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THE
COVENANT
VISION.

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**“Heaven and earth shall pass away:
But My words shall not pass away.”**

THE COVENANT VISION.

EDITOR: Pastor Frank W. Dowsett. J.P.

In presenting this magazine, it is not our intention just to indiscriminately add to the number of Christian journals already available. Our only purpose is to present the Word of God in its fulness as we feel God has revealed it to us, in order that the God of our fathers Abraham, Isaac and Jacob may be glorified.

It is our firm conviction that we are living in the very last days prior to the appearing and return of our Great God and Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ.

We are also convinced that never before in the history of our nation and people has there been such a need for the "Watchmen in Israel" to sound the alarm in order to awaken God's people to the urgent need to repent, and to return to God with all their hearts, and with all their minds, and with all their strength.

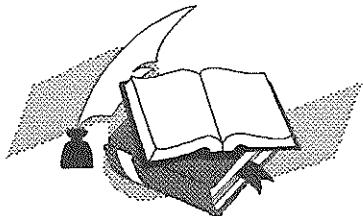
Denominational doctrines and differences are not our concern, and it is not our intention to enter into such arguments. There is not enough time left to waste it on such unproductive, and indeed, destructive, exercises. We are concerned ONLY with what we believe the Word of God says and teaches.

We proclaim the absolute necessity for all people to accept the Lord Jesus Christ as their own personal Saviour, as the only means to Eternal Life.

We proclaim the absolute necessity for the Anglo-Saxon-Celtic people to recognise their identity, their inheritance, and their responsibility, as the literal descendants of God's people Israel.

We proclaim the absolute necessity for all who would faithfully serve God to 'receive the power from on high', which can only

(continued on inside back cover)



Editorial.

The Road Ahead!

So, the New Year has arrived, thankfully without all the computer trouble which was anticipated. But of one thing we can be sure. If we go by "Murphy's Law", everything that can go wrong, will go wrong. On the other hand, if we go by God's Law, then everything that could go wrong, will most certainly go wrong.

I'm not trying to be defeatist in my attitude, but one just has to face facts. One of the certainties of the end of the age in which we now live, is that it will be a time of trouble and tribulation. The prophet Jeremiah, (Jer. 30:7), refers to it as '*The time of Jacob's Trouble.*' The prophet Daniel warns us in these terms; "*And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people: and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time. . . .*" (Dan. 12:1)

Our Lord Jesus Christ warns us through Matthew 24:21; "*For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved:*"

Again, He warns us in Luke 21:26; "*Men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken.*"

Scary stuff, isn't it? It's interesting to note that the literal meaning of the words 'trouble' and 'tribulation' as used in the Bible is "adversity, affliction, anguish, and distress". And anybody with the slightest ability to understand anything, will most assuredly recognise the fact that every one of us is living - or existing - under these conditions. Our legal system is a joke. Our politicians don't seem to know what day of the week it is, and our theologians seem to get more of a kick out of arguing as to whether or not we should be obeying God's Laws than of declaring the plain, unequivocal truths which God has so clearly

set forth in His Word regarding the only solution to all our problems.

For instance, the Law of God requires a life for a life. You deliberately take someone's life, and you forfeit your own life. What happens these days? If the culprit can show that he or she was drunk, or under the influence of some mind-bending drug, then the worth of the victim's life is suddenly reduced to a mere pittance of that of the culprit. Why? Or perhaps the culprit has had a very unhappy childhood, or even an unhappy day. So that makes the death of an innocent victim less serious? Come on folks. If this is so, then why didn't God make this clear when He handed down the penalty in the first place? If someone steals from you, or attacks you, the culprit gets fined, and the government gets the money. Some deal. I know, because I've been a victim. The offender was fined, the fine went to the government, and I didn't even get an apology.

On the other hand, all the pollies seem to be interested in is retaining their position of power, which is their passport to life-long security and financial benefits. What a system? We are all in the wrong jobs.

