinds—that, namely, which is invented by the thinking of sinful flesh; and that which is revealed of God. The former is superstition, and leads men to do a vast deal more than God requires of them, or less than He has appointed. In what is called “Christendom” most improperly (for instead of being Christ’s dominion, as the word implies, it is the arena of his sufferings in the persons of his disciples, and in the suppression of his truth), these extremes of superstition in its plus and minus exhibitions, are illustrated in all their diversity from popery, which is superstition in excess, down to Quakerism, which is superstition in its homoeopathic proportion.

The religion of God, on the contrary, is the *juste milieu*, occupying a commanding and dignified position between the two extremes. It does not require men to abase themselves in the dust, and to afflict their bodies for their sins; nor to plant themselves as so many statues of clay, with downcast or upturned visage in the silence of the sepulchre, under pretence of waiting for Him to move them to preach or pray. There is no fanaticism nor pietism in His religion. When in the exercise of it men are moved to action, they are acted upon by an intelligent and earnest conviction of the truth. This is the instrumentality by which He rouses men to religious exercise—*by the spirit which is the truth*.

When, therefore, they are really “moved by the spirit” they are moved by the truth, and do not talk nonsense. They speak according to “the law and the testimony”; and thus evince to all who understand the scriptures, that they have “*light within*”. Everything spoken not according to the word is nonsense; and the spirit never moves men to speak nonsense: nor doth the light of truth within ever teach men to undervalue the institutions of religion; or to live in neglect of them under pretence of a refined spirituality, or superior sanctity. “By their fruits ye may know them.” This is an excellent rule by

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which to discern the spirits. Men pray for the Holy Spirit; profess to preach under its guidance; and often in a very bad spirit, protest that they received it when converted. But the spirit dwells only with those who understand, believe, and obey the gospel of the kingdom; and who walk according to its precepts. No man, be he preacher or “layman”, has the spirit, or anything else to do with it than as resisting it, who does not preach and believe the gospel Paul preached. The “religious world” is utterly destitute of the spirit which belongs to God’s religion; because it is ignorant of the gospel, and understands not “the voices of the prophets”.

If, therefore, it be sincerely desirous of the spirit of God, let it renounce the traditions of “*the fathers*” and “*mothers*” of the apostasy, from Origen to Joanna Southcott, Jemima Wilkinson, and Ann Lee; let it shake off the thrall of Rome, Oxford, Wittenburg, Geneva, and Nauvoo; all of which make of none effect the word of the living God: and let it “*search the scriptures*” according to the divine command, “proving all things and holding fast that which is good”, that it may believe the truth and obey it in the love of it. Christ will then dwell in its heart by faith; it will be rooted and grounded in love, having attained to the obedience of faith, which is the sole criterion of love to God; and the well-intentioned and conscientious, though unenlightened members of its community, will have no longer ground of lamentation on account of “the decay of spirituality, and the prevalence of formality and worldliness in the churches”. All the Most High requires of men is just to believe what He has done, what He teaches, and what He promises: to obey the law of faith; to take care of the poor of His flock, and keep themselves unspotted from the world. This is pure and undefiled religion. But, alas! where is it to be found?

Religion being the divine remedy for sin, it is evident that when the sin of the world is taken away, religion will be abolished. So long as sin exists in the earth, so long will there be separation between God and men; for it is sin, and that only, which interrupts man’s fellowship with God and His angels, as it obtained before the fall. When sin is eradicated from the world there will be no more death; for death and sin are boon companions; as it is written, “The wages of sin is death”. The abolition of death presupposes the extinction of sin in the flesh; and consequently that the *animal nature* of man has been transformed (not evaporated, but changed) into the *spiritual nature* of the Elohim. Man will then be no longer subject to evil. His race will have passed through its 7,000 years of probation; and all of its individuals, who have been the faithful subjects of God’s religion, will become the incorruptible and perpetual inhabitants of the earth, emancipated from every curse; God will then dwell in men by His Spirit as He now fills the Lord Jesus Christ. All distinction of church and world, saints and sinners, righteous and wicked, shall cease for ever; for there will be none of the Serpent’s seed alive. They will have been utterly destroyed; for only “the meek shall inherit the earth, and delight themselves with abundance of peace”.

Religion begins in the third chapter of Genesis, and finds the record of its end in the last two chapters of the Revelation. Its abolition is expressed in these words: “Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them as their God. And he shall wipe away all tears from their eyes: and *there shall be NO MORE DEATH*, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away. And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, *I make all things new*. And *there shall be NO MORE CURSE*”. Then will the victory be complete. *The Sin-power and all its works will be finally abolished; and an eternal jubilee gladden the hearts of men, in whom God will be all and in all.*

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As it is highly important that the reader should have a distinct understanding of the religion of God, if he would profit by it, it may not be amiss, in order to facilitate its comprehension, to present the following

#### SUMMARY OF PRINCIPLES.

1. Religion is that *system of means* by which the *breach* made by sin between God and man is repaired; and the wound inflicted upon the latter is healed.

2. Man's defilement was first a matter of conscience; and then corporeal. For this cause, his purification is first a cleansing of his understanding, sentiments, and affections; and afterwards, the perfecting of his body by spiritualizing it at the resurrection.

3. An *evil* conscience is made manifest by the truth, and is evinced by shame and by "doubts and fears".

4. A *good* conscience is characterized by a full assurance of faith and hope, founded upon an understanding of the gospel of the kingdom in the name of Jesus, and an obedience to it. The obedience of faith gives the subject "the answer of a good conscience".

5. A *seared* conscience has no compunctions. It is that condition of thinking flesh which results from the absence of all divine knowledge, and habitual sin. It is incurable.

6. Religion is a system of *faith* and *practice*.

7. The *faith* of religion embraces what God has done, what He promises to do, and what He teaches in His word; all of which is presented for the elaboration of a godlike disposition, termed "the Divine Nature" in the believer.

8. To be of any value, religion must be entirely of divine appointment.

9. The *obedience* of religion is a conformity to "*the law of faith*", resulting from the belief of "the things concerning the Kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ". It is termed "*the obedience of faith*"; for believers only can yield it.

10. The *repentance* of religion is the *thinking contrary* to the flesh, and *in harmony with* the testimony of God; accompanied with an Abrahamic disposition as the consequence of believing it.

11. The *morality* of religion is the taking care of the widows and orphans of Christ's flock, and "keeping one's self unspotted from the world". Collectively, it is the "fruits meet for repentance".

12. Religion hath its "*elements*," which are styled "*weak and beggarly*". These are "days, and years, and months, and times"; "meat and drink"; sacrifices, ablutions, ordinances of divine service, holy places, veils, altars, censers, cherubim, mercy-seats, holy days, sabbaths, etc., "which were a shadow of things to come; *but* the substance is of Christ".

13. The elementary doctrinal principles of religion are few and simple; and no other reason can be given for them than that *God wills them*. They may be thus stated:—

a. No sinner can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him, that he should still live for ever, and not see corruption.

b. Sin cannot be covered, or remitted, without the shedding of blood.

c. The blood of animals cannot take away sin.

d. Sin must be condemned in sinful flesh innocent of transgression.

e. Sins must be covered by a garment derived from the purification-sacrifice made living by a resurrection.

14. To be naked is to be in an unpardoned state.

15. The proximate principles of religion are “repentance from dead works, faith towards God, doctrine of baptisms, and of the laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment”.