

Facts for the Times.

(13)

THE BIBLE
AND
THE CHURCHES

FROM THE BEGINNING OF THE WORLD.



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PREFACE.

FACTS are stubborn things : therefore they are not at all times the most pleasant things to write or the pleasantest things to read, particularly when they oppose any long cherished ideas ; nevertheless, they are good things, particularly when they lead to good ; and the few facts set forth in this little book will, in the writer's opinion, lead to the greatest good that this world ever experienced, if they are received with the same spirit in which they are written, viz., so far as the writer can judge of his own matter, with the earnest desire for the extension of the Lord's kingdom on the earth, by setting before the reader in a very simple way some of the facts respecting the divine revelation to man, and the declension of the world from a state of goodness and truth to a state of gross darkness, and its final restoration, " by the redeeming mercy of the Lord," to a state of glory which the most fertile imagination cannot conceive, to a state when the " kingdoms of this world shall have become the kingdoms of our Lord Jesus Christ," and He shall reign in the hearts of all the inhabitants of the world : for the time will come when they shall not have occasion to say, " Know the Lord, for all shall know Him from the least even to the greatest, and the knowledge of the Lord shall cover the earth as the waters cover the seas."

The reader is sincerely asked to cast off all prejudice and preconceived opinions, and read this little book in an open and candid spirit; and as all good comes from the Lord alone, there is at all times a very great advantage in imploring the aid of His Spirit to enable us to see aright. I know many ideas set forth are different to the generally received opinions of the Churches, nevertheless to me they appear in accordance with the Divine revelation; and knowing the terribly conflicting opinions that are held by the bishops and ministers of the Church of England alone, I have considered it the duty of some one to point out the cause and also the remedy, and although I feel quite inadequate to the task, still I have ventured to set before the Christian Church, in a very simple way, what I consider to be the truth; and I think the Word of God, properly understood, will be with me in all I have said. Any little inaccuracies in dates that might occur I ask the reader to pardon, because it was written off-hand, without immediate reference to books, but I think the ideas are truthful.

It appears to me that the Divine purpose respecting the human race is to make all happy from Himself, but if man will not accede to the terms proposed for, and which are absolutely necessary for, the constituting that happiness, he cannot participate in it. The Lord has met the exigencies of the fallen race of man from time to time—firstly, by the Adamic Church; secondly, by the establishment of the Noetic Church; and when on its decline, and the people had fallen into idolatry, by calling Abraham from idolatry, in whom should be celestially represented the redemption of the Lord, the regeneration of man, and whose descendants should maintain a representative Church on the earth until the Redeemer came. I say, the Lord having met the exigencies of His disobedient

people, from time to time, until they had so far fallen away that it was absolutely necessary that His own beloved Son should come into the world to destroy the works of the devil and restore a lost world unto Himself; and the time had arrived for the fulfilment of the prophecy of Isaiah: "A virgin shall be with child, and a child shall be born, and the government shall be upon His shoulders, and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace, and of His government and peace there shall be no end."

Jesus finished the grand and glorious work of redemption, and is now King of Kings, and Lord of Lords, and every sincere repenting sinner who will go to Him for mercy, in submission to His commands, will receive a crown of everlasting life, and be admitted into the kingdom of heaven, to serve Him for ever and ever through His own redeeming mercy.

The reader might ask to what church does the writer belong? I answer, for the last thirty-five years I have considered the writings of Swedenborg perfectly in accordance with the Word, but never saw the necessity of separating from the Church of England, where I worshipped in my early days and do constantly up to the present time, and occasionally among the Methodist, Independent, and Baptist, because I did not consider Swedenborg to be raised up to found a sect, but to lay the foundation for the entire renovation of all the Christian churches, not objecting to a separate Church called the New Jerusalem; and from close observation I perceive that the truths taught by Swedenborg are gradually finding their way among all classes of society, and I have not the slightest doubt in my mind of their being ultimately fully embraced

by ministers of all denominations. To give the reader an idea how much I value the public observance of religion, which I consider a duty incumbent on every one, I say, without boasting, that I have averaged attending the Church of England twice of a Sunday for more than fifty years, besides occasionally attending other denominations, and I sincerely trust it has not been in vain ; but still I find it necessary to do battle with my own heart, and doubt not, through Him who loved us and bore our sins and iniquities, of ultimately obtaining a victory, and I trust an eternal home among those who also have obtained pardon through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus.

