

## The Two Principles

*"Light does not emanate from within; for sin, blood, and flesh can give out none. It can only reflect it after the fashion of a mirror. The light is not in the mirror; but its surface is so constituted that when light falls upon it, it can throw it back, or reflect it, according to the law of light... Neither is light innate in the heart... No; it is a mere conceit of the fleshly mind that man is born into the world with the light within..." — Elpis Israel, page 138.*

**T**HE quotation which Brother Thomas has appended to his sub-heading explains what he means by *The Two Principles*. He cites Rom. 7:25: "With the mind I myself serve the Law of God; but with the flesh the Law of Sin". This comment by Paul is virtually a summary of all that he has set forth in vv. 14-24 of the same chapter. "*The principle of evil and the principle of good* are the two laws which abide in the saints of God so long as they continue subject to mortality" (p. 137).

The opening words offer sound exposition concerning the way in which the human mind operates, and how the flesh is capable of reacting: "Although a sinner may have been 'delivered from the power of darkness', or ignorance, and have been 'translated into' the hope of 'the Kingdom of God and of His Christ' by faith in the divine testimony and baptism into Christ — yet, if he turn his thoughts back into his own heart, and note the impulses which work there, he will perceive a something that, if he were to yield to it, would impel him to the violation of the divine law. These impulses are styled '*the motions of sins*'... The remote cause of these 'motions' is that physical principle, or quality, of the flesh,

styled indwelling sin, which returns the mortal body to the dust".

How is a man enabled to "turn his thoughts back into his own heart" and "perceive" within himself "something" which, if "yielded" to, would cause him to violate the "divine law"? Paul provides the answer: "I would not have come to know sin except through the law" (Rom. 7:7, NASB). In these words, Paul proffers his personal dilemma as an example. He readily confesses that "the law" — which should be understood here as primarily signifying the demands God made upon His people through the revelation in His Word — was the medium through which Paul's sinfulness was revealed, when he looked inwardly upon his motives and actions. God's law said: "Thou shalt not covet" (Gr. *epithumia*, to fix the desire upon; i.e., unlawfully). Thus when Paul found himself coveting, the law pointed to him like a finger of judgment, and his conscience pronounced: "Sinner!" (v. 7; cp. Ex. 20:17; Deu. 5:21).

### An Active Conscience

Paul explains the working of the mind of a saint in relation to conscience, whilst at the same time he highlights the weakness of the flesh:

"To me who wish to be doing the right, that unto me *the wrong lieth near*" (Rom. 7:21, ROTH.).

What is it that produces and activates conscience? The answer is; that which was passed through to mankind from the Tree of the *KNOWLEDGE* of Good and Evil. Knowledge is the key. Upon discovering the significance of their nakedness, our first parents endeavored to cover themselves. Why? Because they both then possessed a conscience. It was an activated conscience which told them they had sinned. They had a clear *knowledge* that they were convicted sinners.

"Fools hate knowledge" (Pro. 1:22) because their consciences cause them discomfort and embarrassment when "the principle of evil" works in them. Contrariwise, the true servants of Yahweh plead for ever-enriched knowledge, that they might more clearly understand His will and His purpose. "Teach me good judgment and *knowledge*; for I have believed Thy commandments" (Psa. 119:66).

The kingdom of Israel was overturned because, when confronted with the demands of the Truth, they would not respond. Why? Because their consciences had become deadened. How did this dreadful state develop? "My people are destroyed for *lack of knowledge*" (Hos. 4:6). They should have been aware of their responsibilities. Such a condition resulted from culpable neglect. They were without excuse. They had no commitment to the Truth, nor conscience produced through sound knowledge. Therefore they lacked the understanding that should have motivated them to strive earnestly to serve their God. "The principle of evil and the principle of good are the two laws which abide in the saints of God so long as they continue subject to mortality" (p. 137).

### Two Hostile Principles

At this point Brother Thomas invites the reader to "re-peruse" pages 89-90 "on the subject of these laws". We should heed his advice as we carefully consider the pages before us (pp. 137-142), for Brother Thomas sets forth a vital foundation for correctly understanding this subject: "The law of sin and death is *hereditary*, and derived from the federal sinner of the race; but the law of the mind is an intellectual and moral *acquisition*" (p. 137). There is ample Scriptural evidence to support this proposition (Rom. 7 being an outstanding example of inspired exposition on the theme).

These two principles are "hostile" to each other because "the flesh lusteth *against* the Spirit, and the Spirit *against* the flesh; and these are *contrary* (lit. *to lie opposite; to oppose; to be adverse to*) the one to the other" (Gal. 5:17).

