HISTORY of the REFORMATION

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of the SIXTEENTH CENTURY

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ISBN: 224-2-85933-777-1

Cataloguing in Publication Data

Edited by: Light of the World Publications Company Ltd.

Reproduced in Turin, Italy

Published by: Light of the World Publications Company Ltd

P.O. Box 144, Piazza Statuto, Turin, Italy

"Lux Lucet in Tenebris"

The Light Shines in the Darkness

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OF THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY

BY J. H. MERLE D'AUBIGNÉ.

Volume First.

EDINBURGH:

PUBLISHED BY OLIVER & BOYD

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FOREWORD

This edition has been reproduced by Light of the World Publication Company. This book intends to enlighten on the real controversies at stake, as reflected in unabated strife and multiple moral dilemmas. The account and illustrations are specially designed and incorporated to edify the reader on pertinent developments in the historical, scientific, philosophical, educational, religio-political, socio-economic, legal and spiritual spheres. Moreover, clear and undisputed patterns and correlations may be discerned wherein may be perceived the networking, interworking and overlapping of antithetical, yet harmonious schools of thought.

Earth's long trajectory of coercion, conflict and compromise has prepared the platform for the emergence of a New Age. Burning questions attend the advent of this anticipated new era, accompanied by its superstructures, systems of governance, rights-based regimes and ideals of freedom and happiness. Chequered in base deception, strategic repression and objectives of new world order, this e-book connects the dots between modern realities, spiritual mysteries and divine revelation. It traces the chronological progress from national catastrophe to global dominance, the destruction of an old system and the forging of a new; succinctly illuminating on love, human nature and even supernatural intervention.

Time and again, remarkable events have moulded the course of life and history, while even prefiguring the future. Living in times of great turbulence and uncertainty, the future has been but dimly comprehended. Thankfully, this work enables a panoramic vision of both past and future, highlighting critical moments of time which have unfolded in fulfilment to prophecy.

Although birthed in unpromising conditions, afflicted in gruelling crucibles, several individuals have resolved, persevered in virtue and sealed their faith, leaving an ineffaceable mark. Their contributions have shaped modernity and paved the road for a marvellous culmination and imminent change. Therefore, this literature serves as both inspiration and practical tool for a penetrative and profound understanding behind social issues, religion and politics. Each chapter narrates on both the world and the human condition, enshrouded in darkness, embattled in keen clashes, and impelled by sinister, hidden agendas and ulterior motives. Here, these are unashamedly exposed to plain view. Nevertheless, every page radiates with resplendent rays of courage, deliverance and hope.

Ultimately, it is our fervent desire that every reader experience, grow to love and accept truth. In a world permeated with lies, ambiguity and manipulation, truth will forever stand as the quintessential longing in the soul. Truth engenders life, beauty, wisdom and grace; resulting in renewed purpose, vigour and a genuine, yet personal transformation in perspective and life.

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CHAPTER 1

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The enfeebled world was tottering on its foundations when Christianity appeared. The national religions which had satisfied the parents, no longer proved sufficient for their children. The new generations could not repose contented within the ancient forms. The gods of every nation, when transported to Rome, there lost their oracles, as the nations themselves had there lost their liberty. Brought face to face in the Capitol, they had destroyed each other, and their divinity had vanished. A great void was occasioned in the religion of the world.

A kind of deism, destitute alike of spirit and of life, floated for a time above the abyss in which the vigorous superstitions of antiquity had been engulfed. But like all negative creeds, it had no power to reconstruct. National prepossessions disappeared with the fall of the national gods. The various kingdoms melted one into the other. In Europe, Asia, and Africa, there was but one vast empire, and the human race began to feel its universality and unity. Then the Word was made flesh. God appeared among men, and as man, to save that which was lost. In Jesus of Nazareth dwelt all the fullness of the Godhead bodily.

This is the greatest event in the annals of the world. Former ages had prepared the way for it: The latter ages flow from it. It is the centre of their bond of unity. Henceforward the popular superstitions had no meaning, and the slight fragments preserved from the general wreck of incredulity vanished before the majestic orb of eternal truth.

