

**ADVANCE
THOUGHT**

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Advance Thought by Chas. E. Glass

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PREFACE.

IN presenting this work it may be mentioned that it was originally commenced, simply as an effort of individual mind to explore the truth for itself, without any intention of bookmaking, and the printing of it was an afterthought. The writer did not believe that any peculiar gift, denied to others, was possessed by those through whom we have received inspired Scripture, as he held that inspiration, if admitted at all, must be regarded as the common inheritance of mankind; and that, as a necessity of increased enlightenment, it must even grow more generally open than it has yet been. ["It is written . . . they shall be all taught of God."] Perplexed between the unsatisfying dogmas of sectarianism, based chiefly upon "the letter that killeth," his desire was that his mind might be so enlightened as to realise "in spirit" such a knowledge of the Divine laws, as to find a religion in which he could have confidence. Whilst encouraged by an innate belief in an All-wise God—the evidences of whose governing mind are found in unalterable nature—and by a belief in ever open revelation, based upon circumstances which fell under his own personal experience in pursuing the

inquiry as to religion and truth, he endeavoured to disabuse his mind of preconceived impressions of early religious teachings, and to draw by constant, earnest, and pure desire, the Divine light sought for, into an open, unprejudiced, and willing mind. ["Ask, and ye shall receive; knock, and it shall be opened unto you."]

This work, then, is not the result of book learning; but what is good of it is the gift of inspiration, although there are a few speculative deductions, presented as such; and there are quotations and extracts from received authorities, which have been added since the work was written, in order to strengthen, if possible, the conclusions arrived at, in the minds of some readers, who may require evidence of that nature. The writer makes no pretension to great literary ability in this work, and if readers want fine language, quotations from deep scientific authorities, or a profound knowledge of books, they can get plenty of that elsewhere. This book does not profess to furnish anything of the kind, but rests more particularly upon revelation, which, if pure, should be able to withstand any philosophical or scientific tests which may be brought forward to disprove it. It is maintained that, if readers will carefully endeavour to follow the meaning conveyed in these pages, they cannot fail to see a certain vein of consistent reasoning throughout, which may not only be instructive, but satisfying to their religious scruples. There are many points which would bear a better finish, in order that the tenor of the whole work be better understood, but there are many points which are ex-

tremely clear, and which, on the whole, must suffice to convey a good general impression to the mind. Whether or not there are those who will question the statement which attributes the ideas herein propounded to inspiration is of very little moment, as all statements must rely upon the truth contained in them for their vitality. It is felt that some will be greatly benefited by reading this book, otherwise the responsibility of making it public would not have been undertaken. At the same time, it is also felt that there are thousands whose minds are not prepared to receive the truths it contains, and to them it must, for the present, be as a "sealed book."

"The whole world," says the great minded Carlyle, "calls for new work and nobleness. Subdue mutiny, discord, widespread despair, by manfulness, justice, mercy, and wisdom. Chaos is dark, deep as hell; let light be, and there is instead a green, flowery world. Oh, it is great, and there is no other greatness! To make some nook of God's creation a little fruitfuller, better, more worthy of God! to make some human hearts a little wiser, manfuller, happier, more blessed, less accursed! It is work for a God! Sooty hell of mutiny, and savagery, and despair, can, by man's energy, be made a kind of heaven; cleared of its soot, of its mutiny, of its need to mutiny; the everlasting arch of heaven's azure overspanning it too, and its cunning mechanisms and tall chimney-steeple, as a birth of heaven; God and all men looking on it well pleased."

Let those who read and doubt, not rest satisfied, but appeal for themselves to the same source of unerring wisdom, and then abide the result. If Divine enlighten-

ment and a knowledge of higher truths are looked for, they must be earnestly desired. There are many anxiously groping after truth who may not have the same opportunities of inquiry as the writer, and he presents this work because he holds that the increased intelligence of the age requires a religion which it can feel to be an actuality, and which it can reconcile with reason and the knowledge it has gained of the operation of the laws which govern the universe.

Sir Humphrey Davy has remarked :—

“ If I could choose what would be most delightful, and I believe most useful to me, I should prefer a firm, religious belief to every other blessing ; for it makes life a discipline of goodness—creates new hopes when all earthly hopes vanish ; and throws over the decay, the destruction of existence, the most gorgeous of all lights ; awakens life even in death, and from corruption and decay calls up beauty and divinity ; makes an instrument of torture and of shame the ladder of ascent to paradise ; and far above all combinations of earthly hopes, calls up the most delightful visions of plains and amaranths, the gardens of the blest, the security of everlasting joys, where the sensualist and the sceptic view only gloom, decay, annihilation, and despair.”

Intelligent thinkers and inquirers have lost all sympathy for sectarian distinctions, as tending to alienate people instead of cultivating brotherly love and unity ; and they turn from the teachings of theology, as presenting an inadequately high and pure conception of divinity. In all ages—according to fixed natural laws—it is held that man has, by inspiration, received forms of religion suited to his capacity of intellect ;

and, at the present time, the strong exercise of pure and fervent desire for truth, which is so noticeable in certain quarters, will undoubtedly attract to him a religion in which he will find confidence, consolation, and hope.

"Books," remarked Lord Dudley, "are loved by some merely as elegant combinations of thought; by others, as a means of exercising the intellect. By some they are considered as the engines by which to propagate opinions; and by others they are only deemed worthy of serious regard when they constitute repositories of matters of fact. But perhaps the most important use of literature has been pointed out by those who consider it as a record of the respective modes of moral and intellectual existence that have prevailed in successive ages, and who value literary performances in proportion as they preserve a memorial of the spirit which was at work in real life during the times when they were written."