I leave this little book in the hands of the reader, with the earnest prayer, that if it stirs up a spirit of inquiry, the reader will be guided by the Spirit of Truth in its perusal ; and, so far as it is in accordance with the Word of God of infinite love and wisdom, he may be enabled to see and act upon it to the setting up of the Lord's kingdom in his own mind and the minds of others.

The Bible and the Churches.

THE *inspired* books in the Bible are **PLENARY** inspired, and are the following (see Noble, *The Plenary Inspiration of the Sacred Scriptures*), viz.:—The five books of Moses, Joshua, Judges, the two books of Samuel, the two books of Kings, the Psalms, all the Prophets, the Gospels, and the Revelation. Doubtless, the other books in the Old Testament have been of service to the Church in all ages. The book of the Acts of the Apostles beautifully confirms the truth of the preceding by the miraculous interposition of the Lord. The Epistles of the Apostle Paul wonderfully set forth the gospel of Jesus Christ the Son of God, as also do the other Apostles, but they are not *plenary* inspired. Reader, pray for the illumination of the Holy Spirit of Christ, and read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest. The first eleven chapters of Genesis are not positively literal, but treat spiritually of the establishment of the Adamic Church and its destruction, and the setting up of the Noetic Church and its dispersion. Then commences the literal sense with the call of Abraham, containing a literal sense, a spiritual and celestial sense,—the literal sense teaching of events as they occur, the spiritual sense referring entirely to the work of regeneration in the union of man and the Church, and the celestial

sense treating entirely of the work of redemption by the Lord Jesus Christ. (See the *Arcana Cœlestia*, by Emanuel Swedenborg, with more than fifty thousand references to the Old and New Testaments, proving most conclusively the truth of what he asserts; and the Commission for revising the Bible will find great assistance in coming at a true and lasting translation by carefully examining the *Arcana Cœlestia*, and testing the rendering of Swedenborg against the original.)

It is most important at the present time, particularly, that we should have the proper rendering of the original text of Scripture, which I feel perfectly satisfied will agree with the Apostolic teaching, but it will not agree with the Nicene Creed. (See account of its introduction and effects on the first Roman Catholic Church, A.D. 325.)

There are various opinions respecting the existence of the human race on this earth before the Adamic Church. For my own part, I am of opinion that the human race existed for a long period before what is called the Mosaic account of the Creation; and I entertain the idea that all the inhabitants of the earth lived a very considerable period in that state of holiness in which they were originally created, which is called the golden age of the world. But they gradually fell away from that state of holiness and of brotherly love and patriarchal worship of the Lord to render an external Church necessary—the Divine Love and Wisdom of the Lord accommodating His government to the failings of His declining people, arranged the Adamic Church. (See the first chapter of the book of Genesis.) Sad to relate, the Adamic Church gradually declined, getting worse and worse, until falses and evils brought on its own destruction, described by the Flood; the divine love and mercy still meeting the exigencies

of His disobedient people, arranges the Noetic Church, the leading features of which are described by Shem, Ham, and Japheth. Lamentable to think, the human race still declines, and the Noetic Church at last gets into such a state of confusion and disorder that they do not understand each other, and is dispersed, the Lord still preferring a remnant, which is supposed by some to correspond in some degree to our own Reformed Church. The real Church having gradually declined into such insignificance, it was necessary that the Lord should have a representative Church on the earth; therefore Abraham was called from idolatry, whose descendants, the Children of Israel, should keep up a representative Church on the earth. (See the instructions given to Moses in the Mount and the Commandments respecting it, from 20th chapter of Exodus onward to the end of Exodus. For full explanation, see *Arcana Cœlestia*, 12 volumes, by Swedenborg, originally £5, now published at £2, 8s.)

