

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 Berean Christadelphians since 1923.

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ECCLESIAL NEWS	Nakalira
EXHORTATION..... Resurrectional Responsibility – Part 7	183
.....Letter To The Ecclesia Of Smyrna.....	187
THOUGHTS	Meditations—Deity’s Ways No. 69..... 199
SIGNS OF THE TIMES – Letter to an Anguished Person.....	202
..... Visit To Palestine.....	202
..... Mr. Oliphant’s Work.....	207
ANSWERS	Aliens..... 209
..... Desire For Spiritual Perception	209
..... Covenant Keeping.....	210
..... Delegates	210
..... Eating Blood	211
..... Marriage In Millennium.....	211
..... Offenses	212
..... The 7-Hilled City	212
..... The Bread and Wine	213
..... The Christadelphian Magazine	213
..... The Third With Egypt.....	214
..... The Truth In Worcester	215
BIBLE MARKING..... The Psalms - Psalm 4:3.....	216

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, Kenya

Dear Brethren,

We are fine in the Lord's vineyard at Nakalira. We are especially joyful to have extended the right hand of fellowship to **Bro. Conrad Wanyama** who was immersed in water on 6th May 2015 at 4.00 pm. Join us in praying for him to walk the slippery path under Yahweh's guidance and grace. We know our joy is shared by the heavenly host and we pray that many more may come to the Gospel knowledge and join the saints in the work of the Kingdom of Messiah.

Your Bro. in Christ, John Musa

GATHERINGS & ACTIVITIES

(To be held Yahweh Willing)

- LAMPASAS FRATERNAL GATHERING**.....**June 12-14, 2015**
Bro. Ricky Hurst, PO Box 1381, Goldthwaite TX 76844, 325-451-4075
- RICHARD FRATERNAL GATHERING**.....**July 3-July 6, 2015**
Sis. Linda Jones, Box 48, Richard, Sask, S0M 2P0, Canada, gljon@yourlink.ca, 306-246-4628
- HYE FRATERNAL GATHERING**.....**July 19-26 2015**
Bro. Mark Braune, 209 Ranger Dr., Buda, TX, 78610, 512-577-1119,
markbraune@gmail.com Study, Deuteronomy
- CANTON FRATERNAL GATHERING**..... **Oct 31-Nov 1, 2015**
Bro. Don Miller, donaldg.miller@yahoo.com

The BCAA

The Berean Christadelphian Audio Archives, or BCAA for short, has made available a large selection of talks on MP3 online. The address is www.bcaudioarchives.blogspot.com. Please check this link often as we will be updating with new material as much as possible.

The 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.

We are always looking for tapes, and if you have some talks that you would like to share, please email Bro. Craig Kiley (craigkiley@yahoo.com) and we will be happy to transfer the talks to MP3 format and post them.

Do All To The Glory Of God (1 Cor. 10:31)

We must unify our lives with one central motive: the glory of God. Everything we think, say or do must be for this purpose. Everything that does not contribute to it, or that detracts from it, must be put away. This alone is joy and peace. *—Search Me O God GVG*

Resurrectional Responsibility – Part 7

6. (Continued) The expressions used by Scripture in describing the rejected at the judgment seat never give the slightest support or warrant for excluding any of the willfully and knowingly disobedient.

Acts 17:30-31 – All men everywhere who refuse to repent when God commands them.

“The times of this (Gentile) IGNORANCE God winked at; BUT NOW COMMANDETH ALL MEN EVERYWHERE to repent, because He hath appointed a day in which He will JUDGE THE WORLD.”

This passage in its plain and simple meaning is absolutely conclusive—God HAS winked at times of IGNORANCE, but NOW—COMMANDETH—BECAUSE—WILL JUDGE. Tremendous efforts have been made to evade and obscure the clear teaching here, to divert it and to water it down.

The words “command” and “judge” have been subject to persistent attack, but they still stand fast. This passage is a mighty bulwark for the Truth and will not be fought against by those who really desire to understand God’s Word.

The arguments that have been used to try to take the meaning out of these clear, plain words—“command” and “judge”—are a strong index of the unsoundness of the view that requires such arguments.

The word here translated “command” (parangello) occurs 35 times in the N.T. Of the other 34 times (besides this) 33 of them unmistakably carry the meaning of COMMAND in the context, and COULD NOT be rendered otherwise. Examples:

Acts 1:4 – *“Commanded them that they should not depart.”*

Acts 4:18 – *“COMMANDED them not to speak at all.”*

Acts 5:28 – *“Did we not straitly COMMAND you?”*

Acts 10:42 – *“COMMANDED us to preach.”*

Acts 16:18 – *“COMMAND thee to come out.”*

Acts 16:23 – *“CHARGING the jailor to keep them safely.”*

I Cor. 7.10 – *“I COMMAND . . . Let not the wife depart.”*

2 Thes. 3:4 – *“Do the things we COMMAND.”*

There is ONLY ONE passage out of the 35 occurrences that this word is translated any other way than “command.” It is 1 Cor. 11:17, where it is rendered “declare.” *“In this that I DECLARE unto you.”* BUT—note carefully that the MEANING is still “COMMAND,” for the Revised Version has here—*“Now in giving you this CHARGE.”* And New American Revised has: *“But in the following INSTRUCTION.”*

So in EVERY OTHER PLACE than this Acts 17:30, this word definitely DOES mean “command.” How weak then the case is revealed to be that has to twist it into another meaning here! It is very regrettable that—when God issues a COMMAND TO REPENT—attempts should be made to water it down to a mere “announcement” (!) of no authority or binding force. This is a very grave presumption.

The very context so obviously requires “command”—*“Times of ignorance winked at* (passed by; not brought to account; RV—overlooked), *BUT NOW—command—repent because—judge.”*

* * *

And the word “judge” (krino) DOES MEAN “JUDGE,” in spite of all the twisting to obscure its meaning. This word “krino” occurs 113 times. It is translated:

judge 87	decree 1
determine 7	ordain 1
condemn 5	think 1
go to law 2	sue at law 1
esteem 2	sentence 1
conclude 1	avenge 1
damn 1	call in question 2

This covers ALL occurrences of this word. It will immediately be perceived that there is not the SLIGHTEST doubt that this word DOES truly mean “judge,” and is INVARIABLY so used in the N.T. And surely it will be further immediately perceived that any attempt to obscure this meaning is very questionable, and throws grave doubts on the soundness of the view that necessitates such a course.

To make it even more conclusive, consider also the related words in the N.T. The following list covers ALL the occurrences of the words under consideration—

KRIMA: judgment 13, damnation 7, condemnation 5, condemned 1

KRISIS: judgment 1, judgment-seat 1, judge 1

KRITES: judge 17

This word “krino” is the PRINCIPAL word for “judge” in the N.T. Take away its meaning and you take away the judgment-seat altogether. Look through a concordance under “krino” and you will have no doubt as to its meaning. Here are a few passages—

John 7:51 – *“Doth our law JUDGE any man ..”*

John 12:48 – *“He that rejecteth me hath one that JUDGETH him ... word shall JUDGE him.”*

John 18:31 – *“Take ye him and JUDGE him according to your law.”*

Acts 23:3 – *“Sittest thou to JUDGE me after the law?”*

Acts 26:6 – *“I stand and am JUDGED for the hope of Israel.”*

Rom. 2:1 – *“Wherein thou JUDGEST another, thou condemnest thyself.”*

Rom. 2:16 – *“Day when God shall JUDGE the secrets of men.”*

(This passage is a DIRECT PARALLEL to Acts 17:31, the one under consideration—try “rule” here!)

Rom. 2:12 – *“ ... as many as sinned in the law shall be JUDGED by the law.”*

2 Tim. 4:1 – *“Who shall JUDGE the quick and the dead.”*

1 Pet. 4:5 – *“Ready to JUDGE the quick and the dead.”*

Rev. 20:12 – *“Book was opened and the dead were JUDGED.”*

Try “rule” in ANY of these passages! Surely no Truth-seeking person could be satisfied with a theory that has to so twist one of the plainest and most important words in Scripture. This word is NEVER TRANSLATED “RULE,” nor by any word MEANING “rule.”

Its only connection (a very faint one) with the conception of ruling lies in the fact that Hebrew rulers were ALSO judges, rendering JUDICIAL DECISIONS. The true perspective will be clear from the following definition of “krino,” from Thayer’s Lexicon—

1. Separate, put asunder, pick out, select, choose.

2. To approve, esteem.
3. To be of opinion, deem, think.
4. To determine, resolve, decree (i.e., a decision or judgment).
5. To judge, to pronounce an opinion concerning right and wrong, to pronounce judgment, to subject to censure.
6. To rule, govern, to preside over WITH THE POWER OF GIVING JUDICIAL DECISIONS.
7. To contend together, to dispute, to go to law.

