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A STUDY OF THE THEOLOGY OF DR. JOHN THOMAS, FOUNDER OF THE CHRISTADELPHIANS

by

WILLIAM LESTER THOMPSON

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts
School of Religion

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INTRODUCTION

The theme of this dissertation was suggested to me by Dr. F. D. Kershner, Head of the Christian Doctrine Department of the School of Religion. His interest, which I came to possess also, in one of the movements that began within the Christian Church was the basis of that suggestion.

After a very careful reading of the Apostolic Advocate and Millennial Harbinger during 1834-1839, I came to understand the basic contentions of Dr. John Thomas and Alexander Campbell. Two biographical sketches of Dr. Thomas served to point out the cause and time of division between them. It soon became apparent, that the doctor's doctrines were summarized in his Elpis Israel, first written in 1850. Our library possesses the volume in its fourth edition.

This dissertation is an attempt to lay before the reader the cardinal tenets of this work. In it, I have outlined his ideas, giving suitable documentation, and have made a brief evaluation of his system. The volumes of Dr. Thomas' two additional periodicals are in the possession of Mr. John Lea of Philadelphia. Access to them would enable the student of this movement to see it more clearly in its years of development.

It is my conclusion that the theology of Dr. Thomas and his Christadelphians lacks Scriptural soundness, well-rounded comprehension of Christianity and an adequate grasp of the need for reformation of contemporary Christianity. The wisdom of Mr. Campbell, as seen in his treatment of these teachings by word and pen, will be at once evident to the

reader.

I wish to acknowledge my gratitude to Dr. Kershner for his personal interest in this subject. To Mr. Lea, Mr. Zilmer, and Mr. Mann, contemporary American Christadelphians my thanks are extended for generous aid in securing material. Mr. C. C. Ware of Wilson, North Carolina was especially kind in visiting me at the School of Religion and making available to me some contemporary literature on the movement.

CHAPTER I

JOHN THOMAS, M. D. NOT D. D.

John Thomas was born, the son of an Independent clergyman, in Hoxton Square, London on April 12, 1805. No details of his childhood days are given by his biographers except that he was subject to the advantages and limitations of children born in the home of the ministry.¹

At the age of twelve, he began a two year tutorship at the hands of a private surgeon, the son-in-law of the parish curate at Chorley in Lancashire. At sixteen, he returned to London and for the ensuing two years put himself under a general practitioner near Paddington. At the end of these four preparatory years, he entered as student at St. Thomas hospital in London where he attended lectures, did private studying, and acted as anatomy demonstrator in London Borough hospital. After receiving his diploma

¹Two principle biographies are used for the information contained in this chapter. Dr. Thomas: His Life and Work by Robert Roberts is the chief source. The author, a close friend and ardent disciple of the movement promulgated by Dr. Thomas, based his biography ". . . on information imparted orally to the writer by the doctor himself, and largely drawn from the periodicals published by him over a period of thirty years; all of which the writer has been fortunate enough to procure, with the single exception of the Investigator, published about the year 1844." (p. 4) The volume, however, is weak at one point: the author had no access to the Harbinger and thus no quotations are made from it except as they appear from Dr. Thomas' own periodicals. (p. 125) The biography was written about 1894 (see Chapter heading p. 307); the copy I read was a reprint made in 1911.

The second source was The Life and Writings of Dr. Thomas, edited by John W. Lea of Philadelphia and published in June of 1915. It makes liberal use of the volume described above, adds a few quotations, and still betrays the lack of acquaintance with Campbellian literature.

Throughout the five volumes of the Apostolic Advocate numerous autobiographical sketches of Dr. Thomas' early life may be found. I note here only a few: Vol. 5, pp. 57-66, 85-93, 129-141, 159-166. See also the Mil-lennial Harbinger, 1835, pp. 86-91. A complete set of the Harbinger has been at my disposal throughout.

he became companion to a London physician for three years following which he had his own practice at Hackney for a similar period.

Caught by the immigration fever of the 1830's he sailed for America in May of 1832. His father soon joined him and they went to make their home in Cincinnati. During his seven months stay there, while his father was minister for a Baptist church, he became acquainted with Major Daniel Gano, Clerk of the Supreme Court of the United States and Walter Scott, a minister, both members of the Church of Christ. The latter, after convincing him of the necessity for "baptism for the remission of sins", immersed him into Christ in the Miami Canal. This brought him into relations with a religious group that was to largely shape his future.

In the spring of 1833 he left Cincinnati for the East and on his way stopped at Bethany, Virginia, to make the acquaintance of Alexander Campbell. At the latter's suggestion, Dr. Thomas preached at the Wellsburg Church and as a result revealed his fine speaking talent. With Mr. Campbell's good wishes he went to Philadelphia and entered into his medical practice at the same time preaching for the Church of Christ there. During his stay of eleven months he married. In this city also he began his career as an editor. The first issues of the Apostolic Advocate were edited in that city. In June of 1834, he moved to Richmond, the original point of destination. Here for the next two and a half years he practiced his medical profession, evangelized in nearby regions, and edited his paper. At the close of 1836 he removed to Amelia County near Paineville where he continued the above-mentioned labors. His medical profession decreased in attention while his religious activity increased.

December of 1839 found him preparing to move his family to Illinois

where he intended to take up farming. He early learned that he was not cut out to be a farmer and considered taking up his editorial career again. After a few months of newspaper printing, in 1842 he began publishing a monthly religious magazine called the Investigator. The last two issues were published in Louisville, Kentucky where he had moved after financial difficulties. A year's residence there and then to Richmond for a new start! His work now consisted chiefly in the publication of the Herald of the Kingdom. For the next several years he lived in Richmond and except for his first two trips to Britain (1848-1850 and 1862-1863) remained there until about 1865 and moved to Mott Haven, then to West Hoboken, New Jersey; his last years were spent in New York.¹ During these years he was constantly writing and lecturing and the extent of his labors will be seen when we consider his life in greater detail.

In May, 1869 he made his third visit to Britain and after a year's stay determined to return for his family. This plan was never carried out; on his return to the United States he accepted invitations for lectures and on one of these trips was taken ill. He died March 5, 1871 at the age of 65 and was buried in Greenwood Cemetery, Brooklyn. This, in brief, is a biographical sketch of the author of the theology we are to consider in this paper.

In order to properly understand the writings of Dr. Thomas it is essential that we probe deeper into certain aspects of his life. Of prime importance, of course, is his religious life, including its background, preparation and expression.

¹ John W. Lea, The Life and Writings of Dr. Thomas (Philadelphia: The Faith Publishing Company, 1915) Vol. I, p. 211

Infant baptism was administered to him in his father's church, the Congregational,¹ and then at the age of seventeen he joined² His membership was of short duration when after six months he resigned. Little attention was given to religion during his student days and not until he suffered shipwreck on the Atlantic did he give it serious consideration. Amid the lashing waves

He concluded that the best thing to do in the circumstances would be, as the waves were closing over him, to go down with the prayer upon his lips, "Lord have mercy upon me for Christ's sake." At the same time he determined within himself that if ever he got on terra firma again, he should never rest till he found out the truth of the matter, that he might no more be found in such an uncertain state of mind.³

This resolution was kept when he contacted both Presbyterian and Baptist ministers in New York City and Christian ministers in Cincinnati. Major Daniel Gano and Walter Scott were interested in the doctor's search for truth and spoke to him about baptism for the remission of sins alluding to the case of the Ethiopian treasurer.⁴ The doctor responded to their clear presentation of the truth and was forthwith immersed into Christ. This constituted him a Christian and a member of the Church of Christ; it aligned him also with the current Reformation being ardently advocated by Scott and Campbell. From 1832 until 1846 the doctor was one of the Reformers.

His new stand caused his father, then preaching in a Baptist church in Cincinnati, to turn from him, only later to embrace his same position.⁵ Added to his interest in the pursuit of the medical profession was the new

¹John Thomas, Apostolic Advocate, (Richmond, 1834-1839), Vol. 1, p. 211

²Robert Roberts, Dr. Thomas, his Life and Work, (Birmingham: C.C. Walker, 1911) p. 205.

³Ibid., p. 11.

⁴Acts 8

⁵A.A. Vol. 1, pp. 206-216.

concern for the discovery of the truth from the New Testament. He became a constant reader of its pages. On his way to Richmond he visited Alexander Campbell and through his urgency was turned to consider preaching. With reluctance he addressed the brethren at Wellsburg and other places but proved an excellent talent for exhorting. This impetus led to his preaching labors for Churches of Christ both in Philadelphia and Richmond.

In May of 1834 he began, at the suggestion of a member of the Philadelphia church, the publication of a monthly paper entitled The Apostolic Advocate. The first sentence of its Prospectus defines its aim. "This work shall be devoted to the Ancient Gospel and the Original Constitution of Things as proclaimed and appointed by the Apostles."¹ The five years which followed were devoted to its publication; we may style these the Advocate years. It was during this period that Dr. Thomas was most ardent in his support of the Reformation but was beginning vaguely to consider ideas that ultimately led to his break with the movement. A rather thorough study of the five volumes of the Advocate shows his ardent advocacy of the principles of the Reformation. He lived them, wrote them, preached them and debated them.²

It was during the Advocate years that seed was sown which led to the dissolution of his relationship with the Reformers. Three particular factors are evident. The first was Dr. Thomas' advocacy of the re-immersion of Baptists. He contends that since they had no faith in the risen Christ and the remission of sins through baptism into Him, they were in reality unbaptized. Mr. Campbell thought his reasoning was accurate but advised, for the sake of expediency to the Reformation, that such a message be proclaimed carefully and that any subsequent practice on the part of Baptists be carried

¹A. A. Vol. 1, p. 1.

²A.A. Vol. 1, pp. 223-228, Vol. 2, pp. 32-42, Vol. 3, pp. 49-72, Entire 3rd issue, Vol. 4, pp. 124-131, 165-171, 192-199, 270-275, 303-311.

out in private. The doctor scoffed at "expediency" and lashed out at Baptists for being the subjects of a ceremony no better than "a Jewish ab-lution".¹

The second was his theory of the state of the dead. Dr. Thomas was much concerned with the nature of man and taught that he was naturally mortal. Through Christ he could become immortal, but only so after he had slept in the grave until the resurrection. His idea of conditional im-mortality carried with it also the corollary that "infants, idiots, and pagans" were annihilated at death. Mr. Campbell termed this "materialism" and "speculation", opposing it bitterly.²

The third factor was known as "the Lunenburg controversy". In answer to a question relative to Christians among Protestant parties, Mr. Campbell wrote the following opinion to a woman in Lunenburg County, Virginia:

But who is a Christian? I answer, everyone that believes in his heart that Jesus of Nazareth is the Messiah, the Son of God; repents of his sins, and obeys him in all things according to the measure of the knowledge of his will.³

¹Reference may be made to the following sources for a full considera-tion of this point: M.H., 1835, pp. 417-420, 565-567, 619, 1836, pp. 56-64, 227-231. A.A. Vol. 2, pp. 130-139, 160-168, 180-185, 193-205, 273-280.

²The references to this written discussion are numerous. The fol-lowing list will serve to inform the reader of the main arguments on the part of both men. A.A., Vol. 2, pp. 177-180, 217-223, 241-246; Vol. 3, pp. 25-38, 83-88, 186-189, 190-191, 208-212, 217-226, 228-232, 240-243, 246-252, 270-281; Vol. 4, pp. 10-27, 43-46, 84-89, 96-103. M.H., 1836, pp. 169-174, 224-227, 396-403, 407-411, 451-457, 520-525, 556-560; 1837, pp. 143-144; See also 1844, pp. 529-576 which contains A. Campbell's extra on Life and Death.

³Alexander Campbell, Millennial Harbinger, (Bethany: printed by Mr. Campbell, 1830-1866) 1837, p. 411.

Dr. Thomas thought this was going too far. He thought it surrendered the whole message of the Bible and was thus a compromise of the faith. Mr. Campbell expressed it only as an opinion, basing it on the proposition that God could not hold one responsible for something he did not know provided he had made every effort to learn. The rift created by this controversy was never to subside; it tended to set Dr. Thomas against Mr. Campbell and caused the former to define his position in increasingly narrower terms.¹

Under the conviction that he had the truth in these matters, the doctor continued to advocate them. Mr. Campbell's patience wore thin when Dr. Thomas participated in a debate on the "State of the Dead" held in Fork Church, in Lunenburg, Virginia, August 1-5, 1837.² The doctor's opponent was a Presbyterian minister named Watt. As a result the doctor was called on the carpet by Mr. Campbell when shortly thereafter he demanded:

I will only add, that in a case of this sort, an explicit renunciation of these nine doctrines, not merely a promise to suppress them or to hold them as private property, as though they were inoperative opinions, would be indispensable to Christian communion.³

We shall not here discuss the details of the ensuing "crisis" but shall pass on to the outcome of this demand.⁴ After much discussion of the "crisis" in both papers a personal meeting was effected in Paineville, Virginia. The outcome of this was an agreement made by Dr. Thomas with his church, acceptable with Mr. Campbell, that he would ". . . discontinue the discussion of

¹For further reading on this point may be done by referring to the following references: M.H. 1837, pp. 411-414, 561-567, 577-588 (an extra); A.A. Vol. 4, pp. 231-242, 280-284.

²A.A., Vol. 4, pp. 142-143; M.H., 1837, pp. 508-509.

³M.H., 1837, p. 514.

⁴The details of the crisis may be known by a close reading of the Nov. 1837-Nov. 1838 issues of the Advocate and studying certain articles in the Nov. 1837-Feb. 1839 issues of the Harbinger.

". . . certain things . . ." in relation to the mortality of man, the Resurrection of the Dead, and the final destiny of the wicked, . . . " . . . unless in his defence when misrepresented."¹ The crisis subsided for the time being but the doctor was not convinced that he was in any sense in error. Six months later he closed his paper and moved to Illinois. Thus were brought to a close his Apostolic Advocate years; they had been five in number.

His move to Illinois began his years of uncertainty. Should he disband his study of and concern for those truths he felt to be vital? The years from 1839-1846 were to determine the answer.

A few minor incidents in Illinois served to keep alive his interest in what he conceived to be the truth. While farming near Naperville he preached from time to time on Sundays in town. After moving to St. Charles to publish a weekly newspaper he lived with one of the Reformers; he soon turned his weekly newspaper over to his friend and began the publication of the Investigator. The title of this religious paper is significant of his interest at that time. He preached in a Universalist church upon numerous occasions and held a two-day debate with a Mormon preacher. His year at Louisville increased his religious activity. In this city, he held a week's debate with a Universalist, which was sufficiently acceptable to the Reformers that it restored some of their confidence in him. A major turning point in his career was his acquaintance with the Millerite movement--a second advent group. Having read Millerite literature he became interested in correcting its views; this led to studies in prophecy. The natural outcome of this contact was the new name for his paper: Herald of the Future Age. "He adopted this title," says his biographer, "because he had come to see that the truth of the gospel was identified with the approach of the age of

¹A.A., Vol. 5, p. 249.

