

The Necessity of a Revelation

"If we survey the starry canopy, thence no sign or voice is given expressive of the truth. They declare the eternal power and divinity of their Creator, but they speak not of the destiny of the earth or of man upon it ... Turn we to man and ask him, 'Whence comest thou, and what is thy destiny? Whence all the evil of thy nature, why art thou mortal, who made thee, who involved thee in the wide-spread ruin and calamity on every side?'" Ask an infant of days the history of the past, and he can as well detail it as man can answer these inquiries without a revelation from Him who is before all, and to whom is known from the beginning all He intends shall come to pass ... To the Bible, then, all must come at last if they would be truly wise in spiritual things. This is a great truth which few of the sons of men have learned to appreciate according to its importance ...

Elpis Israel, pp. 2-3.

Brother Thomas divided *Elpis Israel* into three parts.

The first expounds upon the basic principles revealed in the divine revelation to mankind: the only source of true wisdom; the purpose in the creation of all things; how sin entered into the world and how death came upon the human race; a true definition of religion and the doctrine of immortality; and the present order of things upon earth in relation to the Age to Come.

Part Two deals, comprehensively and compellingly, with "the things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ." The key is provided to understand the true nature of the gospel and its indispensable relationship to the promises made to the fathers of Israel. The relativity of the Mosaic dispensation to the purpose of Yahweh is

explained. Towards the end of Part Two, the "name" of the Lord Jesus Christ is shown to be inexorably linked with the re-establishment of the kingdom of Israel and the throne of David, and the building of the temple described in Ezekiel's prophecy.

Part Three deals exclusively with Bible prophecy. The present "pandemonianism of the world" is set against the background of Nebuchadnezzar's vision, which represents "an autocracy to be manifested in these Latter Days." The unfolding of fulfilling prophecy is traced through Roman-Babylon and the "two witnesses" of the Apocalypse. Ezekiel 38 and related prophecies are examined in detail, and the reader is brought ultimately to the events leading to Armageddon, the "resurrection" of the nation of Israel, the second exodus, and the

establishment of God's kingdom on the earth for 1,000 years.

A Fitting Beginning

It was expedient that Brother Thomas should commence his book by defining Part First of his work as "The Rudiments of the World" — which means, "the first principles" of the world. That is to say, the fundamental ideals which existed in the mind of the Deity when He considered the creative work He was to implement and bring to fruition.

The heading for chapter one is also significant: "The Necessity of a Revelation." When commencing the instruction of an individual in the "first principles" of the faith — especially one who is largely ignorant of the Biblical teaching — it is always wise to begin at this point. It was not merely desirable but a "necessity" that God should reveal Himself and His purpose to the human race. Were it not so, mankind would be limited to "the imagination" of their own mind, which is only "evil from his youth" when left to its own rationalism. Without a revelation from the Creator, man would be directed only according to fleshly philosophy. Consistently, there has been ample evidence in the world as to the destructive effects which result from the reasoning of the fleshly mind. Not only does it leave mankind alienated from their Creator "through the ignorance that is in them" but, just as disastrously, leaves them "alienated and enemies" of God through their "wicked works" for which they have no remedy within themselves (Eph. 4:18; Col. 1:21).

Therefore, without a divine revelation the human race would have no knowledge of their Creator, or His purpose, or their own needs and how He has provided for them.

The world abounds with religious people. From the most highly educated and sophisticated, to the most simple and primitive, it would be difficult to discover a race or a class that does not have some form of religion, worshipping gods of extraordinary diversity.

The Many Voices of Apostasy

What of "Christianity", so-called? A multifarious assortment of discordant and disparate denominations, speaking with a bewildering array of contrasting voices — such is a logical summary of that which passes commonly for the "Christian" religion. How can "christians" call themselves One Religion when there is such diversity within their ranks? Concerning the efforts of the clergy, Brother Thomas wrote: "If by their labours they were to make all the earth like England and America, it would still need to be converted to the religion of Christ ..." (p. 217). Thus, concerning this class of professing religionists, Brother Thomas had earlier written: "They have nothing to do with the word of reconciliation except to pervert it, and to bring it into disrepute. The principles of the apostasy, and indeed of all false religion, are such as result from the thinking of the flesh when left to its own communings" (p. 160).