And what can one say of so many of our theologians? Thankfully, they are not all bad, but unthankfully, it seems to be that those who are the most way-out, and who are most inclined to compromise with any situation in order to tickle the ears of their parishioners, are those who get the most attention. You rarely find the media giving them a bad press coverage.

There seems to me to be just three simple questions involved here. Firstly, will this situation continue? The short answer is "YES", unless both nationally and individually we start taking notice of what God requires, and stop following our own selfish and stupid desires. Secondly, what has caused this to eventuate? The short answer is that we have broken God's Laws, and are now paying the automatic penalties which God pre-wrote into His Laws. And thirdly, is this condition ever going to end? I'm very glad to be able to report that the short answer to this question is a resounding "YES"!!! I'm very glad to be able to leave you all with the thoughts expressed in the final sections of the verses I quoted above. The end of Dan. 12:1 reads; "*and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book.*"

The end of Matt. 24:21 reads; "*but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened.*"

God never leaves us without hope for the future. So obey, and enjoy. But like 'love and marriage', as the old song goes, you can't have one without the other. □

The Heritage of Israel.

By Frank W. Dowsett.

Part Thirteen.

The Covenant & The Promises. Part 8.

The Abrahamic Covenant. Part 5.

Wbefore we conclude our study of what are generally referred to as the Abrahamic Covenants, I thought it necessary to look at the subject of what we might call “the substitute” fulfilment of the covenants made by God with our forefathers Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, as generally taught in virtually all areas of modern theology.

Many Christians will be surprised to find that there are four different points of view mainly held regarding the identity of the recipients of these covenants.

1. That literal Israel has been done away with by God - ostensibly because they became too evil for Him to do anything about it. As a result of this decision He gave all these wonderful promises to “the church”, thus creating a “spiritual Israel” in lieu

of the literal nation and company of nations and Great People to whom, and about whom, He had made the promises. Thus, the "church" became a substitute for the nation. This unfortunately created somewhat of a problem in that some of the terms of these covenants and promises contained features which were not too complimentary to the "church", so a compromise seems to have been reached in which all the 'good' parts apply to the "church", whilst all the 'bad' parts apply to the Jews. Two major factors appear to have been entirely disregarded by our modern theological "experts" of this persuasion.

Firstly, the Hebrew and Greek words for "church", or its equivalent, are totally different from their respective words for "nation". It amazes me to find how easily and off-handedly Bible teachers can look their congregations in the eye and without the slightest embarrassment teach them that they can mean the same thing. Of course, it's quite possible that in their theological studies they have discovered something that has escaped God's attention or knowledge. Maybe!

Secondly, if literal Israel has been replaced by a 'spiritual' Israel, how do we reconcile the following statement in Malachi 3:6;

"For I am the LORD, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed."

You will note that this statement is NOT made to "Israel", but to "the sons of Jacob"!!! One may try to 'spiritualise' the term "Israel", - recognising the fact that there is a spiritual quality associated with Israel which cannot be overlooked, - but there is no way that the term "sons of Jacob" can be spiritualised, as this expression always referred to the literal people of Israel as a nation. It is "the sons of Jacob", the literal seed of our forefather Jacob, not some conglomerate body of multi-national people, to whom God made this vow, which guaranteed that they will never be consumed, or destroyed. We have just two choices. We believe in the integrity of God, or we accept the doctrines of man. We simply cannot have both. Even the prophet Balaam was unable to curse that which God had blessed, nor change the intent of God in regard to His Israel people. We read his words in Numbers 23:19;

"God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent: hath he said, and shall he

not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?"

