

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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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

Nakalira Ecclesia, Kenya, Sunday School at 9:30am, Memorial at 10:30am, Bible Class Friday at 2:30pm, Bro. Paul Walukana, PO Box 65. Kamukuywa, 50216 Kenya, paulwaluka@yahoo.com

Beloved Brethren and Sisters,

Loving greetings in one Hope we share. We are all well, hope to you. As we wave goodbye to the year 2009, it is an opportunity to look to God’s blessings. There has been one added to our members through baptism on 27/12/2009. Sis **Dorine Wanjala**. We are grateful for counsel received from brethren. “Surely in the multitude of counsellors there is safety” (Prov. 11:14). Sunday school are grateful of the books sent by Bro. Bob Bent. Another year now lies ahead, brings nearer the return of Jesus to accomplish the purpose of God with the Earth. Work continues for those seeking the Truth, occupy till HE COMES’ (1 Timothy 4:11-13).

With love in Christ,
Bro. Paul Walukana

GOLDTHWAITE, Texas, Berean Christadelphian Hall, 1109 Reilly Street, Goldthwaite Tex. 76844, Bro. Vernon Hurst, Study class, Eureka 9:00 a.m. S.S. and The Temple of Ezekiels Prophecy class, 10:00 a.m., Memorial Meeting 11.00 a.m. Wed. 7:00 p.m. Daily readings and discussion. Public Lecture every 2nd Sunday

Loving greetings to all the Bre. & Sis in Jesus Christ,

It is with sorrow ,we report the falling asleep of our Sis. Carolyn McLaren on Dec. 9, 2009. She will be greatly missed by all that knew her. Sis. Carolyn had been a member of our ecclesia since Oct. 11 2009. Through her illness she remained strong

in her faith. One of Her greatest pleasures in this life was being able to go to the gatherings and be near her Bre. and Sis. She now awaits the resurrection with the hope of eternal life with Christ.

On a happier note we have enjoyed our annual study weekend on Nov. 27-29. Bro. Ed Truelove gave a three part series of "The Last Terrible 40 Years." Bro. Jerry Connally gave a two part series on "History of the Church"

On Sunday Bro. Gary Smith delivered the word of exhortation titled "The Parallels of Physical Fitness and Spiritual Fitness".

We appreciate the loving time and work those brethren have given to make this gathering a success. We also appreciate all those who participated in this joyous occasion.

Our annual Sunday School program was held in June. It is a great blessing to watch Sunday School students growing in knowledge of GOD'S Word.

We have had many visitors around the table of the Lord this past year. In June Bro. Ricky and Sis. Julie Hurst, in July Bro. Leonard and Sis. Pam and Bro. Ben Naglieri, Sis. Joanne Osborne, Sis. Jaymie Phillips, Bro. David Humpreys, Bro. Ben Naglieri gave the Word of exhortation in July. Bro. Leonard Naglieri gave the word of exhortation on Sept.13. Then Bro. Fred and Sis. Ruth Higham, Bro. Craig and sis Lacy Kiley was here on Dec. 20. Bro. Fred gave the word of exhortation. On Dec. 27 Bro. Matthew Hughes and Sis. Esther Hughes joined us around the table of the Lord We appreciate all the brethren and sisters who have stopped by for a visit from different parts of GOD'S vineyard, and also we appreciate the Bre. giving comforting words of exhortation during their visit with us.

We are very happy to welcome as new members in our ecclesia, Bro. Craig and Sis. Lacy Kiley and baby Asher. Bro. Craig and Sis. Lacy will be a great help & strength to our ecclesia. We realize they will be missed by those of the Lampasas Ecclesia. Our hope is that we will soon be together with all our Bre. and Sis. in that righteous Kingdom on earth with the Lord Jesus Christ, ruling the whole earth in righteousness.

Our love in Christ to all of like precious faith,

On behalf of the Goldthwaite Ecclesia, Bro. Vernon Hurst

Edmonton, Alberta - S.S. & Study Class 10 A.M.; Memorial 11:20 A.M.;
Bible Class 8 P.M. in homes. Bro Steve Armstrong, Box 16, Site 440, R.R. #4, Stony Plain, AB. T6E-6H4. Phone (780) 963-7115.
Email -: stevearm@xplornet.com

Dearly beloved Brethren and Sisters throughout the household of Faith,

The past few months have been filled with ups and downs and trials of various sorts for those of us in the Edmonton Ecclesia.

Our dear elder Brother, Bro. Arthur Luard fell asleep in the Lord on Sunday November 8th 2009, after a long illness. He will be missed greatly by all of us. He spent many years dedicated to the Truth, serving on the arranging board as treasurer and still exhorting us in his 86th year! He has left big shoes for the rest of the Brethren to fill, which we must as we continue in the work of the Truth.

The following weekend November 13th and 14th was our winter study weekend, we were blessed with several Brethren and Sisters and Sunday school Students visiting from the Richard Eccl. Sis. Dawn Gill, Bro. Dave Humphreys, Bro. Dan and Sis. Sandra Jackson, Bro. Gordon and Sis. Linda Jones, Sis. Annetta Jones, Bro. Kelly and Sis. Sandra Readman and Bro. Terry Readman all attended.

The subject for the weekend was "worship through the ages" and concerned the time periods of Moses, Solomon, the millennium and today, we thank Brethren - Dave Humphreys, Terry Readman, Gordon Jones and Dan Jackson for preparing and giving these talks and our own Bro. Brent for the Sunday School talk. This study weekend was a welcomed oasis for all of us.

On Tuesday January 5th another of our Brethren, Bro. Noel McChesney also after battling a long illness fell asleep. Many of you will know of Bro. Noel from his traveling with Sis Brenda to fraternal gatherings all over North America and their trip to Australia. Bro. Noel even in dark times always managed to bring a smile to the faces of those he spoke to. He also will be missed greatly.

Our prayers and thoughts need to be for our two Sisters and the families of those that are mourning the loss of their loved ones.

We do indeed long for the return of our Lord to awake all of our Brethren and Sisters who are waiting for him and to put right a very wrong world. We pray that the resurrection will be a sure one—that time when the righteous will no longer be subject to sin, illness and death, but with a righteous and merciful judge will rule this world in righteousness and peace.

We would also like to remind the Brotherhood of our summer camp out youth weekend to be held God willing at the Strathcona Wilderness Centre in Alberta, July 2-4, 2010. Bible study and fun activities for all who attend! Our youth need the association with each other just as we need that fellowship with each other that we hold so dear. Please contact Bro. Ben Darter for further information.

On behalf of the Brethren and Sisters in the Edmonton Ecclesia,
Your Brother in Christ, Steve Armstrong

Holy Land Trip

Our plans are continuing for another trip to the Holy Land in May, 2011, God willing. We expect more people than we had on our first trip and should have prices firmed up in a couple of months. Instead of going down into Egypt we hope to visit a few places that Paul travelled to: Athens, Corinth and Cenchrea before departing for home. You may see the complete itinerary at the Richard web site (richardbereans.com). We look forward to the day when we will all assemble at Jerusalem to enjoy that marriage feast prepared for those that are accounted worthy. What a glorious hope we can look forward to. Please contact Bro. Jim Sommerville for further information.

FRATERNAL GATHERINGS & ACTIVITIES

(To be held Yahweh Willing)

HOUSTON FRATERNAL GATHERING.....April 9–11, 2010

Bro. Michael Kramer, 8008 Junius St, Houston, TX 77012

HENGOED FRATERNAL GATHERING.....May 21–24, 2010

Bro. Steve Male, 19 Glas Y Gors, Aberdare, CF44 0BQ, Wales, UK. Email tiscali.co.uk

LAMPASAS FRATERNAL GATHERING.....June 11–13, 2010

Bro. Ricky Hurst, PO Box 1381, Goldthwaite TX 1-325-451-4075

HYE FRATERNAL GATHERING..... July 26–Aug 1, 2010

Bro. Mark Braune, 209 Ranger Drive, Buda, TX 78610, USA. 1-512-295-2868, email markbraune@gmail.com

The Study Class will be on the

book of Daniel.

NE FRATERNAL GATHERING – BOSTON.....Oct 9-10, 2010

Bro. Steve Osborne, 35 Shady Lane, Northboro, MA 01532 503-393-5721

steve.sharon@verizon.net The theme will be on "God Manifestation"

The BCAA

A website called Berean Christadelphian Audio Archives, or BCAA for short, has made available a large selection of talks on MP3.

The address is www.bcaudioarchives.blogspot.com. Please bookmark this link as we will be updating this archive with new material as much as possible.

The main purpose of this site is to restore and make available lectures, exhortations, and study classes. Some of these talks are decades old and have seldom been heard. The quality of the material will vary; they have been transferred from audio cassettes and reel to reel tapes. Some have occasional distortion and tape flips.

It is an ongoing project, and we have lots of material to work with. However, we are always looking for tapes, and if you have some talks that you would like to share, please email either Bro. Craig Kiley (craigkiley@yahoo.com) or Bro. Noah Brown (sbsugar@gmail.com) and we will be happy to transfer the talks to mp3 format and post them.

Any comments and questions are very welcome; we want this website to become a resource for brethren and sisters worldwide.

Household of Faith in the Latter Days

"We all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the Glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Lord the Spirit" (1Cor. 3:18).

A FRATERNAL GATHERING ADDRESS

The Gathering Committee's outline for this address lists these five items:

1. *The attitude of the Household in relation to the Signs of the Times.*
2. *The attitude of the Household in relation to the Gentile world.*
3. *The attitude of the Household in relation to Israel.*
4. *The effect the Signs should have on the Household.*
5. *The glory that will be theirs in the Kingdom of God.*

First, then: *Our attitude toward the Signs.* It should comprise these aspects: *Awareness, Thankfulness, Deep Interest, Neutrality, Caution, Balance, and, Discrimination.*

AWARENESS: Jesus severely chided the Pharisees because they could not discern the Signs of the Times. It could have helped save them from the greatest tragedy that ever befell a people. They should have been aware of their location in Daniel's messianic Seventy Weeks, which culminated in their generation. They should have recognized in Rome the terrible, strange-tongued, eagle-nation from afar (Deut. 28) that was to destroy their city and Temple (Dan. 9:26), and cast them out of their land.