In view of the fact that there exists a Body of people known as the Christadelphians, who are fully persuaded out of the Scriptures of truth that they comprehend — and walk in the way of — the one true apostolic faith, should they not be a people who greatly rejoice? "The necessity of a revelation" will never be questioned by clear-thinking men and women. But whether those who are immeasurably blessed to receive an understanding of that revelation will continue to appreciate the priceless

value of the knowledge they have been granted, is another matter. The history of the Truth from the days of Cain and Abel has been a constantly recurring record of men and women ceasing to value the "revelation" they had received by the goodness and mercy of a loving God. Losing their sense of responsibility in such matters, they have departed from the One Faith, being led astray through the weakness of their fleshly mind or the effect of ungodly influences which they have permitted to rule their thinking.

A Heritage Beyond Price

A knowledge and understanding of the Truth is a priceless acquisition, totally irreplaceable by any substitute. Those who are richly blessed to receive such an understanding, and to be encouraged in their faith by works such as *Elpis Israel* should never cease to thank God for His inestimable mercy towards them, and to value above all other considerations the eternal heritage He has placed within their grasp.

Thus, those who have received the Truth should appreciate beyond measure "the necessity of a revelation" from God, which He has provided within the pages of His Word; for they must humbly acknowledge that without such a precious "revelation" they would remain locked within the stifling confines of their own minds — minds of fleshly thinking; not minds in harmony with the thinking of the spirit of Yahweh.

Examine Chapter Headings

In reading *Elpis Israel* it is always wise to consider the precis which is given beneath each chapter heading. The brief outline at the beginning of chapter one (Part First) is most illuminating, and is instructive. The reader should particularly note that

Brother Thomas affirms that the Scriptures provide the "only source of true wisdom" and states that "the study of the Bible (is) urged, to facilitate and promote which is the object of this volume." *Elpis Israel* was written specifically and purposefully to encourage the study of the Bible, as the sacred divine "revelation" to man. It was not written to advance the religious philosophies of its Author. He showed no reticence at having his exposition closely perused in the light of the holy oracles of God. "All writers and speakers must be *unceremoniously* tried by this; for, God hath said, that 'if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.' It matters not who the sinner may be; pope, cardinal, archbishop, bishop, minister, or their admirers; or, even one of the saints of God, or an angel himself; nothing he may say, or write, must be received unless in strict conformity to this word; and of this the people must judge for themselves upon their own responsibility ... To this Book, then, we appeal for light" (p. 170, our italics).

The Bible The Only Unchanging Source of Truth

The above quotation conveys a great deal concerning the attitude and character of Brother Thomas. He considered his reputation to be of no importance. He asked his readers for nothing, save a close examination of the Scriptures. He deplored ceremony, whilst appreciating the need for a sword-like application of the Scriptures to all dogmas and creeds. No writer or speaker — despite any pretensions they may have to respectability or fame — should be exempt from the probing scrutiny of the Word of God. The Scriptures alone must be the arbiter

on all issues involving divine truth and wisdom.

Bro. Thomas understood these clear-cut issues. Having begun his search for the Truth some 16 years earlier, he had come to the unequivocal conclusion that "the religious world is utterly destitute of the spirit which belongs to God's religion, because it is ignorant of the gospel, and understands not the voices of the prophets" (p. 164).

Thus in the opening words of the book the Author makes an overall observation concerning the earth and the teeming millions of mankind who inhabit its land mass. In 1849, world population was estimated to be about one billion. It obviously impressed Brother Thomas as rather incongruous that, whilst "the heavens" declare "the glory of God", upon the face of the earth the picture is quite different: "a thousand millions, subject to sin, disease, and death ..." In this manner the Author promptly touches upon the heart of all mankind's problems. They are three-fold: sin, disease, death.