The son of man lived thirty-three years on earth, healing the sick, converting sinners, not having where to lay his head, and displaying in the midst of this humiliation such greatness and holiness, such power and divinity, as the world had

never witnessed before. He suffered and died—he rose again and ascended into heaven. His disciples, beginning at Jerusalem, travelled over the Roman empire and the world, everywhere proclaiming their Master as the author of everlasting life. From the midst of a people who despised all nations, came forth a mercy that invited and embraced all men. A great number of Asiatics, of Greeks, and of Romans, hitherto dragged by their priests to the feet of dumb idols, believed the Word. It suddenly enlightened the whole earth, like a beam of the sun. 1 A breath of life began to move over this wide field of death. A new people, a holy nation, was formed upon the earth; and the astonished world beheld in the disciples of the Galilean a purity and self-denial, a charity and heroism, of which it had retained no idea.

Two principles especially distinguished the new religion from all the human systems that fled before it. One had reference to the ministers of its worship, the other to its doctrines. The ministers of paganism were almost the gods of these human religions. The priests of Egypt, Gaul, Dacia, Germany, Britain, and India, led the people, so long at least as their eyes were not opened.

Jesus Christ, indeed, established a ministry, but he did not found a separate priesthood: he dethroned these living idols of the world, destroyed an overbearing hierarchy, took away from man what he had taken from God, and reestablished the soul in immediate connection with the divine fountain of truth, by proclaiming himself sole Master and sole Mediator. "One is your master, even Christ; and all ye are brethren."

1Ohm tis elion bole. Eusebius, Hist. Eccles. 2:3.

As regards doctrine, human systems had taught that salvation is of man: the religions of the earth had devised an earthly salvation. They had told men that heaven would be given to them as a reward: they had fixed its price; and what a price! The religion of God taught that salvation comes from him alone; that it is a gift from heaven; that it emanates from an amnesty—from the grace of the Sovereign Ruler: "God hath given to us eternal life."

Undoubtedly Christianity cannot be summed up in these two points; but they seem to govern the subject, as far as history is concerned. And as it is impossible for me to trace the opposition between truth and error in all its features, I have been compelled to select the most prominent.

Such were the two constituent principles of the religion that then took possession of the Roman empire and of the world. With these we are within the true limits of

Christianity, and beyond them Christianity disappears. On their preservation or their loss depended its greatness or its fall. They are closely connected: for we cannot exalt the priests of the Church or the works of the faithful without lowering Christ in his twofold quality of Mediator and Redeemer. One of these principles was to predominate in the history of the religion; the other in its doctrine. They both reigned at the beginning. Let us enquire how they were lost; and let us commence by tracing the destiny of the former.

The Church was in the beginning a community of brethren, guided by a few of the brethren. All were taught of God, and each had the privilege of drawing for himself from the divine fountain of light. The Epistles which then settled the great questions of doctrine did not bear the pompous title of a single man—of a ruler. We learn from the Holy Scriptures, that they began simply with these words: "The apostles and elders and brethren send greetings unto the brethren."

But these very writings of the apostles already foretell that from the midst of this brotherhood there shall arise a power that will destroy this simple and primitive order.

Let us contemplate the formation and trace the development of this power so alien to the Church. Paul of Tarsus, one of the greatest apostles of the new religion, had arrived at Rome, the capital of the empire and of the world, preaching in bondage the salvation which cometh from God. A Church was formed beside the throne of the Caesars. Composed at first of a few converted Jews, Greeks, and Roman citizens, it was rendered famous by the teaching and the death of the Apostle of the Gentiles. For a time it shone out brightly, as a beacon upon a hill. Its faith was everywhere celebrated; but erelong it declined from its primitive condition. It was by small beginnings that both imperial and Christian Rome advanced to the usurped dominion of the world.

The first pastors or bishops of Rome early employed themselves in converting the neighbouring cities and towns. The necessity which the bishops and pastors of the Campagna felt of applying in cases of difficulty to an enlightened guide, and the gratitude they owed to the church of the metropolis, led them to maintain a close union with it. As it has always happened in analogous circumstances, this reasonable union soon degenerated into dependence. The bishops of Rome considered as a right that superiority which the surrounding Churches had freely yielded. The encroachments of power form a great part of history; as the resistance of those whose liberties are invaded forms the other portion. The ecclesiastical power could not