PHILOSOPHY
THE MEDIA
HUMAN GOVERNMENT

WAR ON THE BOOK
& ITS PEOPLE
“...he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to
blaspheme his name, and his tabernacle, and them that dwell in
heaven. And it was given unto him to make war with the saints,
and to overcome them: and power was given him over all
kindreds, and tongues, and nations.”

Revelation 13:6,7

WRITTEN OVER 100 YEARS AGO
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What was it about?

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“Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.”
John 17:17.

The world has been at war with the Bible,
and the people of the Bible (both Jews and
true Christians) throughout history. This
controversy is now leading to Armageddon.

The Assyrians in the Land of
the Bible
“Seek First the Kingdom of God”

The “Gospel of the Kingdom of God” is an invitation to his Kingdom and Glory, as appears from the apostle’s words, when he says to the subjects of the one baptism, “We exhort and comfort and charge every one of you as a father doth his children, that ye walk worthy of God “who hath called you to his kingdom and glory,” and “that ye may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which ye suffer.”—1 Thess. 2:12; 2 Thess. 1:5. They were “called” or invited to certain things which became their hope; styled therefore by Paul, the “one hope of the invitation” or calling; and elsewhere “the Hope of the Gospel.” The kingdom and glory of God were the hope of all new converts in Paul’s day. For this and the resurrection he was called in question (Acts 23:6), and suffered the loss of all things that he might win them, for in winning them he won Christ. The kingdom and glory being the hope of the Gospel, is the reason why so much is said in the New Testament about them. All Christians in those days looked for the kingdom and glory which constituted “the excellency of the knowledge of Jesus, the anointed one and Lord.”—Phil. 3:8.

When Paul went to a city it was to tell them about the kingdom of God, and to make them an offer of possessing it, on certain conditions, at the appointed time. Thus we are told that Paul and Barnabas preached the Gospel at Lystra and Derbe, cities of Lycaonia.—Acts 14:6, 7, 21; and that when they returned from Derbe to Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch, they exhorted the disciples they had made to “continue in the faith” saying that “we must, through much tribulation, enter into the kingdom of God”—verse 22. Continue in the faith of that for which they suffered. Would they have endured “much tribulation” without faith in a well-defined hope? Could they have continued in the faith of that hope if Paul had not preached it to them in the Gospel? Nay, verily. They were exhorted to continue in the faith of the kingdom he preached to them in the gospel of the kingdom. They believed this gospel and obeyed it, but did not therefore consider themselves already in it; but they hoped to enter into it as a reward for patient continuance in well-doing through much tribulation.

The gospel was designed to take out of the nations a people for that kingdom; but when the kingdom is come all that remains is for that invited people to “take the kingdom, and to possess the kingdom, ad alma we-ad alam almaiya, during the Age, even during the Age of ages.—Dan. 7:18.

Jesus, though “the truth,” was not this gospel, but the Apostle of God sent to preach it. In his teaching he did not say, “Make me first and foremost in the proclamation of the everlasting gospel,” but what he said was, “Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness, and tell no man that Jesus is the Christ.”—Matt. 6:33; 16:20. When one said “Lord, before I follow thee, suffer me first to go and bury my father;” Jesus said, “Let the dead bury their dead; but go thou and preach the kingdom of God.”—Luke 9:60.

Jesus preached the gospel of the kingdom for three years and a half to the Jews, and to them only. When his ministry was drawing to a close, he delivered his celebrated prophecy on Mount Olivet, and therein, referring to the gospel he was preaching, he said, “This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the habitable, for a testimony to all the nations.”—Matt. 24:14. Hence it was the same gospel he preached before he became a sacrifice for sin that was to be preached to the Gentiles of the Roman habitable. It follows, then, that on and from the day of Pentecost, the same gospel of the kingdom, preached by Jesus, was still preached by his apostles, with something additional, which he only darkly hinted at, and his apostles, till after his resurrection, did not understand.

Turn to Luke 18:31-34, “Behold,” said he to the twelve, “we go up to Jerusalem, and all things that are written by the prophets concerning the Son of Man (before he becomes Son of God with power,—Rom. 1:4, and de facto, King.”—Matt. 25: 34), shall be accomplished. For he shall be delivered unto the Gentiles, and shall be marked, and spitefully entreated, and spitten on, and they shall scourge him, and put him to death; and the third day he shall rise again. And they understood none of these things; and this saying was hid from them, neither understood they the things which were spoken.”

It was the gospel of the kingdom, then, together with the things the apostles did not understand concerning the sufferings of the Christ, that Jesus commanded them to go and preach to Judah and the nations, when he said, “Go ye unto all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature.”—Mark 16:15. There is no sophistry can over-ride this. Now, we pray the reader to mark well, that salvation is predicated on the belief of these two classes of things which constitute the one gospel, namely, the things concerning the kingdom the apostles did understand (Matt. 13:11), and the things concerning the sufferings of the King, which we have seen they did not understand till just before Pentecost, because God purposely concealed them from them, as he had done from the prophets and angels of old time.—1 Pet. 1:10-12: “He that believes the good news of the kingdom, and is immersed, shall be saved; and he that believes not the good news of the kingdom shall be condemned.” This is the teaching in Mark 16:15-16. They are “the wholesome words of the Lord Jesus,” and neither more nor less can be made of them.

Again, the divine order in which things are to be presented to men for faith, is laid down in the example of the Great Teacher himself, and upon whose method we deny that any one can improve. Take the method he adopted in teaching the twelve:

1. He first instructed them in the secrets of the kingdom.
2. He convinced them that he was the King, or Anointed, and Son of God, and demanded their confession of it.
3. He then began to talk to them about his sufferings enigmatically; and
4. He explained the enigma after he rose from the dead, and breathed upon them.

1. He began his work in Galilee, by preaching the gospel of the kingdom.—Matt. 4:23. The discourse on the mount is a specimen of his preaching to the children of the prophets.—Matt. 5, 6, 7. He then worked great miracles, confirming it as the doctrine of God.—Matt. 8, 9. After this introduction, he selected from the body of his disciples, twelve for a special purpose—Matt. 10. He continued to preach the kingdom (for that he was sent to do—Luke 4:43) enigmatically to the people at large, but explaining his parables to the twelve in private.—Matt. 13.

2. His doctrine and miracles convinced them that he was the Christ or King and Son of God; and when he considered the time had come, he
demanded of them their conviction concerning him. Peter, for himself and the rest declared that they accepted him as “The Anointed, the Son of the Living God.”—Matt. 16:16.

3. In the twentieth verse of the chapter last quoted, Matthew says, “Then charged he his disciples that they should tell no man that he is Jehovah, Shua, the Messiah,” or in English, “shall be the Mighty, the Anointed; and in Greek, Jesus the Christ.” He then goes on to say, “From that time forth began Jesus to show unto his disciples how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders, and chief-priests, and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day.” “But they understood not that saying, and were afraid to ask him”—Mark 9:32. Three of the twelve were favored with a view of how Jesus will appear when he shall stand and feed Israel in the majesty of the name of Jehovah his God.—Mic. 5:4; Matt. 17. After this he talks to them about Elijah coming to “restore all things,”—“The Regeneration,” in which he declares they shall sit upon twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.—Matt. 19. All this time they were in the dark about the sufferings, death, burial, and resurrection of “the Wonderful.”

After promising them royalty with himself, in his future, or premillennial entrance into his capital amid the acclamations of his subjects, by riding into Jerusalem on the foal of an ass. This future entrance, he afterwards informed them, would come to pass when “the times of the Gentiles should be fulfilled,” and Jerusalem should be free. Compare Matt. 21:9, with 23:39; Luke 21:24.

Having preached judgment against Jerusalem and the Commonwealth he directed their attention to the end of the Gentiles’ times, when he should come in power and great glory to put them into possession of the kingdom and punish the unjust in the judgment of the devil and his angels—Matt. 25. The last three chapters contain the history of the sufferings and resurrection he predicted, the meaning of which they could not comprehend.

4. After he rose from the dead “Jesus breathed upon them, and said to them, Receive ye the Holy Spirit: whose sins soever ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose sins soever ye retain they are retained.”—John 20:23. We believe that from this time they understood the meaning of the sufferings of the Christ, and how believers in the gospel of the kingdom might obtain repentance, forgiveness, and eternal life, through his name. On the day of Pentecost they were qualified to speak what they had learned in the forty days (Acts 1:3), in divers languages, and to confirm their doctrine by miracles. The spirit the Lord Jesus breathed into them called all things to their remembrance, and its Pentecostian descent ended them “with power from on high.”

By Ron Kidd LONDON, ONT.

As far as religious matters are concerned we should not be surprised that for the most part people take what they believe for granted. Many people affirm their belief in the Bible not knowing anything about what it teaches or whether or not their own particular viewpoint originates therein. For the most part belief is based, not upon personal examination, but on what they have been told by someone else.

This short series of articles is designed to encourage people to read the Bible with understanding and a questioning mind. Instead of approaching the Bible with preconceived ideas let us simply read what it says and accept what is written on face value.

It is evident from the quotation under the main heading that there were those in the first century who perverted (as the word ‘wrest’ means) the inspired teaching of God’s word. Such people were unlearned and unstable and Peter says that those who persisted in such perversion were simply contributing to their own destruction. Obviously then, to misrepresent Bible teaching is a serious matter.

These articles are not intended to be exhaustive, rather they are designed to focus on certain preconceived views and determine if they hold true.

We want to begin with the topic of Satan. For instance if the question were posed, where does Satan first occur in the Bible, what would be the answer? Some years ago twenty five students in a Bible seminar all answered, “The book of Genesis, in the garden of Eden.” Of course, they were referring to the serpent that tempted Eve and invaribly would be the stock answer of the majority of Christians. But is that the correct answer?

We will begin by examining the word “Satan.” It is a Hebrew word that has been brought directly into the English language and is found in both the Old and New Testaments. However it is evident that the translators of the Bible have, in many instances, allowed their theological opinions to influence the translation. Therefore sometimes the word Satan is retained in our English Bible, whilst on other occasions it has been translated to reflect what the word actually means.

This bias is evident when we examine Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible. Doctor Strong says Satan (Stg’s #7854) signifies “an opponent; especially (with the article prefixed) Satan, the arch-enemy of good.” It is translated: ‘Satan’ 19 times, ‘adversary’ 7 times and ‘withstand’ once, in the King James Bible. The root word (#7853) means to attack, or accuse and is similarly translated, ‘adversaries,’ 5 times; ‘resist,’ once.

From this we learn that the term Satan simply means an adversary.

Strong’s bias lies in the comment that Satan is “the arch-enemy of good.” Here is a case where a theological position has influenced the definition, because when the scriptures are examined carefully this definition is not strictly true. We need to examine the word in its context in the Bible to determine its correct meaning.

The chart below sets out the various ways the Hebrew word Satan is translated in the Old Testament along with all the Bible references.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reference</th>
<th>Translation</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gen. 3:1</td>
<td>‘adversary’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gen. 19:19</td>
<td>‘adversary’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gen. 25:23</td>
<td>‘resist’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gen. 45:18</td>
<td>‘withstand’</td>
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Conspicuous by its absence is any reference to Satan in the book of Genesis, in fact the word Satan first occurs in its English form in the book of Chronicles. Let us examine this verse in more detail. The text reads: “And Satan stood up against Israel, and provoked David to number Israel” (1 Chronicles 21:1). Who exactly does Satan refer to? As with most scriptural problems there is no need to speculate, it is a simple matter of allowing the scriptures to interpret themselves.

The book of Chronicles, where this is recorded, is a history of the nation of Israel from the perspective of the southern kingdom of Judah. The corresponding books of Samuel and Kings, however, detail the same period of Israel’s history, but from a broader perspective. Keeping this in mind we can determine the equivalent section to the book of Chronicles by the use of marginal references (if your Bible has them), or by using other reference material.

The corresponding chapter is 2 Samuel 24:1 where we read: “And again the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel, and he moved David against them to say, Go, number Israel and Judah” (2 Samuel 24:1).

The common ground in both chapters is the reference to Israel being numbered but the difference lies in who provoked the numbering. In the first reference it is Satan who stands up against Israel, whereas in the second it is “the anger of the Lord” that is kindled against Israel. Clearly therefore Satan and the Lord are one and the same. God for some reason.
was being an adversary against the nation of Israel.

There can be no suggestion from this comparison that the LORD is the arch-enemy of good. Is it not rather that God was being an adversary to Israel for their ultimate good, particularly in view of the fact that the scriptures clearly tell us that “whom the LORD loveth He chasteneth” (Proverbs 3:12), and that by this means “all things work together for good to them that love God” (Romans 8:28).

The idea that God takes on an adversarial role is further confirmed by the way the Hebrew word \textit{satan} has been translated in the Bible. The first time that 'satan' occurs in the Hebrew Bible is in Numbers 22:22 where it is translated 'adversary.'

“And God’s anger was kindled because he went: and the angel of the LORD stood in the way for \textit{an adversary} (satan) against him. Now he was riding upon his ass, and his two servants were with him.”

Notice who this is referring to; not some supernatural evil power, but the angel of the \textit{LORD}. Again in verse 32 'satan' is translated "\textit{withstand}," i.e. ‘to stand in the way of.’ God was attempting to prevent the false prophet Balaam from pursuing his own ambitions; God became Balaam’s adversary through His angel.

It is evident from these verses that the common view of Satan simply did not fit the context—at least in three verses. Notice the inconsistency of the translators in this instance.

“For my love they are my \textit{adversaries} (satan): but I give myself unto prayer,” verse 4.

“Set thou a wicked man over him: and let Satan stand at his right hand,” verse 6.

“Let this be the reward of mine \textit{adversaries} (satan) from the \textit{LORD}, and of them that speak evil against my soul,” verse 20.

“Let mine \textit{adversaries} (satan) be clothed with shame, and let them cover themselves with their own confusion, as with a mantle,” verse 29.

From an examination of the context the adversaries refer to those in David's life who spoke against him with lying tongues and surrounded him with words of hatred (verse 2, 3). Because of this David prayed for God to reward his adversaries according as they deserved (verse 20, 29). So why in verse 6 did the translators see fit to retain the Hebrew in the English text? The only explanation is that in verse 6 they imposed upon the text their own theological position regarding Satan.

The Revised Version (published between 1881 and 1898), in recognizing the inconsistency changed the text to say, “And let an adversary stand at his right hand.” Even the Jehovah’s Witnesses, who hold tenaciously to there being a powerful devil, corrected the inconsistency in their New World Translation by rendering the word satan as ‘resister’ or ‘resisting’ in each verse.

This little exercise should alert us to the fact that whatever translation is used we need to be on our guard against any form of theological influences. We should never take for granted the idea that Church doctrine is firmly established on Biblical teaching; neither should we assume that what people claim to be taught in the Bible is correct until we have determined it for ourselves.

