

THE BEREAN CHRISTADELPHIAN ECCLESIAL NEWS

A monthly magazine devoted wholly to the Berean Christadelphian Ecclesial welfare, with the object of providing Ecclesial news, exhortations, articles and information of fraternal interest to the Brotherhood. Defending the original, foundation principles upon which the Truth was uncovered from darkness and upon which the Christadelphian movement was developed. Opposed to the dogmas of papal and protestant christendom. Upholding the Truth as The Berean Christadelphians since 1923.

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ECCLESIAL NEWS	West Wales, Las Cruces
EXHORTATION.....	No Man Stood With Me..... 147
EXHORTATION.....	Corinthians 157
EXHORTATION.....	Speech 160
SIGNS.....	Signs Of The Times 165
THOUGHTS.....	"My Goodness" 170
THOUGHTS.....	To Continue The Work Begun 171
THOUGHTS.....	Order of Meetings 174
THOUGHTS.....	Children Singing 174
THOUGHTS.....	Hye 1930..... 174
THOUGHTS.....	Mary 175
Analecta Apocalypcticae (13).....	176
WHAT DOES THAT MEAN	180

God Willing, The Berean Christadelphian Ecclesial News will be published monthly as an avenue of providing information of Ecclesial interest to the Brotherhood. Ecclesial news and correspondence, Fraternal Gathering notices, special activities and upbuilding exhortations are encouraged. This is an effort to upbuild and prepare us in heart and mind for the return of our Lord Jesus Christ.

CHRIST IS COMING SOON AND WILL REIGN ON EARTH

Ecclesial News

WEST WALES, Wales, Breaking of Bread – 10.00am; Sunday School – 11.30pm; Afternoon meeting – 1.30pm; Monday First Principle Class; Thursday Book Class 7.00pm; Friday Youth Evening with Hengoed – held every 2 weeks on Friday at the Cadoxton Village Hall at 6.30pm. Bro. Andrew Ford, Caerwen, Broad Oak, Carmarthenshire, Wales, SA32 8QJ; Tel. +44 (0) 1558 668 678; Email westwalesecclesia@tiscali.co.uk

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Loving greetings in Jesus' saving name,

We have some wonderful news to share with you. Following interviews last week, it gave us great joy to have the pleasure of baptising two of our daughters, Sis. Melody and Sis. Fantasia Ford on Saturday 31st of March at 14:15 [2:15pm] in Llandoverly Pool, at the tender ages of 13 and 11 respectively. The baptisms were attended by most of the Hengoed Ecclesia along with those from the West Wales Ecclesia. Following the baptisms, everybody assembled in our home to encourage them as they began their walk to the Kingdom as God's children. Bro. Gordon Tippins (Hengoed) provided a wonderful, uplifting exhortation (available in the Youth section of Hengoed's web-site: www.bereanchristadelphians.co.uk), and the day was one of joyful fellowship for all.

Sisters Melody and Fantasia were officially welcomed with the right hand of fellowship on Sunday following an exhortation by Bro. Stephen Ford. There is great joy here in Wales, just as there is in heaven over the commitment they have made to their Master's service. It is our hope and prayer that our Father's blessings will be with them during their pilgrimage, which we believe can only be short with our Master clearly due to return soon.

We would like to express our thanks to those who attended, all who have offered encouragement, along with the Males for providing a superb tea. Also, our thanks go to Bro. Steve Male who kindly assisted with their interviews. Most of all - the thankfulness, praise and worship of our hearts are offered to our Heavenly Father for the wonderful hope He has provided through the sacrifice of His Son, which has been a privilege to share with these little ones, who are Yahweh's heritage. May we all strive to live to His honour and glory.

Love in Jesus,
Bro. Andrew Ford
(On behalf of the West Wales Ecclesia) westwalesecclesia@tiscali.co.uk

LAS CRUCES, New Mexico, Berean Christadelphian Ecclesia,
— Memorial 10 AM; Key Lesson Bible Seminar 1 PM; Tuesday 7 PM Mid-Week Bible Class; Tuesday and Thursday 7:30 PM Walk and Conduct Class & Social Time; Bro. Michael Morrell, 200 Cervantes Village Apt. E15A, Las Cruces, NM 88001-6312; phone, 505-312-1025; morrell@morrellcom.com Web Page <http://lascruces.bereans.org/main>

It is our pleasure to announce the transfer of Brother Beryl Snyder from the Lampasas, Texas Ecclesia to the Las Cruces, New Mexico ecclesia. He is currently living with us at 200 Cervantes Vlg. E15A, Las Cruces, NM 88001. This is on the University Campus in Family Housing. It is wonderful to have another brother here to help out with meeting and Bible classes.

Our sister Lupe Ogaz has been sick and needs prayers. The rest of us are doing ok. We try to keep busy with our meetings, Sunday Bible class and Mid-Week class. We are currently studying the gospel of John, Proverbs, and Revelation.

We continue to send out the Key Bible Lessons to interested people via the internet. There are usually around 200 new Bible Students a month signing up for that.

Our contact phone number here is 505-312-1025. Our meeting place and mailing address is: 200 Cervantes Vlg. E15A, Las Cruces, NM 88001.

Love to you all.
Brother Michael and our Ecclesia.

FRATERNAL GATHERINGS & ACTIVITIES

(To be held Yahweh Willing)

NORTH CAROLINA–VIRGINIA STUDY WEEKEND.....**May 25–27, 2007**
Bro. Dale Lee, 1-757-547-5816, dleecpa2@mindspring.com.

LAMPASAS FRATERNAL GATHERING.....**June 8–10, 2007**
Bro. Ricky Hurst, PO Box 1381, Goldthwaite TX 1-325-451-4075

RICHARD FRATERNAL GATHERING.....**June 29 – July 2, 2007**
Bro. Terry Readman, RR# 1, N. Battleford, Sask, S9A 2X3, Canada

HYE FRATERNAL GATHERING..... **July 23–29, 2007**
Bro. Curtis Hurst, Rt.1, Box 40, Mullin, TX 76864, USA. 1-325-985-3868
Study Class Topic: 2Thess. and Titus; Bible Readings; Discuss. Zech. 8-14

CANTON SUNDAY SCHOOL PICNIC..... **Aug 25 - 26, 2007** Bro. Don Miller, 6695 Carriage Lane, North Canton, OH 44721 330-494-7717

NORTHEAST FRATERNAL GATHERING - DETROIT.....**Oct 5–7, 2007**
Bro. Fred Higham, 1-586-790-2156, fhigham@gmail.com

No Man Stood With Me

“God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind”—2 Tim. 1:7.

Paul's 2nd letter to Timothy was written to strengthen and encourage him. Paul was a prisoner in Rome, about to be put to death. Timothy was laboring in the Truth at some distant place.

Paul appears to feel that Timothy was somewhat disheartened. Truly there was much to cause discouragement. Things were not going well with the Truth. They never have and never will. This is the day of small things—of trial and probation and darkness and faith.

In reading the epistles, we are impressed with how **personal and individual** a thing early Christianity was. It hung to a large extent on the shoulders of this one man and the few who were willing to give their lives to help him. Writing to the Philippians, he said—*“I trust in the Lord to send Timothy shortly unto you.”*

“I have no man likeminded, who will naturally care for your state, for all seek their own—not the things which are Jesus

Christ's" (2:20-21).

All were wrapped up in their own little lives and affairs, too busy to accept the honor and glory of a part in the most wonderful and history-making endeavor that the world has ever seen.

What is left of the things that seemed so important to them then?

But Timothy, though he early chose the one thing which was needful and held fast to it to the end, could get discouraged too. And though writing to encourage him, the external picture that Paul gives is not a happy one. In 1:15 he says: "*This thou knowest, that all they which are in Asia be turned away from me.*" And in chapter 4—"Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world" (v. 10). "*At my first answer, no man stood with me, but all forsook me*" (v. 16).

Timothy would wonder if there were any point in trying to maintain and hold together an organized body of believers—in trying to carry on ecclesial arrangements. Here was Paul, the very heart of the movement, a prisoner facing execution, and the body of so-called Christians he had gotten together were deserting him like rats from a sinking ship.

How pathetically he mentions Onesiphorus—one, at least, who sought him out in his imprisonment and was not ashamed of his chains.

What a state of affairs—when one brother stands out for grateful commendation for not having been ashamed of association with the apostle in his hour of trial.

But Paul relates these things without any bitterness or despair. He knows the purpose of God cannot fail—"The foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal: The Lord knoweth them that are His."—he says in chap. 2. Men may waver back and forth, but the foundation standeth sure; and all who will may stand upon it—be they many or few. Paul's concern was to keep the foundation before the eyes of men, regardless of the appearances or conditions in the external Christian body all around him.

"*Stir up the gift of God which is in thee.*"—he urges Timothy (1:6). We lose much of the comfort and unearthly marvelousness of the Gospel message if we relegate this exhortation to the past. "*Stir up the gift of God which is in thee,*" is just as true today as ever—and what an awe-inspiring, unspeakable gift it is!