It will not be necessary to go through all the wanderings and disobedience of the Children of Israel, because every man, woman, and youth, and maiden ought to be acquainted with them. Suffice it to say, that they were from time to time disobedient to the divine commands—setting up idolatry, getting into all kinds of difficulties through their disobedience; the Lord interposing on their behalf from time to time, until they had so far fallen away that nothing but the seventy years of captivity in Babylon would bring them to a consideration of their deplorable departure from Jehovah, who pitying them, promised by His prophets deliverance in the latter days, when they shall turn to the Lord with all their hearts. Still a representative Church must be kept up, and the Lord raises up a man who shall restore the Temple and

lead them back from their captivity ; and the sceptre did not depart from Judah till Shiloh came, but darkness covered the earth, and gross darkness covered the people. We are now arrived at the time when the Divine Redeemer is to be born, and the commencement of the new dispensation of redeeming mercy.

John the Baptist comes preaching repentance and the remission of sins to prepare the people for the coming of the Son of God. When the proper time had arrived, Jesus commences His public work of redemption, in order that He might ultimately destroy the works of the devil, which He will most assuredly do. The Blessed Redeemer having finished the work which His Father had given Him to do by a life of sacrifice, completes the work of redemption by the sacrifice of Himself on the cross, and after forty days at different times appearing to His disciples, supporting and encouraging them according to His promise, appears at last and tells them that all power is given to Him in heaven and in earth ; and tells them to go forth baptizing in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost : and they went forth baptizing in the name of Jesus, knowing that the name of Jesus is sufficient, because in Him dwells all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.

We are now arrived at the development of the Christian dispensation, and shall endeavour to set forth some of the principal changes the Church has undergone since our Saviour ascended into heaven.

The progress and trials of the Church during the apostles' time is set forth in the Acts of the Apostles.

The doctrines are set forth by the Apostle Paul and the other apostles.

The duty of Christians, and the changes the Christian Church would undergo until it attained to its millennial glory, are spiritually delineated in the Book of Revelation, as shown to John in the isle of Patmos by the Lord Himself.

It is not my purpose to go into the particular trials and persecutions the Christian Church had to undergo during the first 300 years; suffice it to say, that amidst all its persecutions from paganism, the gospel of Jesus Christ had spread over a great part of the world, when in the year 325, Arius arose and denied the divinity of Christ. Constantine called all the Bishops together at Nicæa and introduced the Nicene Creed, which says what the Bible *does not teach*, viz. : that Jesus Christ was begotten before the worlds. Doubtless the divine purposes respecting the human race were all concentrated in the ultimate restoration of all repenting sinners by the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ was begotten in time—according to the announcement to the Virgin Mary, and according to the prophetic declaration respecting it by Isaiah, viz., “a virgin shall be with child, and a child shall be born, and the government shall be upon His shoulder, and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace, and of the increase of His government and peace there shall be no end.”

It is quite clear that the Nicene and the Athanasian Creeds were powerless against the Arian doctrine. It went on for 300 years, and at the expiration of that time nearly all the European States had embraced the abominable doctrine of Arius. But the Lord raised up one in the Church's extremity, as He has at all times done—and the good Clotilda, the French princess who married Clovis, under the Divine Providence won back the European States from Unitarianism to a

belief in the divinity of Christ. Hence it was that the Kings of France were called the eldest sons of the Church (At the time that Clovis was married to Clotilda, about A.D. 500, nearly all the European states had embraced the Arian or Unitarian doctrine which denies the divinity of Christ.)

It will not, I think, be necessary to give an account of the gradual declension of the Catholic Church again under the two Crèeds; suffice it to say, that during 800 years, it had arrived at such a state of degradation, that men with any real Christianity in their souls could endure it no longer, and Luther and others protested against the enormities of the Roman Catholic Church and life, but unfortunately brought out with them some of the erroneous doctrines which took their rise from the Nicene and the Athanasian Creeds. Consequently the whole of the Reformed Church in some degree is contaminated with the doctrines, and now in this nineteenth century the great battle is on, for all denominations are contending for the truth of their own views. I am thankful to think also, that all are sincerely desirous of meeting on the same platform to advocate the cause of the Blessed Redeemer, and I think there never was a time in the history of the world when bishops and clergymen of the Church of England, and leading ministers of all denominations were called upon to meet together in the spirit of love and sincerity, to ascertain what the Lord Jesus Christ came to teach us; and I do sincerely hope the time will very soon come, when such a meeting will take place, and trust that I may have the privilege of being among them. I may almost say, I am a member of all the churches, for I have occasionally attended all denominations for prayer and praise, but principally the Church of England, and my Christian friends will pardon me for saying, that every man and woman

who professes the Christian religion ought to attend some place of worship twice of a Sunday, unless Christian duty calls them another way; and I must again be pardoned for saying, that every head of a family who does not read a portion of the Bible to his household every day, neglects his duty to his family and his Maker.