It is recorded in the Acts of the Apostles that the people of the city of Berea listened to the Apostles and “received the word with all readiness of mind.” Nevertheless they “searched the scriptures daily,” to determine “whether those things were so” (Acts 17:11). We must do likewise.

| TRANSLATING “SATAN” IN THE OLD TESTAMENT |
|-------------------------------|---------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| TRANSLATION:       | Satan | Adversary | Withstand | Adversaries | Resist |
he ninth chapter of Revelation is such a unique picture that it is not surprising that its identification with the origin and advance of Islam has been almost universally accepted since earliest times. In Jon Burke’s book, A More Sure Word of Prophecy, he lists students and writers on the book of Revelation, and all of them until the late 19th century give the same basic interpretation. So it has been indeed a helpful revelation for many centuries to God’s people: yet strangely never comprehended by that very institution portrayed in the verses above. In fact the predominant characteristic of this movement is that it “repented not” (verses 19, 20)!

History makes obvious that the thrust of Muslim war—“Jihad” was against Roman Catholicism, firstly in the Eastern third of the Roman Empire and later in Western Europe. So the sense of these last two verses in Revelation 9 is that, despite the horrendous reversals suffered by Catholicism, it was yet determined to maintain the practices for which God had sent the scourge of Islam.

Mohammed began his work in 612 and died in 632 but within less than a century the Roman world was in desperate conflict with his armies on both the Eastern and Western flanks of the empire. Spain was already captured and in the east the Emperor Leo III (of Constantinople) only narrowly defeated the Muslims at the foot of the Taurus mountains, in Syria AD 718.

There was great concern throughout the Empire and some searching of hearts, for why God should bring or allow devastation of such coveted Christian ground as Jerusalem, Bethlehem, Antioch and Alexandria etc? The Muslim adversary ridiculed the Christians for their idolatry and for their many gods saying they were as idolatrous as the pagan Romans before them or as the Canaanites whom God had removed because of their similar behaviour. For the Church had developed, especially in the East, a system of worship in which prayers were made to Mary and other dead saints, their relics and images venerated and pictures and statues reverenced with prayers and prostrations. By the 8th Century the churches of East and West were cluttered with statues, images, paintings and relics, making the words of Revelation 9 so remarkably apt. The local Jews threw taunts at the Christians and a general disquiet began to grow among Leo’s subjects.

The Emperor had some close confidants on doctrinal matters and to the amazement of the Church and the world he decreed in 726, the confiscation and destruction of all images and statues in the Churches of the Empire and set a brazen public example by burning the statue in the front garden of his palace. This edict was then pursued throughout the empire but the reaction was mixed indeed and controversy swept the Empire for the next 120 years; it goes down in history as the Iconoclastic Controversy.

Pope Gregory’s Reaction

The most vehement reaction against Leo’s decree came from the Roman Bishop, Pope Gregory II. Two of his original letters to Leo remain intact and are reproduced in Eureka, III, p301. Gregory treated Emperor Leo with disdain and threatening; there was
And the rest of the men that were not killed by these plagues yet repented not of the works of their hands, that they should not worship devils and idols of gold, and silver, and brass, and stone, and of wood: which neither can see, nor hear, nor walk: Neither repented they of their murders, nor of their sorceries, nor of their fornication, nor of their thefts. (Rev 9:20-21).

absolutely no way that the churches of the West were going to depart with their beloved icons! "Are you ignorant that the popes are the bond of union, the mediators of peace, between the East and the West? The eyes of the nations are fixed on our humility, whom all the kingdoms of the west hold as a God upon earth, whose image, St Peter, you threaten to destroy. The remote and interior kingdoms of the west present their homage to Christ and His Viceregent; and we now prepare to visit one of their most powerful monarchs, (Charles Martel, grandfather of Charlemagne) who desires to receive from our hands the sacrament of baptism. The Barbarians (the Ten Horns) have submitted to the yoke of the gospel, while you alone are deaf to the voice of the shepherd" (Eureka Vol III ch. 13 sec. 25 pg 301, John Thomas).

The upshot of this vehement altercation was that the Pope lost the temporal support of the Emperor in Constantinople, his trust for some 200 years. Worse still a cruel and warlike people called the Lombards, meaning “long beards” had come into northern Italy and saw the opportunity to advance on an unprotected Italian peninsula and captured Rome with its Pope. These people had been converted but not to the Nicene doctrine; they were of Arian persuasion. The Papacy was in a great quandary and desperately sought a champion for the protection of the City and the Papacy. Where could such a saviour be found?

**Clovis and the Kingdom of the Franks**

The kingdom of the Franks went back to the late 5th century, to Clovis, the first French king. The Franks were a strong warlike people living along the regions of the Rhine Valley and frequently skirmishing or warring with the Romans. Clovis was a greater man and succeeded in uniting the German tribes and had general sway over the whole of Western Europe right down to the Seine and Loire rivers in France, establishing his residence near Paris. This amazing achievement was made possible by the support of the influential Catholic bishops who had provided protection to the western inhabitants as wave after wave of Goths, Vandals and Huns had rampaged through Gaul in the previous 100 years. In 496 Clovis was baptised and so the Roman Church had a resourceful northern ally of their Trinitarian persuasion in contrast to all the other eastern invaders who, following the Goths, were Arian in their Christian doctrine (ie Jesus was just a man, and not God as the Trinitarians taught). This conversion was one of the most significant in European history for it laid the basis for the later Catholic unification of all Europe.

"To the oppressed and persecuted Catholics Clovis appeared as a savior and avenger, while the hope of the future spread and ultimate triumph of orthodoxy centred in him. The long succession of cruel, treacherous, and aggressive warfare, waged avowedly for the church as for the kingdom, was hailed as the work of a modern David, a second Constantine, a true champion of Christianity against heretics and heathens" (The Age of Charlemagne, Charles Wells). Those kings who succeeded Clovis preserved this basic relationship but, with time they degenerated into the inactive Merovingian dynasty: they became known as the “do-nothing kings,” “Rois Faineants”. The bishops on the other hand were increasingly powerful and wealthy receiving special endowments of land and taxation favours and other honours.

“These great spiritual lords, strong in popular support, rich in gold and lands, possessed of what intellectual power there was, surrounded by vassals, ruling their clergy, rivaling, often successfully, the counts and great lay lords, the sensors of kings, freed by immunities from many burdens and obligations, attained a height of power seemingly almost unassailable” (ibid).

It is estimated that at the close of the 7th century the Church owned one third of the land of Gaul and most of this belonged to the bishops and abbots.

**The Large Picture to Date**

So to summarise to this point we see that since the time of the break-up of the Roman Empire, the temporal power had contracted to the East, in Constantinople, allowing the Catholic Pope in Rome a far greater significance in the West than he ever had before. Whilst the Emperor sustained the authority of the Pope, he was increasingly out of touch with the more western and northern regions of Europe. The constant Muslim (or Islamic) threat kept him on his toes in his own back yard! In all this time, from 451, the kingdom of the Franks was slowly expanding and strengthening but the actual line of the kings had become decadent and true power had gone to the Mayors of the King’s palace.

Europe was about to change dramatically.

**The Alliance of Pope and Frankish Kings**

In the year 732 a most notable battle was fought in Tours (or Poietiers) in the South of France, between the vast hordes of Muslim cavalry and the combined but trebling forces of the Roman Catholic world. The Muslims had crossed the Mediterranean at Gibraltar, swept over all of Spain, crossed the Pyrenees
Mountains and now were set for a critical battle. Huge issues rested on the outcome and the Catholic world trembled before the unbeaten forces of the Muslims.

However, the Muslims were soundly defeated and driven over the mountains back into Spain. Several times the Roman forces repeated their ascendency over the Muslim army of cavalry; the praise and thanks of the West fell upon their principal leader, Charles Martel ("the Hammer"), who was not the king of the Franks but Mayor of his palace. His courageous and capable leadership had saved the Roman world from certain eclipse and made the future possible. Martel (“the Hammer”), who was not the king of his country, but Mayor of his palace. His name was due in part to his handling of a group of Muslim horsemen who rode hard and pressed steadfastly. This man was the father of Pepin and the grandfather of Charlemagne.

‘Pepin, King by the Grace of God’

The Iconoclastic Controversy of AD 726 weakened the bond between the Pope and the Emperor of Constantinople. Pepin became the Mayor of the Palace during the reign of Childeric the last of the Merovingian dynasty of the Frankish kings, but in 751 knowing the Pope (Zecharias) was looking favourably in his direction, he asked the question of Zecharias as to whether it was good that a king without power should rule over those who were ruling for him? The Pope replied that Pepin, who was exercising the royal power, should be called king and placed upon the throne!

So the Mayor of the Palace now became the king in the city of Soissons and he and queen Bertrada received the anointing; whilst Childeric was stripped of his royal robes, his long flowing locks cut off and was dispatched to the monastery to spend the rest of his days in humility.

“Thus took place that act of most solemn and momentous significance to Western Europe and to the Christian church, as well as to the Frankish kingdom and the Roman Papacy. There is no need of trying to justify the act; its historical explanation lies in the fact that it took place orderly and peaceably, as an evident political necessity. Its manifest advantage to all persons concerned except the poor last remnant of the royal line, and, above all, the absolute necessity, which the Pope had already felt and recognized, of having some strong arm near at hand if Rome was to be saved to the Papacy and the Papacy to the Western Church, are plainly seen” (ibid).

The Pope of course had no authority to do this; he himself was appointed and authorised by the Eastern Emperor. But we see here a classic step forward in that tale of Papal arrogance that has no equal in the history of mankind. Pope Zecharias knew that Rome needed a powerful champion near at hand if the Papacy and the Western Church were to be saved. If treason was the price, so be it! Notice in this the complete disregard of the official Emperor in Constantinople.

Revelation chapter 13 presents three main periods of the Papacy: “the beast of the sea” (verses 1-8), the “beast of the earth” (verses 11-14) and the image of the beast (verses 14-18). What we are seeing is the change of a Papal-Constantinople alliance to a Papal-Central Europe confederacy, where the temporal support, the militant army to support the Pope’s worldly aims, will come from the central powers of Europe rather than eastern Constantinople by the sea. 751 was a big year in history.

Pepin’s Donation and Papal Statehood

Only three years later, AD 754, Stephen III became the Bishop of Rome, crossed the Alps into the region of King Pepin. The Lombards were so strong and active that help was again sought to preserve the Papacy, its lands and its wealth. Pepin heard of his coming, the first Bishop of of Almighty God and the merits of the blessed apostles Peter and Paul” that Pepin would free them from the cruel and proud Lombards and remained prostrate before the king until he and his sons and nobles stretched forth the hand and raised him from the ground in token of their future aid and deliverance.

Pepin also promised to restore what the Lombards had already seized. He also promised Papal jurisdiction over some conquered lands which became historically famous and known as “Pepin’s Donation,” the foundations of the Pope’s lust for temporal power. The Popes never let the Frankish kings forget this promise, repeatedly raising the matter in correspondence and reminding them of their promise to Peter and Paul!: indeed in 756 Pepin received a letter direct from Peter, pressing him to comply with his promises! In the same year Pepin had his final victory over the Lombards and he handed over to the Pope the provinces of Ravenna, Rimini and Pesaro and other towns and their dependencies.

This land represents about 25% of the Italian leg and remained as the personal lands of the Popes from 756 to 1870. Thus, too, the Pope became an important secular prince and took over the old Byzantine dominion (of the Emperor in Constantinople) in Central Italy. We can see the truly wonderful way in which Revelation 13 was being fulfilled. Papal support was coming from beyond the Alps and not from the Mediterranean powers. The “beast of the earth” was rising!

The Heritage of Charlemagne

A feature of Germanic law was the equal division of inheritance among the sons of the deceased. So when Pepin died in 768 the vast Frankish dominion was divided between his older son Charles and his younger son Carloman. Charles received a northern crescent of lands, facing all the current foes whilst Carloman had a rounded territory of what was left above the Alps. So Charles was distanced from the Pope and it may have been thought then that a union of Pope and Charles could never occur. Furthermore Carloman had made distinct and successful advances towards the Pope and stolen his favour. It was their mother Bertrada that blocked her younger son by arranging the marriage of the Lombard princess(!) to Charles and remarkably,
persuading Pope Stephen that this would neutralise his Lombard foe and provide him the support of the elder son. This scheme worked and Carloman saw himself check-mated by his beloved mother! However Carloman suddenly died at the age of 20 years so that in 771 Charles became monarch over all the lands of the Frankish kingdom: the “beast of the earth” now had an unfettered road to glory!

The Character of Charlemagne

The achievements of Charlemagne are simply stunning. He reigned for 46 years, to AD 814 and until the last few years was involved in military campaigns on every side. The Saxons, Alemani, Dutch Friesians and Lombards were some of his more consistent foes but there were innumerable conflicts from Prussia to the Pyrenees, from the Atlantic to Bavaria. On every side he sought to conquer and pacify his neighbours, to advance his dominion and convert them into Christian communities, loyal to the Pope and his Trinitarian doctrine.

The Frankish Church

Before Charlemagne the Frankish Church was avowedly Catholic and Trinitarian, but its structure and uniformity was lacking compared to the established church and cathedrals of the Roman world. The divisions and dioceses of the Frankish church were randomly organised and many of their customs, habits and training were amateur compared with the older, traditional southern churches. Of great significance was the vigour and zeal of Irish and English missionaries; these people were more Catholic than the Italians and more scholarly than those in the Roman regions. Their impact and influence on the new lands of Pepin and Charlemagne were enormous. The pre-eminent name was that of the English monk Boniface, whose contribution was so great that he became known as “the apostle of Germany.” When this fresh fundamental Catholic teaching was combined with the strong and meticulous organisation of Charlemagne, we have the foundation of that profound Catholic hold that the Roman Church had over Europe for over a thousand years. In all his 46 years as king and emperor Charlemagne gave priority to the teaching of the Church and its influence at every level of society. Hence he was later canonised as a “saint” by the Pope in the 13th century and revered, with Constantine, in the Roman and Anglican churches.

The Lombards, Again!

Whilst Charlemagne conducted numerous military campaigns there were two accomplishments that stood out in his illustrious record. The Saxons in the far north proved a resourceful and recurring foe against whom Charlemagne showed the full expression of his determination and, finally, his savage cruelty. He was not content until in 782 he had totally subjected, converted and integrated these barbaric peoples.

But in the south the Lombards under Desiderius again threatened the Papacy, bringing an army into Italy and stripping a number of cities from the Pope’s dominion.