Paul continues (v. 7)—"*For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.*"

Power, and love, and a sound mind. This is the spirit that God gives us. All the real power was on Paul's side, though all appearances were to the contrary. And so he counseled with cheerful assurance, though forsaken and in prison and facing death. In the next chapter he says—

"*I am in bonds, but THE WORD OF GOD IS NOT BOUND.*"

So he exhorts Timothy (1:8)—

"*Be not thou ashamed, therefore, to testify to our Lord, nor of me his prisoner, but take your share of suffering for the Gospel according in the power of God.*"

"*I am not ashamed,*" he says. He was not ashamed or afraid to meet scorn and ridicule and peril for the sake of the Truth. Why was he not, when others were? Was he naturally any different from them? No, his secret was—

"*I am not ashamed, because I know whom I have believed.*"

He KNEW God. He did not just know **about** Him. He knew Him **personally**. Such knowledge does not come overnight. It takes time. The intimate companionship of God is not for every casual seeker. Solomon says (Eccl. 5:4)—"*When thou vowest a vow, defer not to pay it, for God hath no pleasure in fools.*"

This seems a "hard saying," but it conveys an important principle of divine wisdom. To merit God's interest, we must be prepared to recognize and fulfil our obligations. This is an elementary requirement in any practical endeavor. We cannot be silly, illogical, inconsistent children all our lives.

Getting to know God must be taken seriously, and must be made the center of life's purpose.

And we must be prepared to wait in patience, though the vision may seem to tarry long. Can God be expected to open Himself to one whose heart is not firmly set on developing the acquaintance into permanent devoted affection? "*God hath no pleasure in fools*"—those who are light or divided in their interests.

Paul knew Him, and therefore he could say—'None of these things move me.'

Paul was not above human feelings. He had simply availed himself of something that was far mightier—the God-given

spirit of “*power and of love and of a sound mind.*” He said to the Corinthians that he was “*perplexed, but not in despair.*” In the present darkness perplexity cannot be avoided. It is part of the training. But it need not, **must** not, lead to despair.

In v. 13 he exhorts Timothy—“*Hold fast the form of sound words.*”

This vital principle runs all through the epistle. In 2:15 it is—“*Study to show thyself approved with God—rightly dividing the Word of Truth.*”

But HOW? When we contemplate the endless multitude of theories developed on the supposed basis of the Word of God, especially in these last days of proliferating endeavors to break down and abandon the sound foundation laid by pioneer brethren, in order to pursue “*some new thing,*” we wonder how we should go about avoiding similar pitfalls. But actually it is not the problem that it may appear.

The Truth is simple. It is adjusted to our mental capacity. As long as we hold fast to its simple elements, we are safe.

And it has largely to do with our way of life. Jesus said—

“*If any man will DO the will of God, he shall KNOW of the doctrine*” (John 7:17).

Truly much of Scripture requires study, but there is plenty that is very clear and of practical bearing on our lives, and if we do **this** part, then—and ONLY then—will we know the other.

As guidance in this respect, Paul (in ch. 2) warns Timothy against 3 dangers (v. 14)—“*Strive not about words.*” “*Shun profane and vain babblings*” (v. 16). “*Avoid foolish and unlearned questions*” (v. 23).

One thing it will do us good to remember: it is much easier and more flesh-pleasing to dream and speculate than to study and learn. Imagination has tireless wings, but solid learning is slow, and plodding, and against the grain, especially scriptural learning. Let us briefly consider Paul’s 3 points:

1. “*Strive not about words.*”

Words are just tools. Much strife has been caused by attaching different meanings to a word. Our contact with the mind of the Spirit is through the recorded words of Scripture, so let us study to get the true meaning of those words, and to use them properly.

Let us never think we know the meaning of a word until we have looked it up and have checked its use through Scripture. Words as they are commonly and locally used are often very inaccurate. The greatest pitfall is thinking we know, without making the effort to really find out.

The Word of God is the only true education there is, but it is not something we can peck at. To get anywhere we must, as Paul told Timothy, give ourselves “*wholly to it.*”

“*Strife about words*”—harping over and over on a special little crotchet, is very hurtful and destructive ecclesially, even if the crotchet has a little basic merit: it is the weakness of small minds seeking easy self-gratification. Large and spiritual minds seek peace and harmony and BALANCED growth of knowledge on a BROAD front of study.

2. “*Shun profane and vain babblings.*”

On the face of it, we thoughtlessly assume that this never applies to us. But the real meaning is just empty, human talking—that is, the natural expressing of natural thought. The natural mind is foolish in God’s sight.

Man can learn and observe facts, and modern man has made great strides in applying learned facts to modern inventions. In spiritual realms he must learn and stick to the facts—the revealed facts. He is lost if he begins to speculate on what is not revealed.

ALL speech that is not of grace, seasoned with spiritual salt, is “*profane and vain babbling.*”

3. “*Foolish and unlearned questions avoid, knowing that they do gender strifes.*”

There are many unanswered questions in the Bible, and they are often bandied profitlessly back and forth while the practical meat of divine teaching is overlooked.

The real teaching of Christ bears down hard on the flesh, so naturally the flesh prefers to turn its attention to side issues and crotchets which do not relate to the way of life.

But when we read the Scriptures, let us try to keep our attention on the heart of the flesh-mortifying teaching, and not

allow it to deceitfully expend itself on the incidental scenery, for the heart of man is “*deceitful above all things.*”

Let us concentrate on the PRACTICAL aspects—the holiness, the service to God and to others, the self-denial, the kindness, the meekness, the purification, the putting away of earthly treasures, the faith and fearless allegiance of Christ, the humble, lowly way of life.

“*The servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all*” (2:24).

“*Gentle unto ALL.*” How many pass **that** test of discipleship? Truly there is a necessary and commanded “*striving,*” but the word used here means “*fight*” or “*quarrel;*” it is never scripturally used in a good sense.

If we can accomplish this basic attitude of gentleness toward ALL, then we have laid the groundwork for the gradual bringing unto perfection of the fruit of the Spirit.

But it must go deep. The natural, evil, irritable human tendency to quarrel must be completely dissolved away by the mind of the Spirit, not just sidetracked into other channels by being given a spiritual veneer as “*righteous anger*” or “*contending for the Faith.*” The servant of the Lord **MUST NOT** strive, fight, or quarrel.

“*In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves, if God peradventure will give them repentance*” (2:25).

If we can bring ourselves to realize that all is at all times in the unerring and Almighty hand of God, and that we are but a small cog in a vast machine, we shall not be trapped into that self-important anxiety that leads to hastiness and harshness.

When we see worldliness and unclean, debasing worldly habits gaining ground in an ecclesia; when we see modern customs making a mockery of scriptural ordinances; when we see some drifting away into looser groups that have the appeal of numbers; when we see attendance gradually diminishing and worldly things interfering even on Sunday mornings; when we see bre. Thomas and Roberts and their works criticized and belittled and pushed aside, so that shallow and self-important little minds can introduce new crotchets and speculations—we are apt to become despondent and panicky.

BUT WHY SHOULD WE? Did Paul? No! He says (2:19)—

“*The foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal: The Lord knoweth them that are His.*”

And the apostle, far from despondency, sounded out from his prison-cell inspiring words of courage, and patience, and glorious hope. Without bitterness, but with terrible significance, he points out (2:20) that in a great house there are not only vessels of honor, but also vessels of dishonor. If a man will purify himself, he shall be among the vessels of honor.

This may seem a strange way to give encouragement, but it would help Timothy to realize that ecclesial disappointments and difficulties do not necessarily mean an abandonment by God, but are rather a part of the divine wisdom of trial and probation.

If things were so in Paul’s day, what are we to expect at the time of the end—the perilous times of the last days of which he speaks in the beginning of chapter 3? In the list of evils that will particularly mark the latter days, the 3 he puts first are instructive.

Surely, we can assume that the first ones he mentions are outstanding, either as the most serious, the most dangerous, or the most fundamental. They are “*Covetous, boasters, proud.*”

Surely, above all, these are days of covetousness and pride in this world’s goods. And being human, we are all too easily drawn into this same vicious net unless we are consciously on guard. Covetousness is something that we always regard as applying to others. In ourselves we see it as just an intelligent appreciation of finer things and a commendable industriousness to acquire them.

Let us turn the searching beam of the Spirit on this foolishness. It was someone far wiser than we who said—

“*Having food and raiment therewith be content. Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also. Verily they HAVE their reward.*”

Among the characteristics of the last days is (v. 5)—

“*Having a **form** of godliness, but denying the **POWER** thereof.*”

“*Denying the power thereof*”—saying it “*cannot be done.*” It is “*not reasonable.*” What is “*the power thereof?*” Let us consider a few verses in which this power is referred to—

“The exceeding greatness of His power to usward, according to the working of His mighty power” (Eph. 1:19).

“Now unto Him Who is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us. My brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might” (Eph. 6:10).

“Strengthened with all might according to His glorious power, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness” (Col. 1:11).

IS there such a thing as being “strengthened with all might according to His glorious power, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness”? Let us, at least, not be among those who *“deny the power thereof.”*

There IS such a power, and making contact with it is the difference between life and death. It can and MUST be done!

“All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution” (3:12).

Persecution does not necessarily mean bodily peril. But the Scriptures lay down the principle that if we live faithfully and consistently according to the commands of Christ, we shall be treated in an unfriendly manner by the world in general.

It is not something we should invite, and quite often it is our fleshliness and discourtesy—rather than our Christlikeness—that creates the unpleasantness which we may be inclined to interpret as persecution for righteousness’ sake, But still the fact remains that—

“All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.”