It will be clearly seen from this that the idea of JUDGMENT is the fundamental and inseparable meaning of this word, and runs through ALL its uses. “Rule” is a very secondary and derived meaning, far down the list and DEPENDING UPON THE INCLUDED IDEA OF “JUDGING” for its connection.

Note, too, that the AMER. REV. VER. and the DIAGLOTT (the 2 most dependable and accurate versions) both support the clear, plain meaning of “COMMAND” and “JUDGE” (as does also the New Amer. Rev.).

When the meaning of this word—and particularly its use in Scripture—is studied, one is increasingly impressed with the unshakable POWER of Acts 17:30-31, and the unsoundness and weakness of the argument that seeks to set it aside.

* * *

2 Cor. 5:10-11 – Those who have done bad things.

“We must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things in body according to that he hath done, whether good or bad, KNOWING THEREFORE THE TERROR OF THE LORD, WE PERSUADE MEN.”

It is very easy to SAY, “Oh, that just means brethren.” But—is it so easy to PROVE? Is it any more than a dangerous, ungrounded assumption? Paul sometimes uses “we” of just the FAITHFUL (1 Cor. 15:52); sometimes of ALL MEN (Acts 14:17; 17:28-29). Surely the “we” of this 2 Cor. 5:10 is defined by the context—those who, in God’s sight, have done “good” or “bad”—

“Sin is not imputed where there is no law” (Rom. 5:13).

“He that KNOWETH, to HIM it is sin” (Jam. 4:17).

(To be continued, God willing)

—Bro. G.V.Growcott

Letter To The Ecclesia Of Smyrna

“Faithful unto death”

THE CITY OF SMYRNA

Smyrna was not a large city in the days of the apostle John and not nearly as significant as Ephesus. It was 45 miles north of Ephesus and stood at the end of a long arm of the sea. It was, in fact, very beautifully situated and it was said that no city could rival Smyrna’s picturesque setting. It was called the ornament, the flower, the crown of Asia! This last expression arose from the sight of a ring of temples and noble buildings that surmounted the city on the Pagos, a hill behind the city and harbor.

Smyrna also had an interesting history and this seems to be clearly reflected in the words of Christ. For centuries it was related to the Ionian kings, but around 600 BC it was taken by the powerful king of Lydia and utterly destroyed. Lydia was a contender with Assyria and Babylon at that time and it was not until Cyrus of Persia routed its capital city of Sardis, that this strong and resourceful kingdom lost its dominance over the western half of the territory that we call Turkey. However, Smyrna remained “dead” for nearly 400 years until, it is said, Alexander the Great instigated its rebirth. It was then rebuilt on new and well-considered lines by Lysimachus, the Greek. So Smyrna was a new city that had been ‘dead but was alive again.’

Another significant quality of Smyrna was its fidelity to the Roman people. Well before the Roman Empire had cast its borders far and wide Smyrna had sought alliance with Rome and had never wavered in its patronage to the great city. Cicero, the great Roman writer and orator, scribed Smyrna as “the city of our most faithful and most ancient allies.”

Today, Smyrna is called Izmir and is the largest city in Asiatic Turkey, a bastion of Muslim teaching with hundreds of mosques and has virtually no remnant of its early Christianity. Izmir is considered by some to be one of the most fascinating cities in Turkey—thanks to its incredible past, today’s economic importance and its breathtaking natural beauty. It is the third largest city in Turkey and its port is second only to Istanbul. A cosmopolitan and lively city all year round, it is a major attraction for tourists because of its great geographical location on the shore of the Aegean Sea and gently ascending the slopes of the surrounding mountains; but also because of its amazing history reaching back to important events 3000 B.C. At the beginning of its settlement as an ancient Aolian city, Izmir shared with Troy the most advanced culture in Western Anatolia.

Returning to the 1st century, it is probable that during Paul's first two years in Ephesus, when he used the school of Tyrannus as his base, that the gospel spread to the inhabitants of Smyrna (see Acts 19:10). And we note that we have no special notice of Smyrna in any other book of the Bible other than Revelation.

Rev 2:8 – *“And unto the angel of the church in Smyrna write; These things saith the first and the last, which was dead, and is alive;”*

Rev 2:9 – *“I know thy works, and tribulation, and poverty, (but thou art rich) and I know the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and are not, but are the synagogue of Satan.”*

Rev 2:10 – *“Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.”*

Rev 2:11 – *“He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death.”*

Verse 8: INTRODUCTION *“And unto the angel of the ecclesia in Smyrna write...”*

This is to the ecclesial eldership, as explained in the letter to Ephesus. It is of interest that at a later time, Polycarp, a member of the Smyrnan eldership refused to call Caesar “Lord” and to sacrifice to his divinity, and hence was burnt upon the stake about AD 167, some 70 years after the Revelation was received.

“These things saith the first and the last, which was dead and is alive.”

This saying is taken from Revelation chapter 1:17-18. It was a statement beautifully chosen for the circumstances of the brethren in Smyrna and would have been of great comfort to them. Christ Jesus was the first that should suffer and rise from the dead (Acts 26:23). But in that he is the first, others must follow and they will find their life, despite death, because they are in him. *“For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive”* (1 Cor. 15:22).

Quoting Bro. Thomas, “The Spirit, in his exordium, does not repeat what he said to the Ephesian Star, but selects another characteristic of the Son of Man similitude. *“These things (that follow), that saith the First and Last, who was dead and lived.”* Jesus, when anointed with holy spirit and power, after resurrection, is styled by Paul, *“the Lord the Spirit;”* and *“the Last Adam was made into a Life-imparting*

Spirit;” for, as Jesus said, when in the flesh, “*that which has been begotten out of the Spirit, is spirit*” (2 Cor 3:18; 1 Cor 15:45; John 3:6). Upon this principle, the Spirit says, “*I was dead:*” that element of the Spirit-speaker, who had become spirit, died; therefore, the become-Spirit could say, “*I was dead.*” Thus, “the First” was dead, and lived by resurrection; and when all the Saints shall have been begotten out of the same Spirit, and so also have become spirit, the Spirit-speaker will have a still larger element of the once-dead, and lived, constituting him who spake to John in Patmos, “the Last,” or “the Last Ones,” according to Isaiah.”

People in Smyrna may have noted a correlation of this introduction to the history of their city. Strabo, a Greek geographer, historian and philosopher who lived from 63BC to AD24 recorded how the Lydians destroyed the ancient city of Smyrna, and only a collection of humble and scattered dwellings remained for 400 years. Then, the new period began, designed by Alexander the Great but executed by his successor and general, king Lysimachus. Thus Smyrna rose again to become an autonomous Greek city. Therefore one could say, Smyrna was dead but now lived.

In light of its secular history the Lord speaks of the true restoration—life for man by a resurrection from the dead. And the one who wrote to them was the prototype of their own salvation! What beautiful comfort was in his words.

Verse 9: COMMENDATION, RICH IN FAITH DESPITE TRIAL

“I know thy works, and tribulation, and poverty, (but thou art rich)...”

This is the only letter in which there is not even a hint of judgment; it is all of praise and appreciation. Smyrna was an unchanging, faithful ecclesia prepared to remain true to its calling despite poverty or trial.

The theme of “*tribulation*” (THLIPSIS—pressure, trial) runs through every section of this letter. It is clear that this ecclesia was under more tribulation than any of the others and verse 10 indicates there was worse to come, even to the point that some of them would suffer death. The apostle John in Patmos was their “*companion in tribulation*” (Rev 1:9): in fact pressure and trial will come upon all those who live godly in Christ Jesus (Acts 14:22; 2 Tim. 3:12). However, if borne faithfully, it can bring great blessings (Matt. 5:11-12; James 1:12).

The brethren in Smyrna were of humble background: their “poverty” was obvious. The sensitive manner in which the Lord indicates his awareness of this fact suggests that this poverty had brought its own trials. Yet the Smyrneans were really “rich,” i.e. “rich toward God,” “rich in faith” (Luke. 12:21; James 2:5; 2 Cor. 6:10). In the midst of their dire circumstances they helped each other in the providing of the essentials of life and were, in faithful spirit, thankful to God for His blessings toward them then and His promises of glory, honor and immortality (Rom. 2:7). Rich in faith, they had the true riches and present a marked contrast to those of Laodicea (3:17-18).

“...and I know the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and are not, but are the synagogue of Satan.”

“Blasphemy” is evil speaking against another, e.g. Eph. 4:31; Matt. 15:19. What these evil speakers were saying was intended to injure the believers, and it is obvious that success had attended their efforts. They were placing their lying words in the ears of authorities as is clear from verse 10. Who were these blasphemers?

We will contrast them with the “true Jew” as described by Paul in Rom. 2:28-29 that a true Jew is one whose “circumcision is not outward in the flesh but inward, of the heart.” Such a man has the faith of Abraham and walks in his steps (John. 8:39; Rom. 4:12, 16) and is therefore an “Israelite indeed,” of the “Israel of God” (John. 1:47; Gal. 6:16). So a true “Jew” is a faithful disciple of Christ.