Charlemagne (above) is noted as the founder of “the Holy Roman Empire.” It was an empire that lasted for 1,000 years at the heartland of Europe, so-called Middle Europe (or as the Germans have it Mittel-europische Reich). In the book of Revelation this empire is symbolized by the Beast of the Earth (Revelation 13:11). It had two horns “like” a lamb, but speaks like the Roman Dragon. A horn is the symbol of power, and here is a two-horned dynasty having dominion in central Europe (the earth). It is a Beast in sheep’s clothing, appearing to be Christian but really counterfeit. This “holy” empire passed on to Otto, who continued to “deceive those who dwell on the earth.”
Charles reaction was like his father Pepin, to cross the Alps on to the north of Italy—the “plains of Lombardy,” and thoroughly subjugate the Lombards. In the spring of 1774 at the invitation of the Pope Hadrian, Charles entered the imperial city of Rome, the first Frankish king to do so, and was received in pomp and splendour, by the whole city and the Papal offices in particular. He looked the part, dressed in Roman costume, passing through the streets in triumphal glory! He ascended the stairs of St Peter’s Cathedral, kissing each one as he went, to be honourably welcomed and kissed by Pope Hadrian and his hierarchy. Here was their new saviour to protect their city and recover their lands, now “King of the Franks,” “Lombard King” and “Patrician of the Romans”—yet still not emperor of the Romans!

When Charles left Rome he had given assurance that he would fulfil the terms of Pepin’s Donation; yet in fact he delayed despite repeated letters from successive popes—and from the apostle Peter himself! The Pope even had the deeds of the promised land, given, would you believe, 500 years before by none less than Constantine! The keys to the lands were said to be placed on the tomb of St Peter! There seemed to be no ploy too ridiculous for the Papacy: his correspondence was obsessed with the land of Pepin’s promise, with almost no comment of spiritual things or pastoral concerns.

In the year 799 Pope Leo was ill and caught up in a spate of charges against his behaviour. He crossed the Alps to meet Charles and travelled as far north as Saxony where the King was engaged in gruelling rebellion.

Charlemagne dispatched officers to escort the Pope back to Rome where the trouble-makers were condemned and banished.

25th December 800

A year later Charles was in Rome again but this was the time of greater significance in his reign. Gathered in St Peter’s Cathedral were all the Papal dignitaries and all those that accompanied the King. Upon the Pope’s confession of innocence the whole congregation burst out in praise to God, to the Virgin Mary, to “St Peter” and to all the saints. This was the time of greater significance in his reign. Gathered in St Peter’s Cathedral were all the Papal dignitaries and all those that accompanied the King. Upon the Pope’s confession of innocence the whole congregation burst out in praise to God, to the Virgin Mary, to “St Peter” and to all the saints.

The grandness and glory of this event required the knowledge and acquiescence of Charlemagne. In another day it may have been called “treason,” for who was he to accept such an illustrious title when there was an existing Emperor on the throne. This action was deliberate, decisive and remarkable. The Roman world was split into East and West! An event of immense significance had occurred. A thousand years lay ahead when the organisation of Europe would fall on these lines. Whilst the actual term came later, this 800th year was the beginning of the Holy Roman Empire. No longer would the Papal See be looking east to Constantinople for support, but rather north to the great Charlemagne and to the Carolingian dynasty of kings that would follow. This phase of Roman history is signified Scripturally by “the Beast of the Earth,” where support was received by the Pope to allow him to magnify himself above all that is worshipped. Charlemagne was the key player in this great event in history and his zeal, his strength, his competency and his longevity all combined to make this possible. Well had God raised up the right man according as His Word had spoken. At a time of great change the leader requires a wide range of qualities, Charles the Great had them all: intelligence, scholarship, courage, leadership, martial skills, eloquence, and power of organisation. When the Pope wrote to him on one occasion, he called him “the modern Constantine.” When the Papacy was desperate they looked for a strong and worldly suitor and when they found him they likened him to their original provider of temporal power.

2007...and the Story Continues

The Holy Roman Empire in its various stages lasted for 1000 years (800 to 1789-92) so the historical significance of Charlemagne is very great. The French Revolution in 1789-94 and the wars of Napoleon (1795-1815) blew it apart, but whenever the concept of European unity again emerged then the name of Charlemagne inevitably came to the fore. In the days of the powerful German Chancellor Bismarck, his name was frequently mentioned. So, too in the days of Kaiser Wilhelm which led to WWI and Adolf Hitler in WWII with his Third Reich. It always echoed back to Charlemagne.

More poignantly the last 40 years of European integration have been coloured with the notions of the Charlemagne era. His name is heard in their councils, found on their coins and notes, and taught in their schools. It is the present German Chancellor that is pressing so fervently for a role for the Pope and the church in the growing phenomenon of the EU, and Europe is increasingly hearing her voice. The Papacy needs a champion and Europe is striving to find the roots of its existence.

They rest in the soil of the Germano–Papal league of AD 800.

• Charlemagne was the dominant influence at that time.
• Today the winner of the annual award for European Unity is awarded “the Charlemagne Prize”!

What a testimony this is to the Word of God. Revelation chapter 13 is a wonderful summary of the principle features of the Middle Ages and their legacy.
A BOOK FOR THE TIMES

Written by the late Graham Pearce with information update by Paul Billington.
A Review of Prophecy in Harmony with The Hope of Israel as taught by Christadelphians for over 150 years.
1. Elpis Israel: A Key to the Understanding of Bible Truth
2. Prophecy Fulfilling: Russia, The Vatican & The Invasion of Israel
3. The Redeemer Comes to Zion: The Way to Jerusalem.

The principles of interpretation outlined in this book provide a sound basis upon which we may understand world events as they unfold in our time. Though written in the 1970’s Graham Pearce correctly identified trends that were fulfilling prophecy in harmony with the Truth, and which are continuing today.

We now stand—in 2007—on the very threshold of the Lord’s return. May these writings help prepare us as we await that final call.

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 Developments in Europe today are demonstrating a remarkable fulfillment of Bible prophecy.

By Don Pearce  RUGBY, UK.

What an exciting year it has been! There is nothing new under the sun said the wise man Solomon. What goes around comes around again. Just as Bible students watched the emergence of a strong Germany in the 1930’s, helped by Russia, so again we are seeing Russia assisting Germany to gain a dominant position in Europe. And as it was in the past, when many ignored the clear signs of Hitler’s intentions, so today. To watchers on Zion’s walls the rising again of Germany after 60 years of submission is greatly significant. Europe was dominated for long centuries by the Holy Roman Empire of the Germanic Nation—to give it its full title—and scripture leads us to expect such an empire again.

The other significant area of interest to Bible-guided watchers is the emergence of Saudi Arabia and the Gulf States as nations backing American and British actions to curb an expansionist Iran, and prepared to work with Israel rather than against her.

A Potted History of Germany—The 1st Two Reichs.

Quietly but confidently Germany has been lifting herself up from years of submission following the terrible things of WWII. There is no doubt Germany is on the march again, and this excites us, yet warns us as to how close we must be to the Master’s return!

Germany has gone through 3 empires. The 1st is featured in the beast of the earth of Revelation ch 13.

“And I beheld another beast coming up out of the earth; and he had two horns like a lamb, and he spake as a dragon. And he exerciseth all the power of the first beast before him, and causeth the earth and them which dwell therein to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed. And he doeth great wonders, so that he maketh fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men, And deceiveth them that dwell on the earth, by the means of those miracles which he had power to do in the sight of the beast; saying to them that dwell on the earth, that they should make an image to the beast, which had the wound by a sword, and did live. And he had power to give life unto the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak, and cause that as many as would not worship the image of the beast should both speak, and cause that as many as would not worship the image of the beast should be killed. And he causeth all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads: And that no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name” (Rev 13:11-16).

This symbol aptly describes the situation through the dark days of papal domination of Europe. The two horns symbolise the working together of Church and State. Pope and Emperor. This was the Holy Roman Empire. Initially started under Charlemagne in 800 AD, it moved from a French to a Germanic Empire with Otto I crowned by Pope John XXII in 962 AD. This Germanic Empire lasted until the destruction under the hand of Napoleon as detailed in the vial judgements of Revelation ch 16 and particularly the 4th and 5th vials, which were “poured out upon the sun” and “the seat of the beast.” By 1806 Napoleon ruled supreme, having defeated the Austrians (the seat of the Holy Roman Empire at this time) and their Russian and Prussian allies.

The 2nd Reich emerged from 1871 to 1919, and was brought to an end by Britain and her allies. Under the Treaty of Versailles Germany was tightly bound to prevent her emerging as a strong power again. Europe was carved up by the Allies to assist in this and to act as a barrier around Russia. Countries like Poland, Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia were set up and Austria separated from Hungary. Germany resented the constraints and the nations that Germany had defeated had not been consulted as to the new shape of Europe and so they too resented the situation.

The 3rd Reich

And so under Hitler the German’s rebelled against the shackles that they were under and the 3rd Reich emerged under Hitler in 1933, amidst great unemployment and rising inflation. Preparations for war gave employment to many millions. Hitler and Stalin signed a Non-Aggression Treaty in Aug 1939 whilst secretly agreeing to divide the spoils. Hitler’s attack on Poland in September 1939 led to the outbreak of WWII, and the division of Poland between the Soviet Union and Germany. Germany however attacked Russia, breaking their pact; Hitler had set his eyes on overthrowing communism. After a long and painful war—conservative estimates put the deaths at 50 to 60 million—Britain, America and their allies, together with Russia, had defeated Germany and the 3rd Reich which came to an ignominious end in 1945. Under the Yalta agreements, and later that year the Potsdam agreements, Germany was divided between the four Allies—Britain, America, France and Russia, (see map above), and Berlin itself similarly divided. Germany’s borders were again redrawn and Poland was as it were moved 100 miles westward, reducing the size of Germany and giving extra space to the Soviets. (see map right) It is estimated that over 5.6 million Poles (over 10% of their population) perished in
The new boundaries were to lead to the “iron curtain” that Churchill spoke of in his speech in America in March 1946.

From Stettin in the Baltic to Trieste in the Adriatic an iron curtain descended across the Continent.

In 1947 the British, American and French sectors were amalgamated to form the Federal Republic of Germany—West Germany—and in 1949 the Soviet sector became the German Democratic Republic—East Germany.

With the passage of time the division of Germany ended with the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and the reunification of Germany in 1990. It was in Eastern Germany that Angela Merkel, the current chancellor of Germany, grew up; hence her fluent Russian and a burning desire that never again would Germany come under the control of Russia. This remarkable woman—dubbed a “Margaret Thatcher” and an “iron lady”—came to power in the German elections in November 2005.

She was able to form a majority government and took over from Gerhard Schröder. Schröder subsequently joined the board of the consortium building the gas pipeline from Russia to Germany along the Baltic seabed.

Angela Merkel’s father was a Lutheran pastor and she studied physics and quantum chemistry before becoming involved in politics. As well as Russian, her English is near perfect. Consider what a remarkable woman she is. She is the first chancellor from East Germany, the first woman chancellor and the first non-Catholic chancellor. Her Lutheran background perhaps explains her work ethic. Remarkably too she has come to prominence just at a time when we have not only a German Pope but also a German Russian Patriarch, plus we also have Putin who was a Russian spy in East Germany and therefore speaks German perfectly!

The Beast Today—and Tomorrow

The ending of the beast of the earth under Napoleon did not bring a permanent end to the beast. In chapter 16 of Revelation we find in the 6th vial period, under which we are living, that the beast and the dragon are to be found, together with the false prophet. This is a new symbol introduced to the scene, but very relevant to the current situation. True prophets proclaimed God’s words, false prophets made up their message, claiming it was from God and deceiving those who did not examine those claims too closely. It is therefore an appropriate symbol for a religious system that claims to represent God, but in reality speaks falsely. The Roman Catholic Church fits the situation so well. The Pope claims to be the Vicar of Christ, yet preaches falsehood and deceives the people. His claim to infallibility when speaking ex-cathedra was only formally proclaimed as a dogma in 1870, the very year when the Pope was stripped of all his powers and lands. In past issues we have traced the dragon as a representative of Russia today, inheritor of the military power of Rome and destined to once again retake the old Roman capital of the empire, Constantinople. Germany is the main successor to the Western power of the Roman Empire. Hence our interest in her re-emergence as Europe’s leader.

There is a yet further development that will not fully develop until after the return of the Lord Jesus. Revelation ch.17 describes the next development in the beast/false prophet. Here the false prophet is described as an harlot woman who rides the beast at a time when the beast makes war with the Lamb. Clearly this still lies in the future; a development after the Lord has returned.

First let us see what Merkel is planning with the Constitution. We remember that the French and the Dutch rejected the ratification of it when they voted in 2005. The matter was put on one side for “a period of reflection.” Since then a few more countries have voted to accept it so that the tally now is 2 against, 15 for, with Germany, Finland and Slovakia having completed the necessary parliamentary procedures necessary for its ratification. This just leaves Sweden, Czech Republic, Ireland, Poland, Portugal, Sweden and the UK.

Merkel is determined to push a Constitution through in one form or another, with those rejecting it probably facing at least an outer position, if a 2-speed Europe is created, or a negotiated expulsion. Why does Germany want a Constitution? It is part of her aim for power. Instead of trying to impose German power through force of arms like Hitler, Germany sees her progress to power through the EU Constitution. So Germany has a very strong hand in political and, through the Pope and the Russia Patriarch, religious matters.

Let’s examine the recent growth in Germany. Circumstances (angelic control!) have led to both France and Britain being politically weak at this time. The French presidential elections are due in April this year. President Chirac has not so far indicated whether he will stand for a third term, his low popularity would make it unlikely that he would win even if he stood. His rivals are not experienced so it would seem that France will be in the shadows for some time. Mr Blair is due to stand down in—well is it May or June or perhaps September!! If Mr Brown succeeds him—as seems likely—but it is not certain that there will not be a leadership race—he too will need to grow into the job. As we shall see later, in any case it looks like a difficult time for Britain with Germany pressing for the European Constitution to be reinstated and a timetable agreed for this by the summer. Italy is in turmoil, Spain’s economy poor, so Germany seems to have the field free to herself!

Mrs Merkel grew in world stature in 2006—Forbes voting her last August as the world’s most powerful woman. 2007 especially appears to be the year for her and Germany. Consider these facts. She took over from Finland the Presidency of the Council of the European Union at the start of the year. She is chairman of the G8 and as G8 president she gave the opening talk at the Davos gathering of economists at the World Economic Forum in January. She is in charge of the 50th birthday celebrations of the Treaty of Rome in March. A German has also taken over as President of the EU Parliament (not to be confused with the Council of the European Union presidency). The EU Parliament is a very powerful institution and Hans-Gert Pöttering is an ally of Merkel and has vowed to help with her desire to breathe life into the EU Constitution. So Germany has a very strong hand in political and, through the Pope and the Russia Patriarch, religious matters.