Messiah's reign on the earth."¹

In 1844 he moved to Richmond and the ensuing years, with their conflict with the Reformers and continued study in prophecy, produced a clear-cut position in the mind of the doctor. The position was brought to a head following a series of lectures in one of the Reformation churches in New York.² These lectures were of a highly prophetic nature and caused him no little mental concern. Accompanied by a perusal of an article which had appeared in an English periodical entitled, "The Hope of the Gospel"³ he concluded that salvation was based not on faith but on hope. He was moved, thereupon, to be immersed again, considering himself an unbaptized person. This he did, and thus his mind was set on the gospel of hope.⁴ He was, at this junction, a reformer in deed but not in word.

Dr. Thomas, from this time on, may be considered to have been a Christadelphian. The name was applied many years later but the thought was clear. In March of 1847 he published his Confession and Abjuration followed by his Declaration. In these, he announced that he had been teaching error and henceforth would teach the truth. His break with the Reformation is

¹Roberts, op. cit., p. 171.

²See Lea, op. cit., pp. 139-144 for summary of contents of New York lectures.

³The Christian Messenger and Reformer, Ed. by James Wallis. (London: Simpkin, Marshall and Co., 1839-40), pp. 162-170. Also Roberts, op. cit., p. 203.

⁴The first response on the part of Mr. Campbell appears in the July 1850 issue of the Harbinger. He commends Dr. Walsh of Richmond for denouncing Thomas' teaching on a partial resurrection. He then says: "I wish the Doctor could re-baptize Dr. Thomas. I have understood that he baptized him into what Dr. Thomas (they say) has recently diluted into a volume, called 'Elpis Israel' or 'The Hope of Israel'." (p. 414) In the September, 1852 issue Mr. Campbell referred again to this incident. Dr. Walsh sent to the Harbinger the first of a series of articles on "Destructionism" relative to which the editor remarked, "We solicit attention to it, and especially would commend it to the attention of the few bewildered disciples of the wandering star of 'Elpis Israel', especially as it comes from a brother who administered to him his second or third baptism. Perhaps he may yet dispense to him another into repentance of all his day-dreams about a returning Lord to the ruins of the old Temple." (p. 519)

evident in his own words: "Had they let us alone, it is probable we should have been in good repute indeed with them and their leaders, and might even have been teaching the same fables; which, however, would have deprived us of the pleasure of confessing our errors and mistakes and of thus publicly renouncing and bidding them adieu."¹

We cannot undertake a description of the closing years of his life with their earnest advocacy of these newly discovered principles. The consideration of his trips to England, editorial work, lecturing and constituting of churches must be left for the attention of the historian.² Mention

¹Roberts, op. cit., p. 208.

²Our investigation is concerned chiefly with doctrinal origins; therefore we must put a limit to further details regarding history. It was during 1846-47 that Thomas made his first converts in the United States and in 1848-50 Britain was touched. Study of the Herald of the Future Age and the Herald of the Kingdom and Age to Come, together with periodicals current among Reformers in Virginia and Great Britain, (see especially the British Millennial Harbinger) will provide the historian with facts showing the direction of the movement. A consideration of his writings and addresses shows that he developed throughout the remainder of his life the major thesis discovered in 1847. His channel of activity was Reformation churches and Millerite or Advent Churches; however, those people who were particularly interested in prophecy readily gave ear to his message.

The Christadelphian movement has not grown very rapidly as a distinct group. It would be difficult, however, to measure its influence on many who are in other religious bodies. A Christadelphian in Philadelphia, Mr. John W. Lea, to whom I am deeply indebted for the use of two biographies of Dr. Thomas, quoted the following statistics regarding their strength. "Approximately one thousand in Canada; Great Britain is strongest, maybe around six thousand. Australia, New Zealand, South Africa may be two thousand. But these are only estimates. There is no official record." (from a letter) Statistics for the United States for 1936 are available in the Census of Religious bodies. At that date there were 2,755 members in 109 churches using 16 church buildings valued at \$66,310. The New England States have 15 of these churches, Middle Atlantic, 27, East North Central, 14, West North Central, 5, South Atlantic, 13, East South Central, 3, West South Central, 21, Mountain, 1, and Pacific, 10. Texas has 15 churches, Massachusetts, New York, and Pennsylvania each have 10, California has 8, New Jersey, 7, Virginia, 6, and the other states have 5 or less. (23 states have none) (Vol. II, pp. 357)

The major publishing house is in Birmingham, England. In America, the following men either publish or sell Christadelphian literature: John W. Lea, 2635 North 6th Street, Philadelphia, J. S. Mann, 350 Greenwood Street, Millbury, Massachusetts and A. H. Zilmer, 1401 Forest Avenue, Waterloo, Iowa.

should be made, however, of the origin of the name Christadelphian.¹ While in Ogle County, Illinois, in the winter of 1864-65, some of the members of the local ecclesia were anxious about the possibility of military service. The doctor had always taught that believers should not participate in war. In view of a Federal law exempting religious conscientious objectors from military service, in the event that such was a recognized tenet of their faith, Dr. Thomas prepared a statement for the provost-marshal. In the statement published in the Ambassador, a paper edited in England by Robert Roberts, Dr. Thomas gave the name of these ecclesias as "Brethren in Christ" or "Christadelphians" and spoke of himself as their founder. This testimony is important in isolating the fact of a new denomination. We quote from the statement: "This is also further to certify that the undersigned is the personal instrumentality by which the Christian Association aforesaid in Britain and America have been developed within the last fifteen years, and that, therefore, he knows assuredly that a conscientious, determined, and uncompromising opposition to serving in the armies of 'the powers that be' is their denominational characteristic."² It was signed by John Thomas.

Before passing to the doctrinal consideration of Dr. Thomas, we must give brief notice of two additional factors. The first is the nature of his theological education and the second a notice of his literary productions. It appears from the facts at hand that Dr. Thomas was primarily a student of the Bible, but also was an avid reader of what ever religious literature that interested him. Not being a graduate of a theological seminary, he had no systematic study; but his writings show a certain system which betrays private study along certain lines.

¹Roberts, op. cit., pp. 282-285.

²Ibid., p. 284.

The major work from the pen of the doctor and the one which acts as the primary source of our consideration of his theology is his Elpis Israel or Hope of Israel. It contains 410 closely printed pages and is divided into three main heads. Mention has already been made of the five volumes of the Apostolic Advocate, although much of it was reprints from other periodicals, it contained great portions from his own pen. Its nature is evident from the foregoing narrative. His third major work is entitled Eureka or an Exposition of the Apocalypse. It consists of three volumes totaling 1897 pages and its contents is explained by the title. His three other periodicals, Investigator, Herald of the Future Age and Herald of the Kingdom and Age to Come cover a period of about sixteen years and constitute his days of preparation for these primary works. He printed several minor booklets which we need not mention here.¹

This has been rather a sketchy outline but will be sufficient to enable the reader to understand the man and movement, his doctrines will be better understood in the light of these facts. The volume giving his theology in the main was the result of his speaking tours in Britain and its name, Elpis Israel, signifies the cardinal theme of his system. We shall undertake to describe his theological position by means of the outline common to standard books on theology.

¹The School of Religion library has the following minor publications: Anastasis A Treatise on The Judgment of The Dead at The Appearing of Christ; Clerical Theology Unscriptural or The Wisdom of The Clergy Proved To Be Folly; The Book Unsealed: A Lecture on The Prophetic Periods of Daniel and John; The Revealed Mystery or Hidden Wisdom of the Deity, Expounded in A Summary of Christianity Revealed In The Bible; How To Search The Scriptures and the Result; Catechesis or Scriptural Instruction on Mortality, Immortality and Judgment; Odology: An Antidote To Spiritualism.

CHAPTER II

THEOLOGY PROPER, CHRISTOLOGY, PNEUMATOLOGY AND ANGELOLOGY

THEOLOGY PROPER

The theology of Dr. Thomas is primarily eschatological; however, every point in the outline of theology is touched. His anthropology, soteriology and eschatology are his major concern; the other themes come in only incidentally. Because this is true, we shall give brief attention to the latter and full attention to the former.

His Theology Proper is Biblical. God is Creator, Designer, and Revealer. As Creator, He gave existence to the universe, including the earth, and to all life. His primary concern is for the earth and its beings; the Bible is written from this viewpoint. Our author states the fact of God's creative activity in this relation. "Viewed from them (the other spheres of the universe), it is seen sparkling 'like a diamond in the sky;' and with the rest of the heavens, declares the glory of God, and shows forth the handiwork of him that did create it." The creation, in its original form, is not described in the Bible; only the re-forming of the earth, after the destruction wrought by pre-Adamic inhabitants, is described; this narrative is in the first two chapters of Genesis. The new life which inhabited the earth consisted of animal and vegetable. Among the former was man. (see Chapter III for a fuller discussion of man)

¹John Thomas, Elpis Israel (West Hoboken: by the Author, 1867) Fourth Edition--Revised. p. 1.

As Designer, God planned the nature and destiny of all His creation. Says the doctor: "The Builder of all things either left the elements of the world to a random and accidental aggroupement, or, he 'ordered them in all things.'"¹ The former would be a stupid premise; only the latter can be accepted by intelligent beings. This ordering of things was done according to a plan, conceived by God before any creative act took place." "God, then, had in his own mind a pattern, or design, of all the work that was before Him, before he uttered a word, or his spirit began to move."² The author is careful to reject the Calvinistic doctrine of predestination by contending that God's plan consisted in foreknowledge; but, he would say, foreknowledge does not necessitate. His own statement is: "His knowledge, however, of what would be, did not necessitate it."³ It is reiterated again and again that this design is given for man to read in the pages of the Bible. In the chapters on Soteriology and Eschatology we will see clearly the content of this design.

As Revealer, God has made known His plan to men. We quote the doctor again, "God, then, has caused a book to be written for our information as to his design--his ultimate purpose in the works of creation, providence, and redemption, which are the three grand divisions of his labors; and which are all tending to the development of one great and glorious consummation."⁴ God has not left men to grope in darkness and to create methods of appeasing a God whom they know not. On the contrary, He has adequately revealed Himself so that man may know and obey His will.⁵ The Bible contains the unfolding of

¹Ibid., p. 151.

²Ibid., p. 151.

³Ibid., p. 71.

⁴Ibid., p. 152.

⁵Ibid., p. 140-141.

this will to the eyes of men and so illustrates the love of God.

God's nature is set forth by Dr. Thomas in essentially Biblical phrases. He points out that the essence of God is not considered; consequently the deliberations of the early councils are deemed unessential. Note his own words, "What his essence consists in he has not revealed; he has made known to us his name, or character, which is enough for men to know; . . ."¹ He conceives of God as "one God and Father of all", "the blessed and Only Potentate, the King of kings and Lord of lords", and "God is Spirit".² At times he uses phrases or words that betray the influence of historical creeds but his presentation of theology proper is simple and Biblical.³

¹Ibid., p. 163.

²Ibid., p. 163.

³In any study of theology proper the doctrine of the trinity and that of the transcendence or immanence of God should be noted. Dr. Thomas gives no carefully thought out consideration of these themes. However, the doctrine of the trinity does come under his observation. Inasmuch as he interprets the Elohim of Genesis 1 and 2 to be angels, this eliminates any need for working out a trinity in unity of persons. Comparing his view of the Elohim with the doctrine of the trinity he says: ". . . that all these agents were in the divine essence, constituting 'society in God', is too great a camel for my power of deglutition" (p. 163) Continuing he says: "A first principle with me in all reasonings upon this subject is, that 'there is one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in all' his spiritual family." (p. 163) It appears from these sentiments that Dr. Thomas takes the typically Jewish view of God.

The transcendence of God seems to be Dr. Thomas' teaching; in only a few instances is immanence suggested. His transcendence is pictured when he says: "THE INCORRUPTIBLE SPIRIT DWELLING IN LIGHT is the scripture revelation of the undefinable essence of the self-existent Eternal One, who is from everlasting to everlasting, God." (p. 163) In discussing God's part in creation he alludes to the use of agents rather than a direct personal creative act on the part of God. "He has revealed himself to us as a Potentate, a King, a Lord, etc.; now, they who fill these stations, commit to others the service of executing their will and pleasure. And thus it is with the Invisible and Eternal Potentate. His kingdom ruleth over all. His angels, or Elohim, mighty in strength, do his commandments, hearkening unto the voice of his words. They are his hosts; his ministers, that do his pleasure." (p. 165) This concept of transcendence is also evident in the lack of any attention to the Paraclete as a guest in man. The nearness to God felt by spirit-filled Christians of the early church is entirely over-looked.

The evidences for an immanent God are very scant. The nearest Dr. Thomas comes to this conception is in his presentation of the creation of man and his subsequent animation by the "spirit of God." But this spirit he defines as "an universal principle"; consequently it is really a transcendent spirit. His reference to Jesus as the revealer of God has some suggestion of immanence. However, his view of Jesus as essentially man and only finally God eliminates any close presence of God. Perhaps in his teaching, God will be most immanent when Christ returns to set up His Kingdom.

CHRISTOLOGY

Jesus Christ is presented to the reader in three aspects: the Promised Christ, the Historic Christ, and the Coming Christ.

The Promised Christ. From the decree of God to the serpent in Eden (Genesis 3:15) to the patriarchs and prophets, the promise of Christ is given. The "seed" spoken of in Genesis 3:15, who shall bruise the serpent's head, is this Christ.

The allegorical signification of the sentence upon the serpent kindled the first scintillation of hope in the human heart of the appearance of one, who should deliver the world from all its ills, and advance it to a higher state. The promise of such a personage, and of such a consummation, was the nucleus of that "faith, which is the assured expectation of things hoped for, and the conviction of things unseen."¹

This statement of hope had reference both to the first and second coming of Christ. The dual concept of His coming will be shown in the chapters on Soteriology and Eschatology. The promise of a seed that should come was also given to Abram, and is recorded in Genesis 12:7. Using the statement of Paul in Galatians 3:16 as a corollary, he notes: "The apostle here tells us that the Land of Canaan was promised to the Christ, when God said to Abram, 'Unto Thy Seed will I give this land'."² The repetition of the promise throughout the Old Testament gives ample testimony to the author's position.

The Shiloh of Jacob's prophecy in Genesis 49:10 is also a reference to Christ. He is to be of the tribe of Judah and the promulgator of a set of laws. Again Dr. Thomas sees a promise of a dual coming of Christ as he says:

Two appearances of the Shiloh are indicated by Jacob; first, at the departure of the scepter from Judah; and secondly, at the attainment of the tribe to the dignity of giving laws to the gathered people.