Having established the nature of a true Jew, we may extend the thought and say that if one betrays his calling, then, even though he may consider himself a “Jew,” he is really false and dishonoring Christ’s name!

Bro. Thomas in Eureka 1 p 228 wrote, “The Spirit informs us that there existed in that city an institution of a hostile and rival character. Its rivalry is indicated by the claim of its founders to be Jews—“*who say they are Jews;*” and its hostility, by the affirmation of the Spirit, that they constituted “*a Synagogue of the Satan.*”

This was “the church” in Smyrna, as opposed to the Ecclesia of the Smyrneans. The “church” claimed to be Christian, and its “clergy,” apostles, in the sense of being “successors of the apostles, and ambassadors of Jesus Christ,” who, in Ephesus, had been tried, and found to be “liars.” The claim of this synagogue to be a Christian institution is discerned in the assertion of its members, that they were Jews.

This understanding would lead us to say that the false “Jews” in Smyrna were ex-members of the ecclesia which had now gone off and formed their own meeting which Christ here brands the “*synagogue of Satan.*”

When we consider Romans 2:28-29 we find the apostle presents the exact picture that the Lord shows in Revelation 2:9. “*Behold thou art called a Jew and retest in the law, and makest thy boast of God*” (Rom. 2:17; see also verses 18-20). The preaching of the gospel to the Gentiles was ever a source of bitter jealousy to the Jews of every city, who never ceased to stir up bitter opposition (as a true “satan” or adversary) against the apostolic ministry (Rom. 11:11; Acts 8:1, 3; 13:45; 14:2; Gal. 5:11-12; 1 Thess. 2:14-16).

In virtually every city it was the Jews who provided vehement opposition to the apostles’ preaching. And we certainly can see this in Smyrna. It is believed that the Jews of Smyrna in the first part of the second century were numerous and proudly kept separate from the Gentiles, even though many enjoyed citizenship and sought recognition for their support of public works in Smyrna. When Polycarp was executed in 167 AD, the Jews of Smyrna were prominent in hastening forward their evil work. To paraphrase W.M. Ramsay, (a Professor of Humanity in the University of Aberdeen) who in 1904 wrote a piece entitled “The Letters to the Seven Churches of Asia.”

He says, “In that case the eagerness of the Jews to expedite the execution of the Christian leader actually overpowered their objection to profane the Sabbath day, and they came into the festive assembly in the Stadium, bringing bundles of sticks and branches bound together (faggots) to make the fire in which Polycarp should be consumed” (Ramsay, “The Letters” p. 272-273 – Chapter 20).

The consistency of this wicked performance with their behavior at the trials and crucifixion of the Christ (when their hatred of the Son of God overrode all their religious, legal scruples) leads one to believe that they were very likely of the same vicious and treacherous nature in the days of the apostle John.

The apostle Paul informs us of the intense zeal and persecution by the Jews of Ephesus, as we see some examples in Acts and 2 Tim. We may well imagine that bitterness would be extended to their fellows in other cities like Smyrna when the apostle visited them, just as had occurred in the neighboring province of Galatia several years before (Acts 14:19).

“Synagogue of Satan”

These considerations fit in with the use of the term “*synagogue*,” which simply means “an assembly or bringing together” but is used throughout the New Testament to describe the assembly of Jews (Matt. 6:2, 5; 23:6, 34; Luke 21:12; Acts 6:9).

The blasphemers in Smyrna, who said they were apocalyptic Jews, or by interpretation, Christians, but lied, are not styled “the Ecclesia of the Satan,” because that would imply that they were a calling out by a special invitation to something. The Satan has nothing to invite men to that they are not already entitled to by nature. Being sinners, they are “children of wrath,” and therefore adversaries to all contained in “the One Hope of the invitation,” which is to the kingdom and glory of the Deity. They are not, therefore, an ecclesia, but simply a gathering together, a congregation of blasphemers. (Eureka 1 p 230-231)

Such a synagogue, then, came to be a fit and proper emblem of “those Christians,” falsely so-called, who in Smyrna “*said they were Jews, but were not.*” John, referring to these spurious Christians in divers places, says, in 1 John 2:19...

“They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us.”

This emigration from the apostolic fellowship became “the Synagogue of Satan,” and was afterwards distinguished by the assumed title of “the Holy Apostolic Catholic Church.” The leaders of this schism transferred all the customs of the old Jewish Synagogue-System into their pseudo-Christian “church;” and as they were not slow in getting the majority—for they were of the world, and therefore spoke of the world, and the world heard them; for it hears and loves its own—they turned upon those who continued faithful to the apostolic teaching, and denounced and oppressed them as “heretics.” (Eureka 1 p 232-231)

We can picture the scene in Smyrna. In a corner of the city we have a small, poor, but courageous ecclesia, faithfully proclaiming the Truth despite the despotic persecutions heaped upon them by the envious Jewish synagogue. These people knew the Scriptures indeed, and resented bitterly that “unclean” Gentiles were proclaiming a message from their oracles! (Romans 3:1-2). When Jewish proselytes were persuaded by the gospel, and even some of their own Jewish members, their feelings rose to violent levels. No doubt in Smyrna as in so many other places they then consorted with the authorities or intrigued with the “crude fellows of the baser sort” to stir up persecution against the faithful and harmless brethren of the ecclesia (cp. Acts 14:5; 17:5).

The Spirit looks down upon these assemblies and commends the poor and oppressed for their faith and condemns the presumptuous oppressors; unrelated to God, they were, in fact, the synagogue of Satan!

Such open declarations must have cheered the hearts of the brethren!

Verse 10: COUNSEL: BE FAITHFUL UNTO DEATH

“Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer...”

The manner in which this flows on from what we just described suggests that this suffering was going to arise at the instigation of the synagogue of Satan.

“Behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison that ye may be tried.”

“Devil” is the Greek DIABOLOS, an accuser, slanderer (from DIABALLO, to cast through, to malign in the sense of piercing through the truth) (e.g. 1 Tim. 3:11; 2 Tim. 3:3; Tit. 2:3).

“Shall cast” is a related word—Greek BALLO, to throw, or thrust (Mark. 12:42; John. 20:25, 27; Acts 16:24). So we have here a play upon words; the caster-through is going to cast some of the brethren into prison.

The diabolos here was the pagan Roman authorities, the sin power in its imperial manifestation. Again the history of the times throws valuable light upon the record. The reign of the persecuting Emperor Domitian concluded when he was slain in AD 98. He was succeeded by Emperor Nerva who rescinded the edicts of persecution and freed any, like John, who had been imprisoned or exiled. So Christianity and Judaism were pardoned.

Quoting from Eureka 1 p 253, “Under this full toleration the apostle John recovered his liberty and, at the age of about one hundred, fell asleep before the short interval of tranquility was closed by the persecuting spirit of (the next emperor) Trajan.”

It may be that in the purpose of God this interval was given that the aged apostle should be able to deliver these messages personally to the ecclesias and stir them up in faith before the coming years of evil.

When Trajan became sole emperor, persecutions broke out throughout the empire but the strength of them depended always on the attitude of the local people and their governor. It is to be expected that Smyrna, in keeping with her long-established loyalty to Rome, would

have reacted very harshly upon the Christians within her area. Hence the theme of trial is much stronger here than in any other of the seven letters.

On p. 251-253 of Eureka 1 Bro. Thomas has a most moving account of what this verse meant in reality! He records the details of the imprisonment of Polycarp, his interrogation or “trial” and his subsequent burning at the stake.

Here are a few quotes:

When brought before Statius Quadratus, the proconsul...

The proconsul urged him to “swear by the fortune of Caesar... swear and I will release thee...reproach Christ”

Polycarp responded...

“Eighty and six years have I served him, and he hath never wronged me, and how can I blaspheme my King who hath saved me?”

After additional urging by the proconsul, Polycarp said...

“You speak, affecting an ignorance of my real character, hear me frankly declaring what I am: I am a Christian...”

And after being threatened with fire, Polycarp responded...

“You threaten me with fire which burns for a moment, and will soon be extinct: but you are ignorant of the future judgment, and of the fire of Aion-punishment reserved for the ungodly...”

It is a compelling account and brings great power to this record. Many thousands have actually died for the name of Christ, giving their life like their Master, refusing to deny his name or recant the faith.

How do we feel about our service to Christ? Do we think we can take a position alongside men and women like the apostle John and Polycarp? Do you think that we are too soft in these very affluent days? Do we make criticism when the ecclesial outing is not perfectly organized or a meeting goes a little late or we have to fill in for another who may have forgotten his responsibility? Alongside the above example we really ought *never* to complain, but in thankfulness for the great liberties provided by government for the wide and bold proclamation of the Truth, for meeting together without fear, and for the compelling signs of the times. For all these things and more, we should be always rejoicing in the work of God and faithfully upholding His Name. Be positive; resist and ignore the spirit of complaint and murmuring. Let Polycarp’s example be an inspiration to us!