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Merkel is determined to push a Constitution through in one form or another, with those rejecting it probably facing at least an outer position, if a 2-speed Europe is created, or a negotiated expulsion. Why does Germany want a Constitution? It is part of her aim for power. Instead of trying to impose German power through force of arms like Hitler, Germany sees her progress to power working through the EU. A Constitution would make Europe a political entity, able to speak with one voice and have one spokesperson for foreign affairs. This would put a stop to Britain’s political ambitions. She would no longer be allowed to operate on her own in...
conjunction with America. It provides a legal stranglehold on Britain’s independence! Germany being the most populated member of the EU would have the most clout within this political entity of Europe.

“Berlin’s constitutional drive will be put to the test next week when German chancellor Angela Merkel is expected at an EU leaders summit dinner on Thursday evening (8 March) to present her ideas for the Berlin declaration, marking the 50th anniversary of the EU.

“Berlin wants the solemn declaration, to be signed by EU leaders on 25 March, to include a reference to the need for a new EU treaty—possibly with a deadline for a compromise.

“But the move is opposed by states like the UK and the Netherlands who are not eager to be pushed on the constitutional issue” (EUObserver.com 1-3-07).

Presidency of the Council of the European Union lasts 6 months and then is over for another 137 years, with an EU of 27 members. Quietly there has been a subtle change that came into effect on Jan. 1st this year. There is now a “triple shared” period of 1.5 years. Three countries share the role, each assuming leadership for 6 months, but assisting in the other 2 periods. This is so that an experienced country can assist less experienced ones. Is it just a coincidence that when we look at what is planned for the next 3 years—see chart—that Germany and France are in a very strong position to influence the EU!

The New “triple shared” presidency of the Council of the European Union

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One Size Fits All—Not the Euro!

The problem for the euro countries is that they are locked into a currency that does not allow them to adjust their currency rate to suit their particular economic needs. In a world of one-size-fits-all, many are finding it either too big or too small! Strangely the only country it seems to fit is Germany—the very country that was at the heart of establishing a common currency! Italy and Spain are suffering badly. Not that it has come easily to Germany—she has had to go through the painful process, as Britain did under Mrs Thatcher, of curbing the Unions and increasing the flexibility of the workforce. She (and Britain) are reaping the rewards, Germany within the euro-zone and Britain outside it. 2006 was a good year for the German economy, she is much more competitive in the export markets which are her life-blood.

Masters of Transport

This was a headline to an interesting article from a German source. German-foreign policy.com puts out the majority of articles in German, with a few being translated into English. They are concerned at what they are seeing and seek to warn of Germany’s plans. This particular article was to show how Germany is working to be in control of the majority of the EU’s movements in goods. Germany traditionally has been good at building and running railways, not only at home but abroad. Under the new assertive Germany she is determined to be Master of Transport.

“The planned expansion of the German Railroad Corp, is part of a state subventioned, comprehensive development of the German logistical economy, that will be in line with the orientation of the booming German foreign trade. Currently Berlin is pursuing the logistics business in Middle Eastern countries as well as in Russia. Whereas the Persian Gulf has become the turntable for exports to the Arab world, the Russian Federation is considered the “corridor” for overland transport to China— including weapons supplies to the Afghan theater of operations. With additional billions, the German government is financing the expansion of German maritime trade as well. The objective is for Germany to obtain the predominating global position in the transport of merchandise—the world champion in transport.’

“It is said that the German logistics economy should develop into a “European hub” for the surrounding countries” (22-1-07).

As well as expanding her railways she is capturing the container ship business. The statistics are frightening as these charts (above) from the German news site Der -Spiegel show. She owns 1/3rd of the world’s container ships! The next chart shows new ships being built. Germany is way out front with nearly 1000 vessels being constructed. Picture what a stranglehold this will put on world trade if Germany seeks to assert herself. I wonder what military use these vessels could be put to in time of war!

Russia Helping Germany to Become Strong

Soviet policy was to make Germany strong during the period from 1920 to 1933 when Hitler came to power. Russia saw a strong Germany as a useful ally against America. However Hitler didn’t work by the rules and the Soviets were taken by surprise when Hitler tore up his agreements and sent his troops against Russia. A particularly severe Russian winter ended his dreams of bringing the whole of Europe under Germany’s control. Millions perished on both sides. Time passes, new generations arise, and we can see Russia and Germany working together again, as a further article shows. It was the report of a talk given in London on 29th January by an editorial member of German-foreign-policy.com, Horst Teubert. The headline was arresting Germany’s bid for great power status through the EU. He showed how Germany is using her position within the EU to project herself as a Great Power.

“Moscow wants to make Germany the hub for the distribution of natural gas to the rest of Europe. President Vladimir Putin said that this would alter the importance of Germany in the energy economy of Western Europe. This was a polite description for a massive growth of power which had already been announced with the construction of Nord Stream, the so-called Baltic pipeline.

“Exclusive German/Russian cooperation, which shuts out other West European firms and makes Germany into the controller of West European gas supplies, is matched by military cooperation between the two countries.

“Joint Russian/German military exercises have taken place for years. In 2004 the two defence ministers agreed to develop military equipment and armaments in cooperation. In December Russia launched the first German military espionage satellite into space—
cooperation in space is closer between Moscow and Berlin than with Washington or Paris. The Kremlin has agreed that Russian transport planes can be put at NATO’s disposal on a German air base.”

**Germany Seeking UN Seat**

As part of Germany’s desire for power she and Japan are seeking to have a permanent seat on the UN Council. The five existing permanent members are America, Britain, France, Russia and China. Ironically the UN was set up after WWII in order to ensure that never again would Germany or Japan rise to great power. 60 years later the situation is seen through different eyes.

**Poland’s Uneasy Position**

Poland has proved to be a troublesome member of the EU since her accession in 2004. We saw earlier how Poland had suffered at the hands of Germany and Russia; she is now determined not to be pushed around but to stand up to her former enemies. She has blocked the conclusion of an energy agreement between the EU and Russia last year until an unrelated issue over meat exports to Russia is sorted. She is refusing to automatically submit to membership of the euro-zone, as all new members are made to do. She is at loggerheads with the EU over a new highway due to be built through an area of outstanding natural beauty. The Poles are very unhappy that their country has been bypassed as a route for the new Russian-German gas pipeline, depriving them of much needed revenues.

There is also a battle over the swath of land that was taken off Germany at the end of the War and given to Poland. There are those in Germany taking steps to recover their property. Poland wants Germany to renounce any rights to this area, but she is not willing to do this.

We should keep our eyes on Germany as she steers the EU during the next few critical months. We turn now to the Middle East situation.

**The Gulf States Turn to the West**

As we reported in the last issue, one of the consequences of the Lebanon War has been to heighten the fears of the Sunni Muslim states to the threats of Iranian Shiite aggression. They saw the careful preparations that Iran, through Hezbollah had made in southern Lebanon. Ahmadinejad’s threats were not empty words! The removal of Saddam Hussein has had unintended consequence. His Sunni government was a bulwark against Iran’s expansion into Iraq. With Saddam removed Iran is openly stirring up trouble in Iraq with the intention of taking control of the region.

Saudi Arabia has emerged as a strong force supporting America and Britain’s defence of Iraq. She is determined to use her money and her muscle to counter the Iranian threat.

She is also working to support Israel, as it is obvious to the rulers of the region, that were Israel to fall, their thrones would be in imminent danger from Iran. Part of this support is to try to wean the Palestinians away from Iran’s orbit and replace it by Saudi influence.

**Saudi King Abdullah bin Abdul. Can he bring stability to the Middle East, with the backing of the United States and Britain?**

February 19th seemed to yield little in the way of progress, apart from a promise to meet again. Debka Feb. 23rd revealed however that the important meeting was the one that followed when Condoleezza Rice flew into Jordan the following day. There were assembled Arab secret service chiefs from Egypt, Saudi, UAE and Jordan together with American CIA directors, to discuss how they could work together to make progress against Iran. We watch the situation with interest.

**Blair’s Visit to the United Arab Emirates**

One of the participants at the above meeting was from the UAE. Bearing in mind that one of the Dedan’s seem to have occupied the western seaboard of the Persian Gulf, Mr. Blair’s speech on the 20th December 2006 to business leaders in Dubai whilst visiting the region is quite remarkable.

“First of all what I would like to do is to explain how closely the histories of our two countries have been intertwined for 200 years and over that time no country has had a deeper involvement here. A unique relationship of which we in the UK are intensely proud. This is a partnership too that has left us with a deep well of shared experience, respect and friendship. We each know how the other thinks, reacts, and dreams. We trust each other. I understand that London is often referred to here as the eighth Emirate and there were something like half a million visits from the UAE to the UK last year and there is news almost every day of a new Emirates acquisition in the UK.

“While here the UK is privileged to have over 120,000 residents, so I understand, and over 1 million British tourists. Over 100,000 of you are here in Dubai alone. Dubai is now the favourite long haul destination for British travellers after New York. And the widespread use of the English language a priceless asset.”

“Add to that a flourishing business relationship. UAE is the UK’s ninth largest export market. We export more here than to China. Over the last 5 years the UK’s trade figures have risen by a factor of 6 and they doubled again last year. The investment relationship is equally important. We strongly welcome Emirate investment into the UK, for example Dubai Ports World takeover of P & O. British companies for their part are heavily involved in Dubai’s big projects, like the HSBC, Standard Chartered, Lloyds TSB and Barclays have all committed to the Dubai International Finance Centre.

“We therefore decided a few months ago to make the UAE one of the British government’s top ten priority business partners over the next 5 years. And standing here and looking around at the very distinguished group of business people I have here, I can see how right that decision is already proving.”

**Watching and Waiting**

It is thrilling when we bring together so many strands of prophecy, seeing them reaching their final fulfillment in our day. What tremendous changes there have been in say the past 40 years. The world has changed in so many ways, all pointing to the nearness of our Master’s Return. These words addressed to the 1st century disciples have a message for us today.

“And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh” (Lk. 21:28).

We reflect on God’s words to Habakkuk:—

“For the vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie: though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry. Behold, his soul which is lifted up is not upright in him: but the just shall live by his faith” (Hab 2:3,4).

Come quickly Lord Jesus.

**MILESTONES 2006 available from:**

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The phrase used by the prophet Isaiah in chapter 34:8, “the controversy of Zion,” could not better describe the situation that has developed in the Holy Land concerning the modern Jewish state of Israel. This never-ending crisis including the People of the Book has brought “distress of nations with perplexity,” while the city of Jerusalem itself really has become “a burdensome stone for all people” (Luke 21:25; Zechariah 12:3). This controversy is not only political—it is both religious and philosophical bringing to a focus the intense debate over the authority of the Bible and its meaning.

The dispute over the Land of the Bible, not only concerns Jews and Arabs, but involves those who believe the Book to be the word of the Living God—and strangely enough, those who claim that it is not whether on textual or philosophical considerations. This “controversy of Zion” is the issue that draws words of fire from Jew, Arab, Christian fundamentalist, Humanist, Church authority or confessed atheist and Islamic fanatic.

It is upon this anvil that the future of the world will be beaten out and formed. It is the final battleground for the control and mastery of the earth.

“Deep and Radical Antagonism”

It was the Scottish Presbyterian professor of Church history, James Orr (1844-1913), who wrote “that between this view of the world involved in (fundamental) Christianity, and what is sometimes called ‘the modern view of the world’ there exists a deep and radical antagonism.”

That “antagonism” is one that exists not only between believer and non-believer, as it did over a century ago, but now between supporters of Israel and its opponents.

Today there is a hatred of Israel, its Zionism—and of any Bible-based culture (Jewish or Christian). It is manifest as an almost universal sentiment in the European left-wing media—including that of Britain. Today’s anti-Zionism remarkably mirrors the European inspired anti-Semitism of the 1930’s. The “deep and radical antagonism” to the Book and its people was openly proclaimed in a virulent article in the Guardian newspaper (U.K.) on January 3rd, 2001. The headline and sub-heading ran: ISRAEL SIMPLY HAS NO RIGHT TO EXIST, Peace might have a real chance without Israelis’ biblical claims. “Israel stands as the realisation of a biblical statement” said the article. And in referring to the biblical promises the writer said: “...the idea that Israel is some kind of religious birthright has the imprisoned Jews in a never-ending cycle of conflict. The ‘promise’ breeds an arrogance and institutionalises the inferiority of other peoples and generates atrocities against them with alarming regularity.” The “atrocities” of course are those that Israelis are said to commit against the “other peoples.” Atrocities against Jews do not count—just as they didn’t in Nazi Germany.

War Against the Book

The battle against the Bible has been waged for many centuries. During the Christian era it has been the target of pagan Rome, of Catholic Rome, of French philosophy, of German critics, of Rationalism and of modern schools of thought in religious and non-religious fields. The question surely arises as to why these worldly powers (religious and secular) have gone to such lengths in their efforts to destroy, discredit and
irrational as that hatred of the Jews—or today, of Israel. After all, why would a newspaper in Britain like the Guardian, or the Daily Mirror—or the BBC for that matter—care about whether an American president believes his Bible?

The fact is that a scan of history reveals a continuing and relentless war against both the Bible and those who believed it and sought to live by its teachings. Note the following selected instances when attempts were made to suppress the Bible:

- **1st Century A.D.** Corruption and Forgery of New Testament texts (2 Thess. 2:2) and profusion of Gnostic writings (1 John 4:1-6).
- **2nd & 3rd Centuries** Anti-Christian persecution in the Roman Empire (Rev. 6:9). Spurious texts in circulation.
- **A.D. 303** Emperor Diocletian orders all Christian books to be Burnt.
- **A.D. 870** Paulicans are exiled from Armenia to Constantinople and Thrace: Their books are ordered Burnt.
- **A.D. 988** First instance of a Roman canon (such as the British & foreign Bible Society).
- **A.D. 1223** Council of Toulouse, France, prohibits the Bible to laymen (Period of the Albigenses and Waldenses).
- **A.D. 1229** Catholic Church in the Council of Valencia places the Bible on the Index of Forbidden Books.
- **A.D. 1525-1543** William Tyndale translates the Bible into English—copies are banned, seized and Burnt. All Bibles bearing Tyndale’s name ordered Burnt again under the supervision of the Church in 1543.
- **A.D. 1545-1563** Council of Trent condemns the proposition that “the Holy Scriptures contain all things necessary for salvation.”
- **A.D. 1812** Stocks of Bibles belonging to the British & Foreign Bible Society confiscated and Burnt in Madrid, Spain.
- **A.D. 1875** Julian Huxley promotes “unification of the mind” policy via unesco, which involved the removal of the Bible from schools in order to make way for a Humanist world-view.