¹Ibid., p. 103.

²Ibid., p. 204.

The sceptre departed from Judah at the appearing of Jesus; but neither Jesus nor the tribe, have promulgated a code of laws to Israel or the Gentiles.¹

As Shiloh, Christ is to set up His kingdom at Jerusalem, build a temple, issue laws and rule the people with a rod of iron.²

The Historic Christ. The origin and nature of Christ and the meaning of the cross and resurrection are prominent.

Christ was born of God but also of sinful woman; thus He was of the same nature as other human beings. We quote from the doctor at length:

The apostle says, 'God made him sin for us, who knew no sin'; and this he explains in another place by saying, that 'he sent his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh in the offering of his body once. Sin could not have been condemned in the body of Jesus, if it had not existed there. His body was as unclean as the bodies of those he died for; for he was born of a woman, and 'not one' can bring a clean body out of a defiled body; for 'that', says Jesus himself, 'which is born of the flesh is flesh.'³

This common origin enables Him to understand and sympathize with man.

When dealing with His nature, the doctor uses various Biblical phrases.⁴ He is not concerned with the essence of Christ nor His relation to the Godhead in the historic creedal sense.⁵ He does point out that Christ is the revealer of God. "If he be acquainted with him as he is

¹Ibid., p. 249.

²Ibid., pp. 277-281.

³Ibid., p. 114.

⁴Ibid., p. 33.

⁵The nature of Christ in the creedal sense is given practically no attention. As to the doctrine of pre-existence--i.e. of God coming to man in Christ, there is no such doctrine. To the doctor, Jesus never had any being until that night in Bethlehem. That He revealed God is true, but that He was the Logos of John's prologue, no.

This, of course, leads to the discussion of His nature. Was He human or divine or both? Our author seems to think of Jesus as born human (p. 35) became divine at His baptism (p. 68) and perfected, first by suffering (pp. 35, 68-70) and finally by the resurrection. (pp. 36, 88-89) Only, then, at the right hand of God may Jesus be conceived of as divine. This idea is more in harmony with the Jewish concept of the Messiah than with the Greek idea of a God coming to man.

pourtrayed in the prophets and apostles, he will understand the character of God, whom no man hath seen, nor can see; who chargeth his angels with folly, and before whom the heavens are not clean."¹

No discussion of the qualities in the life of Jesus is given by the doctor; the reader is left to his own resources for any extension of this doctrine.

The doctor sees in the crucifixion of Christ the bruising of the serpent's head. (Gen. 3:15) Salvation is gained for man by the cross, but only by way of anticipation. (See Soteriology) Says the author:

Until the crucifixion, the Way was marked out, first by the patriarchal arrangement of things; and secondly, by the Mosaic law; all of which pointed to the Shiloh. But, when Jesus appeared, he announced saying, 'I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life; no man cometh to the Father, but by me.' He became The Way by his sacrificial death, and resurrection. Whosoever would attain to life must believe the truth concerning Jesus, and the kingdom, which is the most holy place.²

Therefore by faith in and obedience to the crucified and risen Lord men may have salvation. This salvation will be described in Chapters IV and VI.

The resurrection of Christ typifies that of the righteous dead.

"When the time comes for the righteous dead to rise, then he that raised up Christ from the dead will also make alive their mortal bodies by his spirit" operating through Jesus upon their dust, and fashioning it into the image of the Lord from heaven."³ The resurrected body of the saint will be like that of Jesus.

The Coming Christ. Dr. Thomas' entire theological system is held together by this fact. Christ is now at the right hand of God and will come again. His portrayal of the exalted Christ is to the point here. "If, therefore, we have been successful in depicting the Lord as he is now, while

¹Ibid., p. 36.

²Ibid., p. 139.

³Ibid., p. 37.

seated at the right hand of God; namely, an incorruptible, honourable, powerful, living person, substantial and tangible, shining as the sun, and able to eat and drink, and to display all mental and other phenomena in perfection; if the reader be able to comprehend such an 'Image of the invisible God', he can understand what they are to be, who are accounted worthy to inherit his kingdom"¹. From this exalted throne He will return. All the activities of the end will then begin and be brought to fulfillment by His presence and power. The resurrection of the saints and the setting up of the kingdom of God will be His functions. Regarding these last things Dr. Thomas says:

This is the millennial future state. Abraham and Jesus are, then, the greatest personages upon the earth; the former being the spiritual father of Jesus and the saints; and the political father of a multitude of nations, over whom Christ and his brethren will until 'the end'.²

For those whose central concern in theology is the historic Christ, the complete absence of any reference to His ethics will be at once evident. Sketchy as this presentation is, it does, in reality, adequately summarize Dr. Thomas' view of Christ.

PNEUMATOLOGY

The pneumatology of Dr. Thomas is very limited. Two features make the whole of it. In the first place, the Spirit of God was the agent of God in creation. Referring to Genesis 1:2 he says:

This ruach, or spirit, is neither the Uncreated One who dwells in light, the Lord God, nor the Elohim, his co-workers, who co-operated in the elaboration of the natural world. It was the instrumental principle by which they executed the commission of the glorious INCREASE to erect this earthly house, and furnish it with living souls of every species.³

In the second place, the Spirit of God is the all-pervading principle of the

¹Ibid., p. 39.

²Ibid., p. 218.

³Ibid., p. 29.

universe. Here the doctor almost becomes pantheistic; he is certainly materialistic as he says:

From these testimonies (Job 34:14, 37:10, Psalms 104:29, 139:7) it is manifest, that the ruach or spirit is all pervading. It is in heaven, in Sheol, or the dust of the deepest hollow, in the uttermost depths of the sea, in the darkness, in the light, and in all things animate, and without life. It is an universal principle in the broadest, or rather, in an illimitable sense. It is the substratum of all motion, whether manifested in the diurnal and ellipsoidal revolutions of the planets, in the flux and reflux of the sea, in the storms and tempests of the expanse, or in the organism of reptiles, cattle, beasts, fish, fowls, vegetables, or man. The atmospheric expanse is charged with it; but it is not the air; plants and animals of all species breathe it; but it is not their breath; yet without it, though filled with air, they would die.¹

In this same connection he defines the spirit in chemical terms when he suggests: "These three together, the oxygen, nitrogen, and electricity, constitute 'the breath' and 'spirit' of the lives of all God's living souls."² No particular systematic elaboration of these two functions of the Spirit is given. The above quotations constitute the main core of the teaching.

Conspicuous by its absence is any reference to the Holy Spirit, Paraclete or Comforter. Although such a characteristic of the Spirit of God is undoubtedly a part of his system, its apparent minor importance has crowded it out of the Elpis Israel. In the light of New Testament thought and historic theology this absence is readily discernable and rather unfortunate.

ANGELOLOGY

Angels are of two kinds, bad and good. The bad angels are those beings who, according to Jude and Peter, in the Beginning disobeyed the Lord God and were cast down to inhabit the earth. Dr. Thomas calls them the pre-Adamic inhabitants of the earth who produced the waste and void (Gen. 1:2) out of which God formed the present earth. Their whereabouts at the present

¹Ibid., p. 30.

²Ibid., p. 30.

time is not stated, but they are reserved for final judgment during the Millennium.¹

The good angels were agents in creation and God's messengers. As the former they are the Elohim referred to in the Old Testament. Regarding the former the doctor says: ". . . a plurality of agents is devoted in the Mosaic history of the terrestrial creation. By faith we understand that the spirit, or Word, operated in, by, and through them, in the formation of all things terrestrial; . . ." ² Again, "He willed; the Elohim executed by his Spirit."³ Again,

"There was none like the Elohim of all the creatures they had made; therefore, they determined to make an animal after their form. They shaped him with head, limbs, and body, like their own; so that he stood before them the earthly image of the celestial Elohim."⁴

Concerning the latter, he points out that the angels revealed His will and are protectors of the saints. The many references to divine messengers in the Old Testament are so many evidences of God's use of these agents in making known His will to men.⁵ He describes their function as guardian of the saints with these words:

Our angels, or Elohim, those I mean of the heavenly hosts, to whose superintendence terrestrial affairs are consigned, until the Lord Jesus shall assume the reins of governments; not all the Elohim, but those of them related to us, 'always behold the face of God', and minister his will towards the sons of men. This is their glory--a part of their reward.⁶

These, then, are the major functions of the angels and constitute the doctor's angelology.⁷

¹Ibid., p. 10.

²Ibid., p. 163.

³Ibid., p. 165.

⁴Ibid., p. 166.

⁵Ibid., p. 163-165.

⁶Ibid., p. 167.

⁷Ibid., p. 162-167 Dissertation on The Elohim

This chapter has sought to sketch the major features of Dr. Thomas' theology of the Godhead and Angels. It should be said that his position is not clearly defined in the Elpis Israel; the consideration of these points has been only incidental because they were such to him. We turn to his Anthropology.

CHAPTER III

ANTHROPOLOGY

The Anthropology of Dr. Thomas is one of the three cardinal features of his theological system. It has already been shown that the Godhead and Angels are related to man as Creator and Sustainer. It will be shown in subsequent chapters that God's plan of salvation, revealed in the Bible, preached and taught in the church and consummated in the coming Kingdom, was designed for his benefit. A careful understanding of the origin, nature, and destiny of man, therefore, is needed.

Two texts serve as the basis for our knowledge of man's origin; they are Genesis 1:26-27 and Genesis 2:7. In the order of their importance we note his characteristics. First, he was "a living soul". "Now, if it be asked, what do the scriptures define 'a living soul' to be?--the answer is, a living natural, or animal, body, whether of birds, beasts, fish or men."¹ Man is one of the animal creation; the nephesh chajiah that was breathed into his nostrils was identical with that which animated all earthly life.²

Man differs from the other animals, however, in that he was made "in the image and likeness of the Elohim."³ This likeness is in form and capacity. As to form, the Elohim are shaped like men as we now see them--head, eyes, legs, etc. "The resemblance, therefore, of Adam to the Elohim as their

¹Ibid., p. 27.

²Ibid., pp. 27-28.

³Genesis 2:7.

image was of bodily form, not of intellectual and moral attainment; . . . "¹
 As to capacity, man is like the Elohim in his ability " . . . to comprehend
 and receive spiritual ideas . . . "² As to nature, however, he is lower than
 the angels.³ Another distinction between men and other animals lies in the
 possibility of immortality for the former. Although created with an inherent
 tendency to death, man could partake of the Tree of Life and live forever.
 Other animals could not.⁴

Dr. Thomas denominates the period from man's formation to his trans-
 gression, "the novitiate". His character during that time is described thus:

Being made in the image, after the likeness of the Elohim, he was
 "made upright". He had no conscience of evil; for he did not know
 what it was. He was neither virtuous, nor vicious; holy, nor unholy;
 but in his beginning simply innocent of good or evil deeds. Being
 without a history, he was without character.⁵

Had no transgression ensued, man undoubtedly would have continued in this
 state, replenishing the earth and subduing it.

The transgression of Adam and Eve gave to man his present nature and
 set in action God's plan for his destiny. The transgression of these two, as
 described in the third chapter of Genesis, produced in them at least three
 results. First, their flesh was excited to sinful action. Dr. Thomas seems
 to think that the recognition of their nudity was the indication of their
 sinful nature.⁶ Second, their disobedience of a direct command of God gave
 them an evil conscience. This evil conscience produced fear and terror with-
 in them and made redemption necessary.⁷ Third, their transgression produced

¹ John Thomas, op. cit., p. 34.

³ Psalms 8:5.

⁵ Ibid., p. 64.

⁷ Ibid., pp. 76-78.

² Ibid., p. 35.

⁴ John Thomas, op. cit., pp. 64, 65.

⁶ Ibid., pp. 74-76.

in them a carnal mind. Had they thought the thoughts of God as He had spoken them, they would have continued to have His mind. But, since they accepted the thinking of the serpent they adopted carnal thinking for their own.¹

The sinful flesh, evil conscience, and carnal mind were transferred to the human race through these first two. Two quotations from Dr. Thomas serve to indicate this. "Sin in the flesh is hereditary; and entailed upon mankind as the consequence of Adam's violation of the Eden law."² Again: "Upon the same federal principle (Levites paid tithes in Abraham), all mankind ate of the forbidden fruit, being in the loins of Adam when he transgressed. This is the only way men can by any possibility be guilty of the original sin."³ In this condition the only fruit possible would be gross evil. And such is natural man, according to our author. This idea of man is quite in harmony with the historic doctrine of original sin. It differs at this point, however, the infant, though disposed to sin, is guilty of no transgression that necessitates the administration of a sacrament. Only when he becomes a mature, accountable, and responsible person, and makes a choice between the way of life and the way of death, is there any need for an act of obedience.

The need of choice brings us to a consideration of the doctrine of total depravity. Dr. Thomas asserts throughout his entire system that God has revealed his way in "the law and the testimony" and that man is capable of receiving or rejecting the message thus presented. He nowhere suggests that a special work of the spirit of God, prior to the preached word, is

¹Ibid., pp. 78-85.

²Ibid., p. 115.

³Ibid., p. 115, see also pp. 79-84.

needed to enliven a man's will, enabling him to believe and obey. This is the function of the truth of God as contained in the Bible.¹ As a result, then, of the fall of Adam and Eve, sinful flesh, an evil conscience, and a carnal mind are the heritage of man.

If this is man's nature, what is his destiny? There are two destinies for man: one for the natural man and another for the spiritual man. The destiny of the former is a life of evil and ultimate dissolution and annihilation at death. Several passages from our author will serve to establish this point.

The thinking of the flesh, uninfluenced by the ameliorating agency of divine truth, is so degenerating in its effects, that it reduces man to savagism. There is nothing elevating or ennobling in fleshly thoughts; on the contrary, they tend to physical deterioration and death; for 'to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.'²

Again:

The unilluminated thinking of the flesh gives birth to the 'works of the flesh'; which are, adultery, fornication . . . (Gal. 5:19) . . . Unchecked by the truth and judgments of God, the world would have been composed solely of such characters.³

Dr. Thomas saw the expression of this unchecked nature, in the long history of man's individual and collective evil, from the days of Cain and Abel to his own day.

The ultimate destiny of this natural man is complete dissolution. The effect of Adam's sin was eternal death for his posterity. The sentence passed on him at that time was ". . . for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return." (Gen. 3:19) The doctrine of the immortality of the soul as held by the church is discarded by Dr. Thomas.⁴ He says: "The end of our

¹Ibid., pp. 117-123, 145-147.

³Ibid., p. 81.

²Ibid., p. 80.

⁴Ibid., pp. 25-27.

being is the end of that process by which we are resolved into dust -- we cease to be."¹ To those untouched by the truth, this life composes their entire existence. The destiny of the spiritual man, on the other hand, is a life of righteousness with Christ, but conflict with the world, a glorious resurrection at the last day, a thousand years of new life with Christ in His Kingdom and, thereafter, eternity on this earth with God as ever present Father and Lord.