We cannot over-estimate the importance of understanding this axiom. The Word of God reveals that humanity has inherited a natural bias towards sin. We do not *naturally* lean towards Godliness; such requires mental enlightenment and a willing submission to God's will. To deny this proposition is to deny that there is anything inherently wrong with human nature. Paul stated: "when I would do good, *the evil is present with me*" (Rom. 7:21, lit. Gr.). This is "the principle of evil" which is "hereditary". Christ is able to "sympathize with *our weaknesses*" because he bore the same nature as ourselves (Heb. 4:15, NASB; cp. ch. 2:14, 17).

It is foolish to deny that "the law of sin and death is hereditary". Clerics and "reverend divines" who pontificate about "the nobility of man" are preachers of foolish claptrap. There is nothing about human nature which should be either honored or treated with servile humility. On the other hand, it is gener-

ally little understood that "the law of the mind" is an intellectual and moral acquisition.

#### Seeking a Godly Mind

If "immortal souls" flit blissfully to heaven, why did the Lord Jesus teach his disciples: "*Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness... Seek, and ye shall find... Labor not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life...*" (Mat. 6:33; 7:7; Jn. 6:27)?

Since the mind of the Spirit must be acquired and is not natural to mankind, godly individuals throughout the ages have appealed to Yahweh to grant them the degree of spiritual awareness and understanding which is a prerequisite to finding divine approval. "With my whole heart have I *sought Thee... Teach me Thy statutes... Open Thou mine eyes... Make me to understand... Grant me Thy law graciously... Give me understanding... Incline my heart unto Thy testimonies...*" (Psa. 119:10, 12, 18, 27, 29, 34, 36).

The disposition of those who "seek" Godliness is made clear in the Word: "O how love I Thy law! It is my meditation all the day... How sweet are Thy words unto my taste! Yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth" (Psa. 119:97, 103). Such men and women have responded to the voice of divine wisdom, which cries out: "I love them that love me! And those that seek me early shall find me" (Prov. 8:17).

All these Scriptures attest that an "intellectual and moral" mind that is in harmony with the character of God is something which must be acquired. Human beings are not born into the world with an intellectual affinity nor motivation towards Godliness. Concerning mankind, the Word of God says: "As he thinketh in his heart, so is he" (Pro. 23:7). This statement must include every human being. What of the man with an uncontrolled ambition

to increase his wealth? Thinking of little else, he may consider nothing is immoral if it will increase his riches. What of the ambitious actor whose greatest pleasure in life is the fawning adulation of an adoring public, and who will see nothing wrong in anything he may do to increase his prestige and influence over others? In these examples, as with every person, "as he thinketh in his heart, so is he". This is stressing that whilst "the law of sin and death is hereditary" in all mankind, the character of every individual is developed, moulded and shaped according to their environment, mode of thinking, and the direction in which they desire to order their lives.

#### The Light Within

If an individual is content to follow the natural impulses of the flesh and to be guided by the ungodly philosophies which are propounded "in the name of humanity" — not in the Name of God! — what is the result? Brother Thomas says: "This is to him 'the light within'" (p. 138). It is the kind of "light" which was promulgated "in the philosophy of Plato, and in the logic of Aristotle". Simply, this is the "light" of the natural mind, which caused the Lord Jesus to teach: "If therefore the *light* that is in thee be *darkness*, how great is that darkness!" (Mat. 6:23).

Brother Thomas explains: "Now, the scripture saith, 'The commandment of God is a lamp; and His law is light' so that the prophet says, 'Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path'... Now, Isaiah testifies, that the Word is made up of God's law and testimony, and that those who do not speak according to it, have no light in them" (p. 138). Note that the fleshly mind, or what may be fed into it, is generally regarded by mankind as a form of intellectual illumination. But there is only one source of light that can lead to eternal redemption: "For

with Thee is the fountain of life; in *Thy light shall we see light*" (Psa. 36:9). All other forms of so-called light are merely the product of the fleshly mind, and are therefore of no value in developing the mind of the Spirit.

From these Scriptures, Brother Thomas deduced: "Light does not emanate from within; for sin, blood and flesh can give out none. It can only reflect it after the fashion of a mirror. The light is not in the mirror; but its surface is so constituted that when light falls upon it, it can throw it back, or reflect it, according to the law of light". These statements show the reader that the source of true light is indisputable, and the means whereby they may gain possession of it. All true light comes from the One Eternal Spirit. Mankind can only look to the Word of God for the light of truth, and reflect — like a mirror — that true light. Men look elsewhere in vain for true light. No wonder Brother Thomas concludes: "It is a mere conceit of the fleshly mind that man is born into the world with the light within; which requires only to be cherished to be sufficient to guide him in the right way". This belief negates the philosophy of the "divines" which assumes that "we are all God's children, and that all men are equal in the sight of God". This is nothing more than man-pleasing philosophy, which is contradicted by the Word of Truth. What say the Scriptures? "But *as many as received him, to them he gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in his name*" (Jn. 1:12, NASB).

