

The Berean Christadelphian

A monthly magazine devoted wholly to the exposition and defense of the Faith once for all delivered to the Saints, with the object of helping to make ready a People prepared for the coming of the Lord. Opposed to the unscriptural teaching of the papal and protestant churches of the world.

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“They received the Word with all readiness of mind and searched the Scriptures daily, whether those things were so. Therefore many believed” – Acts 17:11

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CHRIST IS COMING SOON AND WILL REIGN ON EARTH

As a Thief

Upon whom is it that the Day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night? Is it upon the brethren of Christ? By no means. They are of those of whom Jesus, in connection with the very intimation of his thief-like coming, says: “Blessed is he that watcheth.” Paul expressly says (1 Thess. 5:4), “ye brethren are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief.” It is to “them that look for him” that Jesus “appears the second time without sin unto salvation”—(Heb. 9:28). Not upon the brethren of Christ, then, but upon the world at large, the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night.

It is profitable for us to remember this. We see the world busy from year to year, with its public and private affairs, conducted with an air of vast importance. They follow pleasure and minister to their own glory, and neglect God, apparently with perfect impunity. The things of God figure very small in the presence of their pomp and their display. Nothing appears so absolutely trashy as the hope of Israel, and nothing so ignoble as a sticking for the commandments and ordinances of God.

It is profitable to remember that the spirit of God has forewarned us, that the approach of the day of the Lord would find the world in this state: that the day would come upon them as a thief, and would bring sudden destruction upon them.

It may be wondered how the day of the Lord can be said to come as a thief, seeing that its approach has been so long proclaimed beforehand, and seeing there are so many signs of it recognizable in the public affairs of the world. The wonder will cease if it is remembered that it is only to those who are indifferent to that proclamation and ignorant of those signs, that it is said to come as a thief.—*R.R.*

FRATERNAL GATHERINGS *(If The Lord Will)*

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Studies and Thoughts

BY BROTHER JOHN THOMAS

DANIEL'S VISIONS—A DIVINE UNVEILING OF THE FUTURE (Continued)

In the vision of the Four Beasts, he saw the Kingdom of Babylon in its golden, silver, brazen, iron, and clay manifestations. Through these distinct symbols, he saw what could not be represented in a statue, where the metals in juxtaposition signified merely one united confederacy in the latter days. By the Four Beasts he saw that the successive phases through which the Kingdom of the Serpent was to pass, were to result from the tempest of war in the Mediterranean countries. His words are—“The four winds of the heaven strove upon the Great Sea, and four great beasts came up from the sea, diverse from one another” (Dan. 7:2, 3).

The winds were not all blowing at once, but successively and at long intervals, each tempest resulting in a change in the constitution and government of the Kingdom of Babylon, as represented by the Beasts. By these belligerent tempests the Macedonian-brass and the Roman-iron dynasties, incorporated themselves with the gold and silver Babylonish dominion, and with one another, forming thus the Band of Iron and Brass, and setting itself around the Tree-Stump when the royalty should be transferred to Rome as the seat or throne of the power in its fourth beast or dragon manifestation.

The Beasts being substituted for the metals of Nebuchadnezzar's Image, they represent, of course, the same phases of the Kingdom of Men. We learn from Jeremiah that the powers of Nineveh and Babylon were each represented by lions. He says—“Israel is a scattered sheep, the lions have driven them away: first the king of Assyria hath devoured him; and last this Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon hath broken his bones” (Jer. 50:17).

The Ninevite Assyrian was represented to Daniel as a lion with eagle's wings. Many years before, the Deity had punished the King of Assyria and his land for scattering the Ten Tribes by transferring the dominion over the Nimroudian empire from Nineveh to Babylon. This revolution is represented by the eagle-wings being “plucked” from the lion's back; while the lion itself was made to stand erect as a man, and to receive in exchange for its lion-heart, the heart of a man. Thus the Lion-Man became a symbol of the Kingdom of Babylon so long as the government continued in the family of Nebuchadnezzar; which, with all its faults, was more human than that which it succeeded.

The impiety of Belshatzar brought ruin upon his family and calamity upon the Kingdom. It was made an accusation against him, by Daniel that “the Deity in whose power his breath was, and

whose were all his ways, he had not glorified.”

Convicted of this, the Lord of heaven pronounced sentence upon him, saying—

“God hath numbered thy reign, and finished it. Thou are weighed in the balances and found wanting. Thy Kingdom is divided, and given to the Medes and Persians”—Dan. 5:26-28.

The execution of this sentence was prompt; for, “on that night was Belshatzar the King of the Chaldeans slain. And Darius took the Kingdom.”

This transfer of the government occurred B.C. 542. Its mission was to restore Judah’s Commonwealth, and to extend the boundary of the Kingdom of Men. “Arise, devour much flesh,” was the policy of its reign. The Bear was the symbol of this government, whose dominion extended from India to Ethiopia, over a hundred and twenty-seven provinces. The reign of the Bear began under a Mede, and in two years passed by inheritance to Cyrus, a Persian. This change of position was represented to Daniel in the saying that “it raised up itself on one side,” so that one side became “higher than the other,” but before it raised itself up, the higher side was no higher than the other; therefore the higher side acquired its position last, as appears in the history of the time. The Ram in the eighth chapter with horns of unequal height is another symbol for the same government; the unequal elevation of the sides of the Bear, and the different altitude of the Ram’s horns, are conditions representative of the same dynastic peculiarity—“The higher horn came up last.”

The Bear had also another peculiarity worthy of note. “It had three ribs in the mouth of it between its teeth.” These ribs represented the threefold division of its territorial conquests. The interpretation is found elsewhere in these words of Daniel: “it pleased Darius to set over the Kingdom a hundred and twenty princes, who should be over the whole Kingdom; and over these, three Presidents, of whom Daniel was chief; that the princes might give account to them, and the King (the Bear-Mouth) should have no damage.” The three presidencies, then, of the silver dominion were the ribs in the mouth of the Bear.

In dismissing this symbol, it is worthy of remark, that while the Ram, by which the Persians represented themselves in Daniel’s time, is their symbol in relation to the Macedonians under Alexander, the Deity hath chosen for them the Bear, to signify them as an element of the Image in the latter-days. The latter-day symbol then of Persia is a Bear; and a bear is at this time her formidable neighbour, and has already taken from her a large portion of her territory. The Russian Bear is destined to supersede her present government as an independent sovereignty, and to grasp Persia

between its teeth from near India to Ethiopia, which is to be “at his steps.” This is no mere conjecture, but absolutely certain; for Yahweh has declared by Ezekiel that Persia shall be an element of Gog’s confederacy at the time of the end. The Ram continued 206 years and nine months.

The third symbol representative of the Kingdom of Babylon under a new constitution shown to Daniel, was a Leopard with Four Heads and Four Wings. It answers to the Brazen part of the Image, which “bore rule over all the earth;” and to the Goat with Four Horns pointing to the Four Winds in the eighth chapter; but without the Little Horn, which is represented by the Fourth Beast.

The Leopard is Macedonian, representing Alexander the Great’s dominion and those of his four principal successors who divided it amongst themselves. The body of the beast represents the power before it was divided: and each head is one of the subsequent divisions. The wings represented the position of the Macedonian Heads relative to the Holy Land. At the death of Alexander, a long period of war ensued, which resulted B.C. 301 in the establishment of the following Kingdoms on the territory of the Kingdom of Men—

First Head—The Kingdom of the South, comprehending Egypt, Libya, Arabia, Coele-Syria, and Palestine, under the Ptolemies.

Second Head—The Kingdom of the north-west, including Thrace, Bythinia, etc., or the Thraco-Macedonian.

Third Head—The Kingdom of the north-east, comprehending the rest of Asia, inclusive of Babylon and its province; and extending beyond the Euphrates to the Indus. India beyond that river, although allotted to this head, revolted; so that the Indus became its boundary. This was the Macedo-Babylonish Kingdom of the Seleucidae.

Fourth Head—The Kingdom of the West, embracing Macedonia and Greece.

The Lion-Man, the Bear, the Leopard, and its Third Head or Kingdom of the North, all established themselves in the Kingdom of Babylon, where Alexander “held, as it were, the States-General of the world,” and which he had resolved to make the throne of his empire. But the decree of heaven was against the city (Isa. 14, 22, 23; 13:19, 22). The purpose of Alexander was frustrated by death; and by B.C. 293, it became an uninhabited desert by the inundation of the Euphrates and the building of Seleucia on the banks of the Tigris about forty miles above, to which its citizens removed. Thus, the tree of Babylon was hewn down, its branches lopped, its leaves shaken off, and its fruit scattered; so the nations got away from under it, and its rulers from its branches. Nevertheless, the Stump of its roots remained (Dan. 4:14, 15), under the sovereignty of the Third Head of the Leopard, founded by Seleucus, for almost 250

years; when the iron and brass became one dominion in Asia by the annexation of the Macedo-Babylonish territory to the Roman; and the band being thus formed, it was found at length encircled by it B.C. 65.

Of the four heads of the Leopard and the four horns of the Goat, but two only figure in the prophecy of Daniel's book. The reason for this is that the prophecy was not delivered to prefigure the history of the Gentiles; but to foreshow how the international policy of some of them in its bearing upon Judah, the Holy Land, and the saints, would at length create such a situation of affairs in the end, as would favour the execution of the divine purpose of demolishing the powers of the Gentiles in the establishment of the Kingdom of God.