As stated before, if man were left to his unilluminated mind, he would be both evil and miserable. But God has not left him in this condition; He has revealed a way of release. The law and the testimony describe it as the gospel of the kingdom and the name of Jesus Christ. (The following chapter will contain an elaboration of this point.) When a man hears, believes and obeys this revelation he is constituted a son of God by adoption and enjoys the privileges of such a relationship.² The exact nature of this new state of man is not discussed by the author; he sees it primarily as a preparation for the future life and consequently minimizes its temporal aspects.

But the child of God, in this present life, is faced with a tremendous conflict. It began in the dawn of his history with the edict God delivered to the serpent in Eden. At that time, a curse was placed on the tempter and enmity between his seed and that of the woman was decreed. (Gen. 3:15) The seed represents all believers in God's revelation from Abel, through Christ to the saints of the present. The seed of the serpent represents all those who reject the truth or who, because they have not heard it, live in their natural state; these constitute the kingdom of the evil one and are constantly

¹Ibid., p. 62.

²Ibid., pp. 117-123.

warring against the saints.¹

This conflict was heightened by the coming of Christ to the earth the first time. Although styled by the prophet as "Prince of Peace", yet He "came not to bring peace but a sword."² The Doctor says: "When he appeared in humiliation he came to take away peace from the earth, as both his words and history prove."³ Christ Himself suffered at the hands of disobedient civil and religious rulers; so have His seed to this day.⁴

The enmity which results in this mortal conflict will not plague the spiritual man forever. At the end of his life he will die and lay as dust in the grave awaiting the resurrection trumpet. When it blows, he will be raised from the grave and be clothed with immortality. Those that are alive will be changed at that time, and together they will begin a life of glory with Christ. They will have a spiritual body which will be ". . . incorruptible, glorious, powerful, and possessed of a spiritual nature, such as Jesus and the Elohim rejoice in."⁵ Jesus will be King of Kings on the throne of David, His saints will aid Him as He rules the nations with a rod of iron and at the close of the millennial period, the Kingdom will be given to God the Father that He may be all in all.⁶

I shall leave to my chapter on a Theological Evaluation any judgment of the adequacy of this Anthropology. The fact that man's nature and destiny are so bound up in future events renders any complete view of his present condition unimportant. The anticipation of such a future as the second coming of Christ promises, is the key to the doctor's Anthropology. I turn now to a presentation of the way of salvation provided by God for man.

¹Ibid., pp. 109-113, 124-126.

³John Thomas, op. cit., p. 101.

⁵Ibid., p. 37.

²Matthew 10:34-36.

⁴Ibid., pp. 99-103.

⁶Ibid., pp. 275-284.

CHAPTER IV

SOTERIOLOGY

The sixth chapter of Part I, and all of Part II, of the Elpis Israel, contain the facts relative to Dr. Thomas' Soteriology.¹ In them, he defines God's plan for the earth and its inhabitants, and describes the working out of that plan as depicted in the Bible.

His idea of salvation is almost entirely Eschatological. Those people who participate in the events of the Future Age are the ones who are saved. The all-important consideration for any man in this present life, is to be ready to enjoy the blessings of the age to come. To get ready, therefore, constitutes the essential Soteriology of the doctor; in the chapter on Eschatology I shall describe in detail the nature of the future state, the attainment to which is God's desire for His creatures.

How may man be assured that he is ready? This question is answered in brief: by hearing, believing and obeying the truth. As stated in chapter one of this dissertation, God, the Designer of all things, has made a plan for His world and has revealed that plan in a book. It cannot be found in any other place; the doctor makes this imperative as he says:

If we turn our thoughts within us, there is no voice there which unfolds the philosophy of his doings; if we soar into the heavens, or descend into the sea; if we search through the high places of the earth—we find no answer; for "who hath known the mind of the Lord, who hath been his counsellor, or who hath instructed him?" If we would ascertain what God designs to elaborate out of the past, the present, and the future, we must be content to assume the attitude of listeners, that he may reveal to us from his own lips what he intends to evolve in the con-

¹Ibid., pp. 150-286.

summation of his plans.¹

He notes that God has made known the truth in both the Old and New Testaments; an understanding of it in its entirety is essential. "'The truth'," he writes, "is set forth in the law and the prophets; but we must add to these, the apostolic testimony contained in the New Testament, if we would comprehend it 'as it is in Jesus'."² Consequently, man must come to the Bible as a little child and let it speak to his mind.

In preparing the world for the age to come, Dr. Thomas points out that only those who voluntarily accept the truth are fit subjects for the blessings. Our author contends that God could have acted upon man against his will, but He wanted His creatures to be moral beings and capable of choice.

He made man a reasonable creature, and capable of being acted on by motive, either for weal or woe. He placed him under a law, which required belief of God's word and obedience. He could obey, or disobey, as he pleased; he was "free to stand and free to fall."³

Since the foundation of the world, this has been God's principle of action. The doctor alludes to numerous passages in the Bible which indicate the necessity of choice on man's part.⁴ This is the basis of his teaching of conditional salvation and of his opposition to the doctrine of Universalism. All of this is sharpened by his view of the future age; he contends that only the salvation of a number sufficient to populate the renovated earth is the plan of God.⁵

I have stated that one may be ready to enjoy the blessings of the Future State by hearing, believing, and obeying the truth. What is "the truth"? Our author outlines it under three main heads:

¹Ibid., p. 151.

²Ibid., p. 168.

³Ibid., p. 159.

⁴Ibid., p. 159.

⁵Ibid., p. 160.

- "I. Promises to be fulfilled; or, things concerning the kingdom of God;
- II. Promises fulfilled already; or, things concerning Jesus;
- III. The doctrinal import of the fulfilled promises; or, things concerning his name."¹

Inasmuch as the acceptance of these ideas as dogma constitutes the unique position of the Christadelphian movement, I shall quote in full the doctor's attitude.

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; "the truth as it is in Jesus," neither more nor less, is that to which our attention is invited in the word. "The truth" is set forth in the law and the prophets; but we must add to these, the apostolic testimony contained in the New Testament, if we would comprehend it "as it is in Jesus." The kingdom is the subject matter of "the truth"; but "as it is in Jesus," is the truth concerning him as the king and supreme pontiff of the dominion; and the things concerning his name as taught in the doctrine of the apostles. As a whole "the truth" is defined as "the things concerning the Kingdom of God and the Name of Jesus Christ."² This phrase covers the entire ground upon which the "one faith," and the "one hope," of the gospel are based; so that if a man believe only "the things of the kingdom," his faith is defective in "the things of the name;" or, if his belief be confined to the "things of the name," it is deficient in the "things of the kingdom". There can be no separation of them recognized in a "like precious faith"³ to that of the apostles. They believed and taught all these things; God hath joined them together, and no man need expect his favor who separates them; or abolishes the necessity of believing the things he has revealed for faith.⁴

Dr. Thomas feels urged to contend for this system because he believes it was preached by the angel to Abraham, (Genesis 12:1-3) by Christ Himself, (Luke 4:18-19) and by all the apostles (Acts 2:30, 3:21, 8:12, 15:14-18, 17:31, 19:8, 26:6-7 and 28:20, 23, 31). The exposition of the first two items in the system, namely "the things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus" is given in the major portion of Part II of

¹Ibid., p. 172.

³II Peter 1:1

²Acts 8:12.

⁴Ibid., pp. 168-169.

our source. The doctrinal import is described in the concluding pages of this same part.

The things concerning the Kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ may be summarily paraphrased as follows: God promised Abram that he would be the Father of a great nation and that this nation should possess a certain land forever. He renewed the promise to Isaac, Jacob, Moses, the judges and the prophets. In Christ he sealed the promise in blood and thereby pledged its fulfillment. Now, since God cannot lie, He will yet establish Abraham, Christ and all their saints in this certain section of the earth, where the two heads of the nation, composed of their natural and adopted citizens, may rule supreme.¹

Inasmuch as every event described in the Old and New Testament is interpreted by our author to support this idea, it will be impossible to discuss them all. However, some attention to key passages is essential for an understanding of the doctor's conception of "the truth."

Micah the prophet foretold the setting up of the Kingdom of God when he said: ". . . in that day, saith the Lord, I will assemble "Israel," and make them A STRONG NATION: and the Lord shall reign over them on Mount Zion FROM HENCEFORTH, even forever." (4:6-7) This prophecy is merely a sample of the numerous statements of this promise. Its essential feature is that God will set up a Kingdom. In its most simple terms this promise was given to men from Adam to Abram. Dr. Thomas says:

The hope of these things, whose seeds were sown in the constitution of the world at the beginning, was the hope of the gospel then in its most general enunciation. The subjects and territory of the empire, and the rulers thereof, were plainly marked out. The earth and the conquered seed of the serpent, obedient to the victorious seed of the woman, was the gospel of the kingdom in its most simple form. No particular

¹Ibid., pp. 199-218.

portion of the globe, however, was indicated as the territory of a kingdom. The Spirit began with universals; but, as the world became older,¹ the particulars of the promise were unfolded to the eye of faith.

However, in its most clear definition, God revealed it to Abram. When the patriarch was in Haran, God said to him--"Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will show thee; and I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; . . ." (Genesis 12:1-2) This promise was intensified when, later, God said to him: "And I will give unto thee and to thy seed after thee, the land wherein thou art a stranger, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; . . ." (Genesis 17:8) Our author points out that the boundaries of this land were not clearly defined until the time of the Psalmist (72:8) and the Prophet Ezekiel (47:13-21). But Abraham died without receiving this land; consequently, he must be raised from the dead in order that God's promise may hold good. This the doctor sets forth in the following conclusive terms:

If Abram was sentenced to die, how could the promise of God concerning the land be fulfilled, unless he were raised from the dead? And as he is to possess it for ever, when he is raised, he must be also made incorruptible and immortal to enable him to possess it everlastingly! The promise of Eternal life then, consists in promising a mortal man and his son possession of a terrestrial country forever; and this promise to the two, becomes a promise to all who believe it; and are constituted one in them.²

Such is the key to the coming kingdom. The hope of it was Israel's hope, and the ultimate realization of it, is the purpose of God.

The doctor passes on through Old Testament history pointing out how the promise of the Kingdom was given to each generation. Isaac, Jacob and Moses were recipients of it.³ In fact, he pauses long enough to note the

¹Ibid., pp. 198-199; see also pp. 49-55, 103-113.

²Ibid., p. 207.

³Ibid., pp. 233-253.

Sinaitic incident; he describes it as the first setting-up of the Kingdom. The failure of the Israelites to obey God, however, necessitated a new kingdom.¹ In the days of David, this promise was stated in the words of the prophet Nathan: "And when thy days be fulfilled, and thou shalt sleep with thy fathers, I will set up thy seed after thee, which shall proceed out of thy bowels, and I will establish his kingdom." (II Samuel 7:12)² The coming of Christ, in the days of his flesh, brought a renewal of these promises. He was the "seed" of Abraham, the "Shiloh" of Jacob's prophecy and the "Royal Ruler" of the House of David. But his coming at that time was merely to seal the covenant God made with Abraham and Israel; this He did by His death on the cross.³ He is now at God's right hand awaiting the time to return and bring to a glorious consummation the Hope of Israel. He is "heir of all things" but they are not yet subject to Him. It is Israel's hope that they will be. We quote our author's convictions:

Is Jesus never to possess the land from sea to sea, and from the rivers to its extremities? Are Turks and Arabs, and a motley crew of papists, Greeks and Fellahs, to perpetuate its reproach forever? Or is a gentile dominion to be established there to lord it over Asia? Where is there a believer of the gospel of the kingdom to be found who will affirm it? Millions of "professing Christians" imagine something of the kind; but they are infidels, and insulters of God; not believers in the "covenants of promise". To affirm any other destiny for Palestine and Syria, than that stated in the promise, is in effect to tell God that he has spoken falsely. But, on the ground that "he cannot lie", what does the nature of the case necessitate in order to fulfill the promise to Abraham and Christ? This is the answer, and let the reader mark it well: -- to meet the demands of the covenant it is indispensable that Jesus return to Canaan, and that he raise Abraham from the dead!⁴

This is the Hope of Israel; it was revealed to man from the early dawn of Biblical history, clarified by the patriarchs and prophets, and given full expression and meaning by Jesus. The apostles proclaimed it and Paul wrote about it. This was "the truth", as the founder of the Christa-

¹Ibid., pp. 265-268.

³Ibid., pp. 212-214.

²Ibid., pp. 269-274.

⁴Ibid., p. 213.

delphian movement discovered it in the pages of the Bible, "the truth" by which men are to be saved.

The doctrinal import, or the things of the name, stated as the third division of "the truth", constitutes the element of obedience. What are the things concerning the name?

"The name of Jesus Christ comprehends all that is affirmable of him; and is therefore the summary of his character as a prophet, sacrifice, priest, and king."¹ "This, then, is a first principle of the name of Jesus. Admit that he is the Shiloh, and all things predicated of the Shiloh are solely applicable to him."² The first essential of obedience, therefore, is to accept Jesus as the promised King in the coming Kingdom. Accept the cross as an offering for sin, the exaltation as a time of waiting, and the second coming as the era of consummation. Believing these things produces a change in the mind and purpose of the individual, called repentance. This leads to the second element in the Name. Says the doctor:

Faith is unfinished, and the change of mind and disposition is incomplete, until the believer of the gospel of the kingdom puts on the name of Christ. In the act of doing this, his faith is counted to him for righteousness, or remission of sins that are past; and his change of mind and disposition is granted to him for repentance.³

One puts on the Name in this concluding act by having his body immersed in water in the name of Christ. This constitutes him "in Christ", "in him" "Abraham's Seed", and "righteous". It is important that this immersion be predicated upon faith in the foregoing facts about Christ; else it is void. Our author says: "Without faith in these things there is no true washing, no sanctification, or purification, from moral defilement, and no constitution of righteousness by the name of Jesus, for the sons of men; for, says

¹Ibid., p. 281.

²Ibid., p. 281.