If we openly advocate and try to live up to the principles of Christ, we shall annoy most people because they do not want to live that way and resent the implication they should.

Until we recognize and completely accept this state of affairs, we shall be unhappy and divided in our minds. We can have no friendship with the world if we are an out-and-out, unconcealed follower of Christ.

They may tolerate us, but they cannot like us, for they will be uneasy in our presence, and we in theirs.

Everything that is not of the Father is of the world. Therefore the world can also be among our own selves. There can be no true communion except between those who are hungering and thirsting for righteousness—striving to get closer and closer to God and the divine way of life.

“Continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and been assured of...from a child thou hast known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation” (v. 14-15).

How are they able to make us *“wise unto salvation”*? Paul goes on to answer—

“All Scripture is profitable for doctrine, reproof, correction, for instruction in righteousness, That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly (that is, completely) furnished unto all good works.”

This is a very common quotation among us, but have we ever stopped to analyze it and to note what the Scriptures are designed to do to us?—what it MEANS to be *“wise unto salvation”*?

*“Reproof, correction, instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be **perfect and completely equipped.**”*

Do we realize the tremendous, vital power that lies between the covers of this Book? If we come to it hungering and thirsting after righteousness, **we shall find it. It is a promise. It is a divine guarantee.**

It may be in a far different way than we expect, and there may be long waiting and darkness, but it **will** come—a marvelous, divine, transforming power of godliness.

Our part is to hold fast, keep at it. On one occasion Daniel, the greatly beloved, mourned and fasted and prayed for 3 weeks continuously before receiving any recognition. Moses had to afflict himself 40 days before being received up to the mount of God. And these are but symbolic periods of waiting.

Anna, the Prophetess, waited 84 years as a widow in the Temple, serving God night and day with fasting and prayer—waiting to see the salvation of the Lord.

“For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine” (4:3).

We know that the whole vast body of so-called Christendom has long since reached this state. They cannot bear to listen to sound teaching, for it interferes with their way of life. This is the biggest stumbling-block to accepting the Truth.

The lesson for us is to be sure that we are not among the number who are annoyed and resentful when the call to ever-increasing godliness and holiness is presented.

We DARE not regard it as a “burden”! That was wherein Israel grievously offended God. Can it be a “burden” that God asks us to draw closer and closer to Him and His way? Isn’t this what we CLAIM to desire?

We must hunger and thirst after righteousness—we must perceive its divine beauty and value, and the repulsive, deathly ugliness of the natural fleshly mind.

“I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand” (4:6).

Paul had come to the end of his course. Apart from the Master himself, no man had given more, or suffered more, for the Household of Faith.

One would expect that as the great apostle to the Gentiles went to his death for the Truth, the whole Brotherhood whom he had served so unselfishly would surround him in love and sorrow. But just the opposite was the case—

“All Asia (the very heart of his labors) is turned away from me” (1:15).

And when he stood before the stern Roman bar, his life at stake, he records—

“No one stood with me: all forsook me” (4:16).

Twice he implored Timothy in this last chapter—*“Do your best to come to me soon!”*

The reason he gives is—*“For Demas (a long-time once-faithful companion) hath forsaken me, having loved this present world.”*

Demas was at one time a close fellow-laborer with Paul and joins with him in greetings in 2 former epistles. But apparently he had never truly grasped the real value and beauty of the Truth; had never had its divine transforming power sink into his heart.

The falling-away of the once-earnest Demas is the saddest part of the whole epistle. The sadness is that for Demas the picture had faded.

Why? Surely we would expect the vision of the future to grow brighter as one continued in the Truth. It does if we are ever striving to get nearer to God.

But if we regard being in the Truth an end in itself—an accomplished thing that just requires maintaining—then the vital, living reality of it will gradually, imperceptibly, fade from our minds. For we are so constituted. We get used to things—and their effect on us diminishes.

We cannot maintain an interest and an enthusiasm unless we are earnestly STRIVING for something. Paul said—

“Brethren, I count not myself yet to have laid hold, but one thing I do—Forgetting those things which are behind, and stretching forward to those things which are before, I press on toward the goal unto the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus” (Phil. 3:13-14).

He did not consider that he had attained. He could see that all the time that remained to him had to be accounted for by a continual movement toward the ideal in Christ. Not a mechanical approach—just a “doing” or “not doing”—but, as he says, that he might better apprehend, or **comprehend**: that is, a continuous mental drawing closer to the ideal. Let us note that this man says in the same Philippian epistle—

“I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content.”

“I have suffered the loss of ALL things, and do count them but DUNG that I may win Christ.”

And again—*“I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me!”*

But **still** he could at the same time say—

“I have not attained. I have further to go. I stretch forward to the mark of the high calling.”

That is the beauty and glory and power of the mark of the high calling in Christ Jesus—it’s unattainable but ever-inspiring perfection in godliness.

This was the secret that kept Paul's zeal on tiptoe—counting each moment an opportunity to improve his offering, to draw closer to God, to intensify the joy of divine fellowship—eagerly spending the time in loving preparation, always adding by anticipation to the pleasure the final perfect, endless communion. And when the time of his departure came, he said—

“I have fought a good fight.”

It **was** a fight. It still **IS** a fight—a bitter yet glorious battle. A battle whose weapons are kindness, and patience, and gentleness, and endless self-searching, and Hope in the darkness, and an enduring, unquestioning Faith, and Love never-failing. But—*“He that OVERCOMETH shall inherit all things.”*
Bro. G. V. Growcott

Corinthians

Paul is writing to the Corinthians who lived in Greece. Paul had taught them the Truth and used the works of the Holy Spirit to attest to what he preached. Greece was a great country, full of arts and science and philosophy. It produced a type of man who was eagerly searching for, and valued, knowledge. The philosophers of Greece were men who were in no way divinely guided. It was then as it is today. Man looks at the world around him, and tries to figure out how it works. The philosophers, with no knowledge of God, had their own way of putting things together and drawing their own conclusions. This came to represent wisdom. This wisdom was taught then as well as now. The things taught in public speaking courses, as well as the rest of the humanities courses, were derived from things taught in Greece. The Corinthians were steeped in this knowledge before they came to a knowledge of the Truth. The great teachers, as well as the not so great, spoke with great skill and arguments which were powerful to the natural mind. This is why in the second chapter Paul wrote, *“When I came to you, I came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God.”* We must keep this in mind as we read through the various chapters in Corinthians. Paul was continually exhorting and reminding them of how vain and foolish this knowledge was and where true knowledge could be found.

Not only did Paul have to contend with the philosophical teachings, but he also had an upward battle with the Jews in the city. They were not happy that he preached Christ. Paul had two classes in the city trying to disrupt and destroy the Truth. Then as now, a brother sometimes perceives a false idea and attempts to disrupt the harmony and soundness of those called into fellowship with Christ Jesus. The only way we can guard against these ideas is with a thorough knowledge of the scriptures and the truth. The false teachers in Paul's day had a two-pronged attack, which he struggled to overcome, leveled against the Corinthians. We have those advising the disciples to seek justification by observing the Mosaic law. There were also those urging the inclusion of the philosophies of the day. Paul wrote the eighth chapter of Corinthians against this influence. This section of this epistle was directed against those who taught there was no problem with eating sacrifices to idols in their temples.

If the Corinthians were of sound mind and sound in the faith it would not have been necessary for this letter to have been written. But it appears by this epistle they were not of one mind, one heart, and one voice. Paul wrote in the first verse, *“Knowledge puffeth up, but charity edifieth.”* This is an important thought. Part of the problem was that the people of Corinth were brought up in a culture that sought knowledge for the sake of knowledge. Without the transforming influence of the love of God, the pursued knowledge is nothing more than a mere manifestation of the flesh. This is what Paul is trying to say. Knowledge caters to pride. It makes one boastful, seemingly superior, powerful, and proud of his intelligence and learning. Whether the man is of the world or in the Truth, without charity the effect is the same. The world is filled with things which are amazing and interesting to the natural mind. But such knowledge, by itself, will not lead to life eternal. Even knowledge of the Scriptures is of no avail unless it transforms the heart. If we do not come, each and every Sunday, before the bread and wine with a heart filled with love, or charity as the apostle puts it, we come in vain.

Some of the Corinthians used their knowledge to wrest the Scriptures to serve their own purposes. Brother Thomas wrote in Eureka, *“Their argument was after this wise: ‘We have knowledge. We know that the idols are nothing; so that in being out of the demon-sacrifices, and drinking it of the demon-cup, not having an idolatrous conscience, we performed no act of worship; being safe with God upon at this point, we obtain the advantage of seeming conformity in avoiding persecution and for our desertion of the National superstition.’”* We can understand their fear of persecution. After all at that time the ruling powers set the national worship and backed it up by the military power of the state. We find Paul, when setting up the ecclesia at Corinth, teaching the poor and contrite of spirit. The Spirit of God was calling those few who have the attributes that could be molded into someone who could be accepted into His kingdom. The brethren in Corinth were required to do the same things that we are today, to meet around the table with bread and wine to remember Christ and his crucifixion. They were to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ and the Kingdom of God. This would put them in the sights of those opposed to the things of God. This would lead to the same antagonism that we find today when we preach the gospel. Strength is with those that oppose the Truth. They have all the numbers, money, and power. When we look at our lives we have very little as compared to those who oppose the Truth. When we look at Paul we see he had nothing. Jesus is another example of this. He

lacked everything and was in poverty. He was not popular with the rich and powerful. It is the same in our day when the Truth is preached. In Paul's day those in control could beat, imprison, and kill almost at will. We know that Paul himself almost died more than once. We can be thankful that God has deemed it not so in our day. Never-the-less, these facts do help us to understand the fear that the Corinthians held and how those with false doctrines could gain sway amongst the brethren. This has been left on record that we might learn and guard ourselves against our own natural tendencies to oppose the things of God, and that we might be thankful that our lives are not at risk when we come together on Sundays, preach the gospel, and meet for classes.