They should have recognized John as Isaiah's "Voice crying in the wilderness", and as Malachi's messenger of the Messiah. But they did not—and all that was foretold came suddenly upon them.

THANKFULNESS: Without the Signs, the whole pattern of our lives would be far less interesting; far more hazy and indefinite. Truly we could live full, godly lives without them: they are not essential to salvation. But they greatly strengthen faith and interest, and give us encouraging bearings and landmarks whereby to plot our position in the outworking of the Divine Purpose. It is much more pleasant and comforting to be traveling in clear sunlight, observing the changing terrain that indicates the approach of our destination, than it is traveling in indistinguishable dark or fog.

The "sure word of prophecy" would lose much of its force for us if we had no way to tie ourselves in, by current events and circumstances, to our specific position in the Plan. The Signs are of God's love and mercy, for the strengthening of His children. The wise will be thankful for them, and will be stirred to godly action by them.

DEEP INTEREST: It is a remarkable paradox that the true, unworldly, separated people of God are more interested in the significant events in the world than the world itself is. The vast majority of the world's four billion people—we could say ninety-nine percent—know and care little or nothing of what goes on outside their own tiny personal circle of low animal activity and enjoyment. Even in our own supposedly educated and sophisticated countries, we find the weekly news magazines are almost entirely petty froth and rubbish: a few meaningful paragraphs in average issues of over one hundred pages.

Our position is unique. It is *their* world, but we are more interested in what is happening and where it is going. *We* have a program. We know generally what is going to happen, though we do not know specifically from event to event, which makes it far more interesting.

NEUTRALITY: We must constantly remind ourselves to be neutral: to keep in harmony with the *Divine* view of things. It is the potsherds striving with the potsherds of the earth: ALL fleshly and evil.

We have natural sympathy with the downtrodden and the oppressed. On the other hand, we have natural, selfish sympathy with the *status quo* and the preservation of the inequities which favor our own safety and well-being, as the historic dominance and privileges of the White race, which seized as much of the world's good lands as it could—especially the British—confining the other races to overcrowded conditions in less favorable areas. Canada has six people per square mile; India has four hundred and ninety. Australia has five people per square mile; Japan, which covets Australia, has seven hundred and ninety, and her land is very barren generally.

We have many natural, fleshly sympathies and prejudices which we must examine, try to be aware of, and guard against. Our interests and sympathies in watching the Signs must be on the basis of the will and purpose of God, and not our own national, racial or personal feelings.

CAUTION: We must be very careful about attempting to prophesy, and about over-emphasizing passing events. There are many zigs and zags in the development of the Purpose. Just a few years ago, prominent brethren in another group were confidently saying in their official magazine that Bro. Thomas was wrong, and Russia could not *possibly* be King of the North, because of her "Pact of Eternal Friendship" with Egypt. Very soon after, that pact went the way of all human pacts.

Exactly one hundred years ago, the Brotherhood had every reason to believe the end was upon them. The temporal power of the Pope had recently ended—the twelve hundred-year period of power to persecute—just when expected. Russia was furiously driving against the tottering Turkish Empire with the full weight of its armed might. Europe was favoring Russia, because of religious sympathy and envy of Britain's power.

Britain opposed the Russian advance, and had drawn a line at Constantinople beyond which it dared Russia to go. Turkey held the Holy Land, where Russian and Catholic interest was strong. The Jews were stirring toward political life, and had begun to return.

But it was not the end. All the Signs they saw were correct, but had to get far bigger and more prominent: Israel, Russia, war, violence, immorality, human knowledge and travel and pride, world turmoil and discontent, etc. Britain and Europe had to be weakened, and shrink tremendously on the world scene: the German and Austrian empires broken up—all fading before the dreadful superpower of Russia.

BALANCE: The Signs are important, but secondary. Some have made shipwreck in over-emphasizing them far out of proportion: obsessed with them to the detriment of deeper things—then often being devastated when they did not follow an expected pattern at an expected time. Unbalance concerning the Signs can lead to a shallow and unstable faith: a gospel of political sensationalism.

Character, service to God and the Brotherhood, and an ever deepening knowledge of the full range of the Truth, must be the principal aspects of our interest and effort. And finally—

DISCRIMINATION: We must distinguish between normal phenomena and legitimate Signs of the Times. We weaken our case if we consider every tornado a Sign. Earthquakes, floods, droughts, violent weather activities only become Signs if they establish a measurable *new* pattern of greatly increased frequency or intensity or significant location or bearing on current events. This principle applies equally to human events and activities. We must distinguish between normal variations and repetitions of what has always been, and specific *new* aspects peculiar to these last days. War has always been, and therefore war is not in *itself* a Sign (although it is a striking fulfillment of prophecy that, despite all man's protestations and predictions of peace, and claims of civilization and culture, war still is with us more prominently than ever).

But war *is* a Sign in that it has suddenly, in our lifetime, become infinitely more deadly and destructive and horrible and burdensome to the world's peoples: man now has the actual ability in his hands to destroy all life on the planet, and make it uninhabitable for centuries.

The hundreds of billions of dollars, and billions of hours of ingenuity and labor, and mountains of irreplaceable natural resources, spent annually on ever deadlier and more diabolic instruments of war, could transform the earth into a paradise for all, and eliminate all cause for men to go to war at all, if mankind had any decency and wisdom. But it cannot be, as long as evil human nature rules the earth.

* * *

The second item: *The attitude of the Household in relation to the Gentile world.* Jesus said—*God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son*" (John 3:16).

He said again—

“*Thou shalt love thy neighbour AS THYSELF*” (Matt. 19:19).

And in illustration, when pressed as to who is “thy neighbor”, he showed by the parable of the Good Samaritan that the term has universal application. It is as large and broad as the heart is able to expand and grow up to. He said further, through Paul:

“*As ye have opportunity* (that is, to the fullest extent ye are able), *DO GOOD TO ALL MEN*” (Gal. 6:10).

This is a very important injunction as part of the Way of Life. It requires positive action and effort. It is by context directly connected with the promise (v. 8) that those who sow to the Spirit shall reap everlasting life: that is, it is a required part of the sowing to the Spirit. Jesus said also, even more searchingly:

“*Love your enemies . . . DO GOOD to them that hate you*” (Matt. 5:44).

Do we *carefully* obey this, or do we conveniently ignore it?—content to feel noble and superior in not returning the evil? The Way of Life is a very special kind of training for a very special Divine position for eternity. Are we big enough for it?

This is one group of commands. There is another group, as:

“*Love NOT the world... If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him*” (1 Jn. 2:15).

“*Come out from among them and BE YE SEPARATE*” (2Cor. 6:17).

The *friendship of the world is enmity with God*” (James 4:4).

“*Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness*” (Eph. 5:11).

These two sets of commands seem contradictory: many in fact use one set to discountenance the other, according as their preferences may be. But we know they are *not* contradictory.

And we know that both sets are vitally important, are *commands*, and *must be obeyed*.

Wisdom will humbly and enquiringly discern the true pattern and balance between them. We must have an attitude toward the world that harmonizes and fulfils *both* sets of teachings. Bro. Roberts said, with much discernment, that it is such apparently opposite commands as these that develop our spiritual insight and penetration. We are forced to analyze and discriminate, and perceive the finer lines of instruction.

We cannot jump to broad or coarse conclusions. We are forced to the delicate balance of self-control within limited guidelines.

We can have no *fellowship or fraternization* with the world. We must maintain all our motives and desires and interests on a higher, purer, spiritual plane: but our feeling and attitude toward them must be kindness and hope and helpfulness.

Jesus said—

“*I came not to judge the world, but to save the world*” (John 12:47).

He *will* judge, eventually—he plainly tells us so (Acts 17:31)—but that was not his mission then: *nor is it ours*. It is essential to the healthy development of our character that we suppress the fleshly tendency to constantly criticize and condemn “those that are without”; and rather by study of the mind of Christ learn how to *desire* to do good unto all men. And the kindness and concern must be genuine, from the bottom of our hearts in wisdom; not a forced, surface kindness.

Christ wept for wicked Jerusalem, in spite of her long and bloody record of wickedness and murder of the prophets of God. He was bowed down with the realization that wickedness is tragic, self-destructive folly; and he desired to save men from it, not coldly condemn them in it. So must we, sincerely, with heartfelt concern and sympathy.

Primarily, of course, we must be *separate*. We must feel separate, think separate, act separate. We are not, and cannot be, a part of the world in activities, interests and associations.

All we do, all day and every day, must be with the sole motive of pleasing God, keeping close to Him in heart and mind, doing all for and unto Him.

This is first, and fundamental; but it does not stop there. We have obligations *to* the world; and the importance of these obligations is not so much for the world’s sake, as for our own training and character.

Criticism and judging come cheap and easy. They are natural, and fleshly, and very small-mindedly self-gratifying. But to learn how to put ourselves out, and set aside our own comfort and satisfaction, and take the time and trouble and effort to help and strengthen those we so glibly criticize, is the Christ like sacrifice God *demand*s—

“*DO GOOD TO ALL MEN ...Do good to them that hate you*” (Luke 6:27).

It is a positive command; a required part of the Way of Life. Some people spend much time in building muscles by lifting great weights: if faithfully adhered to, the results are very impressive. *These* are the weights that build the essential muscles of the Spirit.

Truly we must discern right from wrong. We must clearly recognize and not obscure the fact that—“*the whole world lieth in wickedness*”—and that, being of the flesh wherein there is “no good thing” *all* that it does is sin, being not of enlightened faith (Rom. 14:23). By desiring to help, we do not condone what is wrong. We simply show the more excellent way. Christ, in his single-minded devotion to the work of God, associated freely with publicans and sinners.

We have no reason to believe he *especially* chose such company although we do know that he especially chose the company of what were snobbishly regarded as the “lowest class” of the people—

“Unto the POOR the Gospel is preached” (Luke 7:22).

This was one of the special signs that he was the true Messiah, as he sent word to John in prison. There is no especial virtue in the poor; but as soon as men get into any position above that stage, then pride and greed and selfishness and covetousness intensify, so that it is increasingly hard for those who are not poor to enter the Kingdom, or be faithful stewards of the goods God has put testingly in their hands.

It was the poor, zealous Philipians, and not the rich, self-satisfied Corinthians, who were closest to Paul and who helped him the most in material things. The poor live closer to the reality of man’s weakness and helplessness and dependence.