2. The second alternative to the "Identity question" is that the people presently known as the Jews are God's chosen people Israel. This has become a very complex question, mainly brought about by what appears to be a complete, and in many instances, a deliberate refusal to examine all the evidence available, both from God's Word and from secular history. I am not going to make any further comment on this alternative at this juncture, as it forms the bulk of our studies a little later on.
3. The third alternative is that the Anglo-Saxon-Celtic people of the world form what has been referred to as "the lost ten-tribed House of Israel", whilst the present-day Jews constitute the Southern House of Judah, and are still, some time in the future, to be re-joined to their brethren of the northern ten tribes. This view was very extensively held early in the history of what we might call "the Identity awakening". And if we look at this position dispassionately, we must acknowledge that one hundred years ago, things were very different from what they are today. That doesn't mean that truth has changed, but simply that we have a great deal more knowledge than was available to our forebears. The revelation of our Israel identity was not generally known to the great bulk of Christians, God Himself having told us through the prophets that blindness in part would be upon His people until a specific time had arrived. That time had not then arrived, and only a very few seemingly selected people - mainly national leaders both in Church and State - had been given the vision as to who we really are. So to break with the tradition and firmly held views of their day was not easy. In those days, it was believed that the Jews were the chosen people, and when it gradually dawned on an ever increasing number of Anglo-Saxon-Celtic people that they themselves were in fact the true descendants of the Israel people of the Bible, the Jews continued to be a part of their thinking in that they were then taken to be the House of Judah. This was the situation when I first heard of our Identity. A lovely, fine, Christian lady - and I know she was, because I ended up marrying her daughter - started to

tell me about who we were, and I well remember telling her that she was out of her brain. Mind you, I was a brash young seventeen year old, and a good Baptist to boot. But something inside me must have left such an impression on me that it wasn't long before I realised the truth of what she was saying. Like everyone else of that time, I accepted without question that the Jews were the two-tribed House of Judah, and that we were still waiting for their re-union with the ten lost tribes. But time and study and developing circumstances slowly revealed that this belief was not entirely correct, at least in some aspects. I suppose that the events of 1948 became a real turning point in the thinking of many Identity folk, although it has to be admitted that there were a number of them, thankfully including myself, who were ahead of the times, as it were, and had already realised that something was not right with this alternative.

4. Thus, the fourth alternative became increasingly accepted. This was that the western Christian nations of the Anglo-Saxon-Celtic people constituted, in fact, the entire twelve tribes of Israel, conforming to the "twelve tribes scattered abroad" as referred to by the Apostle James. We look back on those days with a certain amount of disbelief at the fact that we had not woken to this fact for so many years. It now seems so obvious that we shake our collective heads and say, "how could we have missed seeing that?" But God has a very wonderful habit of leading us slowly, yet with absolute certainty. He never rushes things. He knows exactly what is going to happen, and exactly when it is going to happen. He is the ultimate in the exercise of Secret Service Procedure. He reveals things to us on a "**need to know**" basis. And it is only now, at the end of this age, that the blindness is being lifted because it is now time for His people to know. Criticism of those of days gone by for what now appears to have been error, or at least partial truth, is in my opinion, totally unfair and unproductive. If it had not been for these "trail blazers" we would not have the knowledge and wisdom which a very faithful Lord has given to us. If we had been given all our present information at once, we'd all be suffering from a massive dose of spiritual indigestion. But apart from all this, we have now learned the full value of the understanding of the fulfilment of on-going prophecy. Nothing happens before God's Good and Perfect Timing.

But now, let us return to our study of the second of the above alternatives, that of the Jewish question.

Who are the people presently known as Jews? What purpose do they play in God's plans and purposes? Indeed, do they play any part in these plans at all? What connection or relationship do they have, if any, with the true Israel, the people of God's promises? In order to come to an informed conclusion to these questions, there must be an understanding of certain basic rules and principles.

1. There is no such word as "Jew" in either the original Hebrew or Greek texts from which we have our translations of the Old and the New Testaments.

That may come as quite a shock to most Christians. But a quick check of any reputable Concordance or Lexicon will show this to be true. The original word used in the Hebrew Old Testament is pronounced "yeh-hoo-dee", and means "a Judaite". (see Strong's #3064). The very first time it appears in Scripture is in 2 Kings 16:6, where we read;

"At that time Rezin king of Syria recovered Elath to Syria, and drove the Jews from Elath: and the Syrians came to Elath, and dwelt there unto this day."