It is quite clear from the above brief overview, that the Church of Rome has considered the influence of the Bible to be a threat to its authority and power—hence she has tried to suppress it. Equally keen to banish the Book are those who embrace a Humanist philosophy. Today a marriage of convenience has taken place between these two enemies of the Truth, and they have gained almost total control of the media, seats of learning and government.

**War against the People**

It is hardly coincidence that those who have battled against the Book, have also been foremost in the persecution of God’s people. Jesus told his followers that some of them would be “put to death, and ye shall be hated of all men for my name’s sake” (Mark 13:12, 13 etc.). He told others “be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life” (Revelation 12:10). There were to be those “slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held” (Revelation 6:9). There were “witnesses” who would be made war against (chapter 11:3-7), and so history declares it to have been so. “Bible people” we may call them, who were murdered and burnt at the stake because of their devotion to the word of God—the holy Scriptures.

Then of course there was the Jewish nation itself, “for unto them were committed the oracles of God” (Romans 3:2). Unwilling witnesses perhaps, but standing monuments to the truth of the Bible—that Book which foretold their national history and which predicts their glorious destiny. They too would experience “a perpetual hatred” against themselves (Ezekiel 35:5)— they would suffer for the Name of God, which had been named upon them (ISA-EL). This nation was God’s choice, and those who speak against Israel speak against God Himself (Ezekiel 35:13). Again, the prophet Zechariah declares: “he that toucheth you toucheth the apple of his eye” (chapter 2:8).

The point to recognize here is that those who are identified with the Bible experience persecution. The Christian fundamentalist, the nation of Israel and the Bible itself are all the recipients of the world’s antagonism today. At first glance this antagonism is irrational, yet if it be examined closely it will be found to grow out of a rejection of God and His revealed principles of righteousness.

**The “Secular Society”**

This phrase—the secular society—is camouflage language by which to describe a Godless society—a society which does not want God or any of His laws. It is a society that is exhibiting the disposition of those who built

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**Anti-Israeli propaganda in the Guardian**

July 2006—A symbol of media bias
disputer of this world? hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe" (verses 19-21).

There is thus a deep divide between those who follow the thinking patterns of the modern world, and those whose thinking is shaped by the Bible. They are not even speaking the same language, for a great gulf exists between them. But in any war there are gains and losses, there are advances and there are retreats. If this modern philosophy begins to enter in to a believer, it does so at the expense of the authority of the word of God. In other words the full assurance of faith is watered down, as beliefs become opinions. Everything becomes a theory—all views must be respectfully tolerated, and so the path of apostasy—of abandoning the faith—is commenced. The plain statements of Scripture (and its promises) become open to “interpretation” and measured alongside human values. The authority of God and His prerogative to choose some people and reject others is called into question—it is considered unfair; there should be equal opportunity... but God has spoken, and His word shall stand whether the world likes it or not.

But while the world engages in its anti-Bible crusade and makes war against faith in the word of God, the true believer has to understand that (like it or not) he is engaged in a spiritual battle. The alternative to this conflict is surrender; it is desertion.

As we have seen, the world is governed and ruled by “the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience” (Ephesians 2:2). It is a world that is in rebellion against God.

Babel and said:
“...Go to, let us make brick, and burn them thoroughly. And they had brick for stone, and slime had they for mortar. And they said, Go to, let us build us a city and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven; and let us make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth” (Genesis 11:3-4).

Now a city of course, accommodates a society—and in this case one that desired to make a name for itself. This was to be the City of man—“Let us build us a city.” There was no intention here to honour God’s Name—they said “let us make us a name.” This is a clear statement declaring a rejection of God’s ways while establishing a kingdom of men (Nimrod’s kingdom in fact—Genesis 10:8-10).

 Appropriately, this was to be a city of clay, for the words used in verse 3 (translated “brick”) tell us that. Literally, they said let us make white clay bricks and fire them. So they had lebanah (white clay bricks) for stone, and slime (bitumen) for mortar. A clay city for clay men!

The word translated “mortar” also has the idea of clay and is translated as such in Isaiah 29:16. Look at the character of this clay:
“Woe unto them that seek deep to hide their counsel from the Lord, and their works are in the dark, and they say, Who seeth us? and who knoweth us? Surely your turning of things upside down shall be esteemed as the potter’s clay: for shall the work say of him that made it, He made me not? or shall the thing framed say of him that framed it, He had no understanding?” (Isaiah 29:15-16).

The “clay” here is representative of those who strive with their Maker, or Creator—saying “He made me not... He had no understanding.” See also Isaiah 45:9. It is atheistic in character. These were the characteristics built into the city of Babel. It tells us what kind of society lived there, and it has its counterpart in a modern Humanist and secular society.

An Ideological Divide

Once the Bible was put aside and rejected as being the word of God, then human wisdom and intelligence became identified as the light of the world. This has led through a history of philosophical thought—through rationalism, empiricism and Immanuel Kant’s modernism—to today’s postmodernism. This postmodernism teaches that “reality” only exists in the mind—there is no such thing as fact or truth; it just doesn’t exist! This is the utter foolishness to which the wisdom of men leads us—it ends in total darkness. It brings us to George Orwell’s “denial of reality” and to such a confused and illogical mental condition that such people even doubt their own existence! We can take up the words of the apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians chapter one:
“For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent. Where is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world? hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe” (verses 19-21).

There is thus a deep divide between those who follow the thinking patterns of the modern world, and those whose thinking is shaped by the Bible. They are not even speaking the same language, for a great gulf exists between them. But in any war there are gains and losses, there are advances and there are retreats. If this modern philosophy begins to enter in to a believer, it does so at the expense of the authority of the word of God. In other words the full assurance of faith is watered down, as beliefs become opinions. Everything becomes a theory—all views must be respectfully tolerated, and so the path of apostasy—of
Therefore in order to maintain his own faithfulness the true believer must make a stand. The apostle Paul wrote:

“Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness” (Ephesians 6:11-14).

There is a work to be done by the Lord’s people—a work of “casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ” (2 Corinthians 10:5). As John Thomas forcibly put it over a century ago:

“Human governments have all been opposed to God’s truth, and they have made war upon all that class of people in their several countries who are entitled spiritually to the designation of the saints. You cannot make peace between them. That is the reason why we who advocate the doctrine of God’s saints are in hostility to the world. Those on our side who would make peace with the enemy are not fit to be on our side. It is war to the knife between the powers that be and all Christadelphians. We accept no truce; we will consent to no compromise. Either they must conquer us or we will conquer them,—by argument now, but when the time for argument is passed away, and the Lord has come with power and great glory, His saints will take the sword and conquer the world, whether the world likes it or not.” (The Book Unsealed 1869).

Preparing the ‘Battle-Axe’

While some have been engaged in a spiritual warfare against the enemies of Bible truth, there has been a gradual preparation for a final conflict taking place on another and more natural level. Speaking of “Israel, the rod of his inheritance” the Lord of Hosts (Yhwh of armies) says:

“Thou art my battle axe and weapons of war: for with thee will I break in pieces the nations, and with thee will I destroy kingdoms; And with thee will I break in pieces the horse and his rider; and with thee will I break in pieces the chariot and his rider; With thee also will I break in pieces man and woman; and with thee will I break in pieces old and young; and with thee will I break in pieces the young man and the maid; I will also break in pieces with thee the shepherd and his flock; and with thee will I break in pieces the husbandman and his yoke of oxen; and with thee will I break in pieces

captains and rulers. And I will render unto Babylon and to all the inhabitants of Chaldea all their evil that they have done in Zion in your sight, saith the Lord” (Jeremiah 51:20-24).

This will be the destiny of the Clay City in the latter days. The Humanistic and democratic clay which Daniel says will be mixed with Roman iron, is to be broken in pieces by the battleaxe of Israel when it becomes the stone-power of Daniel 2:43-45. Both Daniel and Jeremiah’s prophecies are dealing with the destiny of Babylon, and both prophets tell us that it is to be broken in pieces. This will be accomplished by Israel who in that day will have been prepared for the task during their long and bitter history.

This is the bone that sticks in the throats of atheists, Humanists, and anti-Bible warriors. It was well expressed by the writer Thomas Newton over 250 years ago when he said that the Jews were “a standing monument of the truth of Christ’s predictions.” This is what he wrote in 1754:

“There are now almost 1700 years, in which the Jewish nation have been a standing monument of the truth of Christ’s predictions, themselves dispersed over the face of the whole earth, and their land groaning under the yoke of foreign lords and conquerors: and at this day there is no reason to doubt but they will continue in the same state, nor ever recover their native country, ‘until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled.’ Our Saviour’s words are very memorable, ‘Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled.’ It is still trodden down by the Gentiles, and consequently the times of the Gentiles are not yet fulfilled. When the ‘times of the Gentiles’ shall be ‘fulfilled,’ then the expression implies, that the Jews shall be restored: and for what reason, can we believe, that though they are dispersed among all nations, yet, by a constant miracle, they are kept distinct from all, but for the farther manifestation of God’s purposes towards them? The prophecies have been accomplished, to the greatest exactness, in the destruction of their city, and its continuing still subject to strangers; in the dispersion of their people, and their living still separate from all people: and why should not the remaining parts of the same prophecies be as fully accomplished too, in their restoration, at the proper season, when the ‘times of the Gentiles’ shall be fulfilled?’”

This “monument of the truth” has stood as a challenge to the City of Man (“Babylon”) in all ages.

Through the prophet Isaiah God says of the Jews: “Ye are my witnesses.” What a challenge this is to the world:

“Let all the nations be gathered together, and let the people be assembled: who among them can declare this, and shew us former things? let them bring forth their witnesses, that they may be justified: or let them hear, and say, It is truth. Ye are my witnesses, saith the Lord, and my servant whom I have chosen: that ye may know and believe me, and understand that I am he: before me there was no God formed, neither shall there be after me” (Isa. 43:9-10).

It is this that has evoked the hatred of the Jews. Adolf Hitler commented in his book Mein Kampf as follows:

“During my study of the influence of the Jewish nation throughout long periods of human history, the gloomy
question suddenly occurred to me whether possibly inscrutable destiny, for reasons unknown to us poor mortals, had not decreed the final victory of that little nation.”

In the same book he disparagingly calls the Jews “the chosen people.” He quickly banished such a thought from his mind however—and the rest is history. Well, almost. On April 29, 1945, as allied forces closed in on Berlin, Hitler wrote in his last “Political Testament:”

“Centuries will pass away, but out of the ruins of our towns and monuments the hatred against those finally responsible whom we have to thank for everything, international Jewry and its helpers, will grow.”

The Jews, Zionism, Israel... whatever banner is chosen, the old hatred manifests itself—and today we are seeing this phenomenon appear with renewed vigour as the world becomes more and more hostile towards the Jewish (“racist!”) state of Israel.

As with Hitler’s Germany, the hatred of Zionism and of Bible-based cultures will bring the ruin of the modern world. The issue will come to a head and will be decided upon the mountains of Israel.

“Enmity against God”

Whereas Humanists tell us that there is a little good in everyone, that we are a product of our environment—the Bible gives us a very different view of human nature. And it is a consistent picture that is placed before us:

• Every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually—Genesis 6:5
• For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders... Mark 7:21
• There is none righteous, no, not one... there is none that doeth good, no, not one—Romans 3:10 and 12; quoting Psalms 14 and 53.
• The carnal mind (mind of flesh) is enmity against God—Romans 8:7

Here is the root cause and reason why the world rejects the Bible and prefers to invent its own philosophy and explanation of things. It is why we have seen a declaration of war upon God and His word. The truth is just too distasteful. When we really get down to it people just do not like to recognise “sin in the flesh”—they prefer to see a little good in everyone!

The apostle John wrote that “he that believeth not God hath made him a liar” (1 John 5:10), and that is not a wise position to take. Of course, men and women have been left
free to call God a liar (for now), but as Jesus told his disciples—“he that believeth not shall be damned” (or condemned)—Mark 16:16. So those who do not wish to be “condemned with the world” (1 Corinthians 11:32) must “come out from among them, and be separate... and touch not the unclean thing”—see 2 Corinthians 6:17.

In the modern world there are very few who are really aware of the issues, for the public (the masses) are led by the blind “formers of public opinion.” They are deceived and kept in ignorance of the word of God, being indoctrinated with an unclean philosophy that corrupts the mind and morals of those who are poisoned or intoxicated with it. Hence we see these poor deluded wretches bearing banners on protest marches against Israeli “aggression” and “occupation,” not realizing that they are following in Hitler’s footsteps and heading for “the battle of that great day of God Almighty” (Revelation 16:14).

“For it is the day of the Lord’s vengeance, and the year of recompences for the controversy of Zion” (Isaiah 34:8).

The Honour of God

When properly understood, this is what the dispute over the land of the Bible is all about. It is focussing the world upon the great promises that God made many centuries ago—it is forcing the attention of the nations upon Israel, and consequently upon the Bible itself. The great and Almighty God declares through the prophet Joel:

“I will also gather all nations, and will bring them down into the valley of Jehoshaphat, and will plead with them there for my people and for my heritage Israel, whom they have scattered among the nations, and parted my land” (Joel 3:2).

It can only be ignorance, or else the wilful disbelief of hardened hearts that fails to perceive events in the Middle East as leading straight into a day of judgment for the nations. Here, upon the mountains of Israel, the Truth will be vindicated once and for all. The details of the final crisis itself are plainly set before us in Ezekiel chapters 38 and 39. After describing the great invasion of the Land by the nations, and the sudden and dramatic Divine intervention, God says through Ezekiel (chapter 38:23),

“There will I magnify myself, and sanctify myself; and I will be known in the eyes of many nations, and they shall know that I am the Lord.”

This is when the great proclamation of Revelation 14:7 will go forth:

“...Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come: and worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters. And there followed another angel, saying, Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication” (Rev.14:7-8).

I will gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle’ Zechariah 14:2.
Early believers in Corinth had to face many internal challenges, and Paul’s advice can help us today.

We would be horrified if we attended “the church (or ecclesia) of God which is at Corinth” around AD 55. Here was a community that was about 5 years old and very inexperienced in the things of God. Although they had in a figure “ten thousand instructors in Christ” they did not have “many fathers” or those capable of teaching the power and spirit of Christ (1 Cor. 4:15). When Paul arrived, he found the community loose in morals, astray doctrinally, and torn apart with factions that set every man against his neighbor. Love and compassion were sorely lacking, and biting and devouring amongst one another seemed the rule. The members were so cold and insensitive that they were taking each other to law before the unbeliever to settle disputes (1 Cor. 6:1-8). Others were so callous and inconsiderate that they freely ate meat that was offered in sacrifice to pagan gods—and ate it even in pagan temples, to the detriment of others (1 Cor. 8).