Domitian, the Roman emperor, was slain in AD 96 while John was in Patmos and Nerva succeeded him on the throne. Nerva published a pardon for those who were condemned for impiety, recalled those who were banished, and forbade the accusing of any men on account of impiety, or Judaism. This was a relatively peaceful time for the Christians and in this period of full toleration, the apostle John recovered his liberty, and at the age of about 100 fell asleep in Christ before this short period of peace came to a close with the ascension to the throne of Trajan.

Nerva appointed Trajan to succeed him, though Trajan did not follow the example of his mentor and he resumed the persecution of the past.

It must be appreciated how much the numbers of the saints were increasing in these years (cp. Acts 17:6; 19:20; Rev. 6:2). The gospel of Truth was abroad in the empire and was going forth “*conquering and to conquer*;” hence Trajan’s concern and resumption of persecution.

“...and ye shall have tribulation ten days.”

These “*ten days*” are intended to signify ten years, on the basis of a day for a year, a principle found often in Scriptural time periods (Num. 14:34; Ezek. 4:4-6). Ten days is too small a time for trial; but ten years gives reason for an earnest warning and at the same time provides a welcome limit to the approaching tribulation which lasted ten years until the death of Trajan in AD 117.

Bro. Thomas reproduces two most interesting letters concerning the persecutions of this time (see pages 254-255); one from Pliny, the governor of Bithynia, a character well known in pagan history, to Trajan and then Trajan’s reply.

After reading these letters, we see the Diabolos and his pagan Satan “*cast them into prison that they might be tempted*” to renounce the faith. Their tribulation was great. They had foes within, who said they were Christians, but lied, and their flesh with all its affections and lusts to contend with. But they were “rich” in faith and good works, and zealous against those who held the doctrines of the Nicolaitines or vanquishers of the people of God’s flock.

What is clear is that whenever the local Roman officials obeyed the Emperor’s edicts, then faithful brethren were in sore trouble.

How touching are these words of comfort in the light of the historical background we have just referred to. How many brethren actually called these words to mind as the fires flickered upon their impaled bodies or wild beasts charged upon them.

“Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.”

The issue was faithfulness, to retain loyalty to Christ in the face of every evil! (cp. Heb. 11:36-38). They had a course of tribulation to run; for *“it is through much tribulation that the saints must enter the kingdom of God”* where the crown is to be obtained and worn (Acts 14:22). The kingdom and its crown of life and glory is *“the prize.”* All the faithful in the times of the apostles knew this. Hence Paul, in 1 Cor 9:24 writes, *“Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain.”*

The people of the city of Smyrna had a reputation for faithfulness to Rome; and the term capital punishment was probably often in their thoughts and words because of their famous loyalty to Rome, which began well before others and had been religiously maintained. The brethren and sisters of Smyrna were being asked to exercise a similar faithfulness but to an altogether greater cause, which was being persecuted by Rome herself!

The coming tribulation was inescapable but its purpose was clearly stated; it was to test them, to determine if they would be loyal to Jesus even at the cost of life itself, if they would hold fast the confession of their faith to the bitter end without wavering (Heb 10:23).

How easy it would have been to give in by burning incense on the emperor’s altar and acknowledging him as lord. It wasn’t much of an effort. They weren’t being asked to swim the English Channel; just to perform a small act and to say some words!

And how appropriate to this situation were the words with which Jesus introduced himself to this people living under the shadow of death! He too was tested to the limit and kept his faith in his Father even to death on the cross, and now lives forever because of it.

The promise to them was not that they would escape death now, but that they would live again for ever.

Victory over death is the keynote of this letter.

The mention of *“the crown of life”* was also a poignant play upon the natural facts of the city of Smyrna. The rings of dwellings that marked the ascending levels of the mountain behind the city were magnificently capped by a “crown” of elegant buildings. “The earthly Smyrna wore a mural crown like that of her patron goddess; the true Smyrna shall wear a crown suited to the servants of the one living God” (Ramsay, “Seven Letters”, p. 275).

The true crown, however, is eternal life of which the STEPHANOS (crown) was but a symbol.

It is not “a crown of life,” as in the A. V., but “the crown of life”—the life award. At the Grecian games a garland or wreath of leaves was given to the successful competitors. This *stephanos*, translated “crown” wherever it occurs in the New Testament, brought before the minds of Greek-speaking people the idea of a contest and victory. The life of faith in the Son of the Deity is compared to a race, and also to a fight or contest. Thus Paul wrote (2 Tim. 4:8): “*I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith;*” or, “I have contested the good contest, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.” He did not speak of a fight, as the A. V. reads, but of the fight, the course, the faith. So, also, it is not a crown that is spoken of, but the crown.

The *stephanoi*, or wreaths, of the Greeks were made sometimes of one kind of leaves and sometimes of another, but they had at least one quality in common: they were corruptible.

The life award of the Gospel will partake of another character; it will be incorruptible, and will comprehend glory, honor, and deathlessness. Speaking of those who strove in the games of Greece, Paul said: “*They do it to receive a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible*” (1 Cor. 9:25). James spoke of that which is in store for those who shall be approved at the judgment seat, as “*the crown of life*” (James 1:12). Peter wrote (1 Peter 5:4): “*When the chief Shepherd shall be manifested, we shall receive the crown of glory that fadeth not away.*” And when Paul had declared to Timothy how that he had finished his course and kept the faith, he said: “*Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not only to me, but also to all them that have loved his appearing.*”

Verse 11: THE PROMISE: NOT BE HURT OF THE SECOND DEATH

“He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the ecclesias; He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death.”

The letter to the people in Smyrna concludes, by promising them who overcome that they shall not be hurt of the second death. They would have to endure the pain of the first death at the hands of the Fourth Beast, which is identified in Daniel’s prophecy, the Diabolos in imperial fashion—the ruthless Roman empire—the same who put our Lord and Master to death. This would all happen during the ten day period.

They would be injured by this death, with great suffering. But there is a “second death” that would be more tormenting and of more bitter anguish than the first. In the first death men and women “*were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection. Others had trial of mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonments: they were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented; they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth. And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise; God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect*” (Heb 11:35-40).

The first death was indeed terrible in all its forms. It laid its victims low “in the dust” where they have remained for centuries. But they do not belong to “death,” for life is theirs through their dedication and devotion to God and His Son. The bruise on the heel by the serpent will only hold them temporarily in a prison of darkness, because the wound is not incurable for it will be healed; for in regard to them, death has lost its sting, for their death will be swallowed up in victory, through their Lord and Saviour, the Anointed Jesus.

The second death is that which occurs after the judgment seat of Christ. “*It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment*” (Heb. 9:27). The present life, then, is only probationary, but the life that is to come is of important and eternal consideration. If at the judgment seat of Christ we should be condemned, then that would be unto a second and permanent death; we should perish. This second death is spoken of on three further occasions in the Revelation: ch. 20:6; 20:14; 21:8. The sting of death is sin and all have suffered its consequences in one way or another, but those who are faithful unto death shall not suffer a second time (1Cor. 15:54-56). Their temporary hurt or ‘bruising’ is the end of their pain for they shall be with the Son of God when he finally destroys under his foot the seed of the serpent and even death itself (Gen. 3:15; Psa. 8:2, 6; Rom. 16:20; Luke 10:19; 1 Cor. 15:25-26).

Bro. Thomas concludes the section on the second death with the following: “Not to be injured of the Second Death was great consolation to those who lived in constant jeopardy of life for the truth’s sake. They might be slain by the sword, but they would rise again; and wield the two-edged sword against the enemy in the execution of “*the judgment written*” (Psa. 149); yet amid all the dangers, vicissitudes, and terrors of the crisis, they should ‘not be injured by the Second Death’.”

Despite their abject poverty, their tribulation and the defamation to which the ecclesia was subject, the brothers and sisters had not grumbled or complained about their conditions or been provoked against their persecutors, but allowed love to control their words and actions. How delighted they must have been that the Lord could praise them without reservation, despite their sorry condition in the eyes of the people of Smyrna.

But most important of all, their Lord, our Lord, understood their difficulties and could enter into their feelings, because He had been tested and subjected to pressures similar to, but even greater than, those the ecclesia experienced.

All power was now his and none could separate them from him.

We are all subjected to tests everyday of our life and these tests will show whether or not we are loyal to God and His Son. And persecutions may sometimes be added to these tests.

Tests of any kind are not pleasant, but we must remember when undergoing them, that our Lord has been tested, tempted in every way that we are. Let us rejoice when we realize we are being tried, for great is the reward to those who overcome.

