

The Truth is the Purifier

"Ye are clean," said Jesus to his disciples, "through the word which I have spoken to you." This word, which is defined to be "the law and the testimony," is the great instrument of holiness and purification. It changes men's minds, loosens their attachment to earthly things; causes them to place their affection on things above; creates a new and right spirit within them; diffuses the love of God abroad in their hearts; separates them from sinners; leads them into Christ; and develops in their lives fruit characteristic of that repentance which needs not to be repented of. The Lord Jesus styles it, "the word of the kingdom"; and Peter, "the incorruptible seed"; and Paul, "the word of the truth of the gospel"; and John, "God's seed"; and by James it is termed, "the word of Truth" ... There is no such thing in the scriptures as a renewed ignorant man ... The truth is the purifier to those only who understand and obey it ...

Elpis Israel, pp. 52-53

Whilst chapter one of Part First covers only nine pages, and therefore serves as a general introduction concerning that which is to follow, the second chapter comprises sixty-three pages. Chapter two covers an astonishing era of Scripture, under the general heading "The Creation of the Earth and Man."

Having established the reality of a six-literal-day period of Creation, the author then reflected upon the seventh day, when, as the A.V. records, "God (Elohim) ... rested on the seventh day from all His work ..." This led Bro. Thomas to a consideration of the significance of the sabbath: as a type, both in its pre-Mosaic setting and as expressed in the terminology of the Law of Moses. He shows his readers that a correct understanding of the significance of the sabbath "implies a faithful mind and a gracious disposition as the result of knowing the truth" because, to such an individual, it would be "a delight" to fulfil the pleasure and will of the Creator. Surely this presents a great lesson for all Yahweh's faithful servants: they should consider every day as a "sabbath" in that they should be willing to "rest" from the laborious works of sin and continue

"doing" what God requires (p. 14). Brother Thomas advances the reasoned explanation that the "six" literal days of creation typified the six one-thousand-year "days" in which sin and death would hold sway over humanity, but the seventh one-thousand-year period would witness the ushering-in of the Kingdom Age, ruled over by immortals who would, in the glory of divine nature, have found complete and everlasting "rest" from the works of sin. The "sabbath" God requires sinful men to observe during their period of probation, is to *cease from the works of the flesh*, as completely as He rested from the work of creation on the seventh day that their characters may be developed after the pattern of the Divine likeness (p. 20). Such a disposition will prepare them for eternal redemption. Thus, lessons to be learned from the significance of the sabbath are worthy of our careful and thoughtful consideration.

"The Formation of Man"

Then follows a ten page section under the above sub-heading. This section of the book has great import, for it has relationship to numerous fundamental

doctrinal issues. It commences with the observation: "The sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath ... Upon this principle, man was not made for religion, but religion for him ..."

The word religion is derived from the Latin, *ligare*, meaning "to bind", thus re-ligion signifies "to bind again". It could only have had any meaning for man after sin had entered the world. Man, by transgression, established a gulf between himself and God, which only the One Eternal Spirit could bridge. Thus, man needed to be "bound again" into a state of harmony with his Creator, such as had existed before the fall. In view of the fact that "it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps" (Jer. 10:23) it was totally beyond man's capacity to provide his own remedy for his state of estrangement from God. In all spiritual matters, "God is truly the only wise physician, whose practice is based upon perfect knowledge"; therefore He alone could provide efficacious religion — or, the means whereby the breach between God and man could be remedied. This, Brother Thomas describes as "Bible religion," (p. 27). To this, he adds a word of warning: "An attempt to 'cure souls' without understanding the constitution of man as revealed by Him who created him, is mere theological experimentation, and as bootless, and more fatally destructive than the empiricism (i.e., a quack; one who knows only experimentation) of the most ignorant pretenders to the healing art ..." (p. 28). Such a belief is in accord with the teaching of the Word: "An hypocrite with his mouth destroyeth his neighbour: but through knowledge shall the just be delivered" (Prov. 11:9).