Surely an impartial observer could conclude that such men and women were reprobates and hypocrites, and that Christ could possibly have nothing to do with them.

The assembly was torn by factions (1 Cor. 1:11-12). The Paulist party called for the complete rejection of the law and was in fact demanding a liberty that bordered upon license. Others followed and admired Peter, who being a Jew, grew up in strict accordance with the Law of Moses. They were the Judaisers who said that you must be circumcised and observe the Law of Moses. They were the Judaisers who were previously Chief Rulers of the Temple, to the detriment of others (1 Cor. 8). Surely an impartial observer could conclude that such men and women were reprobates and hypocrites, and that Christ could possibly have nothing to do with them.

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A Privileged Invitation

Like every Ecclesia, the Corinthians were an assembly of men and women who have been extended a solemn and privileged invitation to the highest honor that could possibly be conferred. This invitation, by the Almighty God of Israel, invites us to be kings and priests in a Kingdom that will be universal and sovereign throughout the entire earth (Rev. 5:10). The marvelous thing is that men and women are called out of this world from all walks of life and moral conditions, which is the meaning of ecclesia—"a calling out". At Corinth, some were “fornicators, idolaters, adulterers, male prostitutes, sodomites, thieves, the greedy, drunkards, revilers, robbers” (1 Cor. 6:9-10 NRSV). God, however, has graciously invited these people to be partakers of glory knowing full well that this building material is crude, uncut, unfinished, and of no use without His molding hands. His longsuffering is great and He sees the final product: a glorious Ecclesia without spot and blemish. So Paul says, “but you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God” (1 Cor. 6:11).

Problems That Were Not Unique

Problems that the Corinthians faced were not unique to their generation, but are found today. The reason is that the raw materials being used are mortal men and women. Flesh is still flesh whether found in the 1st century or in the 21st. By nature, nothing good dwells within us; the heart is still desperately wicked, deceptive, and cannot be known; and our inclinations are earth bound (Jer. 17:9, James 3:15). Also, God has purposely cast a net into the sea of nations and “gathered of every kind. Which, when it was full, they drew to shore, and sat down, and gathered the good into vessels, but cast the bad away. So shall it be at the end of the world: the angels shall come forth, and sever the wicked from among the just” (Matt. 13:47-49). This being the situation, we will coexist with the good and bad in our midst until Christ separates us. Paul said to Timothy, “in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and of silver, but also of wood and of earth; and some to honour, and some to dishonour” (2 Tim. 2:20). In Christ’s great house, it is inevitable that we will rub shoulders with those who are gold and silver—whose faith has been tried and glistens with God’s glory, but also with the inferior who take their talent and bury it in the earth, refusing to labor and to help their fellow man (Matt. 25:25).

The Ecclesia—God’s Crucible

The Ecclesia is of God’s design and provides the environment needed for men and women who have been extended a solemn and privileged invitation to the highest honor that could possibly be conferred. This invitation, by the Almighty God of Israel, invites us to be kings and priests in a Kingdom that will be universal and sovereign throughout the entire earth (Rev. 5:10). The marvelous thing is that men and women are called out of this world from all walks of life and moral conditions, which is the meaning of ecclesia—"a calling out". At Corinth, some were “fornicators, idolaters, adulterers, male prostitutes, sodomites, thieves, the greedy, drunkards, revilers, robbers” (1 Cor. 6:9-10 NRSV). God, however, has graciously invited these people to be partakers of glory knowing full well that this building material is crude, uncut, unfinished, and of no use without His molding hands. His longsuffering is great and He sees the final product: a glorious Ecclesia without spot and blemish. So Paul says, “but you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God” (1 Cor. 6:11).
women to spiritually mature. It is a crucible where their character is crushed, shaped, and perfected to reflect and manifest the Divine Glory (Isa. 43:7). We all long for an environment that is refreshing and trouble free but Paul said, “Indeed, there have to be factions among you, for only so will it become clear who among you are genuine” (1 Cor. 11:19 NRSV). It does not seem fair, humanly speaking, that we should expect factions and other difficulties to be in the Ecclesia. Who wants to be confronted with the searing heat of controversy, divisions, and charged emotion, or the chilly blast of those whose love has waned? But in the midst of this vortex, opportunity abounds to exercise our discipleship and learn the way we should behave before our God (1 Tim 3:15). We then develop and experience the joy, the love, and compassion of Christ that makes our life far richer. It is our pleasure and duty to help each other (Gal. 5:14, 6:2), and by doing so it is proof that our love is real and seals our forehead with the imprint of Divine approval (John 13:34-35). Our efforts may be feeble, but we must strive to keep ourselves “in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.” By showing compassion, we make a difference. And others we seek to “save with fear, pulling them out of the fire; hating even the garment spotted by the flesh” (Jude 21-23).

Challenges

The Corinthians faced many challenges in their walk in the Truth. Stress is one of the challenges that seems inevitable to the Gospel calling. Paul said that we “through much tribulation (will) enter into the Kingdom of God” (Acts 14:22). It is tribulation or pressure (as it means in the Greek) that will bear down upon us like a vice to mold us into God’s Divine image. If we are seeking God, tribulation is inevitable and will come in different forms. Otherwise, “if you do not have that discipline in which all children share, then you are illegitimate and not his children” (Heb. 12:8 NRSV). Surely “discipline always seems painful rather than pleasant at the time, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.” The challenge is to be trained by it: to look into it and discover the things that God would have us to learn if we are to be His children. We may seek for greener pastures, but if we belong to God, trouble arises to perfect our character. But we do not despair because “God is faithful, and he will not let you be tested beyond your strength, but with the testing he will also provide the way out so that you may be able to endure it” (1 Cor. 10:13 NRSV).

Another challenge is that like the Corinthians, a community of believers in Christ has no paid ministry (1 Cor. 9:1-19). All work is entirely voluntary. Many are raising families and all have to labor for daily bread—spiritually and physically. Home life is demanding in itself and to properly nurture the family requires time, effort, and dedication. How much more difficult it then becomes when other demands and sacrifices are added to the load. It almost requires superhuman effort to conduct the affairs of the meeting: presiding, exhorted, presenting classes, and conducting Gospel proclamation efforts. Need it be mentioned that in addition, there are those duties incidental to any organization necessary for maintaining the facility and providing sufficient organization and structure. But, “I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me” (Phil. 4:13).

Generally speaking, members in the household of God are not professionals. How few are polished public speakers, or have college degrees, or have the skills to run an organization, or even the skills to deal with people. How many have high paying jobs and the luxury of vacation to help in the Ecclesia? Paul said, “Consider your own call, brothers and sisters: not many of you were wise by human standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth. But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; God chose what is low and despised in the world, things that are not, to reduce to nothing things that are, so that no one might boast in the presence of God” (1 Cor. 1:26-29). It is truly a marvelous thing then that the Ecclesia can operate at all seeing it is composed of those who the world would call weak, foolish, and lowly. So Jesus said, “I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes: even so, Father; for so it seemed good in thy sight” (Luke 10:21).
God’s people have often stood in the need of reformation. This we know from both Old and New Testaments. The pattern of Genesis 6:12 has been often repeated when “all flesh had corrupted his (God’s) way upon the earth;” sometimes beyond repair or recovery. When that is the case it must end in disaster, even as God brought “the flood upon the world of the ungodly.” Yet even then, God gave every opportunity for reformation as we are told in 2 Peter 2:5, for Noah was “a preacher of righteousness” at that time. We are told how there was preaching to the disobedient while “the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah...” (1 Peter 3:19-20).

We see the same thing with the nation of Israel as that people went astray and corrupted themselves many times:

“For their heart was not right with him, neither were they steadfast in his covenant. But he, being full of compassion, forgave their iniquity, and destroyed them not: yea, many a time turned he his anger away, and did not stir up all his wrath. For he remembered that they were but flesh; a wind did not stir up all his wrath. For he waited in the days of Noah...” (1 Peter 3:19-20).

There were times of reformation—especially in the days of Hezekiah, Josiah, Ezra and Nehemiah.

Also, even in the short period covered by the New Testament, we learn that the early Christians soon left their “first love” and are said to have fallen (Revelation 2:4-5). There was need to “contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints” (Jude verse 3). Those assemblies to whom the Apocalypse was sent had need to “repent” and to “hold fast.”

With such a background, it ought not to surprise us if it is suggested that among the churches (“ecclesias” we ought to call them) of our time, there is the same need for reformation. Such a need of course can only be appreciated where there is discernment enough to perceive it—and that discernment can only be produced by absorbing the word of God, and honestly considering the realities of the spiritual environment of our time. If, upon due reflection, we conclude that the ecclesias of our time have also left their first love, or in any way fallen, then the challenge must be squarely faced. It may even be that the question posed in Psalm 11:3 will occur to us in some cases: “If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?”

What Can Be Done?

Reformation must always begin at home. It must begin with ourselves. It is all very well despising others who we may imagine to have departed from the faith whilst we ourselves are less than spotless. It is Jesus himself who speaks to us here and says:

“And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother’s eye, but perceivest not the beam that is in thine own eye? Either how canst thou see thy brother, Brother, let me pull out the mote that is in thine eye, when thou thyself beholdest not the beam that is in thine own eye? Thou hypocrite, cast out first the beam out of thine own eye, and then shalt thou see clearly to pull out the mote that is in thy brother’s eye” (Luke 6:41-42).

The first point here is that the would-be reformer “perceivest not” the beam that is blurring his own vision. So the very first place to begin is with a ruthless examination of ourselves. We have to start by being honest with ourselves, for there is something called “the deceitfulness of sin” says Hebrews 3:13. What, honestly, is our estimate of ourselves? The self deceived see themselves as being “wise in this world” (1 Corinthians 3:18); they see themselves as being something when the truth is that they are nothing (Galatians 6:3). A characteristic of the self-deceived is that they are not doers of the word, they are “hearers only” (James 1:22). They have no control over the tongue so that their religion is vain, says James (1:26).

So firstly, can we be sure that none of these things apply to our own selves? We suspect that there are few of us indeed who could say that we are 100% clean in all these things—or that “we have no sin” (1 John 1:8). Let us at least identify and recognize our own failings—let us endeavour to perceive anything that could be blurring our own vision.

If we can recognize ourselves as being less than perfect, then we may perchance avoid that pharisaical arrogance that prevents so many would-be reformers from being able to see clearly enough when it comes to helping their brethren.

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There are instances of sin for which there is no sacrifice at all, and that is wilful or deliberate sin which accounts “the blood of the covenant” that sanctifies us as a common thing (Hebrews 10:26-29). Weakness through the flesh (Romans 8:3) is one thing, but to do despite (i.e. insult) to the spirit of grace through wilful disobedience and arrogant denial of the Faith is what John calls “a sin unto death” (1 John 5:16). These cases, whether intellectual or moral, are covered by the term apostasy; literally a defection or revolt from the Faith. So the apostle writes: “Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove (try) your own selves” (2 Corinthians 13:5).

The Road to Unbelief

Unbelief is caused through “the deceitfulness of sin.” It is a process of self-deception whereby the mind of the flesh works in order to satisfy the cravings of our nature, and in effect persuades us into disobedience of God’s commands. The apostle Paul says: “For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it slew me” (Romans 7:11). So sin is a deceiver that resides in the heart and hardens it against hearing God’s word.

Let us consider this. In Jeremiah 17:9 we read that “The heart is deceitful above all things...” and in Genesis 6:5 that “every imagination of the thoughts” of man’s heart is only evil continually—also in Genesis 8:21 “the imagination of man’s heart is evil from his youth.” Jesus confirms this as we can see from Mark 7:21-23, “For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, Thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: All these evil things come from within, and defile the man.”

Here is an explanation of what Paul meant when he wrote of “sin that dwelleth in me” (Romans 7:17 and 20), and used that phrase “sin in the flesh” (Romans 8:3). In Ephesians 2:3 it is further explained as “the desires of the flesh and of the mind.”

The natural desires (or lusts) bring us into conflict with God’s commandments—we must either obey His will, or our own. Faced with this, the human mind seeks for a solution—for a compromise—and finding none it becomes stubborn or hardened. A mental form of sclerosis is formed by the deceitful heart and conscience is suppressed, often by false and faulty reasoning. So it is that “an evil heart of unbelief” is formed as a person is “hardened through the deceitfulness of sin” (Hebrews 3:12,13). The alternative to this road of unbelief, is to “hear his voice” and obey it (verse 15)—and that requires self sacrifice, just as the Lord Jesus Christ has demonstrated by his death.

Reformation then, is a difficult road—but the very first requirement is that we recognize and believe the Truth that God has revealed; the truth about ourselves and about the nature of man.

**Deceiving, and being Deceived**

When the apostle Paul tells us of the apostasy that would develop out of the early ecclesias, he said that it would come “with all deceivableness of unrighteousness” (which is the same thing as the “deceitfulness of sin”). He also gives us the reason why these people were deceived and deluded—first, “because they received not the love of the truth” (2 Thessalonians 2:9-11).

Now the love of the Truth is the first line of defence against going astray from it. It is possible to know the truth of God’s word and even to recognize the reality of it—yet not really care about it for its own sake. This became a problem in Ephesus, for they had left their first love (Revelation 2:4). Their defences were down and it would only be a matter of time before deceivers would come along and finding an opening, suggest a different line of thinking—so the Spirit urges them to repent.

The first deception ever recorded in the Scripture began by suggesting that God did not mean exactly what He had said—there was another way to look at it (Genesis 3:1-5). The word of God was not to be taken literally—man would not surely die because of sin, “for God doth know” that “ye shall be as gods” (elohim). Existence would continue in another form, perhaps like the angels (complete with wings, no doubt!), or perhaps in a different dimension of time or space... but to descend into oblivion, Never!!

This approach to God’s word by the human mind has been seen all down the centuries— and it is still the same today. Proverbs 8:8-9 depicts wisdom as saying: “All the words of my mouth are in righteousness; there is nothing froward or perverse in them. They are all plain to him that understandeth, and right to them that find knowledge.”

Plain words (and the Hebrew means straightforward words) mean what they say, and unless the context demands otherwise they are to be taken literally. To do otherwise is to “wrest” (torture or pervert) the Scripture—something that Peter says was being done in his day (2 Peter 3:16). But it is Jesus who tells us why this happens, and we find his explanation in John 8:43-47. The Revised Standard Version has a very clear rendering of this passage:

> “Why do you not understand what I say? It is because you cannot bear to hear my word. You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father’s desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, and has nothing to do with the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks according to his own nature, for he is a liar and the father of lies. But, because I tell the truth, you do not believe me. Which of you convicts me of sin? If I tell the truth, why do you not believe me? He who is of God hears the words of God; the reason why you do not hear them is that you are not of God.”