We find Paul reminding the ecclesia that although there are many gods and lords, there's only one true God. He wrote in 1Corinthians 8:6 *"But to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him."* Paul did not have to deal with the Trinity as we know it today, but he had his share of false gods and beliefs to argue against. It's hard to understand how those who would preach the blasphemous idea of three gods in one could make any sense of this verse. Paul places a very clear distinction between Christ and God. Paul is trying to impress the Corinthians with the total, absolute, permeation of God. His Spirit is like a vast ocean in and through and around everything. All things are formed of it, all life is given by it, and without it nothing would exist. In the vanity of their own minds the religions of the world today teach that God created the universe out of nothing. But as this verse shows God clearly created all things by His Spirit and of His Spirit. Paul says, *"of whom are all things"*. Clearly the pagan teachers of our day fail to grasp the import of Paul's lesson to the Corinthians.

The Apostle points out how, out of love, one should go out of his way not to cause offense. We are to consider one another. We are to take each other into account when deciding our actions, especially those who are weak in the Truth. The weakness we are speaking of is referring to questions of conscience. A brother may think something is wrong that is not really wrong, but when he faces others, stronger brethren, doing that which he perceives as wrong, then he might do it against his own conscience. And doing one thing against his conscience may lead him into going against his conscience on things that are really wrong. We need to go on the apostolic precept of charity or love having the strongest place in our hearts. The apostle is trying to teach those who were strong in the Truth, (not merely by knowledge but in love), ought to consider those who are weak and not to please ourselves. Brother Roberts gives this example, *"On the same principle, a man might see his way, as between himself and God, to be present at the internment of a relation without feeling compromised by the clerical mummery of the occasion. And other things there are which he might feel equally at liberty to do. But there are weak brethren to be considered, for the most part zealous men, but men of a narrow range of mental vision. If your liberty is likely to be misunderstood by them or made by them a cause of wrong action on their part in some other manner, it is according to the apostolic rule, and the rule of common benevolence, better to desist."* Paul's argument is that of a strong minded brother, in liberty doing something that's not wrong, but by some considered wrong causing their destruction. He points out that it is by the knowledge of the strong brother that the weak brother perish. The lesson then for us is to carefully guard our words and deeds and actions. We must be careful not to turn believers from the Truth. This is a lesson that a wise man will apply to himself in many ways. It is a check against reckless action. We must consider the consequences of how our actions will affect others. If we are truly putting all others before us we shall joyfully seek opportunities to make loving sacrifices on their behalf. Paul gave up everything and put himself in danger for the work of the Truth and the love of the brethren and sisters. Only those who are willing to follow Paul in these efforts are the true brethren of Christ. *Bro. Beryl Snyder*

Speech

This week I have been thinking about the importance of understanding *"the ten commandments"*. In them we read Exodus 20:7 **You shall not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain; for the LORD will not hold him guiltless that takes his name in vain.** It is this commandment, which involves several important Bible teachings, I will speak about today. Specifically, we sin against God by speaking God's name in a light-hearted, foolish, or angry manner.

If that way of speaking is a practice we do, out of habit or ignorance then it is time to stop this immediately and ask God to forgive us. If we are surrounded by people who blaspheme God by speaking His name as a curse word, or use it for emphasis, or by way of an exclamation of surprise or disgust, or any time in such a manner, then I believe it to be quite appropriate to instruct them to stop doing that around us.

Let's think first what **taking God's name in vain** actually means. In Leviticus 24, starting at verse 10, we read of an instance where a young man took God's name in vain.

"And the son of an Israelitish woman, whose father was an Egyptian, went out among the children of Israel: and this son of the Israelitish woman and a man of Israel strove together in the camp; And the Israelitish woman's son blasphemed the name of the LORD, and cursed. And they brought him unto Moses: (and his mother's name was Shelomith, the daughter of Dibri, of the tribe of Dan:) they put him in ward, that the mind of the LORD might be shewed them. And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, Bring forth him that hath cursed without the camp; and let all that heard him lay their hands upon his

head, and let all the congregation stone him. And thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel, saying, Whosoever curseth his God shall bear his sin. And he that blasphemeth the name of the LORD, he shall surely be put to death, and all the congregation shall certainly stone him: as well the stranger, as he that is born in the land, when he blasphemeth the name of the LORD, shall be put to death.”

Notice in this passage what the man did. It says he “blasphemed the name of the LORD” **and** he “cursed.” How many times a day do we hear God’s name involved with a curse? I would say many times. We hear it from little children, from young people, from men and women and from the elderly. We hear it in music, on TV and radio. All of these people feel it is acceptable to do a sin clearly worthy of death, as shown here in the Bible. How should that make us feel? How should that make us act?

Using God’s name in a profane manner, as it is expressed in Leviticus, is just as sinful as taking His Name in vain. What that means is when we use God’s name to teach about God or to pray to Him, that is not in a profane manner, but in a Holy manner. When we bless God in songs or conversation or prayer, that is using God’s name in a holy manner also, not in a profane manner. But if we mix God’s name with a swear-word or curse, that is blasphemy and using His name in a profane manner.

For example, one of the more common ways to curse is to use the word damn. To damn literally means *to curse*. Many people use the word *damn* and combine it with God’s name. They are either swearing at God Himself when they do this, cursing God, or trying to curse others or a situation. Even if that is not their intent, they still are doing so and are blaspheming God.

We as brethren and sisters in Christ must never, never at all use this phrase that combines the word *damn* with the name of God. We are forbidden to do so. This is exactly what the young man in Leviticus did. He was angry and arguing with another person. That is when he cursed and used a word for God. The result is that all of Israel stoned him to death. That was God’s decision. It says in the ten commandments. “LORD will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain.”

Do we justify our anger and hatred?

We may feel justified if doing this, imagining we are better than the people we are talking about and cursing, those we hate. But are we ever justified in hating? We are taught in 1 John that anyone who hates his brother is a liar and a murderer, and is not going to be saved. That is plain. Hating of people is something that weak people do. The primary commandment of Christ concerning people is to love them. We are commanded to love everybody. That is what is required of us. We are not allowed to even hate our enemies but rather to love them. It says in Luke 6 some of the following quotes: *“Bless them that curse you, and pray for them which despitefully use you.” “Love your enemies, do good to them which hate you,”*, *“But love ye your enemies, and do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again; and your reward shall be great, and ye shall be the children of the Highest: for he is kind unto the unthankful and to the evil.”* This is the gospel that we believe in, these are the teachings that we follow. If we are no longer interested in following these teachings then we are not in Christ.

Usually when people blaspheme God by using the phrases that take his Name in vain such as the word damn with the word God, they are hating somebody. They are speaking with contempt. Christ taught us that God has been quite merciful to us, and forgiven us. He also taught that if we are not merciful and forgiving to others, then we will no longer be forgiven for our sins. Think of the sins you did in the past, before and after baptism, since you were a little child. What if suddenly God were to remove all the forgiveness for those sins and once again hold it all against you? It says in Hebrews 10: *“If we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, But a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries. He that despised Moses’ law died without mercy under two or three witnesses: Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace?”* Notice that once we lose our forgiveness, we will be judged quite severely. If we have been baptized, and yet stop coming to the meeting and sin by hating and cursing, and taking God’s name in vain, God’s judgment on us will be severe and without mercy.

Using God’s Name in a light manner.

Another aspect of this sin is not only cursing and profaning God’s name, but using it in a light manner. This is the commonly used phrases “Oh God” or “Oh my God”, or “Lord” or “Oh Lord” that is common among many people. These uses of the name of God are light-hearted, habitual and condemned in the Bible.

God’s name exists so that we know Him and teach about Him. His name does not exist for us to use as an exclamation or a sign. *“Taking his name in vain”* means using it in a light manner. The word *vain* in Hebrew means – Nothingness, light and empty. When somebody sees something that surprises them, they might exclaim “wow”, or they might draw their breath and say “*WHEW*”. But sometimes they say “God” or “Oh My God”. In fact, they do this all the time. Or they say “LORD”. These

are all blasphemy. They are all taking God's name in vain. The world does not seem to care or agree. In fact, we know that the world couldn't care less about God or His name, so they say it like that all the time. In fact *even atheists* do it.

Jesus' name is included.

Remember also that this includes the name of God's Son, for the name Jesus is the name Yah-Shua, which means God's Salvation. The word Christ refers to God's Anointed Savior. That means that any of these names directly associated with God must never, ever be used in a profane or light and blasphemous manner. If they are then we become guilty before God and are losing our mercy and salvation. We need that mercy and forgiveness to be saved. Look at what Christ went through for us to be given the opportunity to be saved. He suffered and died on a cross for us to obtain forgiveness. If we turn around and blaspheme his name and God's names then we are mocking Christ and mocking God, and that is a sin.