"The secret of Yahweh is with them that fear Him." The matter is therefore revealed for the information of those who fear Him, that they may not be taken unawares. "The wise shall understand." Let them know then, that the policy of only two heads of the Leopard is foreshown, because they only of the four had to do with Judah and the Holy Land; and were sufficient to connect the iron with the silver of the Image.

Hence the individual dominion of Alexander was the Belly, and these two heads also the two thighs of brass; and therefore continuous with the iron Roman leg; so that the brass and iron limbs of the Image from hip to ankle represent the fourth form in its Graeco-Roman constitution. The two thighs and the two heads represent the Kingdom of the South, and the Kingdom of the North-east, as above defined; and with the Little Horn of the Goat, or eastern element of the Fourth Beast, in relation to Judah and the Holy Land, are the powers of the eleventh chapter from the fifth verse to the end. (*To be continued, God willing*)

Second Voyage To Australia

(Continued)

FROM THE BAY OF BISCAY TO NAPLES

Monday, August 9, 1897—Just a week since we sailed from Southampton, we find letters waiting, with pleasant echoes from home. We should have liked to answer them, but could not.—(Accept thanks and love, dear brother and sister Cook).

After breakfast and a little writing, we went ashore to have a proper look at Genoa. The day was very hot, and we gladly availed ourselves of the offer of a carriage to have a drive round.

We had no idea Genoa was such a lovely place. As we ascended the rising ground on which the town is built in the form of a cres-

cent fronting the sea southwards, we found the streets improve in quality till they grew quite light and airy of aspect. The houses are built of lightly tinted stone—creamy and light green, with occasional faint pinks, and a highly ornate style of architecture.

One or two streets were wholly occupied with palaces. The palaces did not stand off the street like English palaces, but fronted flush with the street like ordinary houses—only with more stately fronts. Peeping through the main entrance, you could see trim garden enclosures in ample courts behind. The grandeur inside instead of outside: English palaces seem arranged for public view, while these are for private comfort. A combination of both would be the best. This we shall see by-and-bye.

We passed through one or two squares that were like “fairyl-land,” as the saying is. In one of them, behind elegant gardens and statues, there was a background of high cliff, over which a large cascade was falling with white gleam in the sun. The water was supplied, as we were informed, from an ancient Roman aqueduct.

When we reached the top of the rise on which the back part of Genoa is built, a fine view of hills and ravines opened to our sight in the valley behind.

We descended for perhaps a mile, and then came to the cemetery—the most beautiful cemetery I ever saw. I had no idea there was such a place on the face of the earth. It was in an ideal situation for seclusion—nestling behind the town at the foot of a number of wood-clad hills, which seem to completely surround it.

But its chief beauty is inside: the lofty colonnade for family graves surrounding it on all sides. This is divided into two corridors, or cloisters, running side by side: the first, or outer cloister, is for what we may call second-class graves, and the inner cloister, with open archways to the interior of the cemetery, for the wealthy.

The first cloister is somewhat dark from having no opening in the walls, but still looks beautiful in its stately gloom in distant perspective. Both walls are lined from floor to ceiling with graves. These graves are not excavations in the ground like English graves, but more like a series of closed shelves, fronted by ornamental mementoes of the dead—inscriptions, portraits, wreaths, lamps, etc. The cloister appears to be flagged with graves as well.

But it is the inner cloister that strikes the visitor with a sense of extreme beauty. Only one side of this cloister is used for graves. The other side is open to the daylight through a series of archways running as high as the roof. The side that is used for graves does not at all resemble the walls of the first cloister. There are no shelves, but the wall is divided into a series of niches or alcoves, in which life-size statuary memorialise the dead.

The statuary is in white marble, and mostly consists of groups.

These groups are of endless variety in subject and design, and all executed with the most life-like resemblance to nature. There is no uniformity, no repetitions, nothing stereotyped, so far as we could notice: each group was original, and as a whole, they embraced every variety of death-subject.

In one, the physician was feeling the pulse of his very evidently death-stricken patient: in another, a husband was leaning broken-hearted against the door of his wife's grave: in another, an angel was taking the husband, and the family were following with gestures of agonised entreaty, and the angel beckoning them off: in another, an agonised mother was on her knees, and her son standing sympathetically by—and so on through what seemed an endless series of representations through a long vista of beautiful corridors.

The cemetery inside the beautiful quadrangle formed by the corridors seemed reserved for the common people, whose graves thickly dotted the ground everywhere—a little in the English style, but not quite—the slabs not so substantial, and the setting of the graves not so regular. Another un-English feature was the use of lamps everywhere—in some cases lit: wreaths also were artificial and durable.

The centre of the north, or what we might call the back wall of the cemetery, rose into a stately structure, crowned with a dome, and fronted by Greek columns and frieze, the whole standing at the top of a broad flight of stairs which ascended from a broad central avenue communicating with the entrance.

The whole affair was grand: but we could not conceal from ourselves the sorrowful facts behind it: 1, that it was the offspring of superstition: and 2, that it was but the garnishing of the sad fact symbolised by the skull and cross-bones; that with all his wondrous capacities and glories, man is but the child of corruption and the heir of death.

The spectacle of so much artistic beauty in association with so much of human sorrow, impresses the imagination: but Reason insists on taking the thing to pieces. What is it all, but so much stone shifted from the quarries, and hammered by grimy human fingers, and placed in position?

And what were all the people whose memories are thus vainly sought to be rescued from oblivion by tricks of human art? Even such as we find the mass of human beings in the land of the living—trivial, insipid, uninteresting, benighted, selfish, carnal—and who, where they have attained a degree of culture and intellectual craving, say unto God—“Depart from us: we desire not the knowledge of thy ways.”

The fact remains, after all the glossing and the forgetting, that death reigns, and that men are, as Carlyle expresses it, “mostly

fools”—a dictum which the Scriptures allege with no less energy of speech—“Madness is in their hearts while they live, and after that they go to the dead.”

There is but one proper counterpart to this fact, namely, that God has spoken with the intention of mending it all: and that His speech is in the Bible; and that this only is “the good part that shall not be taken away,” as Jesus declared.

* * *

We return to the ship and find her unimproved as a place of habitation after being exposed in a stuffy harbour to the baking heat of an Italian sun for some hours, and more or less infected with coal-dust from the process of getting in coals. However, as “the light affliction” was “but for a moment,” we could endure till the passing of the night brought another morning.

* * *

Tuesday, August 10, 1897—In bright sunshine and on a smooth sea, we steamed out of Genoa harbour at 10 a.m., and were soon skirting the west coast of Italy on our way southward on the calm blue sea to Naples, which we would reach in 27 hours. The land was more or less visible at a distance all the way.

In several hours, we passed Caprera, Garibaldi’s island, on the left, and then the island of Elba, on the same side, and, at the same time, Corsica, on our right.

It would have been a pleasant entertainment to pass written questions round the company for written answers, to this effect: “What great man of modern times was born in Corsica? and who was banished to Elba, and what for? and what event resulted from his escape to the continent: and please describe what change was produced in the state of the world generally by his career?”

It is very certain that the answers would have been very meagre, and a good few absolutely blank. I found the best educated of the company very dim on the question of the French Revolution, though it happened only a hundred years ago.

The latest novel, the last opera, the most recent speculation of chameleon science—form about the extent of the intellectual horizon of the moderns where they have any horizon at all. Most commonly they have no horizon, but are built in by the back yard of their own very small affairs.

This, of course, is not altogether their blame. It is the inevitable result of the system of things under which they live. No reform of the radical nature needed is possible until God fulfil His promise, and “destroy the strength of the kingdoms of the heathen,” and set His own appointed King on Zion with such irresistible power that “the isles shall wait for his law.”

It would be a nice thing—and nothing more than reason calls

for—if there were an officer on board these ocean steam vessels whose sole business it should be to deliver lectures to the passengers on the various points of interest passed in the course of the voyage; and also to make himself familiar passengers' friend, singling out, in particular, for personal attention and conversation the solitary souls who have no friends and make no acquaintances.

This would be scouted as a piece of Utopian idealism in an age which is impelled by a brutal competition into cheeseparing thrifts. But it comes within the conception of true civilization. And it would be distinctly within the promise that God will—

“Give pastors according to his own heart that will feed the people with wisdom and knowledge.”

* * *

Sis. Roberts and daughters have been fighting the banker and the evolutionist, who, we find, is a music professor. In the evening, while I was writing in the saloon, Eusebia came down from the upper deck, and said,

“Oh, pa, I do wish you would come upstairs: Ma and Mr. Fraser are at it, hammer and tongues, about the resurrection of Christ.”

I was writing a letter that had to be posted next morning at Naples, so I could not break off: but I said I would hurry up and come. I did so, but when I got on deck, the episode had passed.

* * *

Wednesday, August 11, 1897—Serene weather continues. This morning, we passed several beautiful islands as we drew near to Naples. They looked like “the isles of the blest” on the ocean of everlasting peace: but alas, had we landed, we should have found them no exception to the testimony of Solomon, that “the misery of man is great upon him.” All ideal views of the state of man are fantasies, except those prospectively involved in “great and precious promises” written in the Bible and nowhere else.