Prior to this, nobody, and I mean nobody, was referred to in the Bible by the name "Jew". They were referred to as 'Judahites', or 'men of Judah'. Abraham was not a Jew. Isaac was not a Jew. Jacob was not a Jew. There was no such person as a Jew. Even present Jewish authorities testify to this fact. Read the following from the 1980 Jewish Almanac, page 3, under the heading of "*A brief history of the terms for Jew*";

"Strictly speaking it is incorrect to call an ancient Israelite a 'Jew' or to call a contemporary Jew an Israelite or a Hebrew."

A similar situation exists in the Greek of the New Testament. The Greek word used is "Judean", and is so used in every instance in the New Testament.

For instance, our Lord Jesus Christ is never, in the original Greek of the New Testament, referred to as a "Jew". He is called a "Judaean," or "man of Judah". The inscription on the cross, in the original Greek, was "King of the Judeans", not "King of the Jews". This mis-translation, which is common to all Bible translations, gives an entirely false impression and understanding of the Scriptures. Because of the fact that there is a collection of people in the world today called "Jews", it is automatically concluded that they must be the same people as those referred to by the same name in the Bible. It may be an understandable conclusion in the eyes of most, but this doesn't alter the fact that the conclusion is quite wrong and unscriptural. It is mainly on this basis that modern theology teaches that the "Jews" are God's Israel people, and the recipients of the Heritage of Israel. Nothing could be further from the truth. One may as well say that because my initials are f.d. that I have claim to most of the earlier English currency purely on the grounds that every coin has the inscription f.d. on them. A great thought, but I'm sure it won't get me anywhere. (For those who may be wondering, the f.d. on the English coinage stands for "Defender of the Faith".)

2. We must keep in mind the fact that there are both "good" Jews - Judahites, and "bad" Jews - Judahites. Furthermore, there are those who call themselves Judahites and are, and those who call themselves Judahites but are not.

Let's look at what God's Word says about these "good" and "bad" Judahites. In Jeremiah chapter 24 we read;

1 "The LORD showed me, and, behold, two baskets of figs were set before the temple of the LORD, after that Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon had carried away captive Jeconiah the son of Jehoiakim king of Judah, and the princes of Judah, with the carpenters and smiths, from Jerusalem, and had brought them to Babylon.

2 One basket had very good figs, even like the figs that are first ripe: and the other basket had very naughty figs, which could not be eaten, they were so bad.

3 Then said the LORD unto me, What seest thou, Jeremiah? And I said, Figs; the good figs, very good; and the evil, very evil, that cannot be eaten, they are so evil.

4 Again the word of the LORD came unto me, saying,

5 Thus saith the LORD, the God of Israel; Like these good figs, so will I acknowledge them that are carried away captive of Judah, whom I have sent out of this place into the land of the Chaldeans for their good.

6 For I will set mine eyes upon them for good, and I will bring them again to this land: and I will build them, and not pull them down; and I will plant them, and not pluck them up.

7 And I will give them an heart to know me, that I am the LORD: and they shall be my people, and I will be their God: for they shall return unto me with their whole heart.

8 And as the evil figs, which cannot be eaten, they are so evil; surely thus saith the LORD, So will I give Zedekiah the king of Judah, and his princes, and the residue of Jerusalem, that remain in this land, and them that dwell in the land of Egypt:

9 And I will deliver them to be removed into all the kingdoms of the earth for their hurt, to be a reproach and a proverb, a taunt and a curse, in all places whither I shall drive them.

10 And I will send the sword, the famine, and the pestilence, among them, till they be consumed from off the land that I gave unto them and to their fathers."

In other words, there are two very distinct groups contained within the people known as "Jews". There are those whom God declares are "good", to whom He has promised blessing, and there are those whom He declares are "bad, or evil", to whom He has promised judgment, persecution, and destruction.