Control our tongues

We must instead let our speech be far more controlled. There are a number of idle, meaningless little things we say that we feel are unimportant. We feel like people might not be listening and that God doesn't care. But that is not what Christ taught. He said that each of those meaningless little things we talk about, we will be judged for. "*But I say unto you, Every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment. For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned.*" (Matt. 12:36-37).

Once we begin to realize that we will be judged for our speech, for those words we say each day, we will find a really positive way to change our lives. Remember, it is with words that we know God in the first place. Without the Bible we would not know God. That is clearly taught in the Bible. Although *nature* might make us think that there *might be a God*, we would still know nothing about *the teachings of God* without the Bible. We would only have our own experience, our flesh to guide us. And that we are told in Romans 8, is death, not life. Only the Word of God, the Bible can teach us what we need to do and believe to be saved and be in God's kingdom. Anything else is of little use.

It is high time to make the study of God's Word and the speaking of it with our lips the main occupation of our efforts. The Bible says our speech must be holy and not profane. Titus 2:7-8 says: "*In all things shewing thyself a pattern of good works: in doctrine shewing uncorruptness, gravity, sincerity, Sound speech, that cannot be condemned; that he that is of the contrary part may be ashamed, having no evil thing to say of you.*" And Colossians 4:6 says: "*Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man.*"

We speak what we know. If all we let ourselves know is hate, ignorance, worldliness, anger, and malice then that is how we will speak. If the only exclamations we have learned are all blasphemy then that is how we will holler and yell, and sigh, and live moment to moment. But if we study the Bible, and learn to control our tongues and want to live to please God then we will learn to never speak blasphemy again.

Some might in a weak attempt to justify themselves, say that when they use phrases like "Oh Lord" or "Oh my God" that they are *praying* in some way. That is forbidden too. We are told that when we pray it must not be like the heathen, and it should be in secret. When we pray ourselves we should go into a secret place we have and pray there. God will hear that prayer and reward you openly. But in general conversation to constantly use the Name of God as an exclamation of sorts, is blasphemy, it is profane and has no place for brethren and sisters in Christ.

Christ's words should always be on our lips. We can discuss and teach the gospel at all times. Every day we should try to discuss and talk about the Word of God. That of course will involve using God's name many times. But it will instead of cursing be in a way that is not light or vain. Teaching and discussing the Word of God will be giving Glory to God. It is for that reason we meet, and pray together and sing hymns. It is for that reason that Christ died for us and we observe that accomplishment with the bread and wine.

When we are at the breaking of bread meeting we ask God to forgive us. That forgiveness will only be given if we stop sinning with blasphemy, and if we forgive our enemies and let go of any anger we might harbor. Then, God will forgive us as we forgive others. May He bless us in those efforts.

Bro. Michael Morrell

Signs of the Times

In a recent Signs of the Times article, I pointed out the growing relationship between the northern powers of Iran and Russia with Turkey. Turkey has been a northern country most associated with the Southern Alliance. They have had military pacts with the US, even to the extent that the United States and Turkey at one time, had agreements to build nuclear installations in Turkey. These were ultimately cancelled, due to pressure by Russia, but it is one of the facts that demonstrated Turkey's close association with the Southern alliance. She has also made attempt after attempt to join the European Union, which has also recently failed with no future attempts planned.

Turkey is generally regarded as the model Moslem democracy. But as the Moslems have learned how democracy works, they have realized that they can vote a Moslem Theocracy into office. As they have done more and more of this, the separation of Turkey from the southern forces has become more distinct. And I made an observation in my last Signs article, that I had always felt that Turkey would be conquered by Russia as she marched towards Israel, not that Turkey would be previously aligned with Russia before her march, as looks to be the current direction of events.

That direction was observed in the New York Post by Ralph Peters, who is a retired US Army Intelligence Officer, and a respected author on conditions in the Middle East. Here are a few excerpts from his Op Ed piece.

“January 26, 2007 — IT’S hard to watch an old pal hit the skids, making one disastrous decision after another, throwing away a brilliant future. That’s the position we’re in with Turkey - a former ally bent on self-destruction.”

“* Exploiting the population’s disgust with government corruption, Islamists gained power through the ballot box - and immediately started dismantling the secular legacy of Kemal Ataturk.

“* On the eve of Operation Iraqi Freedom, Turkey stabbed the United States - its *only* dependable ally - in the back, denying passage to our troops in the fateful illusion that Ankara could save Saddam.

“* Turkey strangled its (always faint) chance of membership in the European Union with internal repression, ludicrous prosecutions, farcical legislative efforts to Talibanize society and its stubborn denial of the Armenian genocide.

“* With its mischief-making in Iraq, cloak-and-dagger monkey business with Syria and failure to appreciate Iranian deviousness, Turkish foreign policy is in a self-destructive shambles unrivaled since the foundation of the modern Turkish state.”

“Now the question isn’t whether our old ally can overcome its internal difficulties, but which of its troubles will overwhelm it first. Will the Islamist destruction of Turkish culture continue, or will a rumored military coup plunge the country back into another period of internal violence and political stasis?”

“For Washington, it’s all bad news. The march of punitive Islam (punitive, above all, to Muslims) continues to feed on wild-eyed anti-Americanism - but a military coup could lead to a misadventure in northern Iraq similar to Argentina’s Falklands debacle.”

“As for the spectacularly virulent and dishonest anti-Americanism in the Turkish media - we need never have a “Who lost Turkey?” debate: The Turks lost it for themselves. Instead of maturing into the Western culture of responsibility, Turks succumbed to the Arab world’s culture of blame.

“Having looked down on Arabs for centuries, Turks are now becoming functional Arabs, reclining into fantasies of greatness as surreal as a Sufi mystic’s hashish dreams. Ataturk’s revolutionary vision for a modern Turkish state - betrayed by his own corrupt successors - is fading into the reality of yet another retarded Muslim satrapy.”

Now while the American politicians lament this change in Turkey, we view it simply as the last few drops of the Euphrates drying up. Her refreshed relationship with Iran and Syria are part of the divine plan. Turkey is simply taking a more appropriate place, according to prophecy in preparation for the return of Christ.

It was remarked to me that suggesting that Turkey may be aligned with Russia voluntarily and prior to Russia’s invasion of Israel, is no different than the ideas in the late 1960s, when some saw the cooperation between Russian and Abdal Nasser’s Egypt as a fulfillment of the prophecy of Egypt’s ultimate domination by Russia. As I read the prophets, these two thoughts bare no relationship at all. Those who suggested that Egypt would be with Russia at the start of the last war, were attacking the basic Bible outline of prophecy. Suggesting Turkey will be voluntarily with Russia, instead of conquered by Russia prior to the last war, is merely questioning the political method by which Turkey aligns with Russia. But one way or another, Turkey will align with Russia before Russia descends on Israel.

At the time of Russia’s invasion, the nations must be aligned in a certain way, as described in the prophets, particularly, but not exclusively according to the alignments of Ezekiel 38. Turkey, the Togarmah of Ezekiel 38 must be aligned with Russia, regardless of how it happens. Egypt must be aligned with the Southern Alliance, regardless of how that happens. Egypt is the typical King of the South, as Iraq is the typical King of the North. And though neither of these nations are specifically listed in Ezekiel 38, their position in prophecy, and role at the time of the end cannot be questioned. Iraq must be with the Northern Alliance, just as Egypt must be with the Southern Alliance at the start of hostilities. Egypt will later be conquered by Russia by force. Of this there can be no question. She is the ransom (Isa. 43:3) given by God to Russia to save Israel from an even more disastrous destruction than she will experience (Zech. 14), and she could not be given as a ransom, if she was already in Russia’s camp at the start of the war.

As Bro. Thomas saw current events in his day, he thought that Russia would invade both Persia (Iran) and Turkey, conquering them, and then enlisting them to her cause en route to the Holy Land. But current events change, and this causes brethren to view the way God may accomplish an event differently—though they look for the same result. Bro. Roberts, for instance, according to current events in his day, saw Persia and Russia lining up in close cooperation, and made note of it, even though bro. Thomas saw them as hostile. But the end result is the same as Ezekiel 38 demands. One way or another, Russia, Persia and Turkey all cooperate in the end, in the invasion of Israel.

(From a Signs article in the 1877 Christadelphian by bro. Roberts)

Turkey's Perils and Zion's Prospects

"The co-operation of Persia with Russia becomes more and more a visible element in the situation. Persia has concentrated an army on the Turkish frontier, and is said to have made a demand on Turkey for the rectification of the Persian frontier at Bagdad. Captain Burnaby has written a letter for *Mayfair*, dated from Horj, in Persia, in which he states that he has ascertained there is a secret alliance between Russia and Persia. Greece also demands a northern extension of her territory at Turkish expense. Greece has massed 60,000 men on the Turkish frontier, while insurrection is preparing in the Greco-Turkish provinces of Epirus and Thessaly, and also in Crete. Austria has also concentrated large numbers of troops on the Bosnian frontier of Turkey, intending it is said to occupy Bosnia when the Russian troops cross the Pruth. Roumania (or the old provinces of Wallachia and Moldavia, fused into one since the Crimean war), is in open alliance with Russia, and is preparing to co-operate with her in the attack on Turkey."