Let us give great thought to the stirring example of Smyrna and honestly assess the measure of our sacrifice today.

Shall we escape the second death?

Bro. Len Naglieri

Meditations—Deity’s Ways No. 69

DEATH is hateful—it is a curse. Sobbing friends at the grave-side are an evidence of this. Even Jesus wept in the presence of death. Some people may affect to smile at death, but the smile is not sincere. No amount of laugh can alter the sad nature of death. We may pile our beautiful flowers on the coffin lid, but these only increase the tears. The faithless infidel doesn’t laugh when brought face to face with death. On the platform he may talk glibly of death, but for this allowances have to be made. How genuinely pathetic was the account by the daughter of the late Charles Bradlaugh of her father’s dying hours. How touchingly she related how she watched sorrowfully and hopelessly at the bedside, and saw her parent’s life slowly but surely ebb away. Yes, father dies, mother dies, children die, valued friends die. And why? There must be an explanation. There is. Where are we to find it? In the Bible, and nowhere else. What is the explanation? Sin—rebellion against God on the part of man. Oh! say some, such a cause is not equal to what we
199—Berean 2015

see—the rebellion of one is not sufficient to account for the universality of death. This is foolish talk, and against facts. Let such rather open their eyes to the heinousness of sin, as evidenced by the institution of death, and to the purity, holiness, and majesty of God, who cannot pass by it without notice. Adam's sin has filled the earth with helpless transgressors. God is not angry with us because of our helplessly sinning condition, but He cannot overlook it. And His recognition of it necessitates the accompaniment of death with sin. We must not separate ourselves from Adam—we are the offspring of a sinner. The reign of sin is the evolution of transgression. But in the Scriptures there is not only light, but hope and comfort. God intends to abolish sin, and take away death. God has provided Christ, who, by a life of absolute sinlessness, and a death which exhibited the righteousness of God, has made a way of salvation for all who will come to God through him.

The world has utterly forsaken God—its sayings and doings distressingly show it. When reminded of Him it becomes irritable and angry. It has no relish to hear His name reverently advanced. It is far more kind to the man who takes God's name in vain than to the man who upholds that Name by contending for the truth which is inseparably connected with it. God is far from unmindful of all this (Prov. 15:3). Before long there will be a terrible refreshing of the world's memory in regard to God. There have been some awful reminders in time past, but these (as so many Scriptures assure us) will pale before the one that is looming. By fire, pestilence, and blood, will God presently assert Himself everywhere. "I will be known in the eyes of many nations, and they shall know that I am the Lord" (Ezek. 38.; Mic. 5.; Joel 3.). Let God-fearers be patient, and beware of thoughtlessness and unbelief. Israel stands before us as a caution. How speedily they forgot both God and His wonderful works (Ps. 106:13, 21; 78:11), although they had so much prior solemn warning (Deut. 8:11). Israel's folly may easily be repeated by us. Nothing is more simple than to let God and His truth slip from the mind. Bible reading, and separation from the world in our leisure hours, are the safe-guards. Let us remember that there is little or nothing in our every-day affairs to tell us of God—neither in our newspapers, on the street hoardings, nor in the people with whom we mix all the day long. But still, God can be remembered—if the mind is so disposed. Happy and safe is the man who does remember Him.

Man can't live without eating. To be well, and to keep well, he must eat. His food must be good, and it must be varied. These thoughts apply also to the new mental man created in the saints by the truth. The food

provided by God for the upbuilding of this new man is the “All Scripture”—“All scripture is given by inspiration, and is profitable,” etc. Let us be sensible in regard to the food—let there be no undue devouring of prophecy and a neglect of other features of the Word—no restricting our reading to certain passages or books. The “Rev.” So and So’s selection of texts for daily meditations will not serve the purpose of “all scripture.” The whole counsel of God is what we want, and this we can only get by making the mind ponder the whole range of the Oracles of God. It is the disregard of “all scripture” that produces the curious specimens—the stunted, rickety, ill-conditioned mental creatures—that abound in Christendom. If we want to be strong in the truth—healthy and sturdy—positive as to what the truth is, and not fearful to valiantly contend for it—then let us follow, faithfully and thoughtfully, the readings according to the Bible Companion. This arrangement carries the reader through “the whole Bible—traversing the New Testament twice, and the Old Testament once, in the course of twelve months.”

Our probation in the truth is a warfare. This description is no exaggeration, no mere figure of speech. As soon as the truth is embraced a tussle commences, and ends not until our course is run. Our reward depends upon our endurance. The prize is for those who like the apostles of the first century, and Dr. Thomas and Brother Roberts of the nineteenth century, die fighting. “He that endureth to the end shall be saved.” Christ has sought to impress this fact upon us by his oft-repeated, “He that overcometh.” The nature of the fight is well-known to us all. It is the flesh *versus* the spirit—the old man *versus* the new—our imperfect and sin-tending thoughts *versus* the teaching of the word of God. The fight is a big and painful work. Paul describes it in 2 Cor. 10:5. It means the discarding of long-cherished cranks and crotchets, the breaking off of bad but agreeable habits—it means the perfecting of holiness in God’s fear. Shall we give in because the fight is hard, and to obtain the gratification of our lusts? To such suggestions let us promptly say, “Get thee behind me, Satan.” That the fight should be a terrible one is not the fault of God. It is the result of sin, and the hold it has upon our nature. Let us remember that God makes great allowances. If we have a willing mind, He will overlook much. If we tumble over a few times, let us not lie and whine and show the white feather, but get up and renew the conflict. Then “Onward! brother, onward go!”

—Bro. A.T. Jannaway— 1902

Signs of the Times – Letter To An Anguished Person

It is impossible not to feel the same anguish and desperation that you feel, in this current age. But should this not rather be a feeling of exaltation, a time to lift up our heads knowing that our redemption draweth nigh? Jesus said, when the son of man comes, shall he find faith on the earth? Does this question not carry with it, the connotation that there will be very few ready for the Master, at his return?

Yes, it is true that the country in which we live is growing more depraved by the day. But we must remember that it is not the plan and purpose of God to save the US, or any other Gentile country. It is the purpose of God to save Israel, and to place Jesus upon the throne of his father David. And that salvation will be through much tribulation.

The role of this country is prophesied in our Bibles in the prophecies concerning Tyre. When we understand that, it is easier to accept what is going on among the people around us. Tyre was in the garden of God, covered with every precious stone because of Tyre's love and respect for Israel. Tyre became the wealthiest and most powerful nation in the earth because of their care for Israel. But Tyre came to trust in her wealth, and forgot her ties to God's nation. Worse, she sent Israel Jezebel (of Sidon, sister city to Tyre,) to corrupt the people of Israel. And for this, great and terrible judgments came upon Tyre, and on Israel.

It is impossible not to see in these prophecies, the love/hate relationship between the US and Israel in the modern world. And it is impossible not to see the moral depravity of God's chosen people, as they learned this from the west. And in consequence, we understand the terrible judgments that are in store for both, that God might restore righteousness to His chosen land. And that these judgments are at the door.

Bro. Jim Phillips

Visit To Palestine

As is well known to our readers, brother Collyer, of Leicester, left Leicester in April last on a visit to Palestine, in connection with certain projects of a practical character connected with the restoration work being fostered by Mr. Laurence Oliphant. He has now returned after in the main accomplishing the objects of his journey. He wrote several letters during his absence, but none of them came to hand in time for full use in the last number of the *Christadelphian*. The first bears the Jerusalem post mark on the envelope. It was written partly at Jaffa and partly at Jerusalem. It is as follows:—

Jaffa (once Joppa), May 3rd, 1887.

DEAR BROTHER ROBERTS, —Spending a day and a half at this place, I thought I would write you a few lines. As I advised you, I left Leicester for Haifa on Friday, April 22nd, taking return tickets with the noted tourists, Messrs. Cook and Son. This is certainly the best method of travelling in strange parts. I told Mr. Cook before I came, that I thought he was causing many to run to and fro. There is no doubt he is helping to fulfil the prophetic word without knowing it. I also met his son at Port Said. It is astonishing how much business they are now doing in Eastern climes. I had a very enjoyable journey all through coming *via* London and Dover across the Straits to Calais, through France and Italy to Brindisi. Here I embarked upon the P. & O. Steamer *Assam* for Alexandria. This city was reached in three days, after a charming trip across the Mediterranean. Alexandria is a grand city, containing many new and imposing buildings, but its wickedness is great. I had to spend one night here at Abott Hotel. Next day I took the Austrian Lloyd's steamer for Jaffa. The steamer stayed a day at Port Said *en route*. This is a busy port frequented by large numbers of English vessels mostly carrying coal from Wales. I saw two English men-of-war, and one Russian, all alongside each other—dreadful instruments of destruction they all looked. On Saturday night, I started again for Jaffa where I landed mid-day on Sunday. I watched the coast line of this “dear, dear, land” all the way after sighting it with the deepest interest. What a wide compass the mind takes of things divine by such a sight. It is not at first view very encouraging, and at Jaffa (where it is very difficult to land) the first impressions are not agreeable, for the streets and people are dirty and unsightly. Although fine when we landed, it had been raining, and after reaching the Hotel, it commenced to rain again and continued through the night. This had been looked for by the people and will be most acceptable, for the usual quantity of rain had not fallen—the season here as elsewhere being very late. From what I can gather, the season here on the whole has been a good one.