We must, by close association with God and Christ and the Word, develop the God-like characteristic of earnestly desiring to do good to others: this is true *spiritual* living. And it is, appropriately, the *happiest* way. The natural way is to grasp and hoard. People are always collecting things, and its mostly *rubbish*: This is fundamental to the flesh. We all do it as children, but if our lives are going to be useful to God, we *must* mature and grow out of such childishness. Often it’s pretty and attractive rubbish; but it’s still rubbish, and wastes precious time, and gets in the way of single-minded service and dedication to the work of God. Let us *unclutter* our lives, so we can make them spiritually useful.

The natural way, again, is self-interest; and indifference or antagonism to others: small, cramped, self-centeredness. Some even use the glorious Gospel of God to justify this fleshliness.

The *spiritual* way is self-forgetfulness, and deep concern for others. To our shame, many in the animal world could give us lessons in this respect. While we sit back in comfort and smugly criticize, they are out there in self-sacrifice, *doing* something for others.

We must not let the flesh use the true, necessary, God-required narrowness of the Way of Life as an excuse for self-centeredness and unconcern for mankind. Christ, the perfect Example, never for a moment forgot or strayed from the narrow way, but still his whole life was an unbroken pattern of selfless concern for all mankind. *So must be ours.*

* * *

The third item: *Our attitude toward Israel*. Here special factors come into play. Israel is truly part of the world that “lies in wickedness”, but a very special part. Israel is the “apple of God’s eye” (Zech. 2:8); although today sunk in blindness and rebellion and ignorant blasphemy. We must have a very special feeling and affinity for Israel—

“He that blesseth thee I will bless” (Num. 24:9).

But we must not be blind to the characteristic of stiffneckedness that always has and still does distinguish them as a nation. They not only reject Christ himself: they arrogantly reject the very conception of *any* need for a mediatorial, sacrificial Savior. They have no conception of their hopeless bondage to sin. Their holy, God-given Law has taught them nothing. They feel they can approach God on their own, without any need for a Christ. They cannot see that their temporary mediatorial Law is ended, and they have *nothing* in its place. An article in the *Detroit Jewish News*, comparing Judaism with what they believe to be “Christianity”, says—

“Judaism teaches that man can be all-righteous or all wicked, for his ethical conduct is solely up to his own decision. Christian belief is predicated on the doctrine of ‘Original Sin’. In his daily prayers, the Jew proclaims, ‘My God, the soul which Thou hast given me is pure.’

Christianity teaches that man is sinful by birth. Christianity regards the flesh as the cause of sin.

“The Jewish interpretation of ethical freedom implies that repentance is the omnipotent cure of sin. The Christian doctrine of ‘Original Sin’ leads to the conclusion that man is too weak to repent effectively. He is too sinful to atone, and so needs the help of Jesus.

“The Christian finds atonement in the belief that Jesus died for the sins of mankind. This idea of ‘vicarious atonement’—the payment of the penalty not by the sinner but by a substitute for him—cannot be reconciled with Jewish convictions.”

Truly this is a confused mixture of truth and error, in response to the only “Christianity” they know—the sad caricature of Christ exhibited by the Churches: the substitutionary Christ who is punished instead of man who deserves it. But while rejecting the orthodox errors, they also reject the true doctrine of the necessary sacrifice of Christ, though so clearly foreshown in their Scriptures from beginning to end. Their position still is as in Christ’s day among them—

“We are free . . . we are not in bondage . . . we have no need of your freedom” (John 8:33).

Israel is tragically today, as Hosea foretold, *“without a sacrifice”*.

But we must never—in thought or word—align ourselves against Israel, blind and wicked though they be. Their judgment and condemnation and punishment is God’s exclusive prerogative, of which He is very jealous. How bitterly He denounced, and how dreadfully He scourged, those very nations whose natural enmity He used to bring fully merited punishment upon His erring people!

We must never allow ourselves to even *appear* to side or sympathize with those who despise or defame the Jew; for they are—though greatly erring—*“beloved for the fathers’ sakes”* (Rom. 11:28).

We marvel in never diminishing wonder at the continuous, living miracle that they present: a unique and different people from all others—and such a major, out-of-proportion factor in the world’s activities. And today, in their own land, living on the endless raw edge of crisis: four times in twenty-five years viciously attacked on all sides by vastly greater numbers dedicated to their annihilation; and four times decisively defeating the attackers. And the hypocritical world sides with the oil-rich aggressors, and tells Israel she must strip herself of her defenses.

* * *

The fourth point: *The effect the Signs should have on us in preparation for Christ's return.* Theoretically, we should not need the Signs. We should be so deeply impressed and overwhelmed and mentally saturated with the glory of God and the power of the Gospel and the beauty of the Truth that every moment's activity should be an excited, joyful pressing toward the Kingdom, regardless of any current events.

But God knows our frame, and the natural dull cloddishness of our spiritual perceptions; and He has given us the Signs as one of His helps to keep us in touch with the eternal spiritual realities.

The Signs add greatly to our responsibility. Where much is given, much is required (Luke 12:48). No past generation has ever had such concrete, visible evidence as we have. The rebirth of Israel alone should be an ever-present marvel, never growing dim or less exciting.

We should continually thrill as we see these striking and so typically Jewish figures—Begin, Dayan, Sharon—like something suddenly risen out of the Old Testament, strutting about the world stage. We do not credit them with any special wisdom. In fact, their uncompromising, tunnel-visioned Jewishness may be what helps bring upon Israel its final “time of Jacob's trouble”, as it did in AD 70.

But how marvelous are these events! How wonderfully they tie in with all past history, and with prophecy of what is yet to be! And just this week, the godless, bully nations of the world vote unanimously that Israel's settlements on their own ancient land are “illegal”!

* * *

And we have mighty Russia: a dreadful and increasingly industrialized, increasingly scientific, cold, rigid dictatorship, controlling one sixth of the earth, and well over one sixth of its resources—fanatically devoted to world dominion. It is the world's richest nation in mineral resources; it has two and a half billion acres of forests; over one half the world's coal; two fifths of its iron.

Russia's gross national product is half that of US, but it is all muscle and sinew: not frittered and dissipated in puffy trinkets and self-indulgent pleasures and luxuries, as US's is. Russia is just beginning to tap its vast resources; US has pretty well exhausted hers by profligacy.

Russia leads the world in steel, coal and oil production: the three basics of industrialized power. She leads in largest power-dams, and has almost unlimited water power for many more that she plans. She builds everything on a colossal scale.

Exactly one hundred years ago Russia and Turkey were at war, and the Brotherhood thought it was the descent of Gog, and that Armageddon was immediately imminent.

But what was Russia then, compared to now? The mighty British Empire was at its proud peak. Its commerce and navy dominated the world: its industrial production was many times Russia's. In 1860, British steel production was ten times Russia's, and equal to all the rest of the world's combined. Its coal production was double the total of all the rest of the world: coal was then the only source of industrial energy. Russia was not even a factor in world coal production at all: now it's first.

One hundred years ago, the Brotherhood thought the King of the North's “many ships” (Dan. 11:40) were the large secret armada of landing boats by which they suddenly surprised the Turks and crossed the Danube in huge numbers, overwhelming Turkish defenses and beginning the war.

It was certainly a reasonable application. But today Russia has “many ships” in the full, global, naval sense—several times more, in fact, in actual numbers than US—and they will clearly play a large part in the final showdown. In the past fifteen years, Russia has gone from practically no navy at all, to the world's second largest; in many respects rivaling and even surpassing US's shrinking and aging fleet—including three hundred and fifty huge submarines: far more than US has; and far more, and more deadly, than Hitler had at his peak when he was sinking a million tons of Allied ships a month and came close to breaking the back of Allied transport. We see how tremendously Russia has developed in recent years.

The Signs are not to be an obsession, to the detriment of deeper, spiritual things; but are to help keep our outlook and awareness broadened from our own petty things to the developing panorama of the great Divine plan with mankind.

* * *

Finally, the last item: *The glories that will be ours (if worthy) in the Kingdom of God.* What is our conception of “glory”? It depends upon our depth of spiritual perception. What would be “glory” for us? The more shallow our perception, the more we perceive glory as external rather than internal. We know the common worldly conception: splendor, magnificence, renown, celebrity, the worshipful subservience and envy of others: power over others (how the flesh loves that!).

Certainly glory, as represented visually, is brightness, brilliance, radiance, effulgence. But this is merely the outward *manifestation* of glory, as are all the gaudy trappings of power and prestige.

The Scriptures say much of the “Glory of God”, and all true glory must be related to, and part of, that. The Glory of God is His fundamental character and nature: pure, holy, righteous, wise, loving, incorruptible, imperishable. It is to this Glory we are called, and to which we are to yearn and strive.

The first reference to the “*Glory of Yahweh*” is in Exodus 16, in connection with the giving of the Manna, the heavenly bread.

The second is in Exodus 24: the giving of the Law at Sinai.

The third is the promise in Exodus 29 that the Tabernacle—God’s dwelling-place—should be sanctified by God’s Glory. We perceive the type and significance—

“Ye are the Temple of the living God” (2 Cor. 6:16).

Then we come to the fourth: a key passage concerning the Glory of Yahweh. Moses asked— *“I beseech Thee: SHOW ME THY GLORY”* (Ex. 33:18).

God answered (next verse)—

“I will make all My GOODNESS pass before thee.”

And in the subsequent gracious revelation in chapter 34, God identifies His Glory with His goodness and mercy and love (v. 6)—

“And the Lord passed before him, and proclaimed: Yahweh, Yahweh Elohim merciful and gracious, longsuffering and abundant in goodness and truth.”

This was God’s response to Moses’ request, and *this* is the *true* “Glory of Yahweh”, of which the light and splendor and brilliance are but the outward manifestation (1John 1:5)—

“God is Light, and in Him is no darkness at all”—and this clearly refers to *moral* rather than *physical* aspects, because it is spoken of in relation to righteousness and sin.

Psalm 19 announces that—

“The heavens declare the Glory of God” (v. 1).

Here is wisdom and power, truly, but it is more than that. The vast, majestic, orderly *beauty* of the heavens declares goodness and benevolence and trustworthiness and purpose, though it is silent as to what the goodness may have in mind, or what the purpose may be.