³Ibid., p. 283.

the scripture, 'without faith it is impossible to please God.'¹

The major features of obedience to the truth are described in Dr. Thomas' exposition of John 3:3-10. I shall quote him in full:

The New Birth, like the old one of the flesh, is not an abstract principle, but a process. It begins with the begetting and ends with the having been born. A son of God is a character, which is developed out of the "incorruptible seed" of God, sown into the fleshly table of the heart. When this seed, or word of the Kingdom, is received, it begins to work in a man until he becomes a believer of the truth. When things have come to this pass, he is a changed man. He has acquired a new mode of thinking; for he thinks in harmony with the thoughts of God as revealed in his law and testimony. He sees himself, and the world around him, in a new light. He is convinced of sin; and experiences an aversion to the things in which he formerly delighted. His views, disposition, temper, and affections, are transformed. He is humble, child-like, teachable, and obediently disposed; and his simple anxiety is, to know what God would have him to do. Having ascertained this, he does it, and in doing it is "born out of the water." Having been begotten of the Father by the word of truth, and born of water, the first stage of the process is completed. He is constitutionally "in Christ."²

Once a person is constituted a son of God in Christ, it is important to his future salvation that he remain in the faith. Such a life of faith will prepare one to be ready for the trumpet of God, which will call him forth from the grave to share in the blessings of the future age.³

To be saved, is to be ready; to enjoy salvation is the anticipation of those who are ready. The doctrine of the truth of the things concerning the kingdom and the name of Jesus Christ and obedience to this doctrine constitute the doctor's Soteriology. He makes it clear that only by an understanding of these "Divine facts" and "faith and immersion into the Name" may men anticipate the future bliss of the eternal kingdom, and avoid the destiny of annihilation. Although this view minimizes the affairs of this life, the doctor does have definite ideas regarding the assembly of believers and their relationship to the world. We turn now to a consideration of his Ecclesiology and ethics.

¹Ibid., p. 120.

²Ibid., p. 121.

³Ibid., p. 121.

CHAPTER V

ECCLESIOLOGY AND ETHICS

Inasmuch as the doctrine of the church and the consideration of ethics are of comparatively little importance to Dr. Thomas, we shall combine them in our study.

Our author's Ecclesiology is brief but well-defined. He is pre-eminently concerned with the "true" church as opposed to the "apostate" church and the world. For the sake of clarity, we shall consider his discussion of the former under four heads: membership, mission, ordinances, and life.¹

To be a member of the true church one must hear "the truth", believe it, and be immersed into Christ for the remission of sins. In Chapter IV, the nature of "the truth" was described. Members of the church must know this truth only. The distrust in the adequacy of the Bible to present the truth is extremely profound. In addition to references given in the preceding chapter, we may note another comment he makes.

Let us be content with nothing less than a "thus it is written," and a "thus saith the Lord;" for He has laid it down in his law, that no one is worthy of belief who does not speak after this rule. "To the law and to the testimony, if they speak not, according to THIS WORD, it is because there is no light in them."

The scriptures can do everything for us in relation to the light.
⁴Isaiah 8:20.²

In view of this strong conviction, Bible study and Bible preaching are important elements in the make-up of the true church. No addition need be

¹Ibid., pp. 168-187 for full presentation of this theme.

²Ibid., p. 5.

made to the statement in the last chapter relative to the absolute necessity of a believer accepting "the whole gospel." It has been pointed out that the acceptance of the truth concerning the things of the Kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, must precede any obedience to such truth. It is not stated how the immerser is assured that the candidate is fit for immersion. It is apparently assumed, that when one presents himself for immersion in one of the Ecclesias he understands "the truth". A small catechism was written by Dr. Thomas; it may be that the successful memorization of its contents prepared one for the act. Be this as it may, the believer in "the truth", after immersion in water in the name of Christ, is constituted "in Christ" and a member of the church.¹ The doctor points out repeatedly, that only such are in the true church. This position is explicit throughout the work; though it lead to a small membership, immersed believers alone make it up. The following quotation will be typical of the author's anticipation.

A minority, a great minority, so great as to be styled "a few," have seized upon it (the truth) in letter and spirit. These contend against everything opposed to it without regard to fame, property, or life; they contend, however, not with the sword of the flesh, but with "the sword of the spirit, which is the word of God." Not so, however, they who embrace it in part, corrupt it by admixture with human tradition, or reject it altogether. They fight for their opinions as their means enable them.²

Reference to the footnote in Chapter One (p. 10) will show how exclusive the movement has been, as illustrated by its numerical strength. The doctor's own definition may serve to summarize our presentation of membership.

This is the aggregate of those, who, believing these things, have been introduced into Christ through the laver of the water; according to the saying of the scriptures, "ye are all the children of God in

¹Ibid., P. 47-49.

²Ibid., p. 156-157.

Christ Jesus through the faith. For as many as have been baptized into Christ have entered into Christ, ". . . ye are all one in Christ Jesus. And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and HEIRS according to the promise."¹¹ A community of such individuals as these constitutes the mystical body of Christ. ¹¹Galatians 3:26-29.¹

The nature of the membership of the church is clear from these facts.

The second important item in the doctor's Ecclesiology is the mission of the church. What is the church to do? First, it is to preach and teach the truth; second, it is to maintain a readiness to meet the Lord.

Incumbent upon the believer of the truth is the responsibility to teach it to others.² This is especially evident in view of the failure on the part of the apostate church to do so.³ In this way, a bride will be in the process of preparation for the returning groom. Says the doctor:

It will be perceived, then, that the church as defined, is in the present state the espoused of Christ, but not actually married. She is in the formative state, being molded under the hand of God. When she shall be completed, God will then present her to the Man from heaven, "arrayed in fine linen, clean and white."³ Revelation 19:7-8.⁴

The task of preparing for a bride leads naturally into the second purpose of the church. Since the Lord will return, it follows that His people must anticipate and meet Him. The church is to create and sustain this spirit of anticipation so that the believer may either go to the grave in hope or be ready when his great time of change arrives.⁵ Note our author's own words:

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,

¹Ibid., p. 47, See also p. 142.

²Ibid., p. 142-143.

³Ibid., p. 126.

⁴Ibid., p. 48, see also p. 142.

⁵Ibid., pp. 150-161.

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 the shame of his nakedness do not appear; and anoint his eyes with eye-salve, that he may see."¹ 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 baptized into the name of the Holy Ones; 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. A community of such persons in a city, constitutes the Lamb's wife then, prepared for the coming of the Lord. ¹Revelation 3:18.¹

Such is the two-fold mission of the church, as understood by Dr. Thomas.

The third element in the Ecclesiology is the ordinances. What are the divine appointments God has for His church? Mention has been made of the place of the Bible in the church; the nature and purpose of baptism has also been described. The only other major feature is the Lord's Supper. As one would suspect, it does not loom very large in the doctor's system. Briefly, it is a memorial feast to be observed by believers until Christ returns to again eat the Passover. Perhaps the doctor's own statement will best describe the matter.

The bread and wine of "the Lord's Supper" are the remains of the Passover, which are to be shared by the circumcised of heart and ears, until Christ comes in power and great glory. . . . The broken bread and poured out wine, memorialize his sacrifice for believers; and the testimony, "this do in remembrance of me until I come," keeps alive the hope of his appearing in the kingdom of God. When hope becomes a reality, the supper will give place to the Passover; for when Christ is come, the memorial of his coming ceases to be prophetic of the event.²

At the regular weekly meeting of the church, the supper was prepared and believers partook in memory of their Lord and in hope of His coming. Very little attention is given to any of these ordinances except as they arise for discussion in the midst of other themes. What we have presented will act as a summary of the major points.

¹Ibid., p. 547.

²Ibid., p. 265.

A fourth, but very unimportant aspect, is the life of the church. This subject will be dealt with more fully under Ethics. Suffice it to say, in keeping with all that has gone before, the believer is to avoid entanglement with the world. In view of the conflict between evil and good, the believer must remain aloof from any institutions or affairs that would bring evil into his life. This will be more fully discussed at the close of the chapter.

The negative aspects of Dr. Thomas' Ecclesiology constitute the main core of his teaching. What he is against in the church looms larger than what he is for. Since it is not the purpose of this paper to discuss these negative aspects, I shall simply list a few references in the Elpis Israel which contain his ideas. (pp. 4-8, 26-27, 48-49, 85-86, 93-95, 126, 142-148, 160, 182, 185-194, 368-369, 393). These references will indicate to the reader his opposition to the Roman Catholic and Protestant churches. Every church is included in these groups, except his own followers.

Some attention should also be given to those features which commonly fall under the head of Ecclesiology. 1. The Church and the Kingdom of God. Historic theology teaches that in some sense the church and the kingdom are related. Dr. Thomas denies any such relationship. The church is a temporary measure for the present; the Kingdom of God will be set up at the second coming of Christ. (cp. pp. 173-174). A corollary to this is his displeasure of the established churches in Europe and England. They are all a part of the apostacy and will be rejected of God in the great day of judgment. (cp. pp. 129-131) 2. The true worship. The doctor advocated the simplest form of worship: reading of Scripture, exhortation to heed its message, the Lord's Supper, singing (such songs as teach "the truth") and prayer. None of the ritual of orthodox Christianity is to be named among

them. The only worship acceptable to God is that which is carried on in the name of "the truth". (cp. p. 5-7, 126) In practicing what he preached, Dr. Thomas never engaged in prayer with any persons other than those who possessed the truth; nor did he commune with them. (cp. Roberts, p. 161, 258).

3. Apostolic Succession. A special section in Chapter I of Part II is given over to the discussion of this theme. He describes the theory, states the true basis of apostolicity and concludes by showing that modern ". . . popes, cardinals, bishops, priests, and ministers . . ." can in no sense fit the standard. (cp. pp. 187-195). The clergy-laity distinction, the child of apostolic succession, he equally repudiates. He says: "It is the duty and privilege of every one in his own sphere to endeavor to turn men to righteousness; for there is no distinction of 'clergy' and 'laity' in the family of God." (p. 142) During the major portion of his life, the doctor repudiated the idea of a paid ministry; however, he later accepted financial support on the ground that those who preach the gospel are worthy of it. By the gospel he meant "the truth". (cp. p. 369). He did, however, maintain his opposition to an educated ministry. (p. 86)

4. Infant Baptism. The major portion of Christendom has practiced infant baptism for many centuries. The doctor vehemently rejects this practice, conceiving it to be a complete perversion of the nature of faith and obedience. (cp. pp. 26-27) As was pointed out under the discussion of membership in the church, only those capable of hearing and receiving the truth are true subjects of baptism.

5. The importance of theology. The historic church has always placed great emphasis upon creedal statements; they have formed the foundation of every sect in Christendom. The doctor rejects this emphasis and says that the Scriptures alone are able to bring men the truth. "Let the reader," says our author, "search the scriptures

from beginning to end, and he will nowhere find such systems of faith and worship as those comprehended in the papal and protestant systems." (p. 6). He then recommends the searching of Scripture. (cp. pp. 4-7, 126-127) The foregoing items will indicate, in brief, the position taken on these important points in Ecclesiology. To receive a clear picture of the doctor's ideas of the church, the reader may refer to chapter one where his actions are related.

These are the major features of the Ecclesiology of the Christadelphians as described by Dr. Thomas. In view of the Eschatological emphasis in his system, this theme holds little place. The many concerns which we ordinarily associate with the church are not given appreciable attention.

ETHICS

The Ethics of Dr. Thomas' theological system are determined by his Eschatology. The result is that they are brief and minimized. The reader has no doubt seen from my presentation of Soteriology and Ecclesiology, that the future age, with its accompanying circumstances, is the major area of the life of the believer. Our author points out (see Chapter III) that the earth is the scene of a struggle between good and evil, right and wrong, the Kingdom of God and the Kingdom of Satan or the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent. Since God plans to set up His Kingdom at the return of Christ, He is guiding this conflict to that ultimate end. The believer is only an observer and is to keep himself aloof from it all; his only real contact with the world results from his efforts to evangelize. The side of right is taken by the saints; these the doctor defines as "A class of persons separated in the providence of God to execute any work for

him , irrespective of their moral relations to the gospel."¹ Any methods are acceptable among these. The believer is not a saint in this sense, however, but rather in a peculiar sense. Taking a phrase from Daniel he denotes these "the PEOPLE of the saints."² These are ". . . . the saints of God in the highest sense of the word."³ They constitute the true church. Inasmuch as the conflict is between the saints and the world, the "people of the saints" or "the church" must withdraw themselves completely. It is in this setting that the Ethics of the doctor are placed. One must again remember that there is no orderly presentation of this theme in Dr. Thomas' writings. Our information has to be gleaned.

We give attention, therefore, to the Ethics of the Church. The Believer, upon his acceptance of and obedience to "the truth", is a new creature. The animal instincts he once had are gone--he is guided by the truth of God. Our author describes the believer in scriptural terms. He then says:

This new and hidden man is manifested in the life, which is virtuous as becomes the gospel. He delights in the law of the Lord, and speaks often of his testimonies. He denies himself of all ungodliness, and worldly lusts; and walks soberly, righteously and godly in the world.⁴

The fruit of this new life, i. e., the explanation of the terms in this quotation, is seen in the response the believer is to make to his environment. I shall list and discuss briefly this response.

1. The believer will take no part in civil or religious affairs in his community. Since all government, both

¹Ibid., p. 302.

²Ibid., p. 302.

³Ibid., p. 306.

⁴Ibid., p. 127

civil and religious, is a part of the Kingdom of Evil, the believer can have no part in it. Says the doctor:

All the kingdoms that have, or do exist, with the exception of the Commonwealth of Israel, are based upon the usurpation of the rights of God, and of his son Jesus Christ; nor is there a king or queen, pope or emperor, among the Gentiles, who reigns 'by the grace of God.' They reign by the same grace, or favor, by which sin reigns over the nations. They have no favor in the eyes of God.¹

Again:

If a man embrace one of the religions of Satan's kingdom, he is still 'dead in trespasses and sins', and walks according to the course of the world. In brief, anything short of faith in the gospel of the kingdom, and obedience to the law of faith, is walking according to the course of the world.²

In conclusion:

The saints who understand the word will keep aloof from politics. None are more interested in them than they; but they will mix themselves up neither with one party nor another; for God regulates them all; therefore to be found in any such strife, would be to contend in some way or other against him.³

Again:

Let no one, then, who would have God's favor, seek the honor and glory of the world in Church or State; for promotion in either of them, can only be attained by sacrificing the principles of God's truth upon the altar of popular favor, or of princely patronage.⁴

2. The believer will take no active part in armed conflict. (see Chapter I relative to the origin of the name Christadelphian.) The only sword which the believer may use is the sword of truth; to participate in a war or a battle for a nation or state is "of the earth". This is, of course, the direct result of the first ethical principle. Says our author: "Unresisting suffering is the law of their spiritual warfare. If persecuted they must fly; if smitten, they must not smite again; if reviled,

¹ Ibid., pp. 58-59.

³ Ibid., p. 58.

² Ibid., p. 88.