We steamed into Naples harbour, or rather behind the breakwater (for there is not much of a harbour) about 12.30, to the strains of the ship band, which struck up, as we drew near, according to the general German practice.

This musical indulgence will become common, with every other good thing, in the day of the promised blessing. Life is altogether too grim an affair as now conducted. It requires much more than music to end the grimness, of course. Nevertheless, music has an important place and will get it.

But the music of the age to come will not be the inane “toot-toots” of operatic origin—invented to stimulate the blasé faculties of voluptuaries or gratify the senses of mere worshippers of the imagination. It will be “the music of the spheres” truly—such as was heard on Bethlehem’s plains when Christ was born—dulcet

but vigorous, ravishing but noble and grand with the grandeur that can only come with the worship of the Eternal in sincerity, gravity, mercy and truth.

Lunch being served, we go ashore. Sister Roberts and daughters were very anxious to see Pompeii (some 13 or 15 miles distant by rail), and I had hoped there would be time to take them: but as the vessel would resume her voyage in eight hours, there would only be time to get to Pompeii and back, without inspecting the ruins: so we gave it up, and had to content ourselves with an inspection of the antiquities from Pompeii stored in the Naples Museum. Even this we had to do at a scamper, for it was about a quarter to three when we got there, and the place closed at three.

The streets were full of interest for sister Roberts and the girls, not so much on account of the high and strange-looking buildings and shops, as on account of the busy, short-statured, withered-looking population hurrying about in all directions.

A painful feature among them was the number of beggars and priests. The aspect of the whole population was sordid, base, villainous.

What else could be expected after centuries of Papal rule? What more demoralising than the doctrine that men can purge their sins by paying the priests once a week? England is bad enough: if the very seat of the beast is unutterably vile, it is no marvel. The vileness seems to infect everything, except shapes and sounds. Art and music throw a veil over the grosser features of diabolism.

The restaurants look like dens. We went into one of them for a cup of tea, as the weaker members of the company were in danger of fainting by the way. For one cup of tea and one piece of bread and butter we were charged 1s. each. We could have reconciled ourselves to the extortion if the articles supplied had in the least deserved their name. But the tea was exactly like a cup of the senna tea we used to get in Scotland when our mothers wanted to doctor us without the doctor; the butter was like rancid tallow, and the bread almost as if it had been made of chalk mixed with starch. (I suppose there would be better places, but we did not chance on them.)

After escaping from the restaurant we followed Eusebia's leadership to see the arcade, certainly the most beautiful edifice of the kind I ever saw—lofty and ornate, as British buildings are not—suggesting even what the glorious temple of the happy coming age will be; but oh, the human part of it!—(and what are buildings apart from people?)

“Wherein dwelleth righteousness,” is the best part of the promise of the new heavens and new earth. Even huts and hovels would be tolerable if all men knew and served God and loved their

neighbours: but how glorious when righteous people will inhabit noble dwellings?

On the way back to the steamer, we passed loathsome forms, prostrate on the foot-pavement, besides the more numerous loathsome walking. Pushing our way through sere and reckless-looking crowds, wearied in the oppressive heat and the merciless man-hunting bustle proceeding on all sides, we were glad to get on board the comparative quiet of our vessel—though it wasn't very quiet just yet.

All sorts of importunists seemed to have got on board in the universal quest for coin. Poor creatures! They say—not there in English—“We maun (must) live.” Carlyle used to say “I don't see it.” Carlyle was more right than many people would care to admit. When the flood came, God did not recognise the “maun live” maxim as applied to sinners. He never does, “though he bear long with them.” “Maun” (must) becomes “must not” with Him at last.

It is shortly about to become so on a very large scale. Vast multitudes, sophisticated by the glammers of the day, will be surprised to find what little value God puts on human life when it is divorced from the purpose for which He invented it. Piles of corpses throughout the wide world, as in the day of judgment on Jerusalem, will confute nearly for ever the favourite popular fallacy that human beings “maun live” whether they honour God or no.

* * *

At supper table on board, I had my first encounter with the two friends sister Roberts and daughters have been preparing. They had laid the train and now tried to light the fuse, but with only partial success. The enemy, taking the alarm at the first detonation, fled the field—a parable which every one must interpret according to such dim light as the context may afford.

(To be continued, God willing.)

A Brother Beloved

“Yet for love's sake I rather beseech thee”

PAUL'S LETTER TO PHILEMON

Philemon differs from all the rest of the Bible in that it is strictly a private letter on a personal matter written to an individual friend. The only other private letter to an individual in the Bible is John 3, to Gaius, but there the subject and purpose is more general. Timothy and Titus are ecclesial and doctrinal communications.

Philemon was a brother in Colosse converted to the Truth

by Paul. Onesimus was a runaway slave belonging to Philemon who made contact with Paul in Rome—perhaps in repentance, perhaps in realization of the danger of his position. Paul says he had previously been unprofitable to Philemon so perhaps he had taken advantage of the kindness of a lenient owner. In association with Paul he accepted the Truth and was baptized, and then Paul sent him back to make peace with Philemon.

This epistle is the letter he carried from Paul to Philemon. This epistle has been used both to support slavery (in that Paul sent him back) and to condemn it (in that Paul said, “Not now as a slave, but a brother beloved”). Actually it is on a much higher plane than either to specifically approve or condemn one particular aspect of the world of sin. It rises far above it, from temporals to eternal, and leaves the question of slavery as such far below as among unimportant, passing, earthly things.

The whole spirit is summed up in those words just referred to—“No longer a slave but a brother beloved.” To the extent that Philemon comprehended and accepted the fulness of this, to that extent the slavery would cease to exist. In this brief message there can be discerned, skilfully woven together and either expressed or implied, 14 separate arguments in favor of reconciliation on Philemon’s part.

* * *

According to the Law of Moses, an escaped slave was not to be returned to his owner, but Paul sends him back under the law of Christ. Is then, the law of Christ less humane, less enlightened, less merciful, more in sympathy with slavery, than the Law of Moses? On the contrary, Paul’s action indicates the very opposite. Moses’ Law would release Onesimus from his obligation, or at least it would have released Paul from the obligation of giving up Onesimus to Philemon, but the law of Christ called for a repentance and a seeking of reconciliation, and a giving to Philemon the opportunity of granting freely what had been taken from him against his will.

This epistle is clearly related in time and circumstance to the epistles to Ephesus and Colosse, especially the latter. They are from Rome and sent about the same time—62 AD, near the end of Paul’s 2 years imprisonment. Ephesians and Colossians contain several parallel passages and were borne by the same messenger, Tychicus, from the same place.

Philemon and Colossians were both carried by Onesimus and in each the same 6 persons were saluted, (with Colossians bearing an additional salutation from Justus)—

In Philemon—
Epaphras
Marcus
Aristarchus
Demas
Luke
Onesimus

In Colossians—
Epaphras
Marcus
Aristarchus
Demas
Luke
Onesimus
Justus

We are not told where Philemon lived, and we would not know from the epistle to him alone, but we learn from Colossians that Archippus, who was of Philemon's household, was of Colosse.

* * *

IN this one personal letter, we see a slightly different Paul. He plays lightly and gently with all the names as if to add informality and intimacy and appeal to the message.

Onesimus means 'profitable' so Paul speaks of his former unprofitableness but his now profitableness to both Philemon and Paul.

Philemon means "beloved" from *philema*—a kiss—and so Paul addresses him.

Apphia is an affectionate diminutive for 'brother or sister,' and so Paul calls her 'Apphia the sister' (as it should be and as RV gives it, and the best manuscripts).

Archippus means 'Master of the horse'—a military term, so Paul calls him 'fellowsoldier'

But there is without a doubt far more to 'fellowsoldier' than just a passing play upon a name. Paul often introduces the conception of warfare. It is a very apt and instructive comparison, and to Paul—a prisoner of Jesus Christ and for the sake of the Gospel—a real and ever-present fact.

Life in the Truth IS a warfare. It must be so if we are faithful. All aspects of warfare find their counterpart in the Truth: the call, the sacrifice, the separation and leaving behind of the things of the world, the training and the discipline, the hardship and the self-denial, the singleness of purpose, the armor and the weapons, the unquestioning allegiance and obedience to the supreme commander, the existence of the enemy, the close, smooth, tightly-integrated unity of action so essential to victory, the combat and the danger—not with carnal weapons but with spiritual weapons in implacable hostility to everything carnal and fleshly.

In this one word—fellowsoldier—Paul links Archippus inseparably with himself in all these things, and in the glorious assurance of the final victory. In the Colossians, Paul finds it necessary to gently and publicly remind Archippus of his responsibilities in the Truth (4:17)—

“Say to Archippus, take heed to the ministry which thou hast received of the Lord, that thou fulfill it.”

So perhaps, ‘fellowsoldier’ here is also meant to stir Archippus to a clearer remembrance of his partnership with Paul in the glorious Gospel warfare.

* * *

It is very fitting in itself that Paul’s one private letter left for us should be an earnest plea and fervent expression of love and unity for a slave—a class that was then treated as less than human. Paul calls him his son, his brother, and his own heart. It is probable, in the very nature of things, that slave-owners would be very few among the brethren. The vast majority would be either slaves, or poor free men. The Gospel was preached to the poor, and its principles have the greatest appeal to them.