Psalm 45 says—

“The King’s daughter is all glorious WITHIN” (v. 13).

Modern versions and most commentaries make the meaning much more shallow by arbitrarily adding words, as R.V.: “within the palace”. But we believe this is a reference to the *true* glory the Bridegroom sees in the Bride—the *inner* glory of character and substance. This is the natural meaning of the Hebrew as it stands, without tampering.

In harmony with this are several beautiful references to glory in the New Testament. John says (1:14)—

“We beheld his glory . . .”

—that was the “Word made flesh dwelling among them”—

“. . . the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, FULL OF GRACE AND TRUTH.”

“Grace” was his character. *“Truth”* was his foundation. *“Full”* was the degree of his Godlikeness (John 8:29)—

“I do always those things that please the Father.”

That was the glory they beheld. If we desire the eternal spiritual glory of perfect oneness with God in mind and in nature, *this* is the glory—portrayed by Christ—that we must strive with all our efforts to develop and manifest. Let us be sure we are not like Israel: seeking a showy, external, flesh-pleasing glory, and never realizing that the true glory must be developed *within* us by the power of the Word, and that *now* is the time it must be done, if ever.

It is a joyful endeavor: life’s greatest possible pleasure and adventure. But it requires complete dedication, constant attention, and continual constructive self-examination. How much closer are we today than yesterday? How far did we fail of God’s glory *today*, and what can we learn from it to reduce failure in the future?

There must be a continuous self-purifying confessional of prayer in Jesus’ Name. Prayer is not a periodic thing, but continuous: a state of the heart; a condition of the mind. We must pray in *everything*: large and small—for God’s guidance in it, and for His acceptance of it. *Nothing* is too small to be prayed about, for all is equally part of the one single fabric of our life. What cannot be prayed about must not be done.

It will always seem like failure, for the more we learn and overcome, the more we will realize how little we have *really* overcome. Let us remember that when we have “done all”—that is, when we have spent a lifetime trying our hardest—we are *still* as Jesus says, “unprofitable servants”. But God in His mercy is going to accept those “unprofitable servants”, if they truly have “done all—that is, all they could: their best. He has assured us that our pitiful little unprofitable best is enough, if it truly is our best.

His mercy through Christ will make up the difference, and He will accept us as “perfect and blameless in His sight”.

We know that many *will* succeed in this glorious race.

Though “narrow is the way, and few there be that find it”, still in the end, that relative few is described as a “multitude no man can number”. *They can do it: so can we.* The prize of glory is well within our ability, IF we will drop everything else and give it every ounce of effort that we have.

If we truly value the prize, and appreciate and rejoice continually in the infinite love and goodness of God, we cannot possibly be content with giving anything *less* than our best and most. Paul says—

“All have sinned, and come short of the GLORY OF GOD” (Romans 3:23).

Clearly here the “Glory of God” is His perfection of beauty and holiness, and the perfection He requires of those who would be one with Him.

Paul is explaining in this chapter why the perfect God manifesting *glory* of Christ was necessary, that a foundation of perfection might be laid, sin repudiated and condemned, and God forever honored; that God might *then* be merciful to all weak but loving creatures who seek Him with all their heart.

Paul speaks often of this divine Glory that God is, that Christ manifested, and that man must strive for. The term appears over one hundred times in his writings: but perhaps he nowhere expresses it more searchingly and beautifully than in writing to the ecclesia at Corinth. In 2 Cor. 3 he is led to speak of the Old and New Covenants. He speaks of the tremendous, overawing Glory of God as manifested in the Old Covenant, the “ministration of death”, the dispensation of condemnation.

We have seen that the inauguration of this Old Covenant is where reference to the *Glory of Yahweh* first appears in the scriptural record. The Law, and its services and standards and requirements, indeed was glorious: “holy, just and good”, as Paul describes it (Rom. 7:12).

What a wonderful, joyful, beautiful people Israel *could* have been: IF they had lived up to their glorious Law to the best of their ability! That was all God asked. He did not demand impossible perfection. He made merciful provision for constant honest failure, and ever-renewed effort. Let us ponder that thought (for it has very important significance for us today):

What a wonderful, joyful, beautiful people Israel COULD have been—what an unearthly manifestation of God’s glory to the world—IF they had lived up to their holy, divine Law to the best of their ability!

But glorious as the Old Covenant was, the New is far more glorious. That is Paul’s point. We know the sad conditions in the Corinthian ecclesia: conditions that Paul warned must lead to disfellowship if not corrected (1 Cor. 4:21; 2 Cor. 13:2,10).

Paul is trying to inspire them to the beauty that could be, the *glory* that could be—

“the ministration of DEATH was glorious . . . how shall not the ministration of the SPIRIT be MORE glorious?” (2 Cor. 3:8, 9).

Is it glory we seek? This is what Paul is offering and exhorting to—

“We all, with open (correctly: unveiled) face, beholding as in a glass (mirror) the Glory of the Lord, are CHANGED into the SAME IMAGE from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord” (v. 18).

So we see clearly *what* this Glory is, and *when* it must be achieved. It is the likeness of Christ who is the Glory of God, and NOW is the only time for its development. It will not come wafting down upon us at the last day. There *must* be a “change” *now*, and it is the steady beholding that does the changing—

“We beheld his glory, full of grace and truth.”

The urgent question then is—“Are we, while we still have fleeting opportunity, by steadily keeping our eyes on Christ the Glory of God, *being changed* ‘from glory to glory’—that is, changed continuously from one degree of divine glory to a fuller degree?”

This is the sole purpose and reason for our present life: anything else is tragic waste of precious time and golden opportunity. This progressive change should—*must*—be *discernible*: in knowledge, and in character, and in godly action—a continuously closer likeness to the “Lord the Spirit.” Only God can determine the acceptability of the accomplishment in each case, for He alone knows all the abilities and opportunities, all the weaknesses and limitations.

But, certainly, the change—the glorifying process—*must be very substantial*. We are not here to play games, or to just go through hypocritical, meaningless motions. God is not mocked.

He has no patience with half-service or pretence. It must be our best and our all, even though in our limited ability our sacrifice appears relatively but a turtledove, or even just a handful of meal. God knows what our best is: and it is as good in His sight as anyone else’s best. The poor widow gave more than they all. None can despair, and none can be over-confident.

We are reminded of what a wonderful people—what a tremendous witness to the Glory of God—Israel *could have been* in the earth, IF they had fulfilled to the limit of their ability the requirements of their glorious Law. *What about us: who have a far more glorious law?*

If we are looking for “glory”, it is right at our hand: and this is how it is acquired—by long, hard, but joyful, labor and study and effort—not by living today in relaxed self-service, on our “beds of ivory” in our “ceiled houses”—and then expecting all the glory to come suddenly pouring on us at the final day. *Our “glory” is, and will be just what we are making of ourselves right now: day by day, and effort by effort.*

Glorious miracle there will yet indeed be: from weak, erring, human flesh—of such pitifully limited knowledge and power and accomplishment—to glorious divine strength and wisdom: but only for those who have been yearningly straining in that direction through their mortal lives.

Truly there is an aspect of the glory that still awaits us, if we are *worthy*: the final purifying and perfecting, the physical transformation, the divine nature, eternal oneness with God, the open manifestation in the fullness of life and power: every moment ineffable joy.

Paul says, a few verses further on—

“For God, Who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the GLORY OF GOD in the face of Jesus Christ” (2 Cor. 4:6).

The “*light of the knowledge of the Glory of God.*” God has given us this light, this knowledge, this Glory; and He has offered us the ability to look steadfastly upon it—not like Israel, who drew fearfully back—but in love, without fear: and to be transformed into glory by it, if true, eternal glory is what we desire *above all else*.

Moses, standing before Israel, had to cover his face, and veil the Divine glory. Israel’s fleshly sight was too weak, their fleshly heart too gross. The glory of the Old Covenant was freely offered to them, that they should be a holy nation of priests, to carry the joy of God’s Glory to the world. How wonderful they *could* have been! But they failed.

We have been called to a greater Covenant, a better ministry, a more glorious call to glory. Israel failed. They did not realize they were failing. They were quite satisfied with what they ignorantly *thought* was their success. But the attraction and distraction of the present, and of the heathen world around them, took their time, and effort, and interest—and they failed.

They never realized the unique wonderfulness and magnitude of the Divine call that had come to them, and had chosen them for God’s Glory, out of a perishing animal world.

It would be a tragedy if the same must at last be said of us. Glory is oneness of heart and mind and character with God. *There is no other glory.* At the judgment seat of Christ, we shall be given *exactly that which we have set our heart on, and dedicated our life and energies to.* That is pre-eminently fair and just.

If it has been the Glory of God, then it will be the Glory of God: oneness with God in mind and substance, in eternal joyfulness.

If not, then it will not. *Now*, we have the choice: *then*, it will be too late.

Bro. G.V. Growcott

Mutual Improvement

There is no necessity to argue the connection of our present subject with the avowed object of this class; you will have already done it for yourselves as a first and natural thought.

We can, therefore, commence with the fact, admittedly, we are aiming at *mutual improvement*. All, doubtless, have made a mental analysis of the term, and having divided it truly, have found this: it assumes our *ability* to influence each other for good; it pre-supposes that we *can* assist each other to improve. The wise man said, “Iron sharpeneth iron, so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend.” The second point is gained; we are not attempting the impossible.

By intercourse we are able to polish each other in a number of ways, and as a Society with that in view we choose a particular night that the work shall be hastened; in this class the process is brought to the sharpest possible focus.

Our ambition is declared and published; of its worthiness there can be no question. In our pursuit of it, let us not forget that even according to our printed rule (a cold and formal thing) it all relates to *things concerning the Word of God*. We seem forced to remark, how different to the aims of the world’s Mutual Improvement Societies, who, to use a simile, miss the kernel of the matter in their eager grasp for the shell; *they* value that which is superficial, and thereby lose that which is vital.