It is curious that so many varying reports are circulated respecting the state and prospects of the country. I quite think some of our orthodox friends are under-rating what is going on, for fear some of their clients should take too materialistic a view of matters religious. For myself I am agreeably surprised at the advanced state of this part of the country in horticulture. There are some hundreds of acres of orange and other fruit orchards in this immediate neighbourhood, and new plantations are set out every season. As to oranges, they are magnificent samples in size and beauty. The gathering is now nearly over, some few yet remaining on the trees. I am quite satisfied that the

resources of this part of the land are hardly equalled anywhere on earth, and I doubt not this applies to very large tracts of land in Palestine. At present the cultivation of fruit is not done by Jews. The Syrians are the owners and cultivators of the gardens to a considerable extent. I think the Jews will be far more successful in the horticultural work than in agricultural. The fact is, it is not so hard, and moreover requires “mere brains” to accomplish its end. I have seen very much of this district, visiting the orchards, marking differences of culture, &c. I find pruning is not well understood here as yet. Far better results can be obtained with all fruit with pruning I am sure, good as they are. The vine is at home here, and it is quite a treat to see how established vines frame themselves (or rather are framed) for bearing much fruit. I saw some bunches in the infant stage, nearly a foot long, but requiring attention in pruning.

JERUSALEM.

Now (month of May) is about the time of barley harvest, and under good cultivation, I have seen crops of barley as good as in Northamptonshire, the barley county. This was in the plain of Sharon. I am finishing this letter at the Mediterranean Hotel, Jerusalem, where I have just arrived, after rather a long but very delightful drive from Jaffa. The road in some places is rough and hilly, taking a time to cover. I am not able to get on to Haifa until Sunday. I am keeping well, and do not find it too hot at present: in fact it is rather cool.

Hoping you and all are well, with love, I am yours in Israel’s hope.

VICCARS COLLYER.

Haifa, May 10th, 1887.

DEAR BROTHER ROBERTS.—My visit to Jerusalem became more and more interesting every day. After the first feelings of depression, with increasing knowledge of the city, the interest deepens at every step. Although there is a good deal told you that is not true, still there is the spot where the Lord’s hand has been seen in so many ways. At present, it seems to me that Jerusalem is a city built upon cities. No doubt much of the material used for buildings now standing, formed part of previous structures of vast importance. I left Jerusalem on Saturday for Jaffa, and started for Haifa on Sunday. The trip along the Palestine coast was truly delightful. We seem to have associated the Mediterranean with storm and tempest perhaps on account of the experience Paul had. Our experience was very different, for which I was thankful; but it gives great reality to his life and work to be able to see the very place from which he started on his perilous voyage. We landed very comfortably at Haifa about eight o’clock at night. I found

on the landing stage, Mr. Smith. This gentleman, you will well remember, came to see you under Mr. Oliphant's advice, and afterwards came on to Leicester. He drove me up to Mr. Oliphant's in one of the conveyances belonging to Mr. Oliphant. I found Mr. Oliphant much better than when we saw him in Birmingham. He received me most cordially, making me quite welcome at his delightful home. We have had but little opportunity of talking over the matters that are so dear to you and me at present, but I feel quite convinced that he is placed here for a great and glorious work. He is busy with so many ways of doing good, and, as we all know, is glad to lend his influence and help in aid of the poor Jews. This is no small advantage, I assure you, and the brethren may be thankful that in this department of our privileged duties we have one so thoroughly to be trusted. Mr. Smith is making himself felt, and seems to be much appreciated here. He is doing some practical work amongst the flowers, &c., and is possessed of considerable business ability. Baron Rothschild, from Paris, is in Palestine. I have seen him and spoken to him two or three times, but I did not make myself known to him, as he is travelling *inognito*, and I did not consider it expedient. He is coming round here to Haifa, and we may have interviews with him, but this is a matter better left for the present. The baron has to be very particular, or else he would have no comfort in travelling on account of the number of people who would want to see him. I am delighted with Haifa. Its resources are almost boundless as a neighbourhood. I am disposed to think that things will develop here first and foremost in most respects. I am not sure how long I shall stay, but shall not leave a stone unturned in matters that will contribute towards the desires of our hearts. It is exceedingly hot to-day and difficult to write. With much love in the glorious truth of the Gospel, I am, as ever, your brother in the Lord,

VICCARS COLLYER.

Sunny Bank, Highfields, Leicester,

June 10th, 1887.

DEAR BROTHER ROBERTS.—You will be rather surprised to hear from me at the above address. I arrived home on Monday night, the 6th inst., after a very agreeable journey. After my last letter to you, I visited most places of interest in and about Jerusalem. There is so much contention as to “real spots,” &c., that one is glad to get away from “information,” and look from the hills that are *still* “round about Jerusalem,” where we *know* this and that took place. The Mount of Olives had a great charm for me. Near its foot, Gethsemane, and so many points from which the whole of the city can be seen. From one of these, Jesus beheld the city as it was in his day, and wept over it. How

fully his predictions have come to pass. Was ever sorrow like her sorrow? We cannot help feeling sad, and yet the fulfilment of these predictions is an earnest of the fulfilment of other predictions, full of blessing. For “here the glorious Lord,” &c. The information referred to is of this sort: the “real house where the rich man lived,” also the “home of Lazarus,” of the same *parable*! Some sights from Olivet are most charming. On the other side, Eastward, we can see much of the land apparently at our feet, the valley of the Jordan, and nearly all the Dead Sea. In reality, the Dead Sea is some twenty miles away. But the atmosphere is so clear that every object looks near, and, comparatively speaking small. To attempt to cover some of the distances on foot is the best way to become *un*-deceived.

The Jewish element preponderates now in Jerusalem. This is made very manifest so far as the trading community is concerned, by the aspect of the business quarters on Saturday (the Jewish Sabbath). On this day, the streets are as quiet as Sunday in an English town. On other days, the streets are hardly passable for the crowds. There are more Jews *now* in Palestine than is generally supposed. Statistics regarding them are not reliable, and it is not to their interest that it should be known how their numbers increase. The Turkish government is striving *all it can* to prevent them coming to the Holy Land, but they do come, most of them, perhaps ostensibly as pilgrims. Jews are not allowed to purchase land, but still there are Jews who *own* land, and their numbers are constantly increasing. “Christians” can purchase land, but the Government do not like it, and to prevent the sale of land to “Christians,” have sometimes imprisoned those who have sold to them. This block of the Turk is not without its advantages, as apart from it, Palestine would have been full of Gentiles long before this. Meanwhile the “Drying-up” process is going on slowly but surely, and just as surely and certainly the Jewish filling up is going on, and will soon be sufficient to be a bait for the King of the North. I would like to give you my full experience in detail, but cannot do so *now* in writing. I will by word of mouth, later on, if the Lord will.

I have brought a quantity of seeds, and a few plants from the Holy Land. Winnie is sending a few to Eusebia on Monday, when she writes. As you will suppose, my hands are very full for the moment, and the work among the brethren has been put in my way very quickly.

Trusting you are all quite well, I am thankful to say I found all well at home.—I am, yours in Israel’s hope, Bro. VICCARS COLLYER.

On Sunday, June 19th, Brother Collyer having returned to Leicester, Brother Roberts had a long interview with him, during which he took down from him in shorthand a complete account of his journey in all its details. The story, which cannot fail to be interesting to all, will extend over several numbers of the *Christadelphian*.