Here is the reason why so many “interpret” the Bible to mean something different from what it actually says. It is why they “spiritualize” it and thus distort it. As we said earlier, the mind of the flesh works in order to satisfy the cravings of our nature—the natural mind cannot bear to hear (and accept) the plain truth of the word. So Paul writes in Romans 8:7,

> “...the carnal mind (“the mind of the flesh” Revised Version) is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.”

The task before all of us then is a change of mind. The thinking of the natural mind must be subjected to the mind of God as it is revealed in His word of Truth. Where this does not happen and there is not submission to the clear teaching of the word, there will inevitably follow a falling away. And if this is perceived to be the case, the counsel of the Spirit is to:

> “Remember...”

Where a falling away occurs we must take stock of ourselves. And while fighting our own personal battle against the flesh we will be mindful that others are doing the same and we must try to help and strengthen one another in that struggle.

Because we see some, perhaps, falling away from the Faith, there is nothing to be gained by becoming negative, critical or pharisaical. There are positive things to be done as can be seen from certain key words and phrases in Revelation chapters 1 and 2. For example:

- **REMEMBER** from whence thou art fallen (2:5).
- **REPENT** and do the first works (2:5).
- Be thou faithful unto death (2:10).
- **REPENT** (metanooe)—think differently, reconsider (2:16).
- Hold fast (2:25).
- Be watchful (3:2).
- Strengthen the things which remain (3:2).
- **REMEMBER** how thou hast received and heard (3:3).
- **HOLD FAST** that which thou hast (3:11).
- Buy of me gold tried in the fire (3:18).
- Buy of me...white raiment...(3:18).
- Anoint thine eyes with eyesalve (3:18).
- **OPEN THE DOOR**! (3:20).

Here are at least a dozen positive things to do in an ecclesia that may be falling away—and one item stands out—“Remember.” The only
way to reform is to remind ourselves of the sure and certain Truths that were once held, and to see their relevance for our time and circumstances. This means, at the very least a refresher course in those things that may have been forgotten. It means getting out the old materials through which we heard and received the Truth (and not some latter-day doctored version of it). We need informed instructors, not inexperienced novices or entertainers. The apostle Peter wrote:

“This second epistle, beloved, I now write unto you; in both which I stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance: That ye may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of us the apostles of the Lord and Saviour: Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, And saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation” (2 Peter 3:1-4).

Jude also writes (verse 5) “I will therefore put you in remembrance, though ye once knew this, how that the Lord, having saved the people out of the land of Egypt, afterwards destroyed them that believed not.”

Again, in the Old Testament the same principle is laid out. In Jeremiah 6:16 we read:

“Thus saith the Lord, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls. But they said, We will not walk therein.”

**Out of Date?**

There are some traditions that make the word of God of no effect by replacing it (e.g. Mark 7:13). These are the traditions of men (see Colossians 2:8), and can stifle an independent study of the word and so prevent healthy investigation in harmony with the Truth. Other traditions are to be desired and conformed to, and these will help us in keeping both the Truth and its practice. Examples are seen in 2 Thessalonians 2:15; and also 3:6.

So-called “progressive revelation” is ruled out by what we read in Revelation 22:18, 19, and in similar passages such as Proverbs 30:5, 6. This does not mean that we are left to stagnate however. God’s true saints have always been able to know their time as we can see from Mark 13:29 and other places.

We know that there was an understanding of the Apocalypse in vague outline during the first and second centuries A.D. But as the history of the Roman Empire and of Europe unfolded, the book became better understood. Meanings became more obvious as events themselves gave shape and colour to the symbolic signs that had been written by John. So it has been with prophecies concerning the restoration of the Jews to their ancient land. Many students in the 19th century (and before) saw that the Scriptures taught this return, and some were able to identify some details of how it would be brought about (such as Britain being involved in promoting that return), but no one foresaw the extent of that return to the Land before the advent of Christ as we see it today. By sifting through the prophetic word we are enabled to see fulfillments today much more clearly than would have been possible over a century ago. The level of understanding achieved by some in the 19th century is truly impressive—yet today we can travel to the Land, and to the mountains of Israel (the so-called West Bank) and see the developing situation for ourselves with Bible in hand. Bible Truth is never out of date, but as events unfold knowledge is increased and the detail of the prophecy is seen with better focus.

On the other hand there are those who may limit their understanding of the signs of the times through self-imposed blinkered vision rather than upon sound exposition. Being unable to discern the signs of the times, says Jesus, is a characteristic of the hypocrite (Matthew 16:3).

**Sound Doctrine**

Those who have the task of overlooking the affairs of an assembly of believers, says Paul to Titus (1:9), should be men “holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers.” The word translated “doctrine” here is a Greek word meaning instruction or teaching. Sound instruction based upon the word is an essential element in reformation—and the Bible itself gives us examples of such re-forming. As Paul says again in 2 Timothy 2:24-25,

“...the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth.”

The difficulty is in first helping the people to perceive the need. This was often Israel’s problem, they seem to have built up a false sense of security and did not appreciate their perilous situation. Daniel the prophet, a captive in Babylon wrote:

“As it is written in the law of Moses, all this evil is come upon us; yet made we not our prayer before the Lord our God, that we might turn from our iniquities, and understand thy truth” (Daniel 9:13).

It was only after the Babylonian captivity that some woke up and sought reformation. One example of this reformation being carried out is seen in the days of Nehemiah. In this case there was a willingness on the part of the people to re-build what had been broken down, and with that re-building there was necessary instruction—they were caused to understand the reading:

“...So they read in the book in the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading” (Neh. 8:8).

This caused them to “remember from whence they had fallen, and to repent, and to do the first works.”

It is when we consider the alternative to reformation that we must strike all the negative notes. If a situation is beyond repair or recovery it must end in disaster, and there does come a time when it is both wrong and harmful to tolerate a Jezebel or a Balaam in an assembly. Paul told Timothy that there were those who “resist the truth; men of corrupt minds, reprobate concerning the faith” (2 Timothy 3:8). We must not be surprised if they have their counterparts in our day.

Where someone is fighting in order to stay alive spiritually, they must be helped (c/p Isaiah 42:3; Matthew 12:20), but when someone abandons themselves to false teaching and a life of sin, there is little that can be done for them.

The only road to recovery for individuals as well as for ecclesias, is through receiving the sound instruction of the word. But this instruction must be given by able teachers, well grounded in the Truth. It has to be acknowledged that the knowledge of the Truth today came through the labours of those who studied the Scripture and gave us forthright exposition over 150 years ago. Though not infallible, their works are still the basis of sound teaching. Today we need capable men who are well-grounded in these things and who are able to demonstrate the truth of the Scripture and, as the apostle says, “convince” (confute, reprove) the gainsayers.

This recovery cannot be achieved through fair speeches, through entertaining technology or social gatherings (even if such things have their place). As Elijah learnt, it is not in the wind, the earthquake or the fire, but in the still small voice, that reformation is achieved. That voice is with us today, and speaks through the holy Scriptures.

Let us then “open the door” in this Laodicean age by opening up our Bibles, and so enjoy a spiritual feast with the Lord (Revelation 3:20).

“Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me. To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne.”
From our Mailbox

Elijah & The Restoration

Brad Baker, a regular listener to The Bible in the News, and Bible Magazine reader writes, I have heard on your BITN broadcasts and in the magazines that there are Israeli youth revival movements having prayer meetings, singing Psalms, praying for Messiah, etc. Can you tell me from your conversations with Jews whether they are just reading the works of Moses, or are they reading also the prophets, particularly Isaiah? There are parts of Isaiah (ie chapter 51) where God is telling those that are seeking (v1) to hearken and awake; he is bringing his salvation. I am convinced that the last 16 or so chapters of Isaiah will actually be instrumental in the ‘unblinding’ of the 1/3, perhaps preached by Elijah the forerunner. What I’m asking is are they reading it now?

Reply:

There certainly is a religious development taking place among some Jews in Israel today, and as we have pointed out on other occasions it is taking place mainly among those settlers who now live in the territory known as "the West Bank," or more Scripturally "the mountains of Israel." These settlers number about 260,000 and growing—so we must expect (and have found) that there is different degrees of commitment and understanding among them, hence our remarks are necessarily of a general nature.

We have received several questions and comments upon this subject, and the question before us (above) provides an opportunity to clarify the matter and to urge some caution.

As to the specific question, there is perhaps an emphasis upon the study of the Torah (the books of Moses), but these people are reading the whole of the Old Testament, which they call the Torah (books of Moses), but these people are reading the whole of the Old Testament, which they call the "Torah." This is not the case with Jews who are reading the "Torah" in the sense of the "Books of the Law." These are necessarily of a general nature.

Further, it is reflected in several songs that the proclamation of the "Torah" is taking place mainly among those Jews who are preparing for the coming of the Messiah. This is in readiness for the work of Elijah who will work under the direction of the Deliverer (Romans 11:26; Isaiah 59:20).

We must not think that the work of converting Jews can be accomplished by any human agency such as ourselves. Some have thought that they would like to do the Lord's work for him, and have even suggested that they can undertake Elijah's work. Such a suggestion is unscriptural. This point was expressed by John Thomas in 1855:

"We cannot here forbear the expression of our astonishment at the ignorance and presumptions of pious Gentiles who undertake to convert the Jews to the faith of Jesus. God only can accomplish it after the manner we are expounding. Gentile machinery may convert Jews into Gentiles; but it can never turn the seed of Abraham after the flesh into the seed of Abraham after the spirit. They may persuade a few Jews to forsake the little of Moses they still adhere to, and confess that Jesus is Christ and join a church; but to turn away ungodliness from Jacob is a work beyond their knowledge and ability. It is an honour reserved for the Deliverer, who when he returns to Zion, will execute his mission as becomes a God." (Herald Vol. 5 page 245).

The development now taking place is no more than preparatory, and it is in that regard that we see it as significant, as will be recognized by all who truly understand the Gospel of the Kingdom, otherwise known as "the Hope of Israel." It is the teaching of the Lord Jesus Christ that "Elijah truly shall first come, and restore all things" (Matt. 17:11). Why would anyone doubt this?

Some argue that John the Baptist came and did this work of Elijah—at least as far as the house of Judah is concerned. Well it is true that John came "in the spirit and power of Elijah" (Luke 1:17), and that he did turn many hearts—but to say that he fulfilled the requirements of Malachi 4:5-6 simply isn’t true. John did not restore all things—and certainly not the house of Judah, for in A.D. 70 the curse of the law sent them into dispersion. The earth (eretz) or land was smitten with a curse—Malachi 4:6.

This point has been ignored by some armchair critics who favour a party line on the subject; they tell us that Elijah will not again visit Jews in the Land. It is difficult to see how he can restore all things without visiting the Land! Restoring again the kingdom to Israel (Acts 1:11), is surely part of those “all things”—for as we read in Zechariah 12:7 “the Lord also shall save the tents of Judah first.” It is difficult to exclude them from the restoration process.

A great deal was written about Elijah by expositors over 100 years ago, and in referring to the prophecy of Malachi chapter 4 John Thomas wrote:

“Now the contemporaries of Jesus understood this in its obvious sense, namely, that the identical Elijah who was translated, should return to Palestine on a mission to Israel before their being made to pass through the refining and purifying process on the day of terror” (Herald Vol. 5 p. 241).

Whilst recognising that John Baptist fulfilled a typical role here, there is no need to dispense with this “obvious sense” now. The truth is that there is a future work of Elijah with the ten tribes of the dispersion; he will be involved in their restoration after Armageddon (Ezekiel 38) when God says that He will “have mercy upon the whole house of Israel” (chapter 39:25). This does not preclude a work in the Land itself first, and before Armageddon, contemporary with the gathering of Christ and the risen saints in the south.

As far as we are aware, this suggestion of Elijah coming to those regenerated Jews in the Land was first voiced in The Christadelphian magazine for May 1893 (page 181). What is clear to us after having travelled to the West Bank several times and struck up acquaintances there, the religious Zionists of today require instruction in the Truth, and no doubt this will be provided, using the law (Torah) as a schoolmaster (c/p Galatians 3:24) to bring them to Christ. We see the preparation for this now, and that tells us just how near we must be to the return of Christ and the resurrection.

We cannot go against the pattern laid down in Scripture. This is, first a return to the Land, and then instruction. Look at Hosea 3:5. They will return, then seek, then fear. Look at Ezekiel 34:13, 14. First they are brought out from the countries, then they are fed upon the mountains of Israel. The same pattern is seen again in Jeremiah 3:14-15. To leave this out of our considerations is to blind ourselves to a significant sign of our times, and it comes close to that highmindedness that Paul warns us against in Romans 11:20. On the other hand we must not be impatient—there is a set time to favour Zion (Psalm 102:13), and when that time comes we will be able to rejoice with his people (Romans 15:10).
The judgements that came upon historic Babylon pre-figure those that are to come upon Rome

thou hast set up” (Dan. 3:16-18). There could be no compromise!

As with the literal, so also with the spiritual (1 Cor. 15:46). Fire was the ultimate form of punishment by Mystical Babylon, or the Roman Catholic Church, as seen in the infamous burning at the stake of such men as John Huss and William Tyndale (opposite page). Refusal to engage in image worship resulted in the same punishment for Daniel’s fellow servants, as they were cast into the fire with “their coats... and their garments” (Dan. 3:21). However, protected by God’s angel, “the fire had no power” and they emerged with not “an hair of their head singed, neither were their coats changed” (Dan. 3:27 c/p Rev. 3:4). Thus, they retained their covering even in the face of fiery trial.

The parallel between literal and mystic Babylon comes to the forefront in the fifth chapter of Daniel, when Yahweh brings judgment upon this false religious-politico system. “Belshazzar, the king, made a great feast to a thousand of his lords, and drank wine before the thousand” (5:1). Manipulating the powers of the world is evident in mystic Babylon;” with whom the kings of the earth have committed fornication, and the inhabitants of the earth have been made drunk with the wine of her fornication” (Rev. 17:2).

Herein is the judgment of the Roman Catholic Church, known scripturally as “Mystery Babylon the great, the mother of harlots and abominations of the earth”—Rev. 17:5. The “wine” of doctrinal corruption has poisoned the powers and inhabitants of the earth! But Belshazzar went even further, making a critical mistake when he moved to corrupt Yahweh’s servants: “...whiles he tasted the wine, commanded to bring the golden and silver vessels which his father Nebuchadnezzar had taken out of the temple which was in Jerusalem; that the king, and his princes, his wives, and his concubines, might drink therein” (Dan. 5:2). It is THIS PERVERSE ACTION that brings Yahweh’s just destruction upon Babylon, as it will also upon the Roman Catholic system.