What, to us, is the kernel? What is that vital attainment to which our position demands we should bend all our hopes and endeavours? We will call it *character*, in contradistinction to that which is simply knowledge. It is knowledge of a kind, but such as which, by its influence, has become part of ourselves—the knowledge of the Truth, permitted influence, develops true character. How to read, how to speak, and how to write, are considerations of *no worth* by comparison. We shall all admit the truth of that, though these things are conceded a degree of importance as guide-rails and stepping-stones. Knowledge is good (none realize it better than God’s children, do they?); but unaccompanied it puffeth up; yet if it go hand in hand with love it edifieth. “Covet *earnestly* the best gifts,” said the Apostle Paul, “yet shew I unto you a more excellent way”; and, *in effect*, he continues, “though I possess all the talents of the mighty, and the gifts of the Spirit, and have not *love*, I am nothing”.

How far shall *we* get then without it? “Improvement of character,”—“Growth of Love”; connect the two terms in your minds; are they not equivalent in God’s sight? We think so. Dear brethren and sisters, this attribute in the Mutual Improvement Class should be drawn upon to the fullest extent; not, as the conduct of some would appear to advocate, temporarily laid on one side. Consider it, as opposed to the free and easy method of speech and action; a few seem to imagine this is the time to let oneself go, but never was a greater mistake made. It is essentially a time of self-control.

We surely seek those things wherewith one may edify another, and shall we not seek in vain if we allow the man of God to become obscured by the bitterness of words? Let us exercise that Divine possession, and so stimulate it whilst we still, grow in knowledge.

It is in the giving and taking of criticism our restraint is most needed, and in the *giving*, above all; at that time, particularly, may we keep in mind Paul’s admonition, “Let all things be done unto edifying.” What an opportunity it is, however, for self aggrandizement; it is utterly sinful to take advantage of it. Those who would do so *think* they know something, but know nothing yet as they ought to know. We are absolutely precluded from regarding it as a platform simply for “fault finding”; it is nothing of the kind; it is a position of opportunity whereby one may edify another. We all make mistakes, and it is right they should be pointed out to us, whatever our position may be; *but* let it be done in love or not at all.

May we quote typical instances: in an otherwise good address a brother might fail in quite minor features. As we rise to criticise, strong temptation may take hold of us to “make the most of them” in a manner calculated to distort the vision of others. It is wrong to do so; at all times be just. Another, a young brother, say, delivers one which is only fair by comparison, though commendable in itself. Some exert their long trained powers to array before him all his faults, and leave him overwhelmed. It is wrong to do so; be true, but be merciful.

Again, we may think, “Oh, we know brother Jones, he doesn’t mind it.” “We’ll give it to brother Smith whether he likes it or not”, “There’s brother so-and-so, it will only be right to serve *him* as he serves other people; let him see what it is like.” Are these not actual experiences? They are! Do they represent the right attitude? They do not! It is mutual improvement we are met for, and we are not keeping to business by so indulging.

The criticised one is our chief addressee, and has first to be considered. True, then consider him, and provoke to love and good works by seasoned remarks; not to anger and resentment, of no profit to him or the class. Do not seek his humiliation, but his edification. Noise, to less effect than this, is mere sounding brass. Do not Paul’s words, running somewhat on the same line, impress themselves upon us? He is referring to offences, but we use the quotation with confidence here, where the same spirit should obtain favour:—

“Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; for if a man think himself to be something when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself.”

A very easy thing to do, too. To the thoughtful we thus appear ridiculous, and give our brother speaker no assistance; we fail in our object. He is not the only one to be taken thought for, though; when we stand upon our feet here we pose as examples to the class; let us be such, let us behave in a manner worthy of emulation, remembering that through the perfection of speech and idea, we are aiming at something beyond, something infinitely better: the acquisition of character, the only thing which will stand the test in the day of account.

When critics are manifestly animated by this spirit, the position of one criticised is far less difficult than would otherwise be the case; still he, at times, is sure to find the need of restraint. He may have taken days, or even weeks, of earnest thought, and spent hours of earnest labour upon his subject, and for that reason he may resent the fire of criticism and the baring of his faults; disappointment will rob him of the benefit which should accrue, if he does not see things in their right perspective. We do not come here to be commended, nor to have our vanity stimulated, and notwithstanding that we may judge, as we resume our seat, that we have just concluded the best effort we have ever made, and deserve all approbation, we may immediately hear a lot to disillusion us, in which case, don’t let surprise and chagrin throw us off our balance, and lead us to retaliation. Receive all that is said in the spirit of humility, and if anything is of use to us take it to ourselves, always endeavouring to profit. We are, you know, naturally all open to a little egotism, and apt to look for praise rather than advice, and, we are afraid, to justify ourselves in our replies, against our better judgment. Stifle the inclination, brethren; the class is the loser, we are confident, in many instances where there is a reluctance to admit failings. He who fights against the publication of his faults here is endeavouring to shut up a book of instruction.

There is a tendency abroad to give prominence, in responses, to points of contention to the exclusion of real mistakes, and the points of profit are thus obscured. That which appears a little doubtful is seized hold of eagerly as an excuse for evading the main issue. It ought not to be. Don’t let us wriggle too much. To strive about words to no profit, to the subverting of the hearers, is surely an exercise we should leave to the world to whom it belongs. Why cannot we be frank; the younger members, who sit and learn, are not then so likely to receive wrong impressions, and is not the importance of this class heightened by its youthful membership? Have great regard, we say, for the younger members, for this is their training ground. They come here for instruction, and a clouding of the issue leaves them worse off than before.

Meditation on this feature brings home to us the responsibility of the president; the care of matters is for the time being in his hands; how *careful* he should be. He is looked to for protection; some can look after themselves in a question of words (we do not speak disparagingly), some cannot. He who can dispense justice without prejudice, but with love and especial regard for the youthful in Christ, will not occupy the presidential chair in vain: he will do much by his government to contribute towards our success as aspirants to knowledge of God, and as character seekers.

Just a few words about the danger of remaining silent if you have anything of value to say. If you feel conscious you know something relevant and helpful, and are given opportunity, the responsibility is upon you; defer not to say it. If you cannot say it, write it.

Is it too late now to ask, how can we best obtain mutual improvement? As one concrete thought, it is contained in a nutshell; whether president, essayist, or critic, aim to speak with the greatest effect at the command for the good of the listeners, *not* for self-glorification; adopt the attitude of Christ, not that of the Pharisee.

Finally, is it to be thought that we should here have to separate ourselves from some different behaviour, to become for a short space models of propriety; in short, *can* it be thought that we should be different beings here to what we are anywhere else?

Impossible suggestion! The wolf may put on sheep’s clothing, and so deceive; but it makes a poor imitation of bleating. It may assume a habit, but it cannot reproduce that for which it is not fitted. We mean to say that the member whose life’s conduct is not in accordance with our high profession is but poor material in the Mutual improvement Class.

We do not place ourselves above any one in this matter, but merely say that our success here as teachers, or examples of patience, perseverance, humility, Godly wisdom, *love*, does not entirely depend upon our attitude of the moment. If we do not live unto God, we cannot successfully represent Him here as “good stewards of the manifold grace of God.”

Bro. Gill Growcott

Encouraging Words No. 5

In forming resolves for the New Year, we do well to ponder God's estimate of us in relation to the meetings. Assemblies of the faithful—as our recent readings in Nehemiah and Job show—occupy an important place in God's arrangements for His children's well-being. We read in Nehemiah that all the people “gathered themselves together as one man,” and requested to have the law read to them. And the reading and exposition (for Ezra and the Levites “gave the sense and caused them to understand the meaning”) was continued from “early morning until midday” (R.V.). On another occasion, one-fourth part of the day was occupied in reading, and “another fourth part they confessed and worshipped the Lord their God.”

What refreshing, stimulating examples to us are these faithful, zealous men and women! And some of the first century disciples were not one whit behind them, as is shown by the Eutychus incident—Paul's “long preaching” until midnight, and the meeting prolonged until break of day. As we think of things which are sometimes in evidence in our midst—unfilled seats—the tramp, tramp, and commotion caused by those who leave ere the divinely-enjoined assembly is dismissed, we ask ourselves: If the Spirit had occasion to allude to our meetings, would these serve to illustrate faithfulness or unfaithfulness?—earnestness or indifference?—fervour or apathy?

This is a question that intimately concerns sisters inasmuch as now, as of yore, they form no small element in the household of God. Some of us—for the care of the young and the sick are pre-eminently sisters' duties—may be compelled wholly or in part, to absent ourselves from the God appointed gatherings. Under these circumstances we need to be comforted and reminded that God expects impossibilities of none. But let us see to it that our absence or early exit results not from indifference. God was angry with Israel because they commanded the prophets to “Prophecy not.” The words of the prophets still live in Holy Writ, and in turning away from their doctrine, reproof, correction and instruction in righteousness as brought under our notice by brotherly exposition and admonition, we come dangerously near to Israel's sin in saying “Prophecy not.”

Some of us may urge that we turn away from exhortation on the ground that we can learn nothing from such and such speakers. But we see grey-haired brethren of ability and repute listen, in obedience to God's command, with becoming respect to the least gifted of those who have been appointed to exhort, and should not the reason that moves them be sufficient inducement to us to do likewise? And suppose, now and again, one should stand up to teach who is utterly unfitted for the task, should we for this reason run away from the meetings concerning which Paul said: “Not forsaking the assembling of yourselves together as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another and so much the more as ye see the day approaching”—and concerning which Christ said: “Where two or three are gathered together in my name there am I in the midst”?

Should we not rather beseech God to raise up faithful teachers, even as Christ commanded his disciples to pray (Matt. 9:38)—also to grant them utterance even as the faithful, gifted Paul requested prayer on his own behalf (Eph. 6:19)? And should we not diligently search out from the Scriptures the divinely-approved qualifications of teachers, and do our part by thoughtfully and prayerfully recording our vote for those who “speak as the oracles of God,” and approximate to the conditions laid down in Paul's instructions to Timothy and Titus?

But let us make sure that our lack of appreciation, as touching exhortation, does not lie in our own spiritual deficiencies. “The words of the wise are as goads.” Our natural man likes not the goad, and is apt to visit his resentment on the one who uses it. Let us take care. “Speak unto us smooth things” was unfaithful Israel's cry, and in lieu of that “Prophecy not.” Our attitude towards the voices of the prophets and towards those who minister to us concerning them is an infallible test of our spiritual condition.