⁴ Ibid., p. 84.

they must bless; . . ."¹ It is interesting to note that in spite of this pacifistic attitude, Dr. Thomas condemns all peace groups and those who seek to pass peace measures in legislative bodies.²

3. The believer will covet no earthly possessions. Since the future age is to present untold riches to the child of God, he is to have no concern for them now. The doctor describes the Christian religion thus:

But, the 'pure and undefiled religion' of God has no present temporalities, or worldly interests. It has no 'lands, tenements and hereditaments;' nor 'states,' colleges, or 'sacred edifices'. It is like the Son of God in the days of his flesh; homeless, houseless, and poverty-stricken among the sons of men. It has great riches, and good things in store for the poor in this world who are rich in faith;⁵ it promises them the possession of the world⁶ with all the honor, and glory, and riches of it, with endless life for the enjoyment of them; but, it requires faith in God with filial obedience to his law, in a time of tribulation,⁷ as the condition of the inheritance.

⁵ James 2:5

⁶ I Corinthians 3:22

⁷ 1 Acts 14:22, 2 Timothy 3:12.

He concludes that it is impossible to have the blessings of this material world and still maintain that readiness of mind and life so essential at the return of the Lord.

4. The believer will hold marriage and the family in honor. Dr. Thomas teaches that marriage is an institution of God (from the days of Eden) and an ordinance of Christ (Ephesians 5). Although he rejects the usual concept of "sacramental marriage" and recommends the Quaker form of service, he teaches that the husband and wife should maintain a pure and holy love for one another.⁴ The family is God's only institution for maintaining authority. The headship of the husband over both the wife and children should be observed very carefully.⁵ If a member of the family is

¹ Ibid., p. 304.

² Ibid., pp. 99-100.

³ Ibid., pp. 130-131.

⁴ Ibid., pp. 44-45.

⁵ Ibid., pp. 57-58.

not a believer, those who are, must obey the Lord in all things regardless of conflict with parental authority. Dr. Thomas' idea of the purpose of children is related to his doctrine of ethical dualism. In order to compensate for the losses of life in war, God decreed the multiplication of children.¹

5. Women should maintain a subordinate place in society. Their function is to bear children, not to rule or teach. Woman's suffrage was being agitated at that time, as well as the use of women in the church. In answer to this, the doctor said:

But, even women of this excellency of mind and disposition, were it possible for such to do so, would be guilty of indiscretion, presumption, and rebellion against God's law, in assuming equality of rank, equality of rights, and authority over man, which is implied in teaching and preaching. It is the old ambition of the sex to be equal to the gods; but in taking steps to attain it, they involved themselves in subjection to men. Preaching, and lecturing, women, are but species of actresses, who exhibit upon the boards for the amusement of sinful and foolish men.²

The women of the church are to avoid any of these ambitions; they are to set examples for younger women in morals and are to teach them at home.

This only is God's order.³

These Ethical teachings have been sketchy and unconnected, but such they are in the doctor's presentation. The little concern held for the ordinary affairs of this life, education, business, and civil and social organization are the cause of this meagre discussion. The real life of the believer is that which he shall enjoy in the Kingdom of God. Our next chapter will give consideration to that life. The church awaits the consummation of the eternal plan of God. What is that consummation? The description of its major factors will be the function of Chapter VI.

¹Ibid., p. 108.

²Ibid., p. 109.

³Ibid., pp. 108-110.

CHAPTER VI

ESCHATOLOGY

Eschatology is the principal doctrine in the theological system of Dr. Thomas. Every idea in his teaching has meaning only in the light of the events of "the end."

The purpose of God in creation, providence and redemption is fulfilled in it.¹ His very veracity is upheld by means of it.² The purpose and progress of His revelation to man, in the Bible, are understood in its light.³

All other divine arrangements concentrate in this as the great focal truth of human redemption, and terrestrial regeneration. The needle is not more true to the pole, nor planetary attraction to the sun's centre, than are the things of the prophets and apostles to this idea of an Israelitish kingdom and empire of nations.⁴

The true function of Jesus Christ, the "seed", the Shiloh, the "new David" is carried out only in these things.⁵ The gospel which He gave His apostles, and which they preached in the whole world,⁶ is made effective for man, in these days. The ultimate action of the spirit of God takes place at this time, in the remaking of the body of the believers.⁷ The anticipation of the angels, who participated in the creation of the universe and have watched over the sons of God, is rewarded by these events.⁸

The trumpet of God will sound and "the people of the saints" will be

¹Ibid., pp. 150-156.

³Ibid., pp. 2-4, 152.

⁵Ibid., pp. 103, 249, 269-279.

⁷Ibid., pp. 36-41.

²Ibid., p. 211.

⁴Ibid., p. 156.

⁶Ibid., pp. 171-175.

⁸Ibid., p. 40.

raised from the grave incorruptible; those alive will be changed¹. Thus will be awarded to these, as a result of their loyalty, the crown of life. In the events of "the seed" will be seen the fulfillment of the promises concerning "the things of the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ."² The enjoyment of those who have believed and obeyed this "truth" will begin; they will see their salvation. The Bride will be ready for the groom as He comes. The many saints of the Holy Place, who have proclaimed "the truth" throughout their earthly life, and whose garments have been kept clean, will sit on thrones of judgment with the prophets and apostles.³ These are the many "other divine arrangements" which "concentre in this, the great focal point" of God's plan.⁴

The importance of Eschatology is increased by a more careful consideration of the author's idea of God's plan. It will simplify matters if I quote in full one of his many summary statements:

¹ Ibid., p. 40.

² cp. Soteriology, Chap. IV.

³ cp. Ecclesiology, Chap. V.

⁴ Some of the symbols which have their true meaning in the events of "the end" might well be listed to indicate the importance of this period. 1. The Sabbath day and Lord's day are typical of the Millennium. pp. 16-19. 2. The last Adam. p. 35. 3. The spiritual body. pp. 36-41. 4. The bride. pp. 45-59. 5. Eden and The Garden of Eden. pp. 49-55. 6. The tree of life. pp. 62-63, 138-148. 7. The Prince of the World (civil and religious institutions) pp. 85-89. 8. The Devil (Evil) The Great Dragon (pagan and papal Rome) and The Man of Sin (governments) pp. 89-95. 9. The enmity of the seeds. pp. 108-113. 10. The gospel, the Kingdom of God, the truth. pp. 168-187, 265-268. 11. The Hope of Israel. pp. 199-202. 12. The promised land, pp. 202-214. 13. The seed of Abraham. pp. 227-230. 14. Jacob's blessing and his ladder. pp. 233-244. 15. The Shiloh, pp. 248-250, 277-280. 16. The Kingdom of Moses. pp. 254-262. 17. The Passover, pp. 263-265. 18. The House of David and The Throne of David. pp. 269-274.

Each of these symbols or phrases has reference to the doctor's eschatology. The explanation of each has been made in the dissertation.

It is proved, then, that the revealed mystery of God's will, which he has purposed in his own mind, is first to found a kingdom and empire of nations, which he will bestow on the crucified and resurrected King of the Jews; and upon all those who believe the doctrine, or word, concerning it and become obedient to the faith; and secondly, at the end of 7,000 years from the foundation of the world, to renovate the globe; and to people it with immortal men "equal to the angels," who shall all have attained to the eternal state, and to the possession of all its transcendent glories, on the principle of believing his "exceeding great and precious promises," and of lovingly and voluntarily obeying his laws.¹

God's chief aims, then, are "to found a kingdom" and "to renovate the globe; and to people it with immortal men." The means of accomplishing these goals will be outlined in this chapter. However, there is a consideration that must precede this. What has God been doing through all the ages and centuries, from the creation of man to the present? He has been busy doing two things: first, He has been gathering a people who shall constitute the subjects of the kingdom and inhabitants of this new earth;² second, He has been guiding the conflict between the kingdoms of this world and those sanctified ones whom He has set apart to oppose the former. This mortal conflict will bring to a head the plan for His people.

Only the Best material will be suitable for God's citizenry. The natural man, whom the doctor describes in these words: "His heart is evil, and, left to its uncontrolled impulses, he becomes licentious, merciless, and more cruel than the fiercest beast of prey,"³ cannot inhabit this new earth. Only the "new creature," he who has voluntarily accepted "the truth,"⁴ the one who will submit implicitly to the rule of the king, is suitable. For 6,000 years God has been seeking such to be His people. Adam, Seth, Noah, Abram, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Joshua, David, the prophets, John the

¹John Thomas, op. cit., p. 161.

²Ibid., p. 155.

³Ibid., p. 2.

⁴Ibid., pp. 157-166.

Baptist, and their followers, together with Christ, the apostles and all the believers of "the truth" in succeeding generations, constitute these people. Someone will say that few have heard and answered the call to truth. The doctor will reply:

Granted; but what is needed more than a sufficient population for the renovated earth? If this immense mass of corruption and sin, living and dead, had listened to the voice of reason; if it would have believed God and obeyed him; an adequate provision would have been made for them; but they would not, and the consequences inevitably follow.¹

A sufficient number will have been gathered when the end comes, consummating God's redemptive work of the ages.

God has also been guiding the great conflict between "the seed of the serpent" and "the seed of the woman." It is not within the scope of this paper to discuss fully the doctor's philosophy of history. A few basic aspects may be mentioned, however. At the time of Adam's fall, sin entered the world and God decreed an enmity between the serpent's and the woman's seed.² The former are represented by the kingdoms, empires and nations of the world, which God tolerates, but which He guides to a clearly defined end. The latter are known in a twofold aspect: those who are chosen of God to agitate the nations and cause them to do God's bidding (the saints) and those who believe and obey the truth, who prepare themselves for the kingdom.³ (The people of the saints). The reasons for God's tolerant attitude toward nations are: "He bears them for a time; and makes use of them as his sword to maintain order among the lawless; until his gracious purposes in favor of his saints shall be manifested, according to the arrangement of the terms he has disposed."⁴ And "such, then, is the

¹Ibid., p. 161.

³Ibid., pp. 302-306.

²Ibid., p. 108-113.

⁴Ibid., p. 59.

antagonism ordained of God to keep the Beast, or European governments, in check, and to preserve the light of truth and liberty from extinction among the nations."¹ The nations in general are to "maintain order;" those in particular, i.e., peoples who stand for liberty against tyranny, are to keep the world in balance until the great time of the end.

Dr. Thomas teaches that God directs all of this activity on the earth. Let him speak for a moment:

But, though the Lord hath a long time held his peace, he hath not been unmindful of his people, nor heedless of human affairs. The great incidents of history which have given rise to successive kingdoms and dominions, from the overturning of the kingdom and throne of God and of David, his anointed, in Judea, by the Chaldeans, to the present time, are but events predetermined and arranged in the purpose of God, and revealed in the "sure word of prophecy." Not a kingdom has been established, nor a king dethroned, but it has formed a move, which has contributed to the maturity of the present crisis which will ultimate in the introduction of the kingdom of God.²

To support his doctrine he adduces such passages as Daniel 2:20-23 and 4:17. Now this divine direction is a predestined plan and is arbitrarily carried out. One example is sufficient to indicate this. Our author thought that God would direct the British to provide for the restoration of the Jews to Palestine. Regarding this, he says: "The finger of God has indicated a course to be pursued by Britain which cannot be evaded, . . ." ³ The complete outline of God's dealing with the earth is recorded in Daniel, Ezekiel, Isaiah, and Revelation. The doctor interprets the symbolism of these books in an historical fashion.⁴ We cannot here discuss these interpretations; Part III, Chapters I-V, of Elpis Israel, his Eureka and his Exposition of Daniel give the teaching at great length. One would need to make a separate study of these if he were to attempt any kind of an orderly presentation of this historical interpretation. We are concerned only with the

¹Ibid., p. 306.

³Ibid., p. 396.

²Ibid., pp. 288-289.

⁴Ibid., p. 291.

basic doctrine of God's providence and not the details.

Realizing that God has been busy with His world these many centuries, what is the consummation of it all? We turn our attention to the major aspects of the Eschatology of Dr. Thomas. In presenting them to the reader, we shall give them the name used by the doctor and describe their major features.

I. THE RESTORATION OF ISRAEL TO THE HOLY LAND.

The restoration of Israel is a most important feature in the divine economy. It is indispensable to the setting up of the kingdom of God; for they are the kingdom, having been constituted such by the covenant of Sinai, as it is written, "Ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation."² (²Exodus 19:6)¹ If it were, (Palestine always subject to the Gentiles) the kingdom of God could never be established; for the Holy Land is the territory of the kingdom. To all, then, who believe "the things of the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ," how intensely interesting must the future destiny of this country be!²

These two quotations from our author state the case clearly. Since God promised Abram that particular land, He will keep the promise and restore it, even though for centuries it has been in the hands of the Gentiles. Dr Thomas wrote this volume in the fifth and sixth decades of the nineteenth century; at that time Turkey controlled Palestine. He thought his native land, Britain, was predestined to pave the way for this restoration by means of her interest in India.³

This is the first stage in the restoration;⁴ it precedes the battle of Armageddon and begins a process of preparation in the case of Israel. "There is, then, a partial and primary restoration of Jews before the manifestation, which is to serve as the nucleus, or basis, of future operations

¹Ibid., p. 393.

²Ibid., p. 371.

³Ibid., pp. 395-399.

⁴Ibid., p. 395.

in the restoration of the rest of the tribes after he has appeared in the kingdom."¹ The Jews will go to Palestine ". . . as agriculturists and traders, in the hope of ultimately establishing their commonwealth, but more immediately of getting rich in silver and gold by commerce with India, and in cattle and goods by their industry at home under the efficient protection of the British power."² While going about their ordinary affairs the battle of Armageddon will engulf them and set in motion the agents for their salvation. Our author taught that this restoration would begin about 1868.³

II. PREPARATIONS FOR THE BATTLE OF ARMAGEDDON.

As the British are serving God in restoring the Jews to Palestine they are engaged in the subjugation of the East: Egypt and India in particular. This will bring them into conflict with Russia, which shall arise as the great power of the north.⁴ These two will clash in a major battle, with Palestine as the area of combat. Says our author, "They advance their hosts to 'the winepress without the city,'¹ which is called Armageddon² in the Hebrew tongue, and geographically situated in the land of Israel."³ (¹Rev. 14:20, ²Rev. 16:16, ³Ez. 39:4)⁵ The apparent destruction of the Jews will be avoided by the appearance of the Son of God.

III. THE SECOND COMING OF CHRIST

When God has brought sufficient Jews to Palestine and has caused the two powers to engage in a great war, He will send His Son to the earth a second time. When He comes it will be as a thief in the night and not everyone will see Him. "Israel and the saints of the holy city

¹Ibid., p. 395.

³Ibid., p. 373.

⁵Ibid., p. 336.

²Ibid., pp. 395-396.

⁴Ibid., p. 317, 332, 376, 392-3, 398-399.

will see the Lord; but not the nations at large."¹ At his coming the dead in Christ shall arise and, with Christ at their head, they and Israel will defeat the enemy in the Battle of Armageddon.