Mr. Oliphant's Work

The Palestine work of Mr. Oliphant commends itself to every mind in living sympathy with the purpose of God. It is not to be exalted as an affair for brethren to go out of the way to promote. But surely no reasonable man could object to our giving something once a year to such a purpose. The sons of God will force no one to join them. *'The poor ye have always with you'*: we need not neglect them because we give our poor blessing to Zion's desolations. *Bro. Roberts —1887*

The *Jewish Chronicle* has a leading article on the subject which (notwithstanding some drawbacks) must strike a chord of joy in every heart that loves and looks for the appearing of the Lord. Its principal portions are as follow:

“Mr. Lawrence Oliphant's scheme, detailed by a correspondent in last week's issue, contains the most feasible plan that has yet been put before the world...At present, the matter is a purely commercial and administrative speculation; but the very practicability and non-sentimentality of its character is an assurance of its feasibility. Mr. Oliphant has, as we can avouch from personal knowledge, selected the very best spot available for the purpose (for who has not heard of the fertility of Gilead and its balms?), and has laid down conditions which contain the elements of prosperity. At present, the only requisite quality which our brethren possess, or adequately fulfil, is that of the possession of capital, and that they are asked to give, not as a gift, but as remunerative investment. This, to say the least of it, is by no means an injudicious way of appealing to our feelings. We can place some of our *proteges*, our brethren in Palestine, in positions where they can be self-supporting...It would be a great elevation of the Jewish character in the eyes of the world at large, could they prove themselves capable of conducting a colony, harmoniously and reputably, under the present lawless conditions of Ottoman rule. It must be a peaceful triumph worthy of the days of the Messiah, when all shall be peace. Even now, of their own accord, our brethren of Palestine are beginning to show that they appreciate the advantages of agricultural industry, as the letter of the same correspondent reporting Sir Henry Layard's conversation, which is in the highest degree interesting and important, amply proves. Without being able to promise Mr. Oliphant our full support until we are in possession of all details of government, and of the knowledge of the individuals in whom the local government is to be invested, we can

go so far as to say that, up to the present, the scheme recommends itself strongly to the consideration of all earnest and sincere Jews. We shall watch its complete development with intense interest and watchful anxiety.

“Almost coincidently with the publication of Mr. Oliphant’s plans comes the scheme of Mr. Cazalet . . . It seems strange, and yet most reassuring, that two men of culture and thought have hit upon a similar scheme for the regeneration of Palestine and Syria. There are persons who think that the Restoration is to be brought about by a supernatural *coup de theatre*, and that it cannot be accomplished without the intervention of startling and directly apparent miraculous means. The ways of Providence are inscrutable, and much that appears to us merely the result of natural evolution, may be, although not clearly visible, the silent working of the Great Power. There are many who believe that miracles are daily performed, and it cannot be said that their theories are utterly untenable. There is no reason why all the prophecies, in which the vast majority of us devoutly believe, may not be fulfilled in an apparently natural and consequent manner. It is not our purpose to give any undue importance to Mr. Oliphant’s scheme. It may be found not to hold water on close examination, but on the other hand, it may be productive of vast and singular benefit. Mr. Oliphant is avowedly a free-thinker. He has no religious motives. Christianity is to him of as little consequence as Judaism. He is a politician with a theory to carry out, and nothing more. Yet the least likely of us may be the instrument of Providence, and the least religious be guided by the hand of God. Heaven may lead a man of great intelligence, but of little faith, to become the precursor of the Messiah who is to be, according to our belief, but a man of marvellous intelligence and power of influence and organisation. Exceptionally superior qualities of mind may, not improbably, be the result of the inspiration of God. King Solomon, under whose reign only were the Jews completely united, was but a man, even endowed with human failings in the highest and most animal degree. May not the Messiah, who is to unite all mankind in the common bond of an universal method of worship of the Creator, and thus to bestow peace on the world—for the majority of the wars and dissensions are the outcome of religious and political difference—be but the Strong Man strong-minded and strong-bodied: the Canning whom Mr. Carlyle imagined with his faulty philology but true historical insight? Agricultural colonies may not bring about Restoration, but they cannot fail to benefit all who suffer from want of direction to their labours, and from want of aliment.” *Bro. R. Roberts*

Aliens

‘Ithuriel’ [a correspondent] would have us to cease speaking of outsiders as ‘aliens.’ Why? Is it because he thinks they are not aliens? If so, the reason is not good. The reason is bad. The reason is against truth. Unjustified mankind (and all are unjustified who have not believed and obeyed the Gospel in baptism) are divinely declared to be: “*Strangers from the Covenants of Promise, and ALIENS from the Commonwealth of Israel*” (Eph. 2:12).

Have they ceased to be so since the first century? If not, why are we not to describe them as Paul described them? How would Ithuriel have us describe them? Sinners? Would that be less offensive? The ungodly? Would that be any better? ‘Brothers and sisters of one family: sons and daughters of one Father’? That would be beautiful, if true. But are we to speak a lie for the sake of being agreeable?

Ithuriel may think it the truth, and no lie. We are sure it is a lie, and not the truth. What then? Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind, and act honestly according to his own view—but human opinions will not alter the ways of God. The Word of the Lord, **that** shall stand.

Bro. Robert Roberts, —1897

Desire for Spiritual Perception

In your several spheres of probation, you are yearning for what you never realize. You hunger and thirst for the prevalence of a noble enlightenment among men. You love God yourselves with all your hearts and souls. You long to see others rejoice in Him and exalt Him in a sincere and intelligent way. You have a compassionate regard for the condition of mankind, and desire, with even a tearful earnestness, to see them in a blessed condition. You sigh and faint for the delights of sanctified and intellectual friendship in which the hearts of companions should open with a noble warmth to the great and noble topics that the universe presents to the mind, instead of gravitating heavily to the petty accidents of animal life. Ah, and you are afflicted with your own incapacities that blur the sight and enfeeble the hands, and drag you into abysses of gloom as dark and dreadful as Jonah’s habitation in the storm-tossed sea. Now, there is comfort concerning all this. It is somewhat negative in its form; but, then, it is true, and true comfort

wears well, whereas false comfort fails you in the long run. The comfort is that these things are unattainable in the present condition of human life upon earth, but that they are attainable and will be realized in their very perfection in the kingdom of God. The recognition of this is a help. We reconcile ourselves hopefully to our lot, enduring the hardness of the desert by knowing that it is desert, and in the confident anticipation of the land of promise at the end of the journey. One comfort more. It is not displeasing to the Father that we thus hunger and thirst to the point even of misery, after righteousness. On the contrary, Jesus said, *“Blessed are ye that hunger and thirst after righteousness; for ye shall be filled.”* Bro. Robert Roberts, —1885

Covenant Keeping

NOTHING is more stringently enforced throughout the whole of Scripture than the obligation to keep covenant. It was one of Saul’s sins, for which the land suffered, that he acted inconsistently with a covenant that had been entered into 500 years before his day (2 Sam. 21:1-3; Josh. 9:3-19).

How much more binding is a covenant personally entered into! It is one of the specified characteristics of the man who is to inherit the holy mountain that he—*“Swears to his own hurt, and changeth not”* (Psa. 15:4).

That is, when he enters into any promise or obligation, he will perform it, though it may turn out to his own hurt, instead of to his advantage as he may have expected. **And in the performance of his covenant, he will do it faithfully, of course.** That is, he will carry it out in the sense intended and understood by the parties at the time it was entered into.

To fall back, lawyer-like, on some sense not intended, is Jesuitical and tricky, or, in Bible language, wicked, and will never be done by a son of God. Bro. Robert Roberts, —1892

Delegates

‘DELEGATES’ have no power to settle matters of faith, conviction or duty. You may give them power to engage a hall, or

enter upon a printing contract, or any other secular matter ... You cannot delegate the decision of spiritual issues. This is wholly a matter of individual responsibility in which no man can bind or absolve another. When you appoint ‘delegates’ to settle questions of duty, you abdicate individual conscience and set up a spiritual tyranny akin to the ‘councils’ which have already for ages desolated the world.

Bro. Robert Roberts, —1898

Eating Blood

PAUL allowed the eating of things sacrificed to idols, provided the fact of their having been so offered was not paraded as a reason for eating (1 Cr. 10:27-28). This shows that the interdict of Acts 15:29 was an affair of expediency in the circumstances of the time (v.21), and not a commandment based upon what might be called ‘intrinsic morality.’

This elasticity would not, of course, apply to fornication, which was part of the idolatrous ceremonies. And if any think it does not apply to ‘*blood and things strangled,*’ it is best to respect their scruples. There’s no hardship in abstaining from both.

Bro. Robert Roberts, —1891

* * *

YOU need not trouble about the state of the beef and mutton supplied at the butcher’s. ‘*Buy and eat with thanksgiving whatever is put before you, asking no questions*’ (1 Cr. 10:25-27), for ‘*the earth is the Lord’s, and the fullness thereof,*’ ‘*For neither if we eat are we the better, nor if we eat not are we the worse,*’ as regards our standing before God (1 Cr. 8:8).

Even if the command to abstain from blood were in force, it would be applicable to blood as a liquid poured out, and not to the particles of it in dressed meat, which can never be entirely freed of them.

Bro. Robert Roberts, —1891

Marriage in Millennium

Ques: “Does not Eze. 44:22 clash with Christ’s statement to the Sadducees touching the children of the resurrection? That is, if Ezekiel describes events of the millennial Kingdom?”

THERE is no 'clash' between Eze. 44:22 and Matt. 22:30. The marriage statute of the first passage refers to the lower order of Levites who will be mortal men, and therefore permitted under certain regulations to marry. But the absence of marriage relations affirmed by Christ is to be restricted to those who shall be made partakers with Christ of the priesthood which is '*after the power of an endless life*' (Heb. 7:16). These will be the antitypical '*sons of Zadok,*' who is their representative father in the priesthood (Eze. 44:15-16).