This epistle enters into the Brotherhood’s relation to slavery more than any other part of the New Testament. Paul gives instruction concerning slaves and masters in Corinthians, Ephesians, Colossians and Timothy, but here is an actual example and a whole epistle bearing on the matter.

In the Roman Empire in New Testament times slaves outnumbered the free. Very often the slaves were in chains continually day and night. The master had power of life and death. They had little or no rights or protection of law, no property, no true marriage, no choice of a mate—their master gave or took mates at his will.

The children belonged to the master as slaves for any use or purpose the master desired. Runaway slaves usually received torture, branding, and often a cruel death.

If our version were more consistently translated, this aspect of New Testament times would be more obvious: 34 of all the appearances of the word ‘servant’ in the New Testament should be translated ‘slave,’ as in some of the more modern versions.

* * *

The Bible has been accused of condoning and even supporting this human evil. This is due to two universal misunderstandings concerning—

1. The purpose of the Bible.
2. The deep import of its teaching, fully comprehended.

Through much of history, and almost to the present, slavery has been a major aspect of human society. Actually, it is a much wider and more inclusive thing than generally regarded. That is, all dictatorship is actually slavery; all industrial and economic oppression is actually slavery, especially where the victim’s circumstances leave him no choice but to submit.

It has been a universal characteristic of man to seek to oppress and enslave his fellowman and use him to increase his own wealth,

power and leisure.

Slavery in its various forms —fiefdom, serfs, peasantry, etc., has been the common lot of the poor up until very recent times, and practical slavery still exists in much of the world today, where the few rich who own all the land exploit and oppress the vast and hopeless multitude of the poor.

Slavery is just one part of the great human fabric of evil and wickedness. For the Bible to seek to abolish slavery would require it to write the laws for all nations, appoint all rulers, and enforce justice by divine power. This would be the Millennium (which will come in God's own proper time).

The greatest slavery of all, before which all else pales into insignificance, is man's slavery to his own selfishness and fleshly desires, and to this all are in bondage. Most, indeed, are eager victims with no desire for freedom. This is the deep root of the weed to which we must lay the axe of Scripture. Chopping off the branches only makes the evil fruit grow bigger.

The Bible's purpose is not to reform the world—yet. Its present purpose is to call out and prepare a people for God. The present evil constitution of man is the necessary furnace of affliction for the purifying of the saints.

The Bible is concerned with the character of the individual, the release from the universal slavery of self and sin, and the preparation for God and eternity.

It tells the slave to serve his master, whether he be good or bad, as service done to God and accepted by God. It tells the master to treat the slave as he himself would desire to be treated, with perfect justice and mercy, even as he hoped in mercy to be treated by his Master—Christ.

The Bible is not out to put odd and futile patches on a thoroughly corrupt and fleshly constitution of things, but to perfect personal relationships and prepare individuals for divinity. The principles of the commands of Christ, spiritually comprehended and faithfully applied, would completely transform and beautify ALL human and social relationships.

Paul in this epistle applies these principles to an actual master-slave relationship. He sends the runaway and disobedient slave back to his master in submission and repentance, and he exhorts the master to accept him, not as a slave, but as a beloved brother in Christ to whom Paul himself was a willing slave and for whom he was even then in actual chains. And he seals the bond of brotherhood between them with his own infinite love for both.

It is notable that Paul's fullest instructions concerning masters and slaves occur in the two epistles which appear to have been written and sent at the same time as this—one to the same place;

that is, Colossians and Ephesians.

Similarly at the close of Colossians he calls Epaphras the ‘slave of Christ’ the only time he separately applies this term to anyone but himself.

It would seem that he is attempting to soften and dignify the position of the natural slave by reminding the brotherhood of the honor and dignity of their slavery to Christ unto life eternal. He shows how a mark of natural ignominy can be a badge of spiritual glory.

The instruction in Ephesians (which is the fullest) occurs in 6:5-9. We note that in three successive verses, he says they must serve as unto Christ, and not to men, and he promises by the Spirit that such service will be accepted and rewarded as done to Christ himself.

Our state and circumstances in this life are utterly unimportant because of its brevity and because of the transcending importance of other greater things. Whatever God wills is best, for it is designed to forward His purpose and prepare us for a place in that purpose.

The instruction for slave-owners is all in one verse (9) but it is all-inclusive—“Do the same thing to them.”—work on the same principle that **EVERYTHING WE DO MUST BE DONE AS TO AND FOR CHRIST**—

“Forbearing—giving up, refraining from—threatening.”

Threatening anyone is entirely out of the question for a brother of Christ. If the relationship is not in mutual love and respect, it is not acceptable to God. This command alone would transform the whole picture.

“Knowing that your Master also is in heaven: neither is there respect of persons with him.”

He will deal with us as we deal with others. On the same subject, Colossians adds an instruction which, fully comprehended, spells the end of slavery (4:1)—

“Masters, give unto your slaves that which is **JUST AND EQUAL**, knowing that ye also have a Master in heaven.”

Brethren were required to treat slaves the same as they are required to treat all men— with love, gentleness, kindness and humility. **THERE ARE NO EXCEPTIONS TO THESE RULES.** This would raise and purify the relationship far above anything the world dreams of.

Even in the Roman world there were cases of deep devotion of slaves to benevolent masters.

The brethren and sisters of the first century had no experience of a society not built on slavery. This was an inseparable part of the only world they knew. They had much to learn. The lesson for us is to examine ourselves for prejudice or preconceived worldly

notions absorbed from our fleshly surroundings that have no spiritual reason or justification.

We are all to a large extent creatures of our times, blind sheep following the crowd. We take things for granted as right and acceptable just because the wicked world around us so takes them for granted. We do not stop to think things through for ourselves independently, strictly on scriptural, spiritual principles.

* * *

“Paul a prisoner” (v. 1).

Five times in this short letter Paul refers to his bonds. He appears to be associating himself in bondage with Onesimus the slave, in order to appeal more strongly to Philemon.

Only in this letter does he so introduce himself. His normal introduction is “Paul the apostle,” but here, in this personal letter of entreaty, he keeps his authority and apostleship in the background and emphasizes his bondage.

Only in two other epistles does he omit the title ‘apostle’ and those were to the two ecclesias to whom he felt most close — Philippi and Thessalonica.

* * *

“To our beloved Apphia, and Archippus” (v. 2).

These are members of Philemon’s household. It would seem most probable Apphia was Philemon’s wife and possibly Archippus his son; but any relationship or none at all is possible. Certainly they must be an intimate part of the household or they would not have been included in a letter on a domestic matter. They were obviously concerned in the problem.

* * *

“Grace to you, and peace” (v. 3).

These are not just standard words of greeting, but very real and vital things. Without grace from God we are just ordinary, flesh-thinking creatures; and there is no true peace except that which God gives those who give their lives to serving Him in love.

If Philemon was to hope for ‘grace and peace’ from God, he must extend grace and peace to Onesimus.

* * *

“I thank God, making mention of thee always in my prayers” (v. 4).

Another very real and essential thing—thanksgiving and prayer. Paul had many, many brethren and sisters always in his mind and in his prayers. These are the true spiritual realities of life. This is living fully and abundantly, largely and joyfully.

* * *

“Hearing of thy love and faith” (v. 5).

It is a joyful, comforting thing to hear of love and faith being

manifested. It gives great encouragement in times of trial and stress. It indicates a healthy, hopeful, thriving condition. To see these things bringing forth fruit in others gives reality and purpose and confidence to our own faith.

Moreover, it creates a oneness, a feeling of closeness and partnership. When we see brethren and sisters putting first things first, we are drawn towards them in love. We can communicate. There is mutual understanding.

But when we see them absorbed in a multitude of empty, passing, present things, getting gain and seeking pleasure, there is a sad sense of distance and barrier and futility.

Paul could have commanded Philemon, by reason of his own authority in Christ, but commanding would not have taught any deep spiritual principles. Rather on the basis of Philemon's already manifested spiritual fruits and characteristics, Paul desires to build a broader understanding and more universal application.

Love, patience, humility, forgiveness, service and submission to others are NOTHING if not perfectly consistent and completely universal, for to be anything they must be US, not just our convenient cloak for chosen occasions and chosen recipients.

A Christian slave-owner was really in a much more difficult position than a Christian slave, if he understood the principles of godliness and nonresistance to evil, and suffering ourselves to be defrauded.

To be a true brother of Christ he had to go in the face of some of the strongest prejudices of human opinion—the ones where personal advantage was most deeply at stake. The principles of Christ dissolve all human conventions and distinctions.

* * *

“Thy love toward ALL saints” (v. 5).

This must necessarily include the new brother Onesimus. There would be no exceptions, no respect of persons. Paul irresistibly builds his case on Philemon's own already manifested recognition of the true way of life.

* * *

“That the communication of thy faith may become effectual by the acknowledging of every good thing which is in you in Christ Jesus” (v. 6).

What does this mean? “Communication” means fellowship, partnership, sharing together. It refers to the communion of mutual service between brethren in love, the deep unity of mutual giving and receiving. Both spiritual and material are inseparably combined in one.