REMARKS.

In reference to the first part of the book of Genesis, I would observe that there exists different opinions among learned men. Some think it is to be understood literally, but one thing is certain, that it has a spiritual meaning, and that spiritual sense truthfully sets forth the setting up of the Adamic Church and its fall, and the work of regeneration of every individual who obtains an inheritance in the kingdom of heaven, and up to the 12th chapter the setting up and fall of the Adamic, and setting up and dispersion of the Noetic Church. It is worth the serious consideration of ministers of the gospel to examine carefully Swedenborg's *Arcana Coelestia* by the original text of Scripture, and if they come to the conclusion that it is the true meaning of the Word of God, let them come out boldly and tell the world, but if it should prove to be groundless, it will be equally the duty of the ministers of the Gospel of Jesus Christ to do everything in their power to stop its progress, for I can assure them that the truths taught by Swedenborg are gradually finding their way among all denominations. I think Swedenborg says that the interior doctrines of the Reformed Church are right if they were properly understood, but it is evident that opinions among the reformed on some important points differ very widely, rendering it absolutely necessary at this time of terrible conflict in the

Church, that leading men of all denominations should meet together in the spirit of Christian charity, and hear each other's opinions, and compare them with the Word of God, so that the Christian Church on earth may at once lay the foundation for its future millennial glory. It is hardly worth while for me to go into the particulars of the different opinions held by the Church of England; this I do say, that the doctrinal difference is very wide, besides the difference of opinion respecting vestments and the sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper, which to me seems astonishing when our Saviour's teaching was so plain and simple. There is a considerable difference in the teaching of the Independent, Wesleyan and Baptist Churches, but not anything so wide as in earlier times; and as I before observed, I believe there is a sincere desire in the minds of all denominations to cast aside minor considerations, and combine together for the establishment of Christ's kingdom on the earth—sincerely hoping ere long to witness the lovely spectacle of bishops, clergymen and ministers, of all denominations, meeting together not in legal prosecution, but with sincere, loving and obedient hearts, to learn their Redeemer's will; and sure I am that if they meet in that spirit and implore the aid of the Lord Jesus Christ, that He will be among them to guide and bless their efforts and lead them into all truth, and be with them in all their labours, until the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdom of our Lord; and as each champion for the truth passes from his labours in this world, they shall be removed to a more extensive sphere of usefulness in the kingdom of Heaven, with the approving welcome of "Well done, good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

The new birth a necessity. All who go to Heaven must

be born of water and the Spirit, through the redeeming mercy of the Lord. True religion is the highest source of enjoyment this world has to offer, and just in the same degree as we bring our minds in subjection to the Divine will, under the influence of the Spirit of Truth, shall we be enabled to pass tranquilly through this changing world to the haven of everlasting rest, where are "pleasures for evermore" in the service of our redeeming Lord.

All good flows from the centre to the circumference; therefore there are numberless innocent recreations to be enjoyed that are in perfect accordance with Divine arrangements, but the greatest pleasure on earth is to be found in doing good to others according to our capabilities and position in life.

Inreference to the removal of Dr. Smith Vance from the Commission for revising the Sacred Scriptures, I cannot see how any man, however, learned he may be, can be any assistance in revising a book the very spirit of which he disbelieves. How can any man, I ask, who disbelieves in the divinity of Christ assist in arranging a book which is full of it from beginning to end? It was a great mistake his being admitted at all; but if we do make mistakes,—and who is there in the world that is not liable?—the sooner it is remedied the better: therefore, I think on mature consideration, it was right to remedy the error of admitting a Unitarian to assist in revising the Bible as quickly as possible.

N.B.—In revising the Prayer Book the writer considers that the Nicene and the Athanasian Creeds should be left out, and the Apostles' Creed only retained. The word "regenerate" should not be used in the Baptismal Service, nor the words "I believe in the resurrection of the flesh" in the Baptismal Service, nor the words "in sure and certain hope of a glorious resurrection" in the Burial Service.



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