Bro. Robert Roberts, —1879

Offenses

Nothing more easily blights friendship and every good work connected with it, and nothing is more liable to wreck an ecclesia, and all the beautiful interests associated with its existence, than the general habit of neglecting the scriptural method prescribed for dealing with matters of wrong, and resorting to the natural-man method of talking over evil reports with third parties, instead of either being silent or going to the person concerned.

Bro. Robert Roberts, —1889

The 7-Hilled City

Rome is undoubtedly the 7-hilled city of the Apocalypse. It is true that Constantinople (originally the 2nd capital of the Roman Empire) is also built on 7 hills. It is said that the site of Jerusalem was also originally 7 hills, and some other cities have been mentioned with the same peculiarity, but this does not obscure the truth in the case.

If the identity of Rome with the 7-hilled city of the Apocalypse depended only on that topographical feature, there might be some doubt. But it does not do so. It results from several lines of evidence. One is conclusive by itself, if there were no other: "*That Great City that reigneth over the kings of the earth.*" (Rev. 17:18).

Rome did this at the time the Apocalypse was given, and for centuries before and after. Constantinople never did so, nor Jerusalem, nor any other city since the days of the vision.

—Bro. Robert Roberts, 1898

The Bread and the Wine

“Keeping the feast” of the memorial supper, “as the Lord himself did,” is not a question of the quality of the bread and wine we use: for **on this we have no directions**, and—

“Where there is no law there is no transgression.”

It is our moral relation to the things signified that is everything:

“Let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of MALICE and WICKEDNESS, but with the unleavened bread of SINCERITY and TRUTH” (1 Cor 5:8).

No brother would **object** to literal unleavened bread being used, but no enlightened brother would **insist** on it as essential.

As for wine, you cannot have wine without fermentation. Grape juice is one thing; wine is another. Men may agree to call the former wine, but it is not the thing that has for ages been known as wine.

Bible wine is grape juice in the vinous stage, in which there has been that amount of fermentation of the saccharine matter that imparts to it the heart-gladdening power of which David speaks.

Bro. Robert Roberts, —1890

The Christadelphian Magazine

THE *Christadelphian* has never professed to be a public organ, nor a battleground of opposing opinions. You must remember this in judging of its conduct. It is a private enterprise, originating and carried on with the aim of keeping in view and preserving from obscurity, the Bible Hope of Israel revived by Dr. Thomas nearly two generations ago. **No one is bound by it, and no one controls it but its immediate conductors**, who are glad of the cooperation of all who love its principles, but who cannot be classed with ordinary journalists, or submit to be governed by their rules.

Bro. R. Roberts—1897

The same policy has continued for *The Berean Magazine* and *The Berean Ecclesial News* since 1923. GVG and FJH.

The Third With Egypt

The taking away of the dominion of Babylon, and the bringing of its kingdom to an end, is the work assigned to the Holy Ones; who in overthrowing the Gentile powers will also appropriate to their own use all they possess. Hence, at the coming of the Ancient of Days, it is testified that the hitherto vanquished holy ones should become conquerors in their turn--should conquer the gold, and the silver, and the brass, and the iron, and the clay; or the four kingdoms of Powers that exist on the Babylonish earth, and take them for themselves: as it is written, "These great beasts, which are four, represent four kings, or royalties, which shall arise out of the earth. But the holy ones of the High Ones shall take the Kingdom (of Babylon) and possess the kingdom for the age, even for the age of the ages". Again, "The Ancient of Days came, and judgment was given to the holy ones of the High Ones"; when "the time came that the holy ones should possess the kingdom". And again, "Let the saints be joyful in glory; let them sing aloud upon their beds. Let the high praises of God be in their mouth, and a two-edged sword in their hand; to execute vengeance upon the nations, and punishments upon the people; to bind their kings with chains, and their nobles with fetters of iron; to execute upon them the judgment written: this honour have *all* his saints" (Psa. 149:5-9). The "judgment written" is the judgment that sits when the Ancient of days comes. They are not only to slay the Fourth Beast, and to destroy its body with fire and brimstone; but they are to take away the dominion of the Lion-Man, the Bear, and the Leopard; whose peoples, and nations, and languages, however, will experience a better fate than those of the Fourth Beast dominion; for, while the constitutions of the Latins are exterminated, the populations of Assyria, Persia, and Macedonian Egypt, are permitted to retain their nationality for a season and time. That they do remain distinct national organizations is evident from the following testimonies: "In that day shall there be a highway out of Egypt to Assyria, and the Assyrian shall come into Egypt, and the Egyptian into Assyria, and the Egyptians shall serve with the Assyrians. In that day shall Israel be the third with Egypt and with Assyria, a blessing in the midst of the land; whom Yahweh Tz'vaoth shall bless, saying, Blessed be Egypt my people, and Assyria the work of my hand, and Israel mine inheritance" (Isa. 19:23-24). And, "I will

set my throne in Elam, and will destroy from thence the king of princes: but it shall come to pass in the latter days, I will bring again the captivity of Elam, saith Yahweh” (Jer. 49:38-39).

Exposition of Daniel – Bro. John Thomas

The Truth in Worcester

Some years ago, I was in Worcester, Massachusetts, lecturing on scripture topics. There was then no Christadelphian ecclesia there. As I was speaking in Warren Hall, by permission of the Adventists who occupied it, one of their country cousins came to the city to hear me, and I suppose, to enlighten my darkness. In brief, I may say, that he astounded me by announcing the myth, that Captain William Miller, the Baptist divine, who proclaimed throughout the great American Israel, that Christ was coming to burn up the world in 1843, had been prophesied of by Isaiah!! In the evening of the same day, after I had concluded my address, which did not at all harmonize with Millerite opinion, one of the fraternity asked me if the Scriptures did not somewhere say, that there should be false prophets in the last days? I replied that there was something like it. “Well,” said he, “I think you are one of them!” I smiled at the creature’s impertinence, and left.

That was the day of very small things in Worcester: they are not very great now; but they have attained a magnitude not to be despised. I believe the ecclesia consists of over thirty brethren and sisters, who are a light in the midst of darkness that may be felt. They are hardworking and industrious mechanics, who support their families in comfort and respectability, and can yet find time for the study of the word, with the assistance of what the Rev. W. D. considers that pretentious, inconclusive, and bombastic book, *Elpis Israel*, and *Eureka*. They have no such spirits among them as the clergy and those who paid me a visit. Their ecclesia is not the result of divinity grinding, but of the formative power of the word understood and believed. Any one of them could put to silence the ignorance of the city parsons, if the latter could pluck up courage to encounter them. But upon this, with all their Latin, Greek, and mythology of the Pagans, the pulpit spirits of disobedience dare not venture. They who are “taught of God” are too mighty in the word for the giants of the apostasy.

Bro. John Thomas – 1869

Hints For Bible Markers

The Psalms

Psalm 4:3

“But know that the LORD hath set apart him that is godly for himself: the LORD will hear when I call unto him.”

A key thought on this verse is SET APART. A godly man is different from those around him in the world. We must be separate. This does not mean uncaring and unfeeling towards those around us. We see Jesus repeatedly moved with compassion when he looked upon the misery of those around him. Although we may be impatient for the destruction of this age of Gentile rule, we can still be moved to tears when we realize that this is all the people of the world have. It is all they’ll ever know! The things of this world are all they will ever be able to think about, not having a higher mind, a godly mind. Not able to contemplate the lessons provided in the Word of God, having that change in heart and mind fostered by a profound love of Yahweh.

In 1974 Bro. Growcott wrote, “FOR the past 30 (70 years now!) years the world has been in a state of turmoil with “wars and rumors of wars.” The people in various parts of the world have been, and now are, in extreme nervous tension, not knowing what to expect next.

A good illustration of the present situation is a recent report that was headed “Spreading Mideast Terror is piling up new trouble for U.S. More and more, U.S. is caught in the middle of the underground war between Israel and the Arabs that is gaining momentum in Mideast and around the world.”

Christadelphians have been anticipating this condition for over 100 years, for we know that it presages the coming of the Lord Jesus. We do not say that he is coming today, tomorrow, or any other specific day, but we do feel strongly that the day of his coming is very near.

Very shortly it will be manifest, that the godly man will have achieved his goal of pleasing God. The ungodly, also, will have received their reward. For such a man will have no place in that final form of life upon the Earth, an immortal life, glorifying God! Yahweh is seeking sons and daughters to be His for eternity. This is the whole purpose of life, the Earth, everything! During man’s entire life of sorrow, distress and pain, there is nothing else but serving God. Nothing else has any meaning! (1 Timothy 6:6) *“But godliness with contentment is great gain.”*

Continued next month should the Lord will

Bro. Beryl Snyder