This will be the great day for the true church. Those who have slept in their graves for many centuries will be raised and those alive at His coming will be changed. This is the first resurrection.² They will be given a new body -- Paul calls it the spiritual body.³ Jesus Himself will raise the believers (Romans 8:11, I Corinthians 15:21) and will ". . . transfigure the body of (their) humiliation, that it may become of like form with the body of his glory, . . ." (Phil. 3:20-21). The resurrection body will be like Jesus' resurrection body.⁴ It will be material, substantial or tangible (p. 37), independent of atmospheric air for its support (p. 38), constituted of flesh and bones vitalized by the spirit and bloodless. (p. 38). The doctor proves these points by using illustrations from Jesus' resurrection appearances.⁵ Thus the believer is incorruptible, glorious, and powerful; he will live forever.⁶

Immortal saints and Israel, with their Lord, will do battle to wrest control of Palestine from the nations (Rev. 19). The battle will be severe but with the presence of the Lord the victory will be assured. Two thirds of the Jews that returned to the Holy Land will have been killed.⁷ Although no mention is made of it, apparently the resurrected sons of God will not be killed in the melee.

¹ Ibid., p. 346.

³ Ibid., pp. 36-41.

⁵ Ibid., p. 38-39.

⁷ Ibid., pp. 400-401.

² Ibid., p. 26, cp. I Thes. 4:14-17

⁴ Ibid., p. 37.

⁶ Ibid., p. 37.

IV. THE SETTING UP OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD.

The doctor calls this time the period of transition; in his plan of the gospel of the kingdom it was to take about forty years to consummate. This would be from 1868-1908.¹

The first factor will be the acceptance of Jesus as King on the part of Judah. This will be accomplished when Jesus convenes the elders of the people. They will see Him as the one who has gained the victory for them in the battle of Armageddon, and the one whom their fathers crucified. This will humiliate them and they will bow before Him ". . . to acknowledge Jesus as King of the Jews, and to confess that 'he is Lord to the glory of God the Father.'"² This will constitute the re-grafting of Judah into their own olive branch. (Romans 11) "The New Covenant being made with the house of Judah, the kingdom is established."³ But it is only a beginning. The ten tribes of Israel are still scattered throughout the world and are in subjection to the nations. "The Lord Jesus, as King of Judah, will have to bring the ten tribes and the nations generally to acknowledge him as King of Israel and Lord of the whole earth."⁴ The tribes must be brought back to the Holy Land and the nations must be pacified. This program is to be carried out by means of great armies of Israelites headed by Jesus.⁵

During the time of subjugation of the nations, Judah will be acting the apostle in bringing the ten tribes back.⁶ This will take a series of wars with the nations at large; at the close of each one, a large number

¹Ibid., p. 373.

³Ibid., p. 401.

⁵Ibid., p. 400.

²Ibid., p. 401.

⁴Ibid., p. 401.

⁶Ibid., p. 395.

of Israel will be released to start "the second exodus" back to Palestine.¹ At the close of the forty year period, they will have gathered in Egypt and from thence be led into the Holy Land; upon their arrival they will meet King Jesus and, singing the song of Moses and of the Lamb, be received by Christ. "Having 'wrought with them for his own name's sake,' and by them as his 'battle-axe and weapons of war,' subdued the nations, and brought them to his holy mountain, he will 'accept them there,' and 'there shall all the house of Israel, all of them in the land,' as one nation and one kingdom under Shiloh 'serve the Lord God.'"¹ (¹Ez. 38:21-28, 20:40, 34:22-31).²

This will have been the great time toward which all divine activity has been pointed. The doctor joyously writes:

Thus, in forty years the little kingdom of Judea will have become 'a great mountain,' or empire, 'filling the whole earth.' . . . The 'Economy of the Fulness of Times' will now have fairly commenced, and the Day of Christ in all the glory of the Sun of Righteousness have opened in all its blessedness upon the nations of the earth. The gospel preached to Abraham, saying, "In thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed," will be a reality. The Lord, with Judah as his bended bow and Israel for his arrow, having subdued the nations, and 'bound their kings with chains, and their nobles with fetters of iron' as his conquests progressed, will have transferred their much abused power to his saints,² who shall rule them with a rod of iron which cannot be broken. (²Rev. 2:26-27).³

The transition period is thus ended and the kingdom of God fully set up.

Its complete enjoyment by Israel is for 1,000 years is then God's plan.

V. THE MILLENNIUM

"Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection; on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years." Revelation 20:6

¹Ibid., p. 400.

²Ibid., pp. 405-406.

³Ibid., p. 406.

According to this prophecy, says the doctor, the King shall rule His people and the nations for a thousand years. The purpose of this period, in God's economy, is to discipline the people. Says our author:

He foresaw, that the living race would never be fit for this; (life in a state of unmingled good and glory), but that they must be previously disciplined and prepared for the transition. Hence, he proposed to develop an INTERMEDIATE STATE upon the earth, and among the nations of mortal men contemporary with it; in which, good and evil would still be commingled, but differing from the preceding state (the present) in this, that, though evil would continue to be, sin should not have dominion over the world, but be dethroned by righteousness.¹

We may note the conditions which will pertain during this period of training. First and foremost, every living person will be subject to Christ.

". . . in the Economy of the Future Age, all kingdoms, states, and empires; and all people, nations, and languages, are to be gathered together into one dominion under Jesus' Christ." (Daniel 7:14, 27, Zech. 14:9, Isaiah 24:23, Rev. 20:6 and Isaiah 2:4)² "Having received his law,³ and experienced the justice of its administration, 'all nations will call him blessed,' and 'daily will he be praised.' (³Isaiah 42:4)³ An universal jubilee will celebrate the admiration of mankind, and their devotion to the King of all the earth." In the second place, Israel and the Saints of the Holy City shall reign with Christ. "We see, then," says the doctor, "what God hath declared shall be -- an IMPERIO-REGAL HIERARCHY OF IMMORTALS, which, UNDER ONE CHIEF shall possess all power and authority over subject nations in the flesh."⁴ When God promised Abram a kingdom He promised it to him and his seed after him. In the Millennium, God fulfills this promise, in that "Israelites indeed" rule the earth. Fleshly Gentiles can have no part; only "Jews inwardly" reign with Christ and the apostles. The fleshly Jews are in the kingdom

¹ Ibid., p. 154.

³ Ibid., p. 406.

² Ibid., p. 155.

⁴ Ibid., p. 155.

but they are neither immortal nor rulers.¹

In keeping with this era of rule, Jesus will have His headquarters, or throne, in Jerusalem, the temple will be rebuilt, and all nations shall "flow" unto Him there. (Jeremiah 3:17)² Thus will be fulfilled all the Old Testament prophecies that pointed to a return of a ruler to Jerusalem. The result of this universal acclamation of Jesus as King is the third feature of the Millennium. There will be no more wars. "The world will no more resound with wars' alarms for a thousand years; and among the highest there will be peace and good-will among men."⁴ (⁴Luke 2:14)³ "in his days there will be abundance of peace; for the nations will beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into scythes, and practice war no more."⁴ The Prince of Peace will reign in the kingdom of peace. Sin will arise to disobey the king, but it will easily be put down.⁵

The supreme place of Israel in this economy will serve to remove their reproach among men. "Instead of being a bye-word and a reproach, as at this day, the Gentiles will glory in their patronage; for 'in those days it shall come to pass, that the men shall take hold out of all languages of the nations, even shall take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew, saying, we will go with you; for we have heard that God is with you."⁵ (⁵Zech.8:23)⁶ The scattered people will all be returned to their land and the power of their King will arrest the attention of nations.

It will be a time for the free course of the truth.

¹Ibid., pp. 393-394.

³Ibid., p. 406.

⁵Ibid., p. 407.

²Ibid., p. 280, 406.

⁴Ibid., p. 406.

⁶Ibid., p. 407.

When enlightened by the Lord this will be their judgment of the "names and denominations," pagan, mohammedan, papal, and protestant, which now as a covering veil spread over all nations, darken their understandings, and alienate them from the life of God. But when the King of Israel and his Saints shall rule the world, all these superstitions will be forever abolished, and mankind will be of one faith and practice. (Isaiah 42:4)¹

The doctor points out that only the strong arm of the Lord, wielding the sword, will produce this condition. It will be their great day of judgment.²

"Such will be the order of things for a thousand years."² "The gospel of the kingdom will be no longer a matter of hope, but a reality; . . . This is the Hope of Israel which is set before men in the gospel, and for which Paul was bound in a chain."² The plan of God, the promise to Abram, the Hope of Israel, the Gospel of the Kingdom are all fulfilled in this, "The Economy of the Future Age."³

VI. THE RENOVATION OF THE GLOBE.

During the 6,000 years prior to the second coming of Christ, God was taking out of the earth a people fit to inhabit the new earth. The 1,000 years of the Millennium seem to extend the time of this process. However, evil and corruption still remain among the nations. The believers in God hold supremacy among the nations, putting down evil; but evil is still present.

Toward the close of the 1,000 years, evil will assert itself and a great leader arise who will favorably compare with the many pagan rulers of the world, prior to second coming. He will succeed in arousing the latent hatred of the nations for Christ, and having united them will march on Jerusalem. In the midst of apparent defeat for the Kingdom of God, when

¹Ibid., p. 406.

²Ibid., p. 407.

³Ibid., p. 155.

armies surround the people of Palestine, the wrath of God will be made manifest.

The trembling earth and the blackening heavens warn them of the coming tempest. The dark vapors and thick clouds of the sky, curling in dense and lowering masses, suddenly hiss forth the forked lightening, and the heaven is rent by the deafening roar of the voice of God. Hail and fire mingled with hail, pour down upon them, and they are destroyed from the face of the land. Thus God will deliver his king; for "fire shall come down from God out of heaven, and devour them."¹

In this way God will renovate the earth for the use of His own people. The nations will be utterly destroyed, only those who have heard, believed and obeyed the truth, will be alive after this crisis.²

VII. THE DELIVERING UP OF THE KINGDOM TO GOD.

The destruction of the nations removes forever the cause of death, i.e. sin and evil. As a consequence, death itself is abolished and the inhabitants of the earth will die no more. Before Christ turns the Kingdom over to the Father, He raises from the dead those who, during the previous 1,000 years, ". . . are accounted worthy of eternal life . . ." ³ This is the second resurrection. (Rev. 20:5)⁴

Thus a population will have been provided for the earth, which, instead of being destroyed, will be renovated, and all things belonging to it made new.³ The earth and its inhabitants will be incorruptible, undefiled, and unfading. God, according to his word, will have made "a full end of all nations," except that of Israel, which will be the sole occupant of the globe, and every Israelite, "an Israelite indeed," "equal to the Elohim," and crowned with glory and honor throughout all ages. During the thousand years their nation will consist of three classes, Christ and the saints, righteous Israelites in the flesh, and those who "die accursed;" but when perfection comes, these will be but one class, and all will be immortal. The purpose of God, in the formation of the earth, will be accomplished; and "the headstone of the creation will be brought forth with shoutings, crying, Grace, grace unto it." (³Rev. 21:5)⁵

In this fashion Jesus will deliver the kingdom to God, that He may be all in

¹Ibid., 408-409, see also pp. 377-392.

²Ibid., p. 409.

⁴Ibid., p. 26.

³Ibid., p. 409.

⁵Ibid., pp. 409-410.

all. (I Corinthians 15:24-28) Man will again be related to God as in the garden of Eden. Harmony shall reign in this glorious universe forever!¹

This is the Eschatology of Dr. Thomas. In harmony with the whole spirit of his doctrines, he has shown the ultimate plan of God as he understood it. There are many unanswered questions, many strange ideas, and many apparent contradictions. These never seemed to enter his mind. He had one key doctrine and made everything fit it. For those fortunate enough to be believers of "the truth" great days lie ahead -- i. e. provided one wants a material existence, for the non-believer or unbeliever only destruction and total obliteration. This entire theological study may appear very shallow to the trained mind; it does so to me. However, I have given a careful reading to his major work, and from it repetitions, side-discussions, verbosity and one-sidedness have presented as orderly a system of doctrine as possible. As a conclusion to this paper, I shall give my evaluation of the foregoing and state briefly its relation to the Campbellian movement.

¹Ibid., p. 409.

CHAPTER VII

THEOLOGICAL EVALUATION

It is my opinion, that Dr. Thomas has made no contribution whatsoever to historic theology. Nothing he advocated is essentially new, but is simply a re-statement of old doctrines. A brief survey of the history of theology will immediately undermine his claim to uniqueness.

His doctrine of "the kingdom and the name", although quite absurd in its conclusions, is an attempt to relate Jesus to some framework of society on the earth. The interest of the Roman Catholic Church in "otherworldliness" and the Protestant doctrine of the invisible church, make his idea somewhat a sport. The doctrine, though essentially otherworldly, does call man to life on the earth. Had our author conceived of the kingdom as a present reality, in the process of development, he would have given the church a clearer vision of her nature.

The main body of his work is the product of an untrained mind, let loose in the midst of a sea of doctrines. Agitated by its prejudices, this mind produced a system which makes God a tyrant and leaves men to destruction. Although I can honestly commend him for his trust in God, his confidence in the sufficiency of Scripture, and his dogged loyalty to conviction, I feel constrained to reject his major doctrines in toto.

In presenting a brief critique of his theological system, I shall attempt to suggest briefly a more adequate concept of the teachings of the Bible.

Theology Proper. To conceive of the providence of God in the narrow terms of eschatology, betrays a failure to understand His Word. The patriarchs (Gen. 23:14), the prophets (I Kings 18:36), and the Christians (Acts 4:29-30), believed in God as an ever-present Guide. That they hoped for some life beyond the present, is evident; but God was to them a Deity both of the present and the future. The doctrine of predestination, as described in the doctor's exposition of Daniel, Ezekiel and Revelation, is a reflection of Calvinism. If one accepts free-will, and I do, a different understanding of these books must be found. At the present time, the theory of "crisis literature" is acceptable with me. It is sufficient to know that our God is watching over us according to our faith; any detailed definition of this guidance raises unanswerable questions. Let us live by faith!

The complete omission of any reference to the nature of God as revealed in the patriarchs, prophets, Christ, and the apostles is very evident. By them, He is set forth as, One God over all the universe (Gen. 1:1, 17:1; Deut. 6:4), the God of wisdom and justice (Prov. 1:7, Micah 6:6-8), the Father of love, mercy, and light, (John 3:16, Luke 15:11-32, John 1:9), and the Author of man's salvation (John 3:17, I John 4:10). A more careful study of the Bible would have enabled him to avoid such a one sided concept of God.

Christology. Reference to the chapters on Christology and Soteriology will show that the doctor saw in a legalistic view of the purpose of the cross, the only mission of the historic Christ. Jesus was the Messiah, but only to the degree that He furnished a blood sacrifice to seal the covenant God made with Abraham. Even if this were true, it would relegate

Christ to rather insignificant importance. The apostles did teach that Jesus was the mediator of a new covenant (Heb. 9:15) but they saw in His life, as well as His death, the means of man's salvation. (Romans 5:10)

The historic mission of Christ was to bring life to all men.