I remember, many years ago, I was interviewed on T.V. by one of Australia's leading presenters of the day, on behalf of the British Israel World Federation, in relation to our Israel Identity beliefs. He was most courteous, as distinct from most present-day commentators, and one of the questions he asked me was as to why the Jews were such a persecuted people. I

opened my Bible, which I had placed on the table between us, and just read verses 8 to 10 above without any comment. It was a live-to-air interview, and after the interview he spoke to me privately and told me that he deliberately inserted that question as he considered it to be the most difficult of all the questions he had put to me. He expressed some considerable surprise at the ease with which it was answered. As a matter of fact, he then asked me if I would come back and do another interview in company with a Rabbi and a Catholic Priest. Somehow, this didn't eventuate. As a matter of interest, this gentleman was himself a Jew, and like his father and grandfather before him, had served with great pride as officers in the British army. But the purpose of me relating this incident is to show just how easy it is to explain the Scriptures if we just stick to what the Scriptures say, rather than give our own personal opinions about what we think it says - or more to the point, what we would like it to say. Never forget the principle set forth by our Lord Jesus Christ. He always replied to his questioners or attackers with a "It is written!" It works every time. And I can guarantee you from personal experience that it a sure fired way of making them as mad as hornets, just as their ancestors, the Scribes and Pharisees, became.

But what about those who claim to be Judahites and are telling the truth, and those who claim to be Judahites but are lying? Remember, we are reading of those who are truthfully claiming Israelite descent, and those who are falsely claiming Israelite descent. We read of this in the Book of the Revelation, chapters 2 and 3, and verse 9 in both references;

"I know thy works, and tribulation, and poverty, (but thou art rich) and I know the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and are not, but are the synagogue of Satan."

"Behold, I will make them of the synagogue of Satan, which say they are Jews, and are not, but do lie; behold, I will make them to come and worship before thy feet, and to know that I have loved thee." (emphasis added).

Now from these verses we note that there are members of the community, now as then, who claim to be Jews -

Judahites, or descendants of Israel, but who in fact are not. Our Lord, who gave this revelation to John, made a few very pertinent remarks about these people. Firstly, he called them liars. Secondly, He referred to them as being "the synagogue of Satan". And thirdly, He said that they would eventually come and worship at the feet of those whom they were persecuting. They would admit that those whom they had persecuted were God's true sheep whom He loved, not themselves - the usurpers. There are a group of people somewhere - and most of us know where - who are in for one terrible shock in the near future.

But the fact which we should note is that if there are those who falsely claim to be true Judahites, or Israelites, then for the statement to make any sense, there must be those who can, and do, truthfully claim that distinction.

The point of this remark is that we cannot afford to pass judgment on everyone who is what we would call "Jewish". Many of them are true Israelites who follow what we would consider an unacceptable religion. They're no different from a true Israelite/Anglo-Saxon who worships in the Roman Catholic faith. It doesn't alter their racial origin. I'm quite satisfied that a great proportion of true Judahites, or Jews if you like, are already dwelling with their brethren in the various Israel countries throughout the world without realising the fact.

But in addition to the fact that there are those within Jewish circles who, according to our Lord, are liars, He also identifies them as being members of something which He designates as "the synagogue of Satan." I think that I could reasonably assume that the natural question would now be; "What then is the synagogue of Satan?"

It is mentioned in only one book of the Bible, "The book of the Revelation", and by only one author, Jesus Christ. We find no 'second witness' as required by God. In like manner, we find the phrase "anti-Christ" mentioned by only one writer, John, without a second witness. And in similar fashion we find the phrase "man of sin" mentioned by only one writer, Paul, and again, without a second witness.

Has God changed His own system? Of course not! But there is one viable answer to the question of these 'second witnesses'. Could these three references be testifying to differing aspects of the very same entity? God willing, we will study this possibility in our next issue. (to be continued).

C.V. NEWS.

So a new year has dawned. And there can be no doubt but that the thought uppermost in most of our minds is "What is in store for us this year?"

One thing is sure. We must commence this new year with a complete understanding of, and obedience to, Paul's admonition which he has given in his epistle to Titus. (2:11-13).

"For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ."