The Corruption of the Truth

In reading this section of *Elpis Israel* we are reminded that popular christianity is founded upon two major doctrinal fables: the first concerns God (the doctrine of the trinity); the second concerns man (the alleged immortality of the soul). How delightful it is to read, in these pages, the truth concerning the latter. And how important to understand that so many other erroneous doc-

trines taught by christendom spring from their basic falsity in this matter. For example, if man has an "immortal soul" then there must be a place to which it may be transported after death; and since it is beyond reason to imagine that all "souls" are worthy of eternal bliss, the human mind invented heaven-going and hell. Cogitation upon these premises would necessitate someone being "in charge" of each place; hence "St. Peter" at the "pearly gates", handing out harps and haloes; whilst at the "other" place — oh, shudder and tremble! — the great hairy cloven-footed, long-tailed Devil, complete with viciously applied pitch-fork, raging flames, and sulphurous sufferings beyond description. Such fantasies are not only positively destructive, they are also negatively so. In the befuddled minds of men, they invalidate all concepts of a resurrection from the dead, a Kingdom of God upon the earth, a Divine theocracy reigning over all nations. The three great covenants of promise become largely meaningless. In other words, by embracing a doctrine as the immortality of the soul, the entire gospel message is perverted beyond recognition.

Those who have been blessed with a clear understanding of these issues of life and death should not only count their blessings, but also continue to "contend earnestly" for the Divine truths which have been revealed to them. *Elpis Israel* is of great value in building upon faith, in providing the sound conviction to reject "profane, vain babblings" and "vain philosophy" of human deception.

The Truth must be correctly understood and believed. It must also be preserved in its purity. The alternative is to see it corrupted. Brother Thomas wrote: "The dogma of an immortal soul in mortal sinful flesh has eaten out the marrow and fatness, the flesh and sinew, of the doctrine of Christ; and has left behind only an ill-conditioned and ulcerated skeleton of Christianity, whose dry bones rattle in the winds of doctrine that are blowing around us ..." (P. 29).

"Man in the Image and Likeness of the Elohim"

The creation of man completed, Brother Thomas describes the result of this Divine labour as "this exquisite mechanism" — a beautiful expression to honour the wonder of the human mind and body produced by the all-wise, Omnipotent Creator. A realisation of this was acknowledged by the Psalmist, when he confessed: "I am fearfully and wonderfully made ..." (Psa. 139:14). Sin was to leave its blemish and effect upon humanity. But at the beginning it was not so.

"Man," wrote Brother Thomas, "differs from other creatures in having been modelled after a divine type, or pattern." In the matter of "image" man was created according to the "form or shape" "of the Elohim"; whereas "likeness hath regard to mental constitution, or *capacity*..." Though possessed of such advantages, the original "similitude has been so greatly marred, that his posterity present but a faint representation" of that which the Elohim had created at the first. In other words, sin and its effect blemished the original pattern and production.

Scripture provides a definition of the condition of the human race that is

direct and revealing: "The whole world lieth in wickedness ..." Thus God sent Christ "that he might deliver us from this *evil* world, according to the will of God and our Father ..." (1 John 5:19; Gal. 1:4).

Despite the plight of humanity, Brother Thomas encouraged his readers to take heart, and to learn to walk in the ways of Yahweh, which alone can lead to a hope of eternal redemption. "How consoling and cheering it is," he wrote, "amid all the evils of the present state, that God hath found a ransom, who is willing and able to deliver us from the power of the grave; and not only so, but that 'at the manifestation of the sons of God' when he shall appear in power and great glory *we shall be like him*; because we shall see him as he is.' Then will the saints be 'changed into the same image from glory' (now only a matter of hope), 'into glory' (as seen and actually possessed), 'even as the Lord' himself was changed when he became 'the spirit giving life' or 'a quickening spirit.'

Encouraged by the hope which is set before us, let us acknowledge the value of such works as *Elpis Israel* to assist us in the building-up of our faith in preparation for the Lord's coming.

— John Ullman.

BIBLE MARKING

Psalm 34 — The Care of Yahweh

(Continuing Verse 9 from page 45)

The more we learn to "fear Yahweh" the holier we become. Such an understanding should not be confused with the professed *outward* displays of holiness, such as were manifested by the Pharisees; for the attitude required in this verse speaks of an *inner disposition* which will be revealed in a holy way of life. The word *gadowsh* is used in this way only here and in Psa. 16:3; 89:5,7; 106:16, refers to those whose characters accord with their claim to be members of Yahweh's "holy nation" (cp. Exod. 19:6; Deut. 7:6; Lev. 11:44-45 with 1 Pet. 1:15-17; 2:9; 3:15).

"For there is no want to them that fear Him" — To those of such a disposition there will be no lack of things essential to salvation. Yahweh's blessings are seen in many ways, which only those who have "tasted" (v. 8) can appreciate. David realised this during the strictures of his time in the cave of Adullam (cp. Psa. 23:1, 5-6). Paul taught, "Godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come" (1 Tim. 4:8). Concerning present "wants" he said: "I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content" (Phil. 4:11).

— to be continued