#### What is Truth?

Whom will the Lord ultimately judge to be the true "children of God"? The Word answers: "As you therefore have *received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him, having been firmly rooted and now being built up in him and established in your faith, just as you*

*were instructed, and overflowing with gratitude*" (Col. 2:6-7, NASB).

The true spiritual offspring of Yahweh are those who receive the Lord as their Redeemer and King; who walk according to his ways and his words; who are firmly rooted and grounded in the Truth, thoroughly convinced of their faith; who are continually, day by day, being built up in the Truth and in their relationship with their Savior and their God; who are fully established in their faith in accordance with the purity of instruction they received which caused them to respond to the goodness of God by being baptised into the Lord Jesus Christ.

Only those whose minds have been illuminated with the light of divine truth can appreciate the darkness of the fleshly mind. "Yahweh! What is man that Thou takest knowledge of him! Or the son of man, that Thou makest account of him?" (Psa. 144:3).

"But what is truth?" asks Brother Thomas; and then provides the answer: "It is 'the light of the glorious gospel of Christ', who is the polished incorruptible fleshly mirror, which reflects the image of God". In using the word "fleshly" Brother Thomas is not insinuating that the Lord Jesus was a man of the flesh; that is borne out in the preceding word: "incorruptible". His meaning is that the Son of God was a reflection of the "image of God", the perfect character of the Deity; that he was, indeed, the *Word* made flesh.

#### Illumination Gives Knowledge

"God, then, is the *source* of light; the gospel of the kingdom in the name of Jesus is *the light*; and Christ is the *medium* through which it shines; hence he is styled THE SUN OF RIGHTEOUSNESS; also 'the true light'." (p. 139).

This conclusion is in harmony with other Scriptures. "God *is* light, and in Him is *no* darkness at all" (1Jn. 1:5). The Greek text is quite explicit. It does

not say "a light, or even *the* light", but simply "light". In the Word, light is always associated with truth, purity, knowledge, goodness, divine character and revelation. Therefore, in Scriptural parlance, it is to be understood that God is light *itself*. He is faultlessly pure in every conceivable respect. There is nothing in Him which could be regarded as being in any way imperfect. This is the reason for His perfection of character.

How important to consider that it is the reflection of this same light, as seen in the Lord Jesus Christ, that "hath shined into" the hearts of God's true saints "with the *illumination* of the *knowledge* of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" (2Cor. 4:6, J.T.).

Having arrived at these conclusions, the reader should reconsider *The Two Principles* — the principle of evil and the principle of good. Having shown that God's saints receive the priceless blessing of having the true light bestowed upon them, Brother Thomas reminds us: "But 'every man' is not enlightened by this glorious knowledge; for to some it is hid. The tablets of their hearts are so corroded and encrusted with opaque and sordid matter that they are destitute of all reflecting power. Light will not shine in a black surface. Hence, saith the apostle, 'if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: in whom the god of the world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ should shine unto them' (2Cor. 4:3-4)".

#### Continue in the Light

Throughout the ages, mankind in general have remained content to

accept "the law of sin and death" *because* it is hereditary. And why not? No fuss; no bother; no unnecessary waste of mental or physical energies; no wearying contentions; a comparatively easy way of life — simply following the dictates of their fleshly mind. So thinks the natural man. But his ignorance, willingly embraced, is his folly. "The way of the wicked is as *darkness*; they know not at what they stumble" (Pro. 4:19).

What then of those who will be found numbered among the wise at the Lord's coming?

Brother Thomas encourages his readers: "If a man have light, then it is very evident that it is *acquired from without*, and not a hereditary spark from within". Light and darkness are totally incompatible. The former is acquired from Yahweh; the latter is inherent in the flesh. The former represents purity, truth, knowledge, goodness, divine character, divine revelation; the latter stands for the flesh in which "dwells *no good thing*". Hence, John states: "The light shineth in darkness; and the darkness *comprehended it not*" (Jn. 1:5).

How blessed are those who have been drawn to the light of divine Truth; who have been mentally and morally raised above the "hereditary law of sin and death", that they might allow "the word of Christ to dwell in them richly, in all wisdom".

Through such illumination, they will be enabled to "walk in the light" until the coming of the King of Glory, thence to be received by him with joy into the glory of his kingdom (Col. 3:16; 1Jn. 1:7). — *John Ullman.*

### Forfeiting Friends.

It is not pleasant to lose one's old friends, but if they are determined that we shall teach what we do not believe, or suppress what we do to please them, or forfeit their goodwill and be turned adrift, we accept the latter alternative, and adrift we go.

— *J. Thomas.*