“Effectual” means active, energetic, productive, fruitful.

“Acknowledgment” means (and is translated in other versions),

perfect knowledge, full recognition, deep discernment.

The word is not just gnosis—‘knowledge,’ but epignosis—‘full knowledge, realization, comprehension.’ Paul is praying that the goodness manifested by Philemon to the brotherhood may result in fuller knowledge and deep comprehension of the glorious blessings that are ours in Christ.

Is he praying that others may be enlightened by Philemon’s example or that Philemon himself may be expanded and deepened in spiritual joy and knowledge as a result of, and as a blessing upon, his acts of loving fellowship?

Doubtless both thoughts are involved, but the latter would appear to be the principal one, and most in harmony with the spirit and purpose of the epistle, for Paul’s aim is to lead Philemon to a growth in godliness.

* * *

“Though I might be much bold in Christ to enjoin thee that which is convenient” (v. 8).

That is, to command what is required. Paul had authority from Christ, as the apostle to the Gentiles, to enforce the law of Christ, by the guidance and power of the Spirit, throughout the ecclesias.

In a spiritual sense he stood in the same relation to Philemon as Philemon did to Onesimus. Yet for love’s sake he chose to forgo his authority, and to entreat rather than to command. To command and enforce is to admit the failure of love—

”The law is not for the righteous, but for the lawless and disobedient.”

The righteous does not need a law. All he needs is to be told what is desired—just the slightest hint—and he delights to comply in love. If Paul had enforced his authority, he would have been contradicting and denying the very thing he was seeking; for he was trying to persuade Philemon to forgo his authority for the sake of love. By himself yielding, he brings great persuasion upon Philemon to yield. Much more can be accomplished by yielding than by forcing. Forcing hardens resistance, while yielding melts resistance away.

* * *

“Paul the aged?” (v. 9).

When Paul first is brought to our attention he is spoken of as a young man. Within 30 years, according to all accepted reckonings, he was dead. At this time of writing to Philemon, he was probably 50 to 60 years old. How then, does he speak of himself here as ‘aged’?

Like Christ, though not to the same degree, the full and intense activity of his life was packed into a small compass. When we consider his experiences—the beatings, the hardships, the sleep-

lessness, the cold and hunger and long weary laborings—we can see how he was ‘Paul the aged’ in that short period of time.

Life is not just a matter of existing for a certain length of time. It is doing. It is intense, and purposeful, and useful activity. By scriptural standards, living in relaxed personal self-pleasing is not even life at all in any true sense, but a hideous form of living death—

”She (or he) that liveth in pleasure is dead while she liveth”
(1 Tim. 5:6).

* * *

“A prisoner of Jesus Christ.”

The thought is deeper than just that he was a prisoner on account of Jesus Christ. In the light of what he says elsewhere, it is clear that he sees himself as a prisoner, a bondman, a slave forever OF Jesus Christ, thankfully and joyfully.

The Roman chains he wore he saw as his chains of unity with, and suffering for, Christ. The Romans were but a passing and meaningless shadow, just the faint, hazy, flickering background. The vivid reality that Paul always saw in all his experiences and circumstance was Christ himself, ever beside him.

* * *

“A brother, both in the flesh and in the Lord” (v.16).

Though not necessarily required by this statement, it is quite possible that Onesimus was his own less fortunate half-brother, a son of his father, for a man’s own children were slaves if their mother was his slave.

* * *

“Knowing thou wilt also do more than I say” (v. 21).

Paul specifies the principle and indicates the direction, but leaves it to Philemon’s largeness of heart and depth of spiritual perception to determine how far.

This is a beautiful aspect of Christ’s commands. At any particular time, brethren are at different levels of spiritual perception and experience, and this cannot be forced.

Paul seems to be clearly hinting here at complete freedom for the slave, but he could not presume to suggest it, far less command it. It must come from the mind of Christ working within Philemon himself.

This, too, showed much more kindness and consideration to Philemon—giving him room to freely, voluntarily, manifest his goodness beyond what was asked. There are many lessons in wisdom and courtesy we can learn from this very brief letter from friend to friend.

There is a deep lesson for us in the basic form and nature of

this letter itself, apart from the specific message it contains. We should study and copy its spirit and tone. We should learn to feel the affections and emotions it portrays, for Paul is not just being clever and diplomatic to gain his ends.

He is being sincere and Christlike and gentle and courteous, as all letters should be, especially to brethren. It illustrates the great change that must take place in us—from the natural to the spiritual.

The natural Paul—Saul, the self-righteous, self-important persecutor—could never have written a letter like this. He had to be completely transformed by the love of Christ and the inworking power of the Spirit. Every letter we write should be a manifestation of the mind of the Spirit. It should bear the stamp of the new man of love and gentleness and meekness.

The beauty of the law of Christ is that it fits every social circumstance, it solves every problem, and it raises every activity—even the simplest and meanest—to the level of direct communication with God, dignifying and glorifying every necessary activity of life, however humble it be.

The law of Christ gave a purpose and a nobility and the consolation of an eventual abundant reward and recompense, even to the most hopeless, miserable and degraded toilings of the slave.

The teaching of Christ would cure all human ills, and create a universal brotherhood in which all distinctions and barriers would fall away, and all would serve and submit to one another in love.

“As ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them.”

This of course will never prevail in this present dark world of sin and selfishness, but any who would please Christ must—in their own little personal world that is their life and their relationship to God and all mankind—act on this principle toward all without exception, regardless of what others may do.—Berean, 1966

“Seal Not The Sayings Of The Prophecy”

(Continued)

By **BRO. E. W. BANTA**

How Jesus prevailed so that God gave him the power and authority to loose the seals and to open the book is indicated in verse 6 (ch. 5)—

“And I beheld, and lo, in the midst of the throne and of the four beasts, and in the midst of the elders stood a LAMB AS IT HAD BEEN SLAIN.”

THE SACRIFICE of Christ was a prevailing against sin, a victory over death and the grave, both for the personal Christ and for his brethren, so that they can now sing—

“Thou wast slain, AND HAST REDEEMED US TO GOD BY THY BLOOD.”

This blood of the everlasting covenant, which was shed for many, has already been the life-giving means of bringing up again from the dead, the Lord Jesus Christ, the great Shepherd of the sheep, as expressed in the opening chapter of the book—

“I am he that liveth and was dead; and, behold, I am alive forever more, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death.”

* * *

This is a book of sevens: 7 ecclesias, 7 letters, 7 seals. We will notice as we study this wonderful book that Jesus sent and signified, by his angel to his servant John, TO SHOW UNTO HIS SERVANTS, in all ages and generations, the things that must shortly come to pass.

This book also contains seven blessings that the Lord pronounced upon those faithful servants who read, study, understand and keep the sayings written therein.

(1) The first blessing is contained in chapter 1:3. (And we use bro. Thomas’ translation as we enumerate these blessings).

“Blessed he who knows accurately, and they who give heed to the words of the prophecy, and OBSERVE NARROWLY the things which have been written in it; for the time is near.”

John was commanded to send the book to the seven ecclesias of Asia, and since seven is the scriptural number of completeness, we understand that it is meant for ALL ECCLESIAS. This is made plain in the closing remarks to each ecclesia—

“He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the ecclesias.”

But this blessing in verse 3 does not cover all members of the seven ecclesias of Asia, nor all the servants of God who have received the book since that time. The blessing is only for those who know accurately, give heed to the words, and observe narrowly the things written in it.

(2) The second blessing is found in chapter 14:13, where we read—

“Blessed are the dead dying in the Lord, FROM THIS TIME. Yea, saith the Spirit, in order that they may take rest from their labors, and their works he goes in aid with them.”

From what time will the dead who die in the Lord be blessed? The first verse of this chapter indicates the time and manner of blessing that will be for those who die in the Lord. John says—

“And I looked, and lo, a Lamb stood on Mt. Zion, and with him

an hundred and forty-four thousand, having his Father's Name written in their foreheads."

John was told in verse 4 who these 144,000 were who stood with Christ on Mt. Zion.

"These are they which were not defiled with women; for they are virgins. These are they which follow the Lamb withersoever he goeth. These were redeemed from among men, being the first fruits unto God, and to the Lamb. And in their mouth was found no guile; for they are without fault before the throne of God."

From this time those who die in the Lord will be blessed. But let us understand what it means to DIE IN THE LORD. Many who were baptized into Christ will not die in the Lord. In the scriptural sense, we are only IN the Lord while we are obedient in all things to His will. The Word says—

"If we have not the spirit of Christ, we are none of his."

To die in Christ is to remain faithful to the end.

(3) The next of the seven blessings is found in Rev. 16:15—

"Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he who is watching, and keeping his garments, that he may not walk naked, and they may see his shame."

The meaning here is plain: WHAT A BLESSING IT WILL BE if we are found watching, having garments of righteousness upon us. To walk naked is to have our sins UNFORGIVEN. The blood of Christ is only effective as a covering for sin in the case of those who accept the terms of the New Covenant and abide by its conditions. Otherwise we walk naked, and the angels who assist in the gathering and judgment of the saints will see THE SHAME of those who have no covering for their sins. Of this class Daniel says, they come forth to shame and everlasting contempt.