All the knowledge in the world is not, of itself, going to qualify us for the joy that is before us. It's no use living in hope of the Lord's return if we don't put into practice His requirements. We need much more than hope. We need a totally committed faith. There are too many people today who seem to revel in the declaration that they are "right behind you". But when you look for them, they are quite right, but they're so far behind that they can't hear the band playing.

If this seems like a 'pep talk' then you're probably correct. But things are not going to get any easier, and we must all realise this fact. The enemy has no intention of giving up on us. The fact that there doesn't seem to be any action just at present must not lull us into a false sense of security. They've got plenty on the drawing board, and it's only as we continue to display continuous vigilance, and trust in our Great God and Saviour, that we will be able to stand against these forces of evil which are gathering with the one single aim of destroying both God's people, His Word, and those who are standing in the breach as Watchmen in Israel.

One of the biggest problems, as I see it, is that so many folk get worried because they don't believe that they are doing anything - or at least enough. That could be quite right. But that's something only you can truthfully decide. But please remember. I can write and record messages and Bible studies until the cows come home, and it won't achieve a thing unless people just like you distribute it. The greatest gift that many folk have is the opportunity of passing on the information available to them. You don't always get the results you would prefer, but at least you've tried, and the responsibility then rests upon the shoulders of those whom you have contacted. You are

no longer responsible for them if you have given them the warning and they have rejected it. I've often said to people that we can devote so much time trying to convert the one 'lost' sheep, that by the time we get back to the rest of the flock we find they have all died of starvation.

Serving the Lord is a group activity. Even our Lord didn't do things all on His own. He chose disciples, the meaning of which, by the way, is "teachable ones", and the growth of our Faith ever since has depended on the faithfulness of those who have continued, in their own particular ways, and to their varying capabilities, to carry the Torch, despite all opposition.

Having said all that, I'd better turn to our own news. Betty has been suffering lately with Asthma, and has been quite ill. Thankfully, she is now well on the mend, and I have handed back my badge of 'chief cook and bottle washer'. Please don't hesitate to contact us if you require prayer on any matter, and we will add your name to our Prayer List.

Regarding our web site, we receive on average about 70 visits per week. This may not seem very high compared with some, but the responses are very gratifying, and we are receiving an increasing number of inquiries as to our ministry. Some even use our articles for the basis of their daily devotions and Bible studies. So the work involved is very worth while.

Once again our sincere thanks go out to all those who so regularly and faithfully tithe to our work for the Lord, including many from overseas. Without this support it would be impossible to continue. Our sincere thanks also to all who sent us Greeting Cards. They were greatly appreciated. We pray the Lord's richest blessing on you for your faithfulness.

Then we have our regular helpers here at headquarters. Mark and Bruce share the Sunday morning speaking with me, whilst Bruce spends every Wednesday preparing the orders for postage. Daphne and Gwyn join us for a 'working bee' every two months to prepare The Covenant Vision for posting, whilst Betty looks after the 'bookwork'. Syd does all the odd jobs, constantly looking around for little things that need doing. So all in all, we have a very happy little group. We had one unexpected problem when our video camera broke down and we had to purchase a new one in order to continue our Video Ministry.

Finally, and by no means least, we thank our Lord Jesus Christ for His unfailing faithfulness to us. We pray that we will all be just as faithful to Him as we await His Glorious Return.

A WALK THROUGH THE GOSPELS.

PART 16.

By Bruce Horner.

THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD.

THE WOMAN TAKEN IN ADULTERY.

We take up the story at John chapter 8 with the Woman taken in adultery.

John 8:1 *And every one went to his home, but Jesus went to the Mount of Olives.*

This is a close parallel to Luke's account of Jesus' procedure during Holy Week: *'He spent the days teaching in the temple, and at night he went out and camped on the Mount of Olives.'* Holy Week, in fact, provides a suitable setting for this incident.