—*Sis. C.H. Jannaway—1906*

Meditations – Deity's Ways No. 8

The Psalms are peculiarly Israel's songs; they were never intended for the use of the alien; they are as exclusive as the Epistles of Paul. In their composition they are essentially Israelitish. It is from the standpoint of Israel's hope alone that they can be rightly interpreted and appreciated. The Psalms comprise hymns of praise to God and hymns for the mutual edification and comfort of His people. However instructive these Psalms may be to those out of Christ, the enlightened must not wilfully allow them to be misapplied. God is pleased with praise only when it has been preceded by obedience, and He accepts the service of exhortation from those only who have previously directed their own feet unto wisdom's paths (Matt. 7:5). “Ye (said Peter to believers), as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ” (1 Pet. 2:5).

“My God”—“Our God”—are phrases which can only (truthfully) be employed by the saints. Under the Mosaic dispensation, God was the God of Israel only (Amos 3:2). In the age to come He will be the God of all the earth (Isa. 54:5). Now He is the God only of the few (embracing Jew and Gentile) who believe and obey the gospel. Such have responded to His call (Acts 2:39), and through it, have become his acknowledged people (Acts 15:14). The religious world is “without God”—this is a sad but positive fact. To have to contend for this in word and deed is far from pleasant; but duty must not be shirked. “Obey my voice, and I will be your God” (Jer. 7:23). This determines divine relationship. The religious world in fellowshipping the blasphemous doctrines of anti-Christ is disobedient. The Word speaks plainly:

“Come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you” (2 Cor. 6:14–18).

“The Lord trieth the righteous” (Psa. 11:5). Let us not forget this. The knowledge will comfort and strengthen us in time of need. God tries in a variety of ways. This is also well to remember. Israel was tried by the plausibility of false teachers (Deut. 13:3). And are not we? Israel failed. Shall we? Israel failed because they did not “carefully hearken” unto that testimony which ‘God established, and to that law which he appointed (Ps. 78:5). That testimony and law—enlarged—speak to us to-day, and it is for us to “diligently hearken”—“to take good heed unto ourselves”—for they are the voice of God! He requires us to try every teacher by it. Israel was told not to allow any good thing that might have been done by a false teacher to blind their eyes (Deut. 13:2). All teaching was to be judged by the Word; and those who taught falsely were to be “cut off” (vs. 5, 6) Let us never forget that as error comes to the front, the truth fades away—like the changing scene in a dissolving view.

One of Israel’s abominations was that they allowed “strangers, uncircumcised in heart and uncircumcised in flesh” to enter the sanctuary (Ezek. 44:7). What an important lesson there is here for Israel after the spirit! The Church of Christ is now the temple of God (1 Tim 3:15) and the church likewise forms the antitypical priesthood to officiate therein (1 Pet. 2:5). As in the past, no stranger is permitted to enter the temple—obedience to the letter and spirit of the divine commandments are the qualifications. How guilty in this have been many adopted Israelites! Laxity of doctrine, and laxity of practice, are abhorred by God. Let His true priests take care! Let them keep close to God’s instructions, and take warning from Israel’s failure and punishment. Purity of doctrine, and purity of practice are enjoined throughout the Word. God is now as stringent and jealous in regard to His house, as He was in the past. In relation to God’s instructions, let us speak and act “*not as pleasing men, but God, which trieth the hearts.*”

Gentiles become Jews upon obeying the truth. This is implied in the words “If ye be Christ’s, then are ye Abraham’s seed and heirs according to the promise” (Gal. 3:29). Believing Gentiles together with believing Jews form the “Israel of God” (Gal. 6:16). Connection with Israel is a glorious privilege; separation from her means a dark future—“No hope” (Ephes. 2:12). How the religious world scorns this precious truth! The hope of Israel—that or none—is the choice which the Scriptures hold out. Let a man intelligently and affectionately embrace the “One hope” (Ephes. 4:4) and a supreme interest in all the things of Israel will follow. The past, present, and future of the Jews will each and all be matters of concern. A Gentile believer lays hold of God’s promises to the Jews in the past—shares the Jews’ present degradation, dispersion, and suffering—and is heir to the honour, glory, exaltation, and peace that belong to their future. It is this bond of union that makes the natural and adopted seed of Abraham one. If the natural Jews were faithful, they would be doing what the grafted ones are doing: diligently praying for the peace of Jerusalem: fervently yearning for salvation to come out of Zion.

“I believe God that it shall be even as it was told me” (Acts 27:25). Such was Paul’s confession, made under circumstances which give it great significance. Many who are prepared to rely on God’s Word when things around are favourable, turn sceptical when difficulties arise. That Paul was not of this type is evident from the circumstances alluded to. The ship in which Paul was journeying as a prisoner to Rome was overtaken by a terrific storm. The ship having become unmanageable—every expediency having proved futile—all hope of her and of the lives on board was abandoned. At this juncture an angel appeared to Paul declaring that not a soul should perish. Paul believed the angelic announcement and retained his confidence in it though all appearances of its realisation grew more and more unlikely. No ray of hope was visible until the direst straits had been reached. The vessel was reduced to a complete wreck, and it was only by means of timber from the broken vessel that those who were unable to swim succeeded in reaching the shore. The narrative was written for our learning. Let us profit by it. Let us cultivate Paul’s unqualified belief in the divine Word. Time will most certainly justify the wisdom of the step.

The Saints and not the Alien are invited by God to offer praise—“*Sing unto the Lord, O ye saints*”—“*Let the saints . . . sing*” (Psa. 22:23; 30:4; 149:5; Eph. 5:19–20; Col. 3:16). The few allusions to universal praise in the Psalms refer, as a careful perusal of their respective contexts will show, not to the present but to the future, when all families of the earth will have been joined to the Lord (Psa. 68:32 ; 67:4 ; 66:4). The passages in which all creation is called on praise, are highly figurative, and must be understood in the light of literal statement (Ps. 69:34; 150:6). To make such passages teach that praise is acceptable from the unsanctified is a wrong handling of the word. Praise, like the sacrifices of the law, must be offered in God’s way, and that way now is through Christ, the beloved of God: “By him therefore, let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name” (Heb. 13:15). Let him who wishes to be further assured upon this matter attentively read the remarks of Dr. Thomas in *Eureka* —Vol. 2:350–362; 597–602.

“Destroy it utterly” (Deut. 13:15–17). Such was the edict of God concerning an Israelitish city that abandoned itself to the sin of idolatry. Some cry “shame” on reading it, but the wise will take heed! “I esteem all thy precepts concerning all things to be right”—this was the Psalmist’s view and this will be the mind of all who are after God’s own heart. God is exceedingly jealous. To divert to another the glory due to Him is a terrible sin. In this lies the very essence of idolatry. Let us be on our guard in this matter. There is more idolatry today than many are wont to think. A covetous man is an idolater (Ephes. 5:5) because he trusts in his riches instead of in God (1 Tim. 6:17). It is idolatry for one who knows the truth to put his “trust in princes or in the son of man in whom is no help” (Ps. 146:3), for in so doing his heart departs from his Lord (Jer. 17:5). Let us tremble to give God a wrong place. The only safeguard is to cleave to Him by holding fast to the revelation He has given concerning Himself—to stoutly refuse to compromise the truth, whether for friend or foe. Disobedience upon our part will certainly bring death—a cutting off.

Bro. A. T. Jannaway—1887

The Essence Of Acceptable Worship

“Let us, therefore, fear.”

It is possible for us to be like Israel in their outward zeal for the divine ordinances, and to have a liking for the Gospel only theoretically. We may attend and enjoy the meetings, and in a manner be as strongly in love with the Christadelphian position as the Jews were with their Temple, and yet be lacking in the spiritual element that makes these things acceptable to God as part and parcel of a faithful service.

They are good in their place; divine in their place; indispensable in their place; but if unaccompanied by the sentiment toward God which sincerely offers all to Him, and that disposition toward man which prompts to deeds of blessing and mercy, it may be in vain, for on these two commandments hang all the law, and the prophets, and therefore, all the Gospel, and all the meetings, and the whole machinery of the Divine service of our day.

—*Bro. Robert Roberts*

Theology

The only book we study on theology is the Bible; and the more comprehensive our knowledge of this becomes, the more intense our opposition to all the dogmas and “names” of the “religious world.” We undertake to interpret Moses and the Prophets in harmony with Jesus and the Apostles; when we succeed in this we have “full assurance of faith” that we are right.

—*Bro. John Thomas*

NIV

“If the Lord remains away and our children rely on the NIV, the Truth will be eroded to the point where the next generation will have Bibles which no longer support the first principles of the Truth regarding the nature of Jesus. This could, in time, lead to our understanding of the efficacy of Jesus’ sacrifice being obscured from view. All versions of the Bible have a place as aids to Bible Study, but we should not forget that the NIV is one of the products of declared papal ecumenical policy, and should therefore be used with caution. If we ignore this, we do so at our peril”.

From, “Which Translation?” page 76, published by The Testimony Magazine

Acceptable Prayer

The golden candlestick stood on the left hand of the holy place as one entered from the door. The next object catching the eye was an altar, standing in front before the veil of the most holy—not an altar for offering sacrifice but an altar for offering incense. The altar for offering sacrifice—a much larger altar—was outside the tabernacle. The interior of the holy place would not have been a fitting place for this altar when the significance of things is considered. The holy place typified the holy state arising out of the divine appointments for the purpose, chief among which is the sacrifice of the holy one. It would not have been appropriate to give a place to this sacrifice in the place signifying the state arising out of it. It was more in harmony with the relation of things that the altar of burnt offerings should be outside the tabernacle, though in the holy court. But though there is no altar of sacrifice in the holy place, there is the altar of incense on which morning and evening it was the high priest’s part to offer incense with fire taken off the altar of sacrifice. The incense altar was of wood covered with gold, and resembled the ark in being finished on the top with a royal crown, and having gold-covered staves always in the rings ready for use. All these features would have the meanings we identified in connection with the ark in the last chapter. They represented the same community but in a different state and time—namely, *now* instead of *then*; in the mortal instead of the immortal. Incense we saw to symbolize acceptable prayer. The altar of incense represents the sacrifice of prayer offered with Christ-fire on the gold-plate foundation of faith, without which it is impossible to please God (Heb. 11:6). The presence of this altar in the Mosaic Holy and the daily consumption of incense upon it is a powerful inculcation of this truth from God, which is otherwise so often declared in the Scriptures, that men are not acceptable to Him who do not “*pray without ceasing*”, and in “*everything give thanks*”, offering “*the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name*” (Heb. 13:15)—“*a perpetual incense before the Lord throughout your generations*”. No strange incense was to be used. Only God’s own promises and God’s own commandments must be breathed in prayer. God’s own truth is the only acceptable basis of approach. Man’s thoughts and inventions are odious to Him. This is only natural, as we might say; great men can only be acceptably approached by inferiors on the basis of the great men’s own views of what is proper. How much more must man conform to God. “*I will be sanctified in them that come nigh me*”, was His comment on the destruction of Nadab and Abihu when they presumed to offer strange fire.