But the blessing is also restricted to those who are found watching. Bro. Thomas, commenting on this verse in Eureka, Vol. 3, page 591, says—

"They must first put on the garments, and then keep them from being soiled by the corruptions of the flesh and of the world. NONE CAN WATCH SCRIPTURALLY WHO DO NOT KEEP THE SAYINGS OF THE PROPHECY OF THIS BOOK, for without an understanding of them, it is impossible to know the signs of the advent, whether it is near or afar off."

"All the world sees the facts in regard to the Ottoman, Papal, Austrian and French powers; but it knows not what is indicated thereby . . . This is the case also with many who profess that they are not of the world, but whose practice belies their profession. They talk glibly about the advent, but they are neither in the faith, nor do they know what it is."

"Such are the naked, and have no garments to keep; and all their

professed 'looking for Jesus' is not the watching of the text before us."

(4) The fourth blessing is found in chapter 19:9—

"And he said unto me, Write: Blessed are they who have been called to feast of the marriage of the Lamb. And he said unto me, These are the true words of the Deity."

It is plain from the context surrounding this passage just when this blessedness will come upon those who have been called to the feast of the marriage of the Lamb. The two preceding verses read—

"Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honor to him; for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready.

And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white; for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints."

This particular blessing inserted here refers to the saints at Jerusalem soon after Christ has established his throne there. This will be after the destruction of Gog and his armies on the mountains of Israel, and after the Jews remaining there, when the conflict has died away, have accepted Jesus as their deliverer and King. The Kingdom of God, which the saints have been praying for through all the ages will have come, and the faithful ones will then be in it, rejoicing in the glory and strength of immortality, and companionship with their Lord.

But after this throne is set up in Jerusalem, the outlying nations of the world must be brought in as subject peoples to the law that goes forth from Zion and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. This part of the word is recorded in the rest of chapter 19, as we see heaven opened, and behold a white horse, and he that sat upon him was called "faithful and true, and in righteousness doth he judge and make war."

In verse 14 it is recorded—

"And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean."

These are the saints as they lead out from Jerusalem against the nations of the world, with Judah as their goodly horse in battle. It will indeed be a time of blessing for those who are worthy of this great work of establishing God's righteousness in the earth, so that the whole world may again be of one language and one tongue, and serve the Lord with one consent.

(5) The fifth blessing is found in Rev. 20:6—

"Blessed and holy is he having part in the first resurrection: upon these the second death hath no power. But they shall be priests of the Deity and of the Christ, and they shall reign with him a thousand years."

The blessing here consists, not only in the coming out of the grave at the first resurrection when Christ comes; but in having a

part or lot in that resurrection. They will be the ones that Daniel mentions when he says, “Many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth will awake, **SOME TO EVERLASTING LIFE.**”

They are the first-fruits to God and Christ, on whom death hath no more power, and it is said that they live and reign with Christ a thousand years over the mortal nations of the subdued world.

(6) The sixth blessing in the book of Revelation is recorded in chapter 22, verse 7—

“Behold I come suddenly. Blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book.”

The Lord Jesus told his apostles:

“At such a time as ye think not, the Son of Man cometh.”

It is in this sense that the appearance of Christ will be suddenly, without any previous warning, as to the day and the hour. We know we are living in the time of the end, but whether Christ will come tomorrow, or next year, we do not know. But when he suddenly appears, and the angels bring the message to us, that the Lord has come and calls for us, then is when the blessing pronounced here will stand out in bold relief, **IF** we have kept the sayings of the prophecy of this book. We will have no cause for fear or shame, as we are brought before the Judge of all the earth.

(7) The Seventh and last blessing is found in Rev. 22:14—

“Blessed are they who do his commandments, that their right may be upon the wood of life, and they may enter in to the gates of the City.”

What a blessing that will be—to enter into the City of God, the Holy Jerusalem, that is said to come down out of heaven from God. This is the holy community of the redeemed, with whom God dwells in light and glory throughout the endless ages to come.

* * *

Yes, brothers and sisters, **JESUS HAS PREVAILED TO OPEN THE BOOK AND TO LOOSE THE SEALS THEREOF**, and he has delivered it to us **HIS SERVANTS**, and pronounced these seven blessings upon those who read, understand and keep the sayings therein. Shall we say that for us the book is still sealed—that we cannot understand it—that these seven blessings are not for us?

John was told, at the end of the book—

“**SEAL NOT THE SAYINGS OF THE PROPHECY OF THIS BOOK; FOR THE TIME IS AT HAND.**”—*1966 Visitor*

Current Events Fulfilling Prophecy

UK EXITS EU: “WHAT HAVE WE DONE?”

The whole world is reeling after a milestone referendum in Britain to leave the European Union. And although leaders of the

campaign to exit Europe are crowing over their victory, it seems many Britons may not even know what they had voted for.

Some British voters say they now regret casting a ballot in favor of Brexit. That confusion over what Brexit might mean for the country's economy appears to have been reflected across the United Kingdom. Google reported sharp upticks in searches not only related to the ballot measure but also about basic questions concerning the implications of the vote. About eight hours **after** the polls closed, Google reported that [British] searches for "what happens if we leave the EU" had more than tripled.

Britons were not only mystified by what would happen if they left the E.U.—many seemed not to even know what the European Union is.—*Wash. Post, 6/16*

British voters have compelled their country to leave the EU, without even understanding the impact of their choice. The reaction of the country's leadership, including the soon-to-resign prime minister, is one of utter mystification. So also for the world. Yet for us it is not so.

Isaiah asked, "*To whom then will ye liken God, that bringeth the princes to nothing; he maketh the judges of the earth as vanity*" (Isa. 40:18, 23). He speaks of the Deity as the power behind all powers, whether they be kings and autocrats, or democratic "unclean spirits like frogs"—all of whom He prompts to speak and act according to His will, regardless of their own intents.

In this case the popular democratic voice has spoken, and has apparently so stunned itself with the result, that millions have petitioned to reverse their previous decision—to no avail.

The circumstances and outcome are significant, after the order of Britain's help of the Jews in the day of their calamity (WWII), well before which Dr. Thomas said concerning British leadership—"Present intentions, however, are of no importance one way or the other, because they will be compelled, by events soon to happen, to do what, under existing circumstances, heaven and earth combined could not move them to attempt. The present decisions of "statesmen" are destitute of stability. A shooting star in the political firmament is sufficient to disturb all the forces of their system; and to stultify all the theories of their political astronomy. The finger of God has indicated a course to be pursued by Britain which cannot be evaded" (*Elpis Israel*, p. 442).

Today's disruptive force that waylaid and devastated the plans of the mighty and the rich is the rending of Britain

from the European Union—a separation that, as we shall see, sets the stage wonderfully for the development of the Russian presence in Europe, the anti-British position of Germany and France, and the re-emergence of Britain as a separate military power more closely aligned with the “young lions.”

RUSSIA EMBOLDENED BY BREXIT

The United Kingdom’s vote to leave the E.U. is a severe blow to the E.U.’s long-standing interest in building a common foreign and defense policy.

News of the referendum undoubtedly buoyed spirits in the Kremlin, where leaders will view it as confirmation that Europe is weak and disunited. **This could encourage a more aggressive Russian stance against NATO in the future.**

Meanwhile, **resentment between French and German leaders and their British counterparts** could spill over into NATO’s own internal deliberations.

But if Brexit is a near-term problem for NATO, it is a much bigger blow to the E.U.’s long-struggling effort to build up its own security and defense capability. Since the 1990s, the E.U. has worked to establish a military and defense competence that would allow it to take autonomous action outside of NATO. **Without the U.K., the E.U.’s military and defense capabilities are considerably reduced.** Unless traditionally cautious Germany dramatically reorients its security and defense policy, the French will be the only country remaining in the E.U. with both the necessary military power and political will to use that power outside of NATO.

In a larger view, Brexit introduces enormous uncertainty regarding the future of Europe. Populists in France and the Netherlands have already called for parallel referenda on the E.U.

This uncertainty could prove dangerous for a Europe that has seen its security environment deteriorate in the last two years, with threats from Russia, migration and terrorism all drawing nearer to its shores. Insofar as it creates more economic uncertainty, Brexit will likely further damage Europe’s ability to generate the resources it needs to defend itself against these threats.

U.S. leaders will surely continue to seek to sustain a close special relationship with the U.K. in the security and defense arena. Close cooperation on intelligence, nuclear issues, special forces and critical overseas counterterrorism operations and other issues is certain to continue.—USNews, 6/16

Russian media have hailed Brexit as portending the end for the EU as a whole. Mr. Peskov compared it with the events that led to the breakup of the Soviet Union 25 years ago.

“If the entire EU were to fall apart, there would be a lot of poli-

cy-makers in Russia who would be happy,” said Ian Kearns, director of the European Leadership Network, a London-based think tank. A less-united Europe, where Moscow could play individual countries off against each other, rather than having to deal with them as a single bloc **“would be a very significant geopolitical shift in [Russia’s] favour;”** Mr. Kearns said.—*Globe&Mail*, 7/16
EFFECT OF BREXIT ON GERMANY

Angela Merkel is still chancellor of Germany, but the influence of her predecessor is on the rise. Call it Schroderism: the idea that **Germany is destined to have a “special relationship” with Russia** and must do everything it can to maintain it—regardless of Russian actions. As German chancellor from 1998 to 2005, Gerhard Schroder seemed prepared to do anything to develop a harmonious partnership between Berlin and Moscow and a personal friendship with Vladimir Putin.