Man: Placed at the Head of Creation

"Sin" was the first catastrophe to affect humankind, which resulted in a sentence of "death" being pronounced by the Creator. Man's nature then became sin-prone and death-stricken. With such weakness inherent in the flesh, "disease" and physical afflictions of varying maladies became the inevitable outworking of the frailness which now became intrinsic in human nature.

Becoming, then, "animal, sensual, and mortal" as the result of "sin", the end result was not pleasing to Yahweh. Man's "crimes ... rather than his virtues" set a pattern for

human existence which was contrary to that which the Creator had desired (Gen. 1:26,28).

Exposition of the Truth Essential

Obviously showing no inclination to elevate his readers by commencing his book with a discourse upon the so-called "nobility" of man — a phrase beloved by the undiscerning clergy — Brother Thomas set down a clear description of mankind: "His heart is evil; and, left to its uncontrolled impulses, he becomes licentious, merciless, and more cruel than the fiercest beast of prey." Even worse: "Such is the being that claims the independent sovereignty of the globe ... He repudiates all lordship over him, and claims the inalienable and inherent right of self-government, and of establishing whatever civil and ecclesiastical institutions are best suited to his sensuality and caprice" (pp. 1-2).

Strong words. Not in harmony with the kind of saccharine drivel that is commonly dispensed by the "wise" of this world in an age of flesh-gratifying toleration and indulgence in every form of humanistic perversity.

Once convicted concerning the truth of a matter, Brother Thomas did not hesitate to affirm his belief. Categorically, and without any willingness to pander to the puerile conceits of the flesh, he set forth the teaching of the Word; for he understood that "it is by the truth only we can be saved" — and not "a substitute for it" (p. 188).

Understanding of the Truth Imperative

How essential it is that men and women, brought into contact with the saving power of God's Word, should understand it clearly and correctly. Upon all matters related to

eternal salvation, *the Truth* is indispensable. Yahweh's revealed Truth has no equivalent. He alone is the source of a "revelation" to mankind which has the power to eternally save men and women. Any ideology or opinions advanced by men which are not in accord with that word, should be treated as both spurious and dangerous.

Those who have been blessed to receive the One True Faith should hold it with an earnest determination, prizing their knowledge and its power to deliver them from sin and death. Brother Thomas quoted the apostle Peter to describe such a

priceless heritage as "this precious faith" (2 Pet. 1:1). And constantly throughout *Elpis Israel* he encouraged his readers to understand and walk in the way of *the Truth*. "A man cannot honour God more than in believing *what He promises*, and doing what He commands ... God is pleased with this faith, because it honours Him. It is a working faith. There is life in it, and its exercise proves that the believer loves Him. Such a man it is God's delight to honour ... The time will certainly come when God will acknowledge him (p. 75).
J. Ullman

BIBLE MARKING

Continuation of the Psalms Exposition

Readers may recall that the late editor, Bro. H. P. Mansfield, was engaged in an exposition of the Psalms through the pages of Logos at the time of his death. He found much comfort and encouragement by considering the many themes and exhortations which are contained in these moving Psalms of song and praise.

Bro. Mansfield was engaged in expounding Psalm 34 and had already presented to the readers of Logos the background to the Psalm in Volume 53 pages 339-341 and commenced the exposition on pages 337-379. At that stage death overtook him and he laid down his pen to rest. The present writer was always a keen follower of Bro. Mansfield's exposition on the Psalms having engaged in some study of this area of the Word. Like many others he has appreciated the comforting words of the Psalmist which can stir us to elevate the mind to the spiritual heights of the "sweet Psalmist of Israel". Indeed they can bring us to the same expression as the Apostle Paul, "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor? Or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again? For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: To whom be glory for ever. Amen" (Rom. 11:33-36).

Having appreciated the work of Brother Mansfield in the exposition of the Psalms, we thought it worthwhile to continue the series according to our limited ability, and we trust that readers will once again rejoice in the Psalmist's hope as these are cultivated in future issues (God willing)
R. McAllister