The altar of incense, though wholly a symbol of prayer, was associated with atonement, in being touched once a year with “the blood of the sin-offering” slain and offered outside (Exod. 30:10), which is an intimation that prayer is not acceptable except at the hands of those who have come into contact with the sacrifice of Christ in the way appointed—the understanding, belief and obedience of the gospel, in being baptized into his death. Men who worship apart from this are worshippers on the outside of the tabernacle, and invoke death in presuming to come near without the blood of the sacrifice required. The altar of incense had no relation to the stranger in any sense or way. It was in the holy which no stranger dare enter, and it was both anointed with the holy oil and sanctified with the atoning blood, with which the stranger has not come in contact. Also it was to be served only by the priests, with whom the stranger has no connection. It is only those who have submitted to the righteousness of God in Christ Jesus that are “*a royal priesthood*”, qualified to

acceptably “*show forth the praises of him who hath called them out of darkness into his marvellous light: which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God*” (1 Pet. 2:9).
—*The Law of Moses*

Analecta Apocalypticæ (45) The Fifth Trumpet

The First Woe

It will be recollected that the consideration of the eighth chapter of Revelation brought under our review those terrible visitations upon the western Roman habitable, which are associated with the names of Goths and Huns, Vandals and Visigoths and Ostrogoths, and so on. At the close of that series of judgments (represented by the first four trumpets, and culminating in the extinction of the Roman Empire in the west), we enter upon another phase of events — a more terrible phase — one affecting the eastern section of the empire more particularly, though in truth bearing vitally on all parts of the civilized world. It is a phase so well marked in history as to constitute an epoch, and the starting point of a new order of things in many countries. It was to Europe in a measure what the arrival of Israel under Joshua was to the Canaanites. The Roman world was about to be visited by a scourge far transcending the inroads of the northern barbarians, who at least professed the same religion and assimilated with the populations of the countries they overthrew. Because of the appalling nature of this visitation, attention was called in a special manner to the trumpets heralding its approach: “Woe, woe, woe to the inhabitants of the earth, by reason of the other voices of the trumpet of the three angels, which are yet to sound.”

John hears the first of these three trumpets. Let us imagine ourselves by his side. We hear the loud clarion blast. Then there is a pause. We wait to see the effect. First a star shoots from its place in the sky, and falls upon the earth. Having landed there, it appears as a man, and receives a key with which the star-man proceeds to a certain part of the earth styled the bottomless pit, or, more properly speaking, the abyss. This he opens, and thereupon there issues from the abyss so opened, columns of dense smoke, out of which come locust clouds of horse-like form, having bearded riders wearing yellow crowns, and marshalled in military array — cavalry ready for the charge. John’s description is as follows:— “And the fifth angel sounded, and I saw a star fall from heaven unto the earth: and to him was given the key of the bottomless pit. And he opened the bottomless pit; and there arose a smoke out of the pit, as the smoke of a great furnace; and the sun and the air were darkened by reason of the smoke of the pit. And there came out of the smoke locusts upon the earth: and unto them was given power, as the scorpions of the earth have power. And it was commanded them that they, should not hurt the grass of the earth, neither any green thing, neither any tree; but only those men which have not the seal of God in their foreheads: And to them it was given that they should not kill them, but that they should be tormented five months: and their torment was as the torment of a scorpion, when he striketh a man. And in those days shall men seek death, and shall not find it; and shall desire to die, and death shall flee from them. And the shapes of the locusts were like unto horses prepared unto battle; and on their heads were as it were crowns like gold, and their faces were as the faces of men. And they had hair as the hair of women, and their teeth were as the teeth of lions. And they had breastplates, as it were breastplates of iron; and the sound of their wings was as the sound of chariots of many horses running to battle. And they had tails like unto scorpions, and there were stings in their tails: and their power was to hurt men five months. And they had a king over them, which is the angel of the bottomless pit, whose name in the Hebrew tongue is Abaddon, but in the Greek tongue hath his name Apollyon.”

Let us consider this striking symbolism seriatim. First the star that fell from heaven. This is self-evidently a personage or power: for the star is given a key. You could not give a key to a literal star. A key being representative of opening power, the star to whom the power was given must be the man or organization that would have power to perform the opening. You recollect the seven stars are declared to represent seven angelisms (or men sent) in the midst of seven churches, or organizations of men. These were stationary stars in the hand of Christ, because the spiritually-endowed men sent and sustained by him, peacefully ruled in the midst of the ecclesias. But here is a star descending to the earth, symbolizing a very different function. Such a star under the third trumpet symbolized the destructive descent of Attila from the country where he ruled upon the Roman earth, as will be recollected. What is meant by the key-using star of the fourth trumpet? We discover the answer in the contemplation of what he did. He opened a pit — not a bottomless pit, for there could not be such a thing as a pit without a bottom — but an abyss — a deep place of the earth, whence there emerged upon the countries of the Roman habitable swarms of yellow-crowned or turbaned cavalry. This at once fixes our attention upon the Arabian Peninsula, where at this very time Mahomet appeared, and whence the Saracenic hordes poured forth under his inspiration to offer the affrighted nations of Europe the Koran or the sword.

That this region should be termed the abyss is not inappropriate in view of the topographical configuration of the Holy Land, which is its door of egress in the direction of Europe. You will perceive by a glance at the map that the Holy Land, at the eastern end of the Mediterranean Sea, lies between Europe and the Arabian Peninsula. Now there is a peculiarity about that part of the surface of the earth which is not to be met with anywhere else. You may have seen it noticed in the recent lecture by Canon Tristram, an extract from which appeared in *The Christadelphian* a month or two ago. The country gradually slopes on the east and north towards the basin of the Dead Sea, with the result of forming a huge depression, which may well be described as an abyss. The Jordan descends along the centre course of its bed from its source in the Lebanon, until it empties itself in the waters of the Dead Sea; and the hill country after leaving Jerusalem to the eastward goes down quite precipitously in the same direction. The depth of the geographical hollow thus formed may be estimated from the fact that the water of the Dead Sea is 1,300 feet below the level of the Mediterranean. The mountains enclose it on the eastern side, and complete a depression which presents the idea of an immense valley without an exit; for the mountains at the lower end of the Dead Sea close it on the south. In this valley — the valley of the Jordan — the climate is of a tropical heat in certain parts. In fact, all the climates are to be found in it — from the temperate atmosphere of the upper regions to the oppressive heat of the lower valleys. The vegetation gradually changes

as the land rises from one point to the other corresponding with the climatic conditions. The products of the whole earth and every order of landscape beauty are to be found gathered into this remarkable depression or abyss.

This abyss was the door through which the Mahometan myriads passed from Arabia to Europe. Consequently, it was appropriate to take it as representing the whole region to which they belonged, of which it formed a part. We have simply to ask if the history of the case corresponds with the symbolical opening of the abyss which John witnessed, and the issue of locust clouds which ensued. The answer of history is very clear and distinct.

The preparation of the abyss for the opening was going on during the closing events of the fourth trumpet. A preparation was needed, for prior to this, the Arabian peninsula was divided up into a large number of petty principalities whose separateness and independence were incompatible with the unity necessary to form the Arabians into a moving cloud of locusts. It was needful to fuse them into one power. This was done by the wars that ensued among them upon the publication of Mahomet's pretensions. These pretensions were at first very obscure and feebly put forth. A dreaming visionary — (unlike the prophets of God in every particular) — whose writings in the so-called Koran are the manifest effusions of a weak, egotistic and fanatical mind, biased with a desire to imitate the Scriptures whose characters he frequently refers to and endorses — at last gave himself out as a prophet having a divine mission. His pretence was correct in a certain sense. Though by no means sent from God as the prophets of Israel were, he had a work to do and a place in the programme. He was to organize a terrible scourge for the Papal idolaters of Europe. This was the work providentially assigned to him. He was a servant of God as Nebuchadnezzar was — a servant without knowing or being known of God. His special work probably required his special idiosyncrasy. As a result of his craze, he secreted himself for a time in a cave and pretended to receive divine revelations. These revelations are published in his books. They are terrible trash, as anybody taking the trouble to read the Koran will find. He laboured for three years, and by the end of that time had made fourteen converts, family relatives. At last, he succeeded in attracting around him quite a number of adherents.

The attempt of their townsman (at Mecca) to put them down, at first resulting in the flight of Mahomet to Medina, led to strife, in which Mahomet and his friends made free and successful use of the sword. Success enlarged their ideas, and led to demands of allegiance on the surrounding tribes. The resisted demands led to further war, and war working favourably on his side, Mahomet attained a position of power and importance, until finally the whole of the Arabian nation were subdued to his pretensions and lent themselves to his ideas.

During these events, we contemplate the abyss in a state of preparation for the emission of the locusts. Without it, no amount of opening of the abyss would have sufficed for the providential work to be performed. It wanted the fire and the smoke: and these were generated by the internal dissensions of the Arabians, which elevated Mahomet from the position of a private member of a tribe to a leader of a nation, and prepared the whole Arabian people for that wonderful onslaught on the Roman Empire, which is renowned in history as the wars of the Saracens.

The pit, being ready for opening, the occasion for the use of the key duly arose. The Roman emperor Heraclius, on his way from Persia homewards, having heard of the Arabian turmoils and the upshot of them in the elevation of Mahomet, sent to salute Mahomet, as one sovereign does another. Mahomet, who considered the Catholics idolaters, sent back a message, demanding Heraclius to give up the worship of idols and become a worshipper of the true God. Mahomet's messengers, by whom this message was sent, were assassinated — whether by Heraclius' orders or against his will is not known. The effect on Mahomet was the same as if it had been a deliberate act. He resolved on the invasion of the Roman Empire. With this object, he set his army in motion towards Palestine, at that time subject to Rome, and forming the political abyss (symbolized by the geographical) out of which the locusts were to issue.