The vexed question of Germany’s relationship with Russia is once again open. There is concern elsewhere in Europe, especially in the Baltic states and Poland, where many feel directly threatened by Russia and wonder whether they can rely on Germany as an ally. Only 38% of Germans questioned in a poll in 2015 thought that Germany should use military force to defend a NATO ally that was attacked by Russia.

It is not yet clear how powerful the Schroderist current in Germany is. Its weight within the EU has increased further since the United Kingdom’s decision to leave—*For. Policy*, 7/16

The effects of the British/EU earthquake are widespread. Europe will be less militarily secure with Britain out of the EU. Russia is actually expected to move to set European powers against one another for the purpose of weakening them, much as Russia perceives happened to former USSR countries at the hand of NATO. Concomitantly, Russia is expected to act even more aggressively against NATO. Germany, suddenly unleashed from an obligation to keep Britain happy, is reawakening to that strong affinity for Russia, while France and Germany both begin to give in to old feelings of animosity toward Britain.

We, of course, understand that “Brexit” is occurring for a reason: the course that Yahweh has marked out for Britain is different than that of Europe. The British bloc is to be separate and in independent position (as a “mountain of brass”), to stand and say against the Gogian host, “Art thou come to take a spoil?” (Eze. 38:13); while Europe, with Germany (Magog) and France (Gomer) in particular, is to form an element of that colossal clay-iron host that will ascend the mountains of Israel “as a cloud to cover

the land” (v. 15).

BREXIT ADDS TO RUSSIA / NATO CONFLICT

The instinctive (and expected, according to Yahweh’s edict) reaction to Brexit is for NATO to bang the war drums louder to show that Russia should not anticipate an easy opportunity to advance into Europe—

Leaders of the 28 NATO nations have gathered [at Warsaw, Poland] to welcome a new member—Montenegro—as a new signal to all of Europe but particularly Russia that, as one U.S. defense official said, “We want more members.”

Russian President Vladimir Putin’s aggressive actions in Crimea and all along its western border have, the official said, “made Europe competitive again” and increased NATO’s desire to expand.

Underlining the entire summit will be the so-called Brexit, the U.K.’s hotly debated populist decision to break away from the European Union, which many countries have interpreted as a cue by the leading Western power toward an isolationist future.

The heart of the Soviet bloc that prompted the need for a North Atlantic Treaty Organization in the first place is back, and Western military chiefs including Defense Secretary Ash Carter have embraced the opportunity to fire up new versions of old plans to deter Moscow’s military ambitions. The summit in Warsaw will allow member countries to discuss the details of existing strategies.

NATO allies so far have offered little regard for how Russia sees these moves, or how it uses them as evidence of provocation to justify its own troop deployments. Instead, the alliance has expressed its willingness to embrace other territories Russia considers a part of its spheres of influence.—*USNews*, 7/16

NATO EXPANSION AND THE CLINTON EFFECT

The other leading Western power, which had stepped into the void left by Britain after WWII, is showing severe internal cracks around race and political partisanship while gunmen freely run around killing and maiming under a constitutional right to bear arms. There, a terrible choice between the two leading presidential candidates is a source of great angst to the general electorate. While we leave it to Deity to decide which candidate ultimately suits His purposes, we note with interest the likely effect of a Clinton presidency on NATO—

The North Atlantic Treaty Organization is facing its most serious challenge since the Cold War when the United States and Soviet Union actively confronted each other around the globe.

“While Westerners may believe that NATO’s eastward expansion has been peaceful and voluntary,” says Dimitri Simes,

president of the Center for the National Interest in Washington, “Russians see it as inseparable from NATO’s European and global military exploits.”

NATO and Russia, he says, are “on a collision course.”

NATO has deployed weapons—including ballistic missile defence systems—to forward positions on the Russian front, and Russia has moved thousands of troops into the theatre; both sides have issued bellicose statements and each has carried out an extensive array of muscle-flexing military exercises in the area. Tensions have been ratcheted higher and higher.

“NATO is strengthening its aggressive rhetoric and its aggressive actions near our borders,” said Russian President Vladimir Putin last month. “In these conditions, we are duty bound to pay special attention to solving the task of strengthening the combat readiness of our country.”

NATO’s open-door policy to the countries of Eastern Europe was born in the euphoria of the post-Cold War 1990s and was enthusiastically promoted by the Bill Clinton presidency in the United States (1993-2001).

Whereas the George H.W. Bush administration (1989-93) had viewed the new Russia as a friendly power and had no plans to expand NATO, Mr. Clinton had other ideas and sought to sign up as many new members as possible.

“The Clinton administration had every legal right to proceed with NATO expansion,” acknowledged Mr. Simes. “What U.S. officials had no right to do,” he said “was to think that they could move NATO’s borders further and further east without changing Russia’s perception of the West from friend to adversary.”

“Remarkably,” Mr. Simes wrote, “NATO failed to consider how its dramatically different conduct would affect relations with Russia.”—*Globe&Mail*, 7/16

It is not unreasonable to see that a Clinton presidency would continue to see NATO pushing against Russia in a demonstration of “extreme carelessness” in brushing against an awakening Bear. A reactionary and bellicose Trump, on the other hand, hardly sets the stage for stable relations with Russia. Interesting times are still ahead.

POLAND, BALTICS AND EUROPE PREPPING FOR WAR

Regardless, the preparation for European warfare continues apace, as, according to prophecy, the word has gone forth—

“Proclaim ye this among the Gentiles: Prepare war, wake up the mighty men, let all the men of war draw near; let them come up: Beat your plowshares into swords, and your

pruninghooks into spears: let the weak say, I am strong. Assemble yourselves, and come, all ye heathen, and gather yourselves together round about” (Joel 3:9-11).

The U.S. will begin a continuous deployment of 1,000 troops to Poland next year as a part of a larger NATO plan to intimidate Moscow—a strategy known in military parlance as “deterrence”—and give allied partners near Russia’s border a chance to prepare for the kind of hybrid warfare that has plagued Ukraine.

“Poland will be seeing an increase in NATO and American personnel and in the most modern military equipment,” President Barack Obama said. “With the new commitments, the people of Poland, and our allies across the region, can remain confident that NATO will stand with you, shoulder-to-shoulder, no matter what, today and always.”

The announcement follows previous plans NATO had put forth to establish a total of four new battalions for northeastern Europe, one of which will go to each of the Baltic states of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, and one to Poland.

The U.K., Canada and Germany will lead multination battalions in the Baltic states.

The ramp-up of NATO forces in Eastern Europe is part of the largest alliance troop movement since the end of the Cold War.

“The battalion is certainly a signal to anyone, certainly to the Russians or anyone else, that the alliance cares about that ally, and will defend that ally and has the means to do it,” a senior defense official said, speaking on the condition of anonymity. “The boots are right there.”

A common complaint among defense hawks is that only five of NATO’s 28 member states actually meet the alliance’s goal of allocating 2 percent of their gross domestic product toward defense. Yet officials at the summit privy to closed-door sessions say there is a marked difference in attitude among the member countries’ defense chiefs.

“We have turned a corner,” a senior NATO official said, speaking on the condition of anonymity.

Since making a pledge at the last NATO summit in Wales two years ago, 23 of the 28 countries have now begun investments in military modernization.

“LET’S HOPE THAT’S A SIGN FOR THE FUTURE,” the official said.—*USNews*, 7/16

To that, all we can say is, Amen. “Blessed be the LORD God of Israel from everlasting, and to everlasting. Amen, and Amen.”—T.D.C.

One Hundred & Thirty Five Years Ago (Continued from page 252)

sorry that the work was in hand at all, feeling abundantly satisfied with the Bible as it was, though not knowing very much of it, even in King James' Version.

Others were very glad that a work they had long felt to be needful had at last been undertaken, looking forward with equal expectation to the result of a revision in relation to various scriptural controversies that have been raised. The enemies of the Bible were glad at a performance which they conceived must be unsettling in its effects upon the position occupied by the Bible in the confidence of the believing community.

The case of the last may be dismissed without much ado. The position of the Bible is strengthened in all critical senses rather than weakened by a process which confirms its main sense as embodied in King James' Version . . .

The friends of the Truth could not help looking forward to the result of their work with an interest exceeding perhaps that of any other class in the community . . .

As to the translation itself, bro Roberts said—

It is of course in many points an improvement upon King James' Version, and will doubtless be a useful aid to the Scriptural study: but there will be a feeling that where it has made one improvement, it has made ten alterations that are for the worse—alterations that are merely closer approximations to the idiom of the Greek tongue, but not improvements as a translation of the idea of the original into the English idiom.

* * *

IN the next section on “The Visible Hand of God in Miracles, Signs and Wonders,” part 5, bro. Roberts wrote—

The hand of God is visible in Adam's possession of speech without the opportunity of acquiring it in a natural way, whence we might be led into the interesting enquiry whether there is a primitive language with God, and whether Hebrew be that language, and whether this will be the language in use in the age to come, and throughout the endless ages of perfection to come. We may have a better opportunity for looking at these matters when we come to consider the confusion of tongues. There are other features of the visible hand in the circumstances of Adam and Eve; but we have lingered long enough in and about the Garden of Eden, and must needs proceed on the sorrowful journey “through time's dark wilderness of years”—thankful, however, that the darkness is not as complete as it might have been, but that here and there, the glory of the visible divine hand illumines the night, showing us the road that leads at last to day restored for ever.

