

2. The Means of Enlightenment

"The Bible is the enlightener. If men would not be carried about by every wind that blows, let them study this. It will unfold to them the future, and make them wiser than the world... Be not deceived... The blessing is not simply to him that watcheth; but to him that 'watcheth and keepeth his garments'. Simply to believe that the Lord is near, and to be able to discern the signs of the times, will not entitle a man to the blessing. He must 'buy gold tried in the fire, and white raiment, that he may be clothed, and that the shame of his nakedness do not appear; and anoint his eyes with eye-salve, that he may see.' In other words, he must believe 'the things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ;' follow the example of the Samaritans and be baptised into the name of Jesus Christ; and thenceforth perfect his faith by his works, as Abraham did. He will then be a lamp, well oiled and trimmed, and fit to shine forth as a glorious light at the marriage of the Lamb." — Elpis Israel, pp. 385, 387-388.

With the above words and many others of similar vein, Brother Thomas, the man raised up by God to establish a community of true believers known as The Christadelphians, set about to enlighten the minds of men to the true message of God's inspired Word.

But the original Christadelphian standards of doctrine and practice have declined over the years. In many areas of the Brotherhood, the Truth as set forth by the latter-day pioneers has been, in vital respects, either *foregone or forgotten*.

The cause is obvious: A failure to maintain a consistent study of the pioneer works with Bible in hand. Such occurs when there is an attitude of indifference towards the need for sound knowledge and practice. Some of that class suggest that *Logos* gives slavish deference to the writings of

the pioneers in preference to the Word of God. Such claims are both tedious and unfounded. Brother Thomas set forth one fundamental thesis as the basis for all his prognostications: "The *Bible* is the enlightener." He never claimed special insight nor special authority. It is therefore impossible to properly study his expositions without constant reference to the Inspired Word of God. *Logos* has always endorsed and encouraged this principle.

A Fatal Choice

Yet we are faced with a dangerous paradox! There are modern-day writers within the Brotherhood who disparage and ridicule the works of the pioneer brethren, and who produce books which outsell those of Brethren Thomas and Roberts. This observation is made as a result of

many speaking tours and regular travelling throughout the ecclesial world.

Why would members of the Christadelphian community prefer to purchase and read works which openly oppose the teachings of those who founded our community? Why not rather choose those expositions of the Word which formed the basis, Biblically-established, upon which our fellowship was formed. The Athenians of Paul's day, proud of their status as the philosophical capital of the world, "spent their time in nothing else, but either to tell, or to hear, *some new thing*" (Acts 17:21). No wonder that the straightforwardness of the Truth fell mostly on deaf ears in that city of vainglorious men. "So Paul departed from among them" (v. 33).

The Athenians mocked the wisdom which could be discerned in the counsel given by Paul: "Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth. Avoid godless chatter, because those who indulge in it will become more and more ungodly. Their teaching will spread like gangrene" (2 Tim. 2:16-17).

Need for Selflessness

In matters of eternal salvation, there is no room for carelessness nor negligence. The exercise of conceit or a desire for self-glory will never lead to humble acceptance of Divine Truths. Men who are filled with self-esteem are "proud, knowing nothing ..." because their knowledge is gratifying to themselves and not to God; their delight in "some new thing" pleases their fleshly minds, but is not in harmony with the spirit of the Word. By such a process, men's minds become "corrupt" and

"destitute of the Truth" (1 Tim. 6:4-5). On this, Brother Thomas wrote:

"The scriptures contain the keys. Popes, priests, clergy and ministers may suppress, torture and garble the truth, and throw hindrance in the way; but the man who discards their authority and thinks for himself may, by the enlightening efficacy of the living Word, become 'wise unto salvation by the faith which is in Christ Jesus.' Let the people, then, help themselves, if they would that God should aid them" (*Elpis Israel*, pp. 208-209).

Thus, he urged upon his readers a course of *action*. He sought to persuade them to look objectively at the Word of God, rejecting the philosophies of men, no matter how pious they may appear outwardly. But because "the vast majority of the professing world" fails to manifest this disposition, it is "without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope (no true one) and without God in the world" (p. 208).

Our Responsibility

An immeasurable blessing has been given to our Community in the sound, clear knowledge of the One True Faith. This heritage has been handed down to us by the grace of God and through the unstinting labours of faithful brethren. We will not cast such privileges aside!

That which we love, we will prize. That which we prize we will maintain and defend. "It is of primary importance, that we believe the truth, and not a substitute for it; for it is by the truth only we can be saved," wrote Brother Thomas (p. 188). And the Word of God endorses his uncompromising statement: Matt. 22:8; Mark 16:15-16; John 8:24; Acts 13:46; Rom. 1:16; 1 Cor. 15:1-2, etc.