Why were the armies of Mahomet symbolized by locusts? This seems to be answered by two facts: first, Arabia is the native country of locusts; armies issuing from which, are fitly represented in symbol as clouds of locusts: secondly, the Hebrew word for locust is the same as that for Arab, as regards its radical elements, locust being arbeh, and arab, arbi. It is a third fact that in some parts of Arabian literature, the locust is introduced as the heraldic symbol of the Saracens. It is a fourth fact — (not very strong to be sure, but pointing in the same direction) — that Mahometans say that in the course of his revelations, locusts dropped into the hands of Mahomet, bearing an inscription on their wings, describing them as the army of the Great God.

Palestine, in its eastern borders, fell before the sword of Mahomet, and he died while contemplating further military measures. His death, however, instead of stopping, accelerated the opening of the abyss. His relative, Abu Beker, took the command as his successor, and entered with great ardour on the work that had been begun by Mahomet. His army was principally composed of cavalry: cavalry was not merely an arm of his force, as in the case of the Romans, but cavalry was the army. The result was to give his movements a celerity that baffled Roman calculations. An immense body of horse flew from point to point, and carried all before them like a cloud of locusts.

Their devastations, however, were not general and indiscriminate, but confined to certain objects. You will observe in verse 4, "It was commanded them that they should not hurt the grass of the earth, neither any green thing, neither any tree, but only those men which have not the seal of God in their foreheads". It is interesting to note the feature in the Mahometan enterprise corresponding to this command. The command was a providential command, of course: that is, a commission providentially assigned and not a command oral and express according to the ordinary meaning of the term. We learn this sense of the word "command" when God employs it, from even the un-symbolical part of the Scriptures, such as where God said to Elijah when instructing him to move to Zarephath: "I have commanded a widow woman there to sustain thee" — a widow woman who knew nothing about the matter when Elijah arrived (see Ways of Providence).

The command of God to the Mahometan locusts, to confine their depredations within a certain channel, though not direct and express, was well marked in the form it took in the natural course. An address issued to the Saracen troops after Mahomet's death, by Abu Beker, Mahomet's successor, intimating his purpose to prosecute the war against the Romans, whom he styled the infidel, contained the following passage: "Let not your victory be stained with the blood of women or children. Destroy no palm trees nor burn any fields of corn; cut down no fruit trees, nor do any mischief to cattle You will find another sort of people that belong to the synagogue of Satan, who have shaven crowns: be sure you cleave their skulls and give them no quarter till they either turn Mahomedans or pay tribute." This was the historic

illustration of the command recorded centuries before in the pages of the Apocalypse, of which, of course, Abu Beker was ignorant. The enmity of the Mahometan squadrons was officially directed against the supporters of Roman Catholicism.

“Their torment was as the torment of a scorpion when he striketh a man.” So we read in verse 5. In verse 3, there is an earlier allusion to the same point. “Unto them was given power as the scorpions of the earth have power.” Scorpions strike with their stings with tormenting and sometimes with fatal effects; but the scorpion power in this case was not to be unto death (verse 5). “To them it was given that they should not kill them, but that they should be tormented five months.” What was the scorpion power possessed by the Saracens? We find an answer in the fact that they employed in their military operations formidable missiles which they styled scorpions. These missiles were of a chemical mixture, which was the forerunner of gunpowder. An Arab writer thus speaks of them in 1249: “The scorpions surrounded and ignited by nitrated powder, glide along like serpents with a humming noise, and when exploded, they blaze brightly and burn. Now, to behold the matter expelled was as a cloud extended through the air, which gave forth a dreadful crash like thunder, vomiting fire on every side and breaking down, burning, and reducing all things to ashes.” Armed with this power, known as Saracen fire and afterwards as Greek fire, because finally adopted by the Greeks, the Saracens had power to injure with scorpion-power; but their mission did not extend beyond the infliction of torment. They were not to kill the eastern Roman empire in the way the western had been killed by the Goths. They were only to injure. The men of the eastern or Greek third of the Roman empire were to retain political life in the midst of their torment, but against the will of the majority; the bulk of the people were desirous for the sake of peace to submit to political death and accept the Saracen yoke. But death fled from them: because it was not in the divine purpose that the locusts should kill in the symbolic sense of the term, but only injure five months twice over (see verses 5 and 10). Why not ten months instead of twice five? Because locusts only appear five months in the year; and it would not have been in harmony with the natural history of the symbol to express it in any other way. But they could not be literal months as applied to the events of the symbol. Ten months are not one year, and the afflicting career of the Saracens in European countries extended over 300 years. The explanation is found in the fact with which all present are more or less acquainted, that literal days in symbolic use stand for years.

To the Saracens, then, was assigned the mission of harassing and afflicting the countries of the Catholic apostasy for the long period of three centuries, but not to prevail to the extinction of its political independence. Let anyone read the history of the Saracens from the appearance of aggressive Mahometanism in A.D. 632, and he will recognize the features of this hieroglyph in their historical exemplification.

“They had a king over them.” This is not the star of verse 1, which opened the pit, but is rather to be taken as the official or head under which the Saracenic locusts were organized after their issue from the pit. The historic parallel is found in the Caliphs of the Mahometan system. The Caliph was styled the “Commander of the Faithful.” In the Papal system, you have the Pope: in the Mahometan, the Caliph. The Caliph was a destroyer: this was his providential function: his name is expressed in Greek and Hebrew (see verse 11) denoting that his destroying operations were principally to bear on the Hebrew and Greek areas of the Roman Empire, which historically was the case.

The following paraphrase by Dr. Thomas of the first twelve verses of the chapter, presents the interpretation in a striking and obvious form:

1. “And the fifth angel sounded, and I saw one who had acquired power, and become a king, precipitate the forces of his kingdom upon the territory of the Eastern Roman empire. And to this king was yielded the power of Arabia. 2. And he removed the barriers by which Arabia was shut up from the world without, and a fiery host issued forth, and, by reason of the smoking fierceness of their wrath, subverted the imperial Byzantine authority, and changed the political aerial constitution of the Catholic countries they overran.
3. “The wrathful hosts that invaded the eastern Roman empire were Arabians like locusts for multitude; and they had power fatal as the power of scorpions. 4. And it was commanded them by one, styled the Commander of the Faithful, that they should not hurt the grass of the earth, nor any green thing, nor any tree, but only those men who have not the truth of the Deity in their understandings. 5. And to the Arabians it was given that they should not extinguish the sovereignty of these men, but that they should be tormented in war during one hundred and fifty years, with a scorpion-like torment.
6. “And in those days shall these ignorant professors of Christianity seek political extinction, and shall not find it; and shall earnestly desire to be a conquered people, and political death by conquest shall flee from them.
7. “And the resemblances of these Arabians when embattled, exhibit them as cavalry prepared for war; and on their heads they wore yellow turbans; and their faces were bearded, and they had long flowing hair like the tresses of women; and their spirit was ferocious as lions. 9. And they had on polished steel cuirasses; and the sound of the right and left wings of their armies was of multitudes of cavalry rushing into battle. 10. And they trailed in their rear, or tails of their hosts, scorpion artillery for destruction; and their power to hurt the rest of men westward was also one hundred and fifty years.
11. “And they had over them a king styled a Caliph, the messenger of destruction among the subjects of the eastern Roman empire, or ‘the abyss’. In the land of the Hebrew, he earned the name Abaddon, or Destroyer: and in the land of the Greek, that of Apollyon, which signifies the same.
12. “One woe, that of the fifth trumpet, is passed away after three hundred years; and, behold, there come two woes more before the consummation — the sixth and seventh trumpets, after these things.”

“One woe is past”: it was a long one, and of a nature fully to justify the awful imagery in which it was symbolically foreshadowed. “Two more woes come hereafter.”

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Arranged from the writings of Bro. Robert Roberts by Bro. Bob Widding

For Bible Markers

A mans actions show his character. We need to show the actions which are sown by the Sprit. These actions include how we treat one another and those of the world. The greatest being as the younger is a hard saying for the old man of the flesh, yet it must be kept if we wish to enter into the glorious life promised to those who will obey. Anger must also be overcome. We are told being angry is a cause for danger at the judgment. The words "without a cause" are not in the original and are left out of many translations including the RV and Diaglott. Do we think we are qualified to be angry? Brother Growcott once wrote, "For among other things, anger is an assumption that we know everything. If we think it over, we will realize it is true. Anger is an assumption that we are in possession of all the facts and are qualified to judge." What do the scriptures say? "For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God." (James 1:20) Does this sound as if man's anger is acceptable to Yahweh? "Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamor, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice:" (Ephesians 4:31) It is to be put away, removed from you, as with all maliciousness. "But now ye also put off all these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth." Anger is a loss of control. If we are honest with ourselves we will admit when we get angry we struggle to maintain control. Much of the violence around us is done when angry because someone got out of control. We can not bring about anything good when we are angry. We lose any minute ability we may have to manifest the image of Christ when we are angry. Man's anger is conceited arrogance and "worketh not the righteousness of God." Our actions must show forth the fruit of the Sprit.

Bro. Beryl Snyder

The Commandments of Christ

As collected and organized by bro. Roberts

Brethren not to exercise lordship over one another; the greatest to be as the youngest; he that is chief as he that doth serve; Christ's example the illustration of what is meant.

But he that is greatest among you shall be your servant. (Matthew 23:11)

(26) But ye shall not be so: but he that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger; and he that is chief, as he that doth serve.

(27) For whether is greater, he that sitteth at meat, or he that serveth? is not he that sitteth at meat? but I am among you as he that serveth. (Luke 22:26 – 27)

(13) Ye call me Master and Lord: and ye say well; for so I am. (14) If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another's feet. (15) For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you. (16) Verily, verily, I say unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord; neither he that is sent greater than he that sent him. (17) If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them. (John 13:13 – 17)

Not to be angry without righteous cause; and to take care lest anger even in that case lead to sin.

But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment: and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire. (Matthew 5:22)

Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath: (Ephesians 4:26)

But now ye also put off all these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth. (Colossians 3:8)

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