I would also point out that it is not inconsistent to note cooperation of the Arab states, and still acknowledge the possibility that they will be occupied by Russia in her advance southward. Having a cooperative citizenship makes it much easier to conquer foes. Germany was wonderfully successful in Europe, mostly because of the work of the Catholic Church urging the nations from within to submit to Germany, as Hitler sought to establish the third Reich, or third Roman Empire. Historians refer to the Catholic influence in France and Belgium as Hitler's "fifth column."

My point is, we know (being completely indebted to bro. Thomas) from prophecy, the entire outline for the war the world calls Armageddon. We know very little from prophecy about the details of how that outline will be achieved. We know that Russia and Persia and Turkey will be in alliance at the time of the end. How they get there, the prophets do not say.

Consider for instance, the motivation of the Russian state, and the following from the "National Review" and an author named Mark Steyn, from Steynon Line, Jan. 29, 2007. Note how fluid world events truly are.

"There are ten million people in Moscow. Do you know how many of them are Muslim? Two and a half million. Or about a quarter of the population. The ethnic Russians are older; the Muslims are younger. The ethnic Russians are already in net population decline; the Muslim population in the country has increased by 40% in the last 15 years. Seven out of ten Russian pregnancies (according to some surveys) are aborted; in some Muslim communities, the fertility rate is ten babies per woman. Russian men have record rates of heart disease, liver disease, drug addiction and Aids; Muslims are the only guys in the country who aren't face down in the vodka.

"Faced with these trends, most experts extrapolate: thus, it's generally accepted that by mid-century the Russian Federation will be majority Muslim. But you don't really need to extrapolate when the future's already checking in at reception. The Toronto Star (which is Canada's biggest-selling newspaper and impeccably liberal) recently noted that by 2015 Muslims will make up a majority of Russia's army."

We know from the prophetic outline that Russia (Rosh, Meshech and Tubal) is the force which leads the nations against Israel. But there are three ways (at least) that this recent data can be understood.

First, and most likely (in my opinion) is that the return of Christ is so near, that the rise of Moslem trends in Russia are inconsequential. The Soviets were able to control the Moslem population for 70 years, and there is no reason why Vladimir Putin cannot continue what they have been doing. In fact they have done so, by refusing to allow more mosques to be built in Moscow (there are only four) even though current services frequently spill out into the streets.

Second, that the Moslems in Russia are overwhelmingly Sunnis, and unlikely to feel a close kinship with the Shi'ites in Iran and Iraq. Not only so, but it is thought only 30% of the Russians calling themselves Moslems are practicing Moslems. These Moslems tend to be native Russians, and not immigrants, as cause such havoc in France and Britain. So the rise of Moslems in Russia will not affect the political thinking of that nation.

Third, that the Moslem cause is picked up by Russia, and "*art thou come to take a spoil*" takes on a completely different meaning than we have been suspecting. Russia would become the first Moslem state with a permanent seat on the United Nations Security Council (OK, they may have to race Britain for that title) and the battle for Mt. Moriah becomes the crown and central point of such a war.

Time will be the ultimate interpreter. It will be Russia who comes against Israel. She will come against her with the support of continental Europe, and the northern Moslems states of Turkey, Syria, Iraq and Iran will be with her. How it all comes together, we will have to merely observe as we go along.

Bro. Jim Phillips

"My Goodness"

Jesus says—"Swear not at all . . . Let your communication be, yea, yea; nay, nay; for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil" (Matt. 5:34).

Whatsoever is more than a simple yea and nay, cometh of evil. Any ritual or contrivance to make our statements seem more emphatic or trustworthy "*cometh of evil.*" How does it? What does Jesus mean?

There is a deep lesson here, and a deep principle involved. Jesus in the early chapters of Matthew portrays the ideal of perfection—

“Be ye perfect, even as your Father in heaven is perfect.”

Jesus sweeps away all oaths by making every word holy and pure, just as he swept away the shadowy sabbath by making every day holy and pure. A sabbath set apart implies common days that are not set apart. If every day is lived wholly unto God, what room is there for a sabbath?—

“When that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away.”

So with our speech. There are no degrees of truthfulness. When Jesus put away oaths, he raised common every day speech to the high ideal of divine perfection.

“Let your yea be yea, and your nay, nay.”

Picture a man whose every word is sober and pure and carefully weighed in the divine balance before utterance—a man whose speech is patterned upon all the beautiful instructions of the Spirit. Would it not be incongruous and superfluous for such to bolster his word with an oath?

We must learn to speak as if every word were uttered upon a solemn oath before God. Though we fall far short, can we not see the infinitely desirable beauty of this ideal.

But some will say, “Has not God Himself confirmed His Word with an oath?” True. But we are not God. A different purpose is to be served, and a different principle applies. For one thing, God is not upon probation in the way of righteousness. God is not being trained regarding holiness of speech. For another, God is dealing with men—the infinite with the finite—and in gracious condescension gives them added assurance because of their weakness.

God’s Word does not need an oath to make it sure. It is no surer with an oath than without, and the more clearly we can perceive this, the better God is pleased. We are told in Proverbs 30:5—

“EVERY WORD of God is pure (RV: tried, proved true).”

Consider how Jesus marveled at the deep perception of the faith of the centurion (Matt. 8:8)—

“Speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed.” —the simple, pure, unattested word—What faith! And Jesus’ gentle rebuke to Thomas embodies the same principle:

“Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.”

There is another aspect in which oaths are not fitting for men, that does not apply to God. Jesus says further—

“Swear not by heaven—it is God’s throne; Nor earth—it is God’s footstool; Nor Jerusalem—it is God’s city.”

All is God’s, and only God can swear by it. Puny man has nothing and is nothing. He dare not even swear by his own head, for he cannot even change the color of one single hair of that head, says Jesus. How vividly the Master emphasizes man’s utter helplessness! Who is he to swear by anything, as if he could control it, or his own destiny? A passing vapor—dust and ashes—

“Let your yea be yea; and your nay, nay; for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil.”

There is a further serious thought concerning this matter of oaths and yea and nay, into which we easily tend to slip through thoughtlessness. The world is full of subtle substitutes for oaths, so that the flesh may violate the spirit of the command while observing the letter.

If we examine all the common ejaculations of surprise, or excitement, or anger, or even just common emphasis, we shall usually find that they are disguised oaths, and concealed ways of taking God’s Name in vain.

Consider such expressions as “Good gracious,” “For pity’s sake,” “My Goodness,” “For Goodness’ sake,” “Goodness knows,” [“Gosh etc.”]

If we have any doubt as to what these expressions mean, and where they are derived from, we need only to consult a dictionary—Webster defines “Goodness knows” as—“An exclamation equivalent to ‘God only knows’.” Similarly we find many exclamations that parody curse words. “Darn,” says Webster, is a euphemism for “damn.” “Gee whiz” is patterned after “Jesus.” “Golly,” Webster tells us, is “a substitute for God.”

Divinely acceptable use of the tongue is a far more serious and searching thing than we are apt to realize. *From the writings of Bro. G. V. Growcott*

To Continue the Work Begun

“Grievous wolves shall enter in...also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them pervers.” Acts 20:29-30

ON the monument that stands at the grave of Bro. John Thomas, the following inscription may be read:

“During a busy lifetime, by mouth and pen, he contended earnestly for the Faith once delivered to the saints, and at his death left behind him as the result of his labors, a body of people, in different parts of the world, known as CHRISTADELPHIANS, to continue the work begun.”

This simple epitaph is a silent testimony to an exceptional man whose lifetime labor of love has changed the course of many men & women, and introduced them to a hope that enlightens the intellect and satisfies the highest aspirations of the heart. But the product of his pen is a far greater memorial, still serving his beloved Master. His first great work was *Elpis Israel*, ‘The Hope of Israel’—an exposition of the Kingdom of God and the development of the Divine Plan from the beginning. His last and crowning publication was *Eureka*: an exposition of the Apocalypse, and far more than that, even a treasury of the beauty and depth of a broad range of scriptural truth—at one time highly (& rightly) valued by the Body which his faithful labors had assembled.

For many years, Bro. Roberts continued in the footsteps of Bro. Thomas, and likewise contended earnestly for the One Faith. But as it was even in the days of the apostles themselves, when ‘men arose speaking perverse things, so it came to pass in these last days.

In 1873, bro. Edward Turney publicly renounced what he had learned from bro. Thomas, & contended that Jesus was not a son of Adam, and therefore was not redeemed by his own sacrifice. Many, not deeply rooted, were carried away with him. Bro. Roberts promptly answered his challenge in *The Slain Lamb* and *The Blood of Christ*. These 2 pamphlets should be studied by every Christadelphian.

In 1884, bro. Robert Ashcroft, a popular and very personally-appealing brother, came to the conclusion that the Bible was only partially inspired. Again, many who were deceived, and many who didn’t think it mattered, and many who favored a broad, loving’ fellowship policy, left the main Body of believers. An introductory clause was added to the Statement of Faith to guard against this error, & the Body stood faithfully aside from it.