A knowledge and understanding of the Truth will set us upon the pathway to the Kingdom of God. Therefore, we should love the Truth, prize it, and remain dedicated to maintaining and defending it against all attempts to deplete it.

Otherwise we might be found confederate with the world — and, “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 (God’s) supremacy in the universe; they are annihilative of His Truth; they demoralise His character — therefore He will accept no homage predicated upon them” (*Elpis Israel*, p. 158).

No Light From Within

It has always been a fundamental belief of Christadelphians that “light does not emanate from within (man); for sin, blood and flesh can give out none”. We believe that God is the *source* of light. However, divine Truth cannot be subject to philosophical interpretation. The Bible must always remain its own interpreter. But neither popes, priests nor clergy — nor their friends and supporters within the Christadelphian community — accept this, as current trends show. Hence, “Every man is not enlightened by this knowledge; for to some it is hid... The god of this world hath blinded the minds of them who believe not” (pp. 138,139).

Men either become “renewed in knowledge,” or they remain “alienated from the life of God through ignorance”. There is no middle ground, apart only from the earnest learning process until true knowledge is found. No wonder Brother Thomas affirmed so positively: “I feel entrenched impregnably in the

position here assumed. According to the constitution of the human intellect, the knowledge of the Truth must precede the belief of it. There is no exception to this” (p. 136).

Why is this principle no longer universally accepted amongst professing Christadelphians?

Why are we asked to “break down the walls” which have rightly separated truth from error, and purity of the faith from apostasy? Why should we bow to the philosophy that basic doctrines of the Truth are not “simple and straightforward” and therefore open to any intellectual inventiveness and perversion that some may care to apply to them?

Christadelphians who know the Truth, and who love it and prize it, will refuse to compromise themselves or their beliefs. Brother Thomas stated: “It is true that all men do die, but it is not true that they are all subjects of justification... Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the Kingdom of God? Be not deceived” (p. 133).

Time To Make A Stand

Pressures are mounting upon the Brotherhood as never before. It is time to make a stand. The moral deterioration of this present world is eating like a cancer into the Body of Christ. No longer are we so shocked by the lowering of standards as would have been the case formerly. The passage of time has dulled sensitivity to what is needed. And presumptuous attempts to weaken our doctrinal beliefs, bringing us into a closer relationship with a world “which knows not God”, will prove disastrous. We must resist such endeavours with the Sword of the Spirit, which “is the Word of God”.

Courageous brethren of goodwill must recognise their responsibilities at this hour of crisis, and act accord-

ly. A united call must go forth for unanimity within the Body. It must be upon the singular basis of "the old paths" of sound doctrine and practice, upon which our Community was founded and established.

To this end, every attempt should be made to draw brethren and sisters back to the *sound knowledge* of the Truth, and to develop the *spirit* of the Truth, as revealed with such understanding and clarity as is seen in the pages of *Elpis Israel*.

The question remains: Will the challenge of these evil times be con-

fronted? Will responsible brethren stand firm in their single-minded defence and promotion of *the Truth*? Will sound leadership be seen and heard?

Our plea is: That brethren in positions of ecclesial responsibility will recall the challenging words of Paul at this critical time: "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock ... Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them; for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee" (Acts 20:28; 1 Tim. 4:6)

— John Ullman

BIBLE MARKING

All Prayers of the Bible (Cont. from p. 154)

The Passionate Prayer

Prayer, to the patriarchs and prophets, was more than the recital of well-known and well-worn phrases — it was the outpouring of the heart. Beset by perils, persecutions, pain and privations, they naturally turned to God in their need, believing that He was able to redeem them out of all their troubles. If they were not concerned with the philosophy of prayer, they certainly knew a great deal about its power. They sought the privilege of talking with God, and were not afraid to bare their emotions before Him, acknowledging their sinfulness and supplicating His care. That their prayers were powerful is indicated in the dramatic way Yahweh responded. By studying the Divinely-recorded prayers of faith, we can develop the sort of prayer with which the Father is pleased. Not the prayer of the self-satisfied pharisee, but the passionate prayer of the publican (Luke 18:10).

275. Jeremiah prays for Divine righteousness to be revealed against incorrigible enemies — 174 words: Jer. 18:19-23. Answered in ch. 26:24.

276. Jeremiah expresses absolute depression, as he seeks the Divine answer to the seeming victory of his opposers, even though Yahweh had said he would prevail — 27 words: Jer. 20:8.

277. Jeremiah expresses confidence in his ultimate destiny, for Yahweh sees

the realities of the human heart — 31 words: Jer. 20:12.

278. Jeremiah seeks enlightenment in view of the direction to purchase land for a pitiful sum, in view of the Babylonian oppression — 305 words: Jer. 32:17-25.

Prayers in Lamentations

279. Jeremiah asks for comfort in his distress, and seeks Yahweh's response to the desolation of Jerusalem — 76 words: Lam. 1:9-11.