“They drank wine, and praised the gods of gold, and of silver, of brass, of iron, of wood, and of stone. In the same hour came forth fingers of a man’s hand, and wrote over against the candlestick upon the plaister of the wall of the king’s palace: and the king saw the part of the hand that wrote.”—Dan. 5:4-5.

The “vessels” taken from the temple or house of Yahweh in Jerusalem represent the saints! The faithful of the ecclesial “house” are styled “vessels of gold and silver...a vessel unto honour” (2 Tim. 2:20-21). Sister-wives are also called “vessels” (1 Pet. 3:7). The apostle Paul is referred to as “a chosen vessel” (Acts 9:15). Those who understand the truth of the gospel are those who possess a “treasure in earthen vessels” (2 Cor. 4:7).

Thus, the Babylonian wine represents false doctrine—“the wine of her fornication” (Rev. 17:2 c/p Eph. 5:18)—by which the kings and...
inhabitants of the earth have been “made drunk.” So judgment goes forth against Belshazzar for pouring corrupt influences into “vessels” that belong to Yahweh’s house.

When Israel was taken into captivity, the vessels of Yahweh’s house—that is, *the ecclesia* (1 Tim. 3:15)—were polluted, having been put in the house of the gods of Babylon (Ezra 1:7; 6:5; 2 Chron. 36:18). Having been taken from the “nations” subdued by David (2 Sam. 8:10-11); and utilized for the service of the Truth in the Temple (literally and figuratively), Babylon “burnt the house of God”—*the ecclesia*—and corrupted the vessels of the Temple (2 Chron. 36:19). This is typical of believers throughout the epochs of time, these precious “vessels” who were dedicated to Yahweh.

Significantly, the divine edict of a man’s hand against Babylon “wrote over against the candlestick upon the plaister of the wall of the king’s palace” (Dan. 5:5). In the Apocalypse, we are plainly told “the seven golden candlesticks which thou sawest are the seven ecclesias” (Rev.1:20). Judgment against Babylon—*literal and mystic*—is because of the spiritual damage caused by this corrupt system against the lampstand, the vessels, the house of God, and the Truth.

As those blessed with the Truth that has been entrusted to us, we are humbled to be able to correctly identify the Babylonian system. All the “wise men...astrologers, Chaldeans, and soothsayers” under the influence of Babylon could not interpret the writing (Dan. 5:7-8), because they know not the Truth, being void of spiritual discernment (1 Cor. 2:14). However, Daniel, as a “servant of the living God” (Dan. 6:20), was able to comprehend the divine message saying that Babylon had been judged and the kingdom would come to an end (Dan. 5:25-29). We too must understand the *writing on the wall* to correctly identify and understand the judgment of Mystery Babylon (see: Re. 1:3; 13:1-9; 22:7, 10, 18-19).

God’s servants are not left to speculation as to why this system—*literal and mystic*—is condemned by Almighty God. It is due to blatant arrogance. Daniel reminds Belshazzar that he knew very well what had happened to his grandfather, Nebuchadnezzar, and still “hast not humbled thine heart, though thou knowest this” (Dan. 5:22). Likewise, *mystic Babylon* is a conscious rejecter of the Truth, being fully aware that their doctrines are the work of men’s tradition and not the Word of God. Yet, they remain pompous. “But hast lifted up thyself against the Lord of heaven; and they have brought the vessels of his house before thee, and thou, and thy lords, thy wives, and thy concubines, have drunk wine in them” (Dan. 5:23).

“In that night was Belshazzar the king of the Chaldeans slain. And Darius the Median took the kingdom, being about threescore and two years old” (Dan. 5:30-31). What a glorious day it will be, when the ruthless kingdom of gold—*Babylon*—is replaced by the kingdom of silver—*Medo-Persia*. A symbol of redemption (1 Pet. 1:18; Mat. 27:3-9; Ex. 38:25-27). The *kingdom of silver* brought a complete change to Yahweh’s people. These Medes are prophetically styled God’s “sanctified ones” (Isa. 13:3, 17) and are typical of the saints in the Age to come who will be responsible for the judgment and fall of Mystery Babylon.

It was Cyrus, as ruler of the *silver kingdom*, who is called God’s “shepherd” and “his anointed” (Isa. 44:28; 45:1). Typical of the Lord Jesus Christ, it is Cyrus who states: “The Lord God of heaven hath given me all the kingdoms of the earth; and charged me to build him an house at Jerusalem” (Ezra 1:2). For this work, Cyrus restored “the vessels of the house of the LORD, which Nebuchadnezzar had brought forth out of Jerusalem and had put in the house of his gods” (Ezra 1:7). Thus is foreshadowed the event of Revelation 14:8, “And there followed another angel, saying, Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication.”

Endnotes

1Quenching the fiery darts of the wicked,

2John Carter, “The Oracles of God” 1944

3So many preachers of Christendom erroneously think the gospel is simply “accepting Jesus as your saviour.” The Kingdom of God is the forgotten good news! It is the obligation of those with “loins girt about with truth” as spiritual soldiers to pull down these strongholds of error and herald the good news.

4Ron Abel, Quenching the Fiery Darts of the Wicked

5It is of primary importance that we believe the truth, and not a substitute for it; for it is by the truth only we can be saved; “the truth as it is in Jesus,” neither more nor less.

JOHN THOMAS, Elpis Israel, written in 1849

...surely if there be a book on earth that contains the revealed will of God, that book is the Jewish Bible...

ROBERT ROBERTS, Christendom Astray. 1884

The Bible has been the subject of attack in all ages. As the contemporaries of Jeremiah cut to pieces his writings, only for them to be replaced under divine inspiration, so men have thought to destroy the Scriptures but they have continued to exist.

JOHN CARTER, “The Oracles of God” 1944

The Bible is the enlightener. If men would not be carried about by every wind that blows, let them study this.

JOHN THOMAS, Elpis Israel, written in 1849
In the Land

The Assyrians

By Ken Loveridge

Prince George B.C.

I

n the centuries following the death of Solomon, Egypt and Assyria both looked to the lands between them with an interest in gaining control of the population and the rich trade which passed through the area. The Assyrian army, probably the most sophisticated and effective fighting force before the appearance of the Roman legions, while pre-occupied with Assyria’s nearest neighbours, was not content to have the Egyptians controlling these buffer states. Tiglath-Pileser was the king of Assyria about 150 years after the reign of Solomon. The Assyrian empire’s power had waxed and waned over the centuries as they fought with other kingdoms based in southern Mesopotamia and over the mountains in Persia, Media and Elam. Expansion to the south and east was therefore very difficult. Opportunities to the west, toward the Mediterranean were a different matter. Kingdoms everywhere wanted to control more of the trade that passed through or near their borders, to divert more of the wealth to their own treasuries. At the other end of the Fertile Crescent was the kingdom of Egypt. Egypt was able to draw on the resources of the African continent, as well as control the trade which sailed up the Red Sea from southern Arabia, originating from the nations with which Solomon and Hiram had traded. Traditionally, Egypt had an interest in the land which lay north and west to the Euphrates, the border with the Mesopotamian states.

Assyria was not a state which was easily defended. From its early days, it was faced with enemies in all directions. A citizen army had developed into a large and well-equipped standing army which struck fear into its neighbours. It traveled great distances very quickly, and was constantly occupied in either defending Assyrian territory, or conquering new areas. We can see from surviving documents that it was ahead of its time with improvements in its equipment and techniques of warfare seen nowhere else at the time. It was able to fight on several fronts at once. The Assyrian army was the first to use large units of cavalry with both light and heavy chariots. Infantry units of all types were incorporated into the army, often as units from conquered countries such as Israel. At Khorsabad, Nineveh, and Nimrud, reliefs were found that showed an efficient force at work crossing land barriers, and rivers, building fortified camps and successfully besieging many cities. Their signal and intelligence systems were unequalled at the time and they used mercenaries and foreign slaves whenever they had opportunity. The buffer states of Syria, Philistia, Israel, Moab, Edom and Nabatea paid tribute to the Egyptians or were under their sway, and Tiglath-Pileser wanted their tribute to flow to him.

The supplier for many of the goods which the Assyrians wanted in trade was Phoenicia. Excavations at Nineveh and other Assyrian capitals have disclosed a wide range of ivory and other materials probably produced by Phoenician craftsmen. The string of independent coastal cities which included Byblos, Tyre and Sidon and extended south along the Carmel coast together were a strong mercantile power in the ancient world. Ezekiel chapter 27 describes the extent of their trade empire.

The conquest of Palestine by the Neo-Assyrians was a gradual process that occurred in three major stages. Centuries before, Assyrian armies had reached the Mediterranean, but they had not conquered the inhabitants. Applying the principles of penetration, destruction and deportation, the armies began their new western excursions in the days of Tiglath-Pileser III and Shalmaneser V. From about 734 BC they invaded and conquered the Golan and the Gilead east of the Jordan. Geshur was destroyed, as well as the territory of the northern kingdom of Israel based in Samaria. It was during this period that Ahaz asked Tiglath-Pileser to help him against the Philistines and the Edomites, and sent a large present, but got no help (2 Chr. 28:16). The early movements also went through the coastal region of southern Phoenicia and Philistia. Among others, Hazor, Dan, Bethsaida, Beth-Shean, Acco and Dor were overrun. The Second Book of Kings, chapters 17 and 18 tell us something of the events surrounding the invasion, and the siege and destruction of the northern kingdom in the sixth year of Hezekiah.

The second stage, in the days of Sargon II and at the beginning of Semacherib’s reign, consolidated the conquest of the country of the Philistines, and the parts of Judah which had been taken. In 701 BC, Semacherib’s forces took 46 towns in Judea, and captured 200,000 people, but Jerusalem remained free. His predecessors had also deported about 50,000 people. Part of the Assyrian plan also included the importation of other people to take their place—2 Kings 17:24 “And the king of Assyria brought men from Babylon, and from Cuthah, and from Ava, and from Hamath, and from Sepharvaim, and placed them in the cities of Samaria instead of the children of Israel: and they possessed Samaria, and dwelt in the cities thereof.” These deportees provided support for the Assyrians and later for the Persians. The immigrants continued to arrive through the reigns of Esarhaddon and Ashurbanipal—called Asnapper in scripture.

“Then they came to Zerubbabel, and to the chief of the fathers, and said unto them, Let us build with you: for we seek your God, as ye do; and we do sacrifice unto him since the days of Esarhaddon king of Assur, which brought us up hither... Then wrote Rehum the chancellor, and Shimshai the scribe, and the rest of their companions; the Dinaites, the Apharsathchites, the Targelites, the Apharsites, the Archevites, the Babyloniens, the Susanchites, the Dehavites, and the...
Elamites... And the rest of the nations whom the great and noble Ashur (Ashurbanipal) brought over, and set in the cities of Samaria, and the rest that are on this side the river, and at such a time” (Ezra 4:2, 9, 19).

One of Sennacherib’s major conquests was Lachish, whose siege and destruction were portrayed in wall reliefs in Nineveh. Here we find pictures of the attack of the Assyrian army, the impalement of many captives, and the deportation of the surviving families. Among those who were deported were individuals and units from the armies of Israel, who bolstered the Assyrian forces. Many Hebrew names are found in the Assyrian records which speak of those who rose to high rank within the empire.

One of the gruesome discoveries was a cave near Lachish containing thousands of skeletons of those who died in the conflict. All of the Judean excavations show a level of destruction at this time. Only Jerusalem escaped, and the way through the buffer states was closed to the Egyptians. Assyrian provinces based in Megiddo, Samaria, and the Gilead, were established and most of their ruined settlements were rebuilt. These Assyrian provinces ruled over the area for approximately 80 years. Each of the provincial governors had a small army unit, while there were also district officials and governors in each of the cities.

Our Bible presents us with a dramatic picture of the siege of Jerusalem in the days of Hezekiah. Chapters in 2 Kings, 2 Chronicles and Isaiah give us a wealth of detail about the Assyrians and Hezekiah during their confrontation. Following the defeat of the northern kingdom, it appears that many of the Assyrians and Hezekiah were captured and brought back into service, operation, so that the flow of goods could resume. Ammon, Moab and Edom apparently surrendered without a battle, and accepted the benefits that came with Assyrian control. Some others who came under tribute were the nomadic tribes who controlled the trade routes from the interior to the coast. Phoenician cities in Dor province traded with Egypt, North Africa, Greece and west. Assyrian inspectors maintained strict supervision of all trade activity, but Assyrians themselves did not participate. Officials were placed in all the important harbours, and in desert forts along trade routes. Their task was to ensure that the Assyrian government received their share from the stream of merchandise. The desert nomads were subdued and close tabs were kept on the incense and spice trade.

The next stage of the conquest took place in the latter part of Sennacherib’s rule, after the disaster at Jerusalem, and during the reigns of Esarhaddon and Ashurbanipal. The Assyrians were able to successfully invade Egypt, and at this time, Assyrian settlements and fortresses were erected along the Way of the Sea—the Via Maris—through Philistia. Excavations north of Ashdod have uncovered an Assyrian palace for the administration of the area, while there are signs in Dor that it also may have been the administrative centre for yet another Assyrian province.

Approximately 80 years after the initial invasions, Assyrian domination of the land came to an end. Ashurbanipal died about 627 BC, but his successors fought among themselves and the army was not able to maintain control of lands beyond their own borders. Their control may have begun to slip about 645 BC. The Assyrians had a marked influence on the land during their period of power, and they were long remembered. Although Jerusalem was not conquered, kings of Judah after Hezekiah still had to deal with the invading power. In 2 Chronicles 33:11 we read that Manasseh was taken to Babylon by the Assyrians. While Jonah went to Nineveh at the command of the Lord and saw their repentance, before their invasion of the land, Nahum later warned of their forthcoming defeat, and concluded his prophecy with the words, “There is no healing of thy bruise; thy wound is grievous: all that hear the bruise of thee shall clap the hands over thee: for upon whom hath not thy wickedness passed continually?” (Nahum 3:19).

In spite of hatred for the Assyrians for what was done to destroy the northern kingdom, and oppress the southern kingdom, we are told in scripture that in the future, “In that day shall Israel be the third with Egypt and with Assyria, even a blessing in the midst of the land.” (Isa 19:24).

The invader from the north still has a part to play in God’s purpose.
Evolutionists strain at the gnat of creation, but swallow a camel!

There is more to a camel than meets the eye. His eye has two sets of eyelids to keep out swirling sand.
And look at him nose to nose (below); those nostrils are designed to keep out sand with special flaps.

Just look at the other equipment that the camel has: Those humps are formed by a mass of fat which are his packed lunches, and his system allows him to go three weeks without water! He has special feet as well as amazing insulation from heat and cold. Now if we chew the cud (he does that too) and think about all this, then we will not take the hump at the suggestion of special creation, but go down on our knees as he does!