(John 10:10, 17:3, 5:24) He did not preach "you believe in me and centuries later you can live and rule with me in Jerusalem." He offered man an abundant life on earth and a glorious life in heaven (John 14:1-4) after this one. To Jesus, as the author of life, all the anticipations of the prophets pointed. A careful study of the Old Testament prophecies quoted in the New Testament will show that the Historic Christ of the first coming was their principal fulfillment. (Matt. 1:22-23, 2:5-6, Luke 4:17-21)

A true Christology will consider at great length the life and teachings of Jesus. The four gospels give ample witness to the quality of Him who is "God with us". Reference to the preaching of the apostles and evangelists, and the writings of Paul, will elevate the Messiah, the Son of God (Matt. 16:16) in the mind of every reader. The burden of the whole message of the gospel was the historic (and exalted) Christ. (Acts 2:36, 4:12, 8:12, 9:20, 22:14, 26:23; Romans 1:16, I Cor. 3:11, Col. 3:1 and Hebrews 1:1-2) To the Jews, Christ was preached as the final word of God, (Heb. 1:1-2) and to the Gentiles, as the Lord of Life. (Acts 16:31). Whatever the future might hold, they were secure, because they were the Lord's. (Romans 14:7-9) The eschatological interpretation of the mission of Christ, completely obliterates His essential message.

Pneumatology. The spirit of God, according to Dr. Thomas, is a chemical element or compound. Although I am not prepared to analyze the

nature of the creation and the sustaining of the universe by God, in terms of the discoveries of science, it seems that the doctor presents a pure pantheism or materialism. The spirit of God is active in the universe, but His methods are not discussed in the Scripture. His chief function is that of cause.

The doctrine of the Holy Spirit, as the guest in the life of the Christian, is completely absent from our author's presentation. The essential meaning of the Incarnation is that Christ may live in the believer. Jesus promised a Paraclete or Comforter (John 14:16-23, 15:26-27, 16:7-14), the Apostles and early Christians welcomed Him into their lives (Acts 2:38-41, I Cor. 6:19-20, Romans 8:15) and believers through the centuries have followed His leadership and received His comfort. Only a complete envelopment in "prophecy" could have caused the doctor to miss the meaning and purpose of the Spirit of God in the life of believers. But this is the price paid for lop-sidedness.

Anthropology. Our author lived in the age of the infancy of the theory of biological evolution. No doubt that partly explains his teaching on the nature of man. Yet, even from a study of the Bible it is difficult to see how he could arrive at the conclusion that man is only a "higher animal". We reap today the results of this doctrine. It is undoubtedly true that the ancients recognized some affinity between man and beast as to fleshly constitution, but there was very early the realization that God gave to man something not in animals and birds. It was during the moments of man's pessimism that he likened himself to the beasts; the Psalmist, in 8:5, voices the more general concept of his constitution.

Dr. Thomas' doctrine of original sin, with its accompanying ethical dualism, is not a clearly defined Biblical doctrine. To claim for the sin of Adam and Eve the cause of man's nature is to do more than even Paul does. This incident has meaning primarily as an example of the desire for obedience on God's part and the results of disobedience. The Bible takes man as he is in a given age, and provides for his salvation according to need. I do not think the origin of the nature of evil in man is discussed in the Bible. Those who acted for God in any capacity realized that He had a Way better than man was living, and consequently taught that Way. They saw evil, and, judging in the light of God's will, condemned it. The sinful nature of man is evident by observation, no blame for it need be laid on our first parents.

The idea of the annihilation of the wicked at death is based upon the foregoing conception. Mr. Campbell's arguments for a life beyond the grave for every man are sustained by Scripture. (John 5:29) This doctrine may be better than the doctrine of hell, but both are based on a narrow view of the nature of God. Conditional salvation is undoubtedly taught in the Bible (Mk. 16:15-16) but the advance judgment of annihilation upon non-believers and un-believers is outside the prerogative of man.

Soteriology. The doctrine of salvation in terms of the coming kingdom is inadequate to the needs of man. Further, it is a rejection of the historic mission of Christ. To conceive of a life on this earth, with a few Israelites and Gentiles, in an era centuries in the future is no life at all. It makes the coming of Christ a farce.

On the other hand, to enjoy life now with Christ, and have the promise that even death will not obliterate it, is truly salvation. Salvation

in the Christian sense, is life in Christ. To live in my day as Christ would have me live, and to trust Him for the future life, is to be saved. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me hath everlasting life." (John 6:47) said Jesus. ". . . nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; . . ." (Gal. 2:20) said Paul. Peter offered this salvation on Pentecost (Acts 2:38) and Paul offered it to the people of Pisidian Antioch (Acts 13:38-39).

The teachings of Jesus, as recorded in the Sermon on the Mount, the parables and the numerous private conversations, act as a source of power in saving men from moral evil by means of their faith in Him. Believing Him to have conquered death and to be at the right hand of God to comfort, forgive, rebuke and inspire, constitutes Christian salvation. There is a completed salvation at the end of this life (I Peter 1:5) which Christians are to enjoy, but one need not wait until then to be the recipient of divine grace. The proclamation of our Lord "The kingdom of heaven is at hand" places squarely before us the fact, of His grace, made effective in the lives of those who follow Him.

Ecclesiology. The doctor's trust in the adequacy of the Bible to instruct man in things of God, is splendid. However, his handling of it is obnoxious. He twists Scriptures, bends them to fit his theories, disregards passages that do not substantiate his views. (a study of his interpretation of the doctrine of the kingdom would be sufficient to show this.)

His concept of belief in "the truth" as a test of membership is inadequate and renders the sacraments meaningless. To limit the truth to his peculiar dogma is to make Christ of all men most ignorant. The truth in

Christ is the facts concerning His ministering life and His death and resurrection. That He is "God with us" is the key truth that is the center of the church's thought. (Matt. 1:23, 16:16-18, II Cor. 5:19) To be baptized into Him, is to accept Him as Son of God and Lord of your life, this alone gives meaning to Christian immersion. To partake of the loaf and cup, in memory of Him and in recognition of His divine life in heaven, is to energize the meetings of the disciples. Unless the Son of God is present with the believer in his acts of obedience and devotion, they are superfluous.

To see the church as the living body of Christ (Eph. 1:22-23) with Him at the head and obedient believers as members, is to entertain the Scriptural idea of His body. With a mission to perform, a life to live, and a destiny to anticipate, the church in a very real sense perpetuates His life till He come again. Dr. Thomas has no such exalted idea of the church--the church for which Christ died (I Cor. 6:19-20, Eph. 5:25). To him, it is merely a small aggregation of souls waiting for the "riches of God" on the renovated earth. The many considerations that pertain to the faith, dogma, and life of the church he completely disregarded.

Ethics. As pointed out in Chapter V, there are no ethics in the doctor's teaching. Indifference to the world we live in, has caused his followers to "wall themselves up" in complacent satisfaction. Jesus left no such way. Rather He said, "Ye are the salt of the earth", "Ye are the light of the world" (Matt. 5:13-14). Then He added -- "Let your light shine" (vs 16). In His closing prayer, He asked: "I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou should keep them from the evil." (John 17:15) The whole life of the church through the centuries

has been a life "in the world but not of it." Therefore, I think the Christian should use his best judgment in carrying on the affairs that pertain to this life. Evil people make evil systems -- good people make good ones; he should be among the latter.

Had the doctor's mind not been clouded by the activity of the "future age" he would have been more concerned about this life and would have made a better contribution to it.

Eschatology. The study of the things of the end of the world has always been very interesting. Some thinkers have devoted their entire lives to a consideration of those passages that are eschatological in nature. As pointed out in this dissertation, Dr. Thomas is one of these.

As I have stated before, the over-emphasis on apochryphal literature has given the doctor some very peculiar views. As pointed out by F. D. Kershner, there may have been Jewish Christians (Ebionites) in the early centuries who thought of a great day in the future when they would have the Kingdom of David restored in all its glory. No doubt some orthodox Jews accept this today. But it hardly seems conceivable, that very many Christians could picture such a future as our author has presented. It is fanciful, exceedingly narrow, and lacks a real understanding of the nature of God.

The future is not clearly defined in the New Testament. Jesus himself knew little about it. (Matt. 24:36) There are certain features that make up the hope of the Christian. He is promised a resurrection body, (I Cor. 15:20-54, Phil. 3:20-21) and life eternal with God and Christ Jesus. (Rev. 21:1-5, John 14:1-4) He anticipates the reward of

that life when His Lord returns to receive him. (John 14:3, Acts 1:11, I Cor. 15:23, etc.) The exact nature of it is not given him; he recognizes that it will be great and good, because of the One who has promised to bring it to pass. The Christian sets his mind on God and on life, both present and future; he believes that God will fulfill all of His promises. (Eph. 3:20-21)

For the evil one, and unbeliever, condemnation is anticipated. (Mark 16:16) John teaches that these also will be raised (John 5:27) and that they will face a judgment of condemnation. It is rather dangerous to theorize on this point. The various theories, restitution, hell, purgatory, annihilation, and universalism, are all fraught with difficulties. Dr. Thomas accepted annihilation in part, but he was constantly the object of ridicule and opposition. So long as we believe God to be the Father of obedient ones only, we may leave the disobedient to His mercy and judgment.

Our author's idea of conditional salvation, when applied to "non-believers", enters the area of opinion. The Bible teaches that salvation is predicated upon faith and obedience, but to place non-believers in the same category with un-believers is too big a stretch of the mercy of God.

The Hope of Israel, which Paul and the Apostles preached, was certainly not the restoration of Israel under a temporal king in Jerusalem. A careful reading of Paul's sermon before Agrippa will show that this hope was the resurrection of the dead (Acts 26:6-8, esp. vs. 8). Paul may have had ideas about the nature of that resurrection life, but it is very difficult to understand his preaching if we accept Dr. Thomas' interpretation of "the Hope".

This critique has merely been suggestive; we are not attempting to

give an outline of Christian Doctrine. I have tried to show that our author has been lead astray from the essential message of Christ, by an undue emphasis upon matters that are purely in the realm of opinion. He has given a completely one-sided system and has called it a balanced one. The only feasible explanation for such engrossment, is the fact that years of study in Daniel, Ezekiel and Revelation produced within him an expectancy of the sudden return of Christ.¹ He sincerely wanted to get people "ready". There are many subjects in the doctor's work which could be more thoroughly discussed; however, this paper has sought merely to introduce the theme. Greater emphasis upon "the voices of the Scriptures", a broader view of the providence of God, and a more thorough knowledge of history would have enabled Dr. Thomas to make some contribution to Christian thought.

The Christadelphians and the Disciples

In conclusion, as a Disciple of Christ, I should like to discuss briefly the relation between the Christadelphians and Disciples with special reference to the attitudes of Alexander Campbell toward Dr. Thomas.

When Mr. Campbell first met Dr. Thomas, he was highly pleased with his talents and saw in him a prospective advocate of the Christian gospel.² In a very short time, however, he observed in the doctor a tendency to speculate on matters of opinion. After many months of discussion on the re-immersion of Baptists, Mr. Campbell observed: "It does not at all concern us; let us seek to convert sinners to the Lord, to edify the saints, and leave the weak and vascillating on this question to act as seemeth

¹ Ibid., p. 277.

² A. Campbell, M. H. 1834, p. 190.

good to them, without calling upon the whole community to discuss the subject, or to take a vote upon the question."¹ It was this concern for the need of preaching the gospel to non-believers and of building the saints up in Christ that caused him to rebel against over-emphasis upon opinions. He maintained this attitude throughout his whole observation of Dr. Thomas' life.

The discussion of rebaptism, the nature and destiny of man, and the place of sectarian Christians in eyes of God was carried on endlessly by the doctor. Mr. Campbell came to see that such discussions were tending to distract men's attention from essential Christianity to "the silences of the Scripture." On this basis he plead with the doctor to avoid them and thus eliminate the dangers to the cause of Christ. When he heard that Dr. Thomas had openly avowed these things in public debate he said: "I regard the author of them as an incorrigible factionist, and the new doctrines as now avowed positively subversive of the Christian faith."² It was at this time he called for the Paineville Church to discipline the doctor. Six years later, he asked his readers, "Am I bound to take Dr. Thomas, with all his idle and useless speculations, as a fellow-laborer in the cause of reformation?"³ Throughout the whole controversy (1835-1845), Dr. Thomas never had any interest in the Current Reformation; he consistantly claimed correctness of his views against all the opposition of Reformers and others.⁴

In view of the system set forth by our author in Elpis Israel, we

¹Ibid., 1835, p. 619.

²Ibid., 1837, p. 512.

³Ibid., 1843, p. 229.

⁴John Thomas, A. A., Vol.4, pp. 231-242.

can readily accept the wisdom of Mr. Campbell's demand for his silence.¹ It may have been too harsh ; the "reconciliation" at Paineville, in the fall of 1838, softened it a great deal. Had Dr. Thomas accepted the suggestion of Mr. Campbell and others, to spend his time on more important affairs, he would have been a powerful exponent of Christianity.

The dogma of "the things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus" transferred salvation from basis in faith to basis in hope. This the doctor admitted himself. "It is by this hope we are saved."² In November 1837 he was thoroughly satisfied that he was "in Christ" in the fullest sense.³ After years of delving into "future things" he altered this opinion and acted upon the basis of a new plan of salvation. Mr. Campbell never would accept this view. He not only rejected the accuracy of the doctor's definition of the Hope⁴ but disclaimed any part of it as a dogma. Faith in the revealed Son of God who came, lived, died, was raised and exalted is the only dogma needed for salvation.

Throughout his earthly life, Dr. Thomas continued his advocacy of these particular views; they became the basis for his ecclesias. His followers in America and the British Empire have maintained them in some form until today. They remain a sect with less than ten thousand adherents and continue to refuse fellowship with any other believers. As in the day of Campbell there could be fellowship today between the Christadelphians and the Disciples if the former would reject as a dogma their opinion of "the truth" and would center their minds and energies on the message of Christ as contained in the Gospels, the Acts, and the Epistles. They

¹A. Campbell, op. cit., 1837, p. 513.

²Roberts, op. cit., p.212.

³A.A., 37, p. 232.

⁴M.H., 1850, p. 472.

would also have to discard the spirit of sectarianism and enter into a fuller fraternity with other believers.

The church historian has a fertile field for investigation in the case of these people. Particularly would such be interesting to one of the Disciples. It is hoped that the foregoing investigation will have served to clarify the chief tenets of the founder of the Christadelphians and to have done the spade work for additional investigation. My notes will be available in the Butler School of Religion Library.

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