* * *

IN his “Sunday Morning Exhortation” bro. Roberts spoke on the subject of the Foundation of the Lord—

It is a long time since the foundation was laid on which we stand in hope this morning; but there has been no decay in that foundation. There can be no decay in it. “Man decays and ages move,” but “the foundation of the Lord standeth sure.” Other foundation can no man lay, than that is laid—Jesus Christ the

same yesterday, today and for ever.

Men may disregard the foundation and try to lay foundations of their own, but what can come of their efforts, but disappointment and dismay? They cannot find a bottom that will stay sound and secure; they cannot find materials that will hold together for any length of time. The ground turns to quagmire; their stones turn to sand. A century wrecks their best efforts, destroys their highest hopes. "Man dieth and wasteth away, yea, man giveth up the spirit and where is he?" Who can bring a man from the grave? Who can give hope in death?

The living are indifferent whom the question concerns, and the dead know not anything. Men play with the question till the time is past. They fritter away their strength in fancies, in criminal negligence of the fact that God has given His answer and laid His foundation, than which, there is no other for the children of men. We are here this morning, because we have accepted this foundation. We do not boast of it; we are thankful for it; but we must assert it, and declare it, and contend for it, that away from the Christ preached by Paul, there is no hope, and that away from the ordinances delivered by hand, men hope in vain to please God.

* * *

IN his "Editorial" remarks, bro. Roberts mentioned two points for the brotherhood's consideration—

1) The first article in this number of the Christadelphian is devoted to the consideration of the Revised Version of the New Testament. There will probably be further notices in coming numbers.
2) There is something remarkable in the reunions that have taken place among the brethren during the past month. See the intelligence appearing this month from Birmingham, Leicester, Liverpool, London, and recently from Maldon and Mumbles. A view has been expressed on the part of many, that it is a providential preparation for the Lord's appearing. Perhaps it is.

A state of division and separation is a poor state in which to find the Lord's professed brethren. Well-meaning men, forced into a false position by circumstances, are now released for co-operation with the brethren in one body as Christ desires. This is cause for joy and thankfulness to God.

* * *

IN further "Extracts from Correspondence," bro. Roberts commented on the remarks by a brother on "Dust." He stated—

Living dust, however, is of great value when rightly employed. God loves the righteous though their living dust is intrinsically no better than living dust of the wicked, whom he hates.

The life of the former is therefore ignobled to a degree they may not realise under their burden. It is not a walk from dust to dust, but a walk from dust to incorruptibility. The grave to them is but a quick passage to immortality, since in the grave they know nothing.

If Paul had to live till the second coming of Christ, he would have had a long, long, dreary wait, whereas he had but forty years or so; the years that have gone since his head was severed from his body have been no time to him.

IN his “Notes” section, bro. Roberts commented on several subjects—

- 1) Dr. Thomas.—We have been obliged this month, from press of matter, to omit our usual selection from the Dr.’s writings.
- 2) B.H.B.—It will be better to get a new Hymn Book (cloth) than to have the old one bound, because the binding of the old will cost as much as the purchase of the new.
- 3) An Imposter—An imposter is on the wing. He has victimized the brethren at various points. He has obtained possession of a copy of The Christadelphian, and will exhibit considerable acquaintance with the affairs of the brethren. Strangers ought not to be received without a letter of recommendation. It is no new suggestion that brethren leaving one part of the country for another, should be provided by their ecclesia with such a document. Reference is more satisfactory, because a letter may be forged, whereas a reference that you apply to and wait the answer from before acting, cannot be tampered with.

* * *

BIBLE Lectures (135 Years Ago)—

- “Elijah the Prophet, his Re-appearance Upon Earth Shortly”
- “Stephen’s Speech Before the Jewish Sanhedrin”
- “Review of the Revised New Testament”
- “Wisdom and Ignorance, the Stepping-stones to Life and Death”
- “The Throne of the Lamb”
- “The Man of the Spirit”
- “The Calling of the Gentiles”
- “The Coming Regeneration of Palestine”
- “The Gospel and the Restoration of Jewish Nationality”
- “The Revised New Testament and Hell”
- “The Devil’s Birth, Life and Death”
- “The Baptisms of the Bible”
- “The Priesthood of Melchisedec”
- “The Spirits in Prison”
- “The Life of all Flesh is in the Blood”
- “The Doctrine of Eternal Evil, Is it True?”
- “David, The Man After God’s Own Heart”

June Answers—“Parts of Persons’ Bodies”

- | | |
|-------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| 1. Eli’s broken neck | 21. Lazarus’ finger-tip |
| 2. Asa’s diseased feet | 22. Uzziah’s leprous forehead |
| 3. Job’s teeth | 23. Thomas’ thrusting finger |
| 4. Gog’s hooked jaws | 24. Joseph’s transported bones |
| 5. Judas’ spilled bowels | 25. Debtor’s throat |
| 6. Esau’s grasped heel | 26. Malchus’ right ear |
| 7. Abel’s crying blood | 27. Balaam’s crushed foot |
| 8. Leah’s tender eyes | 28. Jezebel’s palms |
| 9. Moses’ leprous hand | 29. Jezebel’s found skull |
| 10. Nabal’s dead heart | 30. Ezekiel’s lock of hair |
| 11. Isaiah’s touched lips | 31. Simeon’s arms |
| 12. Jacob’s shrunk sinew | 32. Goliath’s struck forehead |
| 13. Sisera’s temples | 33. Eliakim’s key-bearing shoulder |
| 14. Leper’s shaved eyebrows | 34. Micaiah’s smitten cheek |
| 15. Leper’s covered upper lip | 35. Hannah’s moving lips |
| 16. Elisha’s bald head | 36. Samson’s blinded eyes |
| 17. Adam’s nostrils | 37. Bartimeus’ healed eyes |
| 18. Aaron’s right thumb | 38. Jeremias’s armholes |
| 19. Aaron’s right great toe | 39. Abraham’s bosom |
| 20. Amasa’s 5th rib | 40. Governor’s ears |

One Hundred & Thirty-Five Years Ago

The Christadelphian, July, 1881

FOR July, bro. Roberts wrote an article on “The Revised Version of the New Testament.” He remarked on how it came into being, as well as comments on its pluses and minus’. The remarks of several leading brethren were added. He stated—

For more than 10 years past, a company of “learned men” have been engaged in revising King James’ Version of the New Testament. Their work has been regarded with different feelings by different classes of persons. The bulk of the population of the British Isles could not be expected to be more than mildly curious, if anything else than quite indifferent.

A considerable class were not indifferent, but on the contrary much interested, but interested in different ways. Some were

(Continued on page 249)

BIBLE PUZZLE—“Buying, Selling, Payment, Cost”

- | | |
|--|--|
| 1. Buy the . . . and sell it not | 22. Purchased with reward of . . . |
| 2. . . . could be sold for 300 pence | 23. Went to buy, and . . . was shut |
| 3. . . . of great price | 24. Nehemiah said, will ye sell your . . . |
| 4. The . . . was of costly stones | 25. No man buy or sell without . . . |
| 5. Buy us a little . . . | 26. Purchase to themselves a good . . . |
| 6. Doth not your master pay . . . | 27. It is nought, saith the . . . |
| 7. I counsel thee to buy of me . . . | 28. Ahab sold himself to work . . . |
| 8. This day I have paid my . . . | 29. Sell his . . . & buy one |
| 9. . . . purchased field of sons of Heth | 30. I am carnal, sold under . . . |
| 10. Thought gift of God may be . . . | 31. Sell me this day thy... |
| 11. I will buy it for . . . price | 32. Ye are bought with a . . . |
| 12. The . . . are the price of the field | 33. Buy my . . . (Hanameel to Jeremiah) |
| 13. Disciples went to city to buy . . . | 34. . . . — Seller of purple |
| 14. King’s merchants received...at price | 35. . . . said, Let us sell him |
| 15. Two . . . sold for a farthing | 36. Quiet spirit, great price in God’s . . . |
| 16. Not bring price . . . in House of Lord | 37. No man buyeth their . . . any more |
| 17. Buy the needy for a pair of . . . | 38. Buy the . . . to build altar |
| 18. Price of . . . is above rubies | 39. She considereth a field & buyeth it |
| 19. . . . paid tithes in Abraham | 40. Ye pay tithe of . . . |
| 20. Go, sell the . . . | |
| 21. Buy . . . and milk without money | |

Abraham	Foundation	Meat	Sin
Birthright	Full	Merchandise	Sparrows
Blood	Garment	Mint and Anise	Threshingfloor
Brethren	Goats	Oil	Tribute
Buyer	Gold	Ointment	Truth
Degree	Judah	Pearl	Virtuous woman
Dog	Levi	Price	Vows
Door	Linen yarn	Purchased	Wickedness
Field	Lydia	Shoes	Wine
Food	Mark	Sight	Wisdom

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