Ten years later, bro. J. J. Andrew, hitherto a strong pillar of the Truth, became possessed of the idea that none but the baptized would be raised from the dead. Once again, many were carried away with the new theory, or various degrees of it, and many did not think it was important and so went with the erring side when the issue had to be faced. Again bro. Roberts and the faithful stood firm. Clause 24 of the Statement of Faith was clarified to guard against this error, and the Body stood aside from it. This was in the last year of bro. Roberts’ life.

In all these 3 instances, the teaching of the error did not cease with the death of the inventor, but has continued to this day.

Coming closer to our own time, and in the memory of some still living, Bro. A. D. Strickler came to the conclusion that Bre. Thomas and Roberts did not understand the Truth concerning the Sacrifice of Christ.

He stated: “The vitality of man’s responsibility to God for his sins is undermined and destroyed by their interpretations.”

Referring to his own works, he said “My books contain the real light of God’s Truth sent out for the purpose of dispelling Christadelphian darkness.”

In this case, the strong, sound influence of Bro. Roberts being silenced in death, the majority of the main body supported Bro. Strickler with his errors, & it was necessary for those who stood by the Truth to separate themselves, and endeavor to hold fast to that form of sound doctrine left us by our pioneer brethren. From that time onward, the trend has been downward, into more and more toleration of error. As in the other cases, this ancient error revived by Bro. Strickler is still aggressively active among those who chose to stay with him.

The modern trend is to increasingly regard fundamental Truth and specific, divinely-revealed doctrines and commandments as not so important as the Body has viewed them in the past. The emotions of the flesh, mistaken for scriptural love; are increasingly being seen as the important element in ecclesial life. This is the view of the churches of the world. The works of Bre. Thomas and Roberts are increasingly relegated to the dust-bin. A generation has arisen that knows not Joseph, and forgets its indebtedness for its great deliverance from darkness.

In time, these various groups from which the Body had separated, all drifted back together, not realizing the seriousness of sound fellowship.

The hand-writing has appeared on the wall. Can we discern and understand its sober message? Are we fully and deeply conscious of our tremendous responsibilities before God? Do we never cease to tremble before the great and holy and terrible God Whom we have approached unto, and in Whose awesome presence we constantly stand?

Remember what happened to those in the past who have thoughtlessly relaxed their reverence and vigilance in God's service. He must be sanctified in those who presume to come near unto Him. Our salvation must be worked out—truly in joy—but also in wholesome, unremitting fear and trembling:

Let us consider well that God's inviolable holiness and righteousness required the dreadful scourging and crucifixion of His Own beloved Son, to condemn Sin, and manifest God's abhorrence of it, and to lay a sound, eternal foundation of purity and perfection, tried to the uttermost. Dare we then tread him underfoot, or despise his agonized suffering for the cause of holiness, by living out of harmony with his precepts after taking on his Name, or by treating his holy fellowship requirements lightly?

Let us under no circumstances become discouraged because we are few in number, and are referred to derisively as a 'fragment' or 'splinter group: Those who use such terms are thinking & speaking as the world thinks and speaks. Think of the few who were saved from death in the days of Noah. Think of the two only who entered the Land of Promise at the conclusion of the wilderness journey. Think of the few who welcomed Jesus when he appeared in the land of Israel.

Let us never forget that the Truth is an affair of divine principles, and not of mere numbers, and we have no authority to alter those principles to suit ourselves, or to please the flesh. If we would meet with the approval of the Master when he comes, then we must uphold the Truth and defend it with all the courage we possess, whatever the effect may be upon those who would attempt to adulterate our precious heritage and thereby cause us to be 'moved away from the Hope of the Gospel:

"We are made partakers of Christ, IF we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end" (Heb. 3).

"I will come again," said Jesus. He now stands at the door. When it opens, will he find us ready and eager for the searching questions of his great and impartial judgment seat, where the secrets of every heart will be tried? Shall we meet him with the loving confidence of a life of purity and holiness which has been dedicated to his glory and service among men; or shall we have to bow our heads in shame, and confess we thought the way of life was not so narrow as he said it was? According to the words of Jesus- *"MANY ARE CALLED, BUT ONLY A FEW WILL BE CHOSEN."*

That extremely exceptional FEW will be those who have actually, to the limit of their ability, lived up to the things they have professed, and denied themselves ALL ungodliness and worldly lusts. All the rest will find that in their careless self-service they have mocked God's holiness, and brought retribution upon themselves. He speaks again-

"Behold, I come quickly, and my reward is with me, to give to every man according as his WORK shall be"-Rev. 22:12
Bro. George A. Gibson

Order of Meeting

It is not wise to have the exercises of a meeting in such an order that they *are* needlessly tiring. When prayer follows a long hymn, some have to sit down, and all feel it to be a strain on mortal power when 2 standing exercises follow each other. The best way is to have reading after singing. This "gives rest, & prepares everyone to rise with comfort and fervor to prayer. *The Christadelphian—1887*

Wicked At The Judgment

To contend as some do that the wicked will *not* appear with the righteous at the Judgment Seat is to flatly contradict Paul. Those who so contend occupy a very different position from those who seek to find a natural place for words which will not be out of harmony with any divine testimony.

If there are brethren who, in view of John 5:29, do not wish to say the dead are raised mortal, that is one thing, but if they go on to say that just and unjust will not appear before the Judgment Seat of Christ, that is another thing and altogether different. The one may be allowed without dispute, but not so the other.
Bro. Robert Roberts—1898

Children Singing

Which is right, to allow our own children to sing at the breaking of bread, or to restrain them?

ANSWER.—Instruct them in their relationship to God, and access to His favour as revealed in the Lord Jesus Christ, and leave them to act upon the "nurture and admonition of the Lord" imparted. It is one thing to deceive them into the supposition that they are acceptable worshippers without coming to God in "the way" appointed in Christ; and another thing to repel them by uncalled-for restraints. Wisdom is profitable to direct.

Hye 1930

ROBERT LEE, TEXAS.—We desire to make it known, that the Lord willing, our Fraternal Gathering will be held on the Christadelphian Camp Grounds, near Hye, Texas (not Mason, as previously announced). It will extend over seven days, beginning August 5th.

There will be twenty-one lectures, and all who are in our fellowship by upholding the Amended Birmingham Statement of Faith in its purity are cordially invited. There are ample facilities on the grounds for camping, such as shade trees, plenty of wood and water, also two houses, beside the large tabernacle. The Truth has been preached on these grounds for nearly half a century. It was here I learned the Truth in Sunday School through sister Martin—still a very active worker. We should like to have our bro. Dowling with us again if possible. It was on these grounds that the Truth was earnestly contended for against the errors of the late Thomas Williams, nearly thirty years ago. All earnest defenders of the Truth in its purity will receive a cordial welcome.—James Greer

“Mary”

(Not a Love Song, yet with Love in it.)

A wealth of happy sacred thoughts
Arise within my mind,
At this dear name, though plain and short,
A sweeter none can find.

Its meaning was “rebellion” once,
But this it means no more:
The virgin mother of our Lord
The name of Mary bore.

And those who do God’s holy will,
Have Christ for elder brother;
Hence Mary means obedience now,
Christ calls such ones His mother.

A Mary washed her Master’s feet
With tears that fell like rain;
Then with her long and beauteous hair
She wiped them dry again.

This Mary, too, first saw her Lord
When he rose from the dead,
And scarce could tell for fear and joy
The glorious words he said.

A Mary loved to leave her cares,
And sit at Jesus’ feet.
Her sister thought of earthly food;
But she loved heavenly meat.

This Mary brought a precious box
Of ointment for the head,
And then anointed her dear Lord,
Despite what Judas said.

Three Marys stood around the cross,
And watched the Saviour die;
Though men forsook their stricken Lord
These faithful three stood by.

And in the Kingdom can we doubt
These three will all be there?
May we attain the same blest state,
And with them glory share.

T. T. The Christadelphian—1883.

Analecta Apocalypticæ (13)

False Teachers Create Crisis in the Faith

Thus, in the days of the apostles, there were “false teachers” in the Christian congregations, whose motives, teaching, and practices, were analogous to Balaam’s. They were “grievous wolves,” wasters of the people, “speaking perverse things to draw away disciples after them.”

The Judaizers

They taught that belief of the gospel, and being baptized, was not enough; but that, in addition to this, it was necessary also to be circumcised, and keep the law of Moses, or men could not be saved. They appended this dogma to the wholesome words of the Lord Jesus, in order to popularize his doctrine, and make it palatable to the Jews. Paul styles it “another gospel; which (truly) is not another, but a perversion thereof.” He says that they who preached it were “accursed” that they sought to bring believers into bondage; and that, desiring to make a fair show in the flesh, they constrained their victims to be circumcised, only lest they should suffer persecution for the cross of Christ (Acts 15:1-5; 20:29, 30; Gal. 1: 6, 7; 2:4; 5: 10; 6:12).

They proceeded from bad to worse. They inculcated a distinction of meats and drink; the observance of holy days, new moons, and sabbaths; and a voluntary humility in neglecting the body, and worshipping of angels. They not only commanded to abstain from meats, but they also forbade to marry; and corrupted the minds of their dupes with fables, endless genealogies, and doctrines of demons (Col. 2:16, 18, 22, 23; 1 Tim. 1:4; 4:1, 3).

The Gentilizers

But these false teachers not only Judaized, or taught disciples to seek a justification by Mosaic observances, but some of them Gentilized by indoctrinating them with the principles of philosophy, and inducing them to conform to practices and customs of idolatry. Paul wrote 1 Cor. 8 and 10:7-33, to fortify the minds of the brethren against their influence. His reasoning in these places is directed against the teaching of the Balaam-class who taught the lawfulness of eating idol-sacrifices in the temples. Their argument was after this wise: “We have knowledge. We know that the idols are nothing; so that in eating of the demon-sacrifices, and drinking of the demon-cup, not having an idolatrous conscience, we perform no act of worship: being safe with God upon this point, we obtain the advantage of seeming conformity in avoiding persecution for our desertion of the national superstition.”

In philosophizing, they taught the inherent immortality of all men. They rejected the immortality of body, and substituted for it the indwelling of an “immortal soul” in the mortal body; and affirmed its separate and independent intelligent existence in heaven the instant the heart ceased to beat and the lungs to breathe. This led them to deny the resurrection of the body, and to teach that “the resurrection had passed already;” or, what is equivalent to it, that “*there is no resurrection of the dead;*” and so overthrowing the faith of some, by their profane vain babblings and oppositions of science, falsely so called (1 Cor. 15: 12; 2 Tim. 2:18; 1 Tim. 6:20).

False Apostles

Now, of these false teachers the apostle saith, “*They reckon of us as if we walked according to the flesh: and say, his letters are weighty and powerful; but his bodily presence is weak, and his speech contemptible. But though I be rude in speech, yet am I not in knowledge. They are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for the Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as ministers of righteousness. Are they Hebrews? so am I. Are they Israelites? so am I. Are they the seed of Abraham? so am I. Are they ministers of Christ? I speak ironically, I am more. In nothing am I behind the very chiefest apostles, though I be nothing. Truly the signs of an apostle were wrought among you in all patience, in signs, and wonders, and mighty deeds. But, being crafty, (they say) I caught you with guile!*” (2 Cor. 10:2, 10: 11:4, 6,13-15,22: 12:11, 12, 16; Phil. 3:2, 18, 19).

Vain Talkers

Still speaking of these, he says, “*There are many unruly and vain talkers and deceivers, specially they of the circumcision, whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole houses, teaching things which they ought not, for filthy lucre’s sake. Their mind and conscience are defiled. They profess that they know God, but in works they deny him, being abominable and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate*” (Tit. 1:10). “*They have a form of godliness, but deny the power thereof. Of this sort are they who creep into houses, and lead captive silly women laden with sins, led away with divers lusts, ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the Truth. Now, as Jannes and Jambres withstood Moses, so do these also resist the truth: men of corrupt minds, reprobate concerning the faith. They are evil men and seducers, and will wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived*” (2 Tim. 3:1-13).

Turning to Licentiousness

Peter was not behind Paul in his denunciation of this class of men whose diabolical mission it was to turn the grace of God into licentiousness. “There were,” saith he, “false prophets among the people (Israel) even as there shall be false teachers among you (Nazarenes) who will privily introduce destructive sects, and deny the Master that bought them. And many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of the truth will be evil spoken of. And through covetousness will they with feigned words make merchandise of you. As natural brute beasts made to be taken and

destroyed, they speak evil of the things they do not understand; and shall utterly perish in their own corruption.” He then shows that these characters were already in full operation in the societies of the faithful; for, he continued, “They are spots and blemishes, sporting themselves with their own deceivings, while they feast with you; having eyes full of adultery, and that cannot cease from sin; beguiling unstable souls; an heart they have exercised with covetous practices; cursed children: who have forsaken the right way, and are gone astray, following the way of Balaam the son of Bosor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness; but was rebuked for his iniquity. These are wells without water, clouds that are carried with a tempest; for whom the mist of darkness is reserved in the Aion. For when they speak great swelling words of vanity, they allure through the lusts of the flesh, through much wantonness, those that were clean escaped from them who live in error. While they promise them liberty, they themselves are the servants of corruption” (2 Pet. ii). These were the scoffers who appeared in the last days of the Mosaic Aion, “walking after their own lusts, and saying, Where is the promise of His coming?” -- the “false prophets” that the Lord Jesus predicted would “arise and deceive many; and say in heart, the Lord delayeth his coming;” and should therefore “begin to smite their fellow-servants, and to eat and drink with the drunken” (Matt. 24:11, 48,49).

Many Antichrists

John also, to whom the Apocalypse was revealed, is particularly pointed against these wolves in the clothing of sheep. “Little children,” saith he, “it is the last hour: and as ye have heard that the Antichrist comes, even now many antichrists exist: whereby we know that it is the last hour. They went out from us, but they were not of us; for, if they had been of us, they would have continued with us: but they went out that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us.” They denied that Jesus is the Christ; and, consequently, repudiated the doctrine of the manifestation of the Father through him as the Son. Therefore, referring to them, John inquires, “Who is the liar but he who affirms that Jesus is not the Christ? This is the Antichrist rejecting the Father and the Son.” From this it would appear, that they had given the lie to the apostles for teaching what they had come to deny; but John retorted upon them that they were the liars, and the germ of the Antichrist to be more fully revealed. “These things,” says he, “I write unto you concerning them that seduce you. Little children, let no man deceive you. Believe not every spirit” — believe not every man who pretends to speak by the spirit: “but try the spirits;” bring them to the test of the Law and the Testimony, and by this standard ascertain “whether they be of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world. By this ye may know the Spirit of God; every spirit (or prophet) that confesseth that Jesus Christ has come in flesh is from God: and every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ came in flesh is not of God: and this is the (spirit) of the Antichrist which ye have heard that it comes; and is now already in the world. They (these false prophets or teachers) are of the world; because of this they speak of the world (being inspired by its traditions) and the world hears them” (1 John 2:18, 19, 22; 4:1-6).

These were they who released their hold upon the name of Jesus, and denied his faith; and who were strenuously opposed by the true believers under the class-name, or symbol, Antipas; which see. John in writing his second epistle wrote to an Antipas-Ecclesia, or community of faithful witnesses. He exhorted them to continuance in the truth that was from the beginning; and as the reason of his exhortation refers to the fact that “many deceivers were entered into the world, not confessing that Jesus Christ is come in flesh: this,” says he, “is the deceiver and the Antichrist.” Therefore, he continues, “If there come any unto you and bring not the doctrine of Christ (that He is come in flesh), receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed.” In his third epistle, he informs us that Diotrephes was one of this class, and refused even to acknowledge him. Affairs must have attained to a pre-eminently antichristian state to have come to this. This Diotrephes loved to have the pre-eminence in the congregation, and prated against John and his friends with malicious words; “and not content therewith, did himself neither receive the brethren, and forbade them that would, and cast them out of the ecclesia.”

Remnant Reserved

The manifestation of these false teachers contemporary with the apostles created a crisis in the history of the faith. It had come to this, either they must be put down, or the doctrine of Christ would be suppressed. This alternative would certainly have resulted, if God had not reserved to himself a remnant who refused to bow the knee to Baal. This remnant was Antipas; and therefore against all the Nicolaitans, Balaams, and Jezebels; false teachers, who had crept in unawares, corrupting and handling the word of God deceitfully, that they might make it less offensive to the Jews and idolaters; and so make the profession of christianity more popular, and consequently, less dangerous to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness in the world.

Arranged from the writings of Bro. Thomas by Bro. Bob Widding.

What Does That Mean?

“But they mocked the messengers of God, and despised his words, and misused his prophets, until the wrath of the LORD arose against his people, till there was no remedy.” (2Chronicles 36:16)

Is there ever really a sin for which no remedy exists?

The remedy for any sin is God’s forgiveness. This, the only remedy is available to all. We are told in Eze. 33:11 “As I live, saith the Lord GOD, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?” God is eager to forgive. It is free but not unconditional. He requires in return our love and obedience.

However, like any gift forgiveness can be refused, spurned and mocked. That is what we are dealing with in the above quote. How stupid and short sighted people can be. For the sake of wealth, fame or pleasure on a very short and temporary basis, people throw away the most important and valuable gift held out to them.

Clearly the Bible warns us that those who mock God's gift will find the offer of forgiveness discontinued. "*And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind...*" Romans 1:28 It does not mean that they were reprobate by any arbitrary decree; but that as a consequence of their determination to exclude Him, He left them to what they wanted. There comes a point in our lives that God will encourage us to our own destruction, if we continually refuse to acknowledge Him in our life.

People that are loved of God, and offered the hope of eternal life, can end up without any hope at all because they repeatedly spurn what God has offered. Clearly the Bible warns us all, that if we mock God's gift then we will find the offer of forgiveness discontinued.

Yes, brothers and sisters, there is a sin for which no remedy exists: the sin in refusing to accept the remedy God has provided for sin. When this occurs we are on our own. Fortunately, those "begotten of God" cannot have this happen as we are assured by John in his first epistle. Why can't this happen? Because those that truly love God and appreciate what He offers, will make every attempt to avoid sin. When they do sin they are so conscious of their failings that they humbly seek His forgiveness. They recognize that a means has been provided through Christ and seek forgiveness. They know that they cannot simply continue to live as if it makes no difference in the way they act and think.

The way has been opened for us and the opportunity is there. The choice is now up to us if we will avail ourselves of it, or choose our own course. Let us have the wisdom to choose the correct path and be "begotten of God."

Bro. James Sommerville