John 8:2 *Early in the morning he came into the temple again, and all the people came to him, and he sat down and began to teach them.*

Again, Luke 21:39 provides a close parallel: *'And all the people came to him early in the morning in the temple to hear him.'* Many scribes had teaching-pitches in the outer court, where they sat and expounded the law to their pupils; Jesus did the same - but with a difference.

John 8:3-5 *Then the scribes and Pharisees brought a woman taken in adultery. Making her stand in the midst, they said to him, 'Teacher, this woman has been caught in the very act of committing adultery. Now in the law Moses has commanded us that such women should be stoned. What do you say, then?*

Bruce tells us that the expression 'scribes and Pharisees' is common in the Synoptic Gospels, but it is not Johannine; indeed, the very word 'scribe' is absent from John's Gospel. The scribes were the official students and expositors of the Scriptures; many, though not all, of them were attached to the party of the Pharisees. Possibly some of the Pharisees present

were members of the Sanhedrin, whose responsibility it was to deal with such a serious breach of the law.

The word 'Teacher' (Greek *didaskale*, vocative) no doubt translates into Hebrew as *Rabbi* (cf. John 1:38, 49,3:2).

There is something highly suspicious about the accusation. Adultery is not the kind of offence that can be committed by one person in solitude; if she was caught red-handed, how was her guilty partner allowed to escape? Probably he was the more agile of the two, and was able to get away, ungallantly leaving her in the lurch. Was no attempt made to give chase and catch him? The impression we get is that the woman's accusers were not so much concerned with seeing that justice was done as with putting Jesus in an embarrassing position.

From the reference to stoning it has sometimes been supposed that the woman was betrothed but not yet married; In Deut. 22, 23 f. stoning is prescribed as the punishment for a betrothed virgin who is unfaithful to her bridegroom, as well as for her paramour. But in Deut. 22:22 as in Lev. 20:10, the death penalty is laid down for all unfaithful wives and their paramours, and although stoning is not explicitly mentioned, it is probably implied as the means of execution. In fact, it appears that by the first century AD the full rigour of the law was no longer applied as a general rule, in urban communities at any rate. But the ancient law prevails in all its severity in less sophisticated parts of the Near East to our own day. Thus the Vatican periodical *Oriente Moderno* reported a number of years ago: 'Two Muslim pilgrims returning from Mecca, found *in flagranti* guilty of adultery on July 11, 1957, were taken to a judge in Mecca and sentenced to death by stoning. The sentence was executed on July 12, the Mufti himself casting the first stone. And it is a matter of common knowledge that in 1980 the dramatic treatment of a similar offence and penalty, involving a member of the royal family in that part of the world, came near to precipitating an 'international incident'.

'What do you say' they asked Jesus. Moses' ruling was unambiguous; would Jesus rule differently? They probably hoped that he would, and that by setting himself against Moses he would forfeit public esteem and perhaps render himself liable to prosecution before the Sanhedrin.

John 8:6 In saying this they were putting him to the test, with the hope of bringing a charge against him. But Jesus bent down

THE COVENANT VISION.

and wrote on the ground with his finger.

There is a similarity between the question now put to Jesus and the question about the tribute money recorded in The Synoptic Gospels. Both questions were calculated to impale Jesus on the horns of a dilemma: if he answered one way, he would forfeit popular good will; if he answered the other way, he could be charged with sedition before the Roman governor. If he gave an independent ruling on the point of issue, and especially if he said that the death penalty should be carried out, he could be accused of usurping the governor's jurisdiction, or of usurping jurisdiction which the Roman administration had expressly reserved to the Sanhedrin. The Sanhedrin retained the right to *pronounce* the death sentence for capital offences against Jewish law, although they could not *execute* it without the governor's authorization (see 18:31). These were matters with which a layman would be well advised not to meddle; but Jesus was now challenged to speak his mind on such a matter.

Why did he stoop down and trace letters on the ground? T.W.Manson suggested that he was imitating the action of a Roman magistrate, who wrote down his sentence and then read it out loud. If that is so, the words which he wrote would be those which he utters in verse 7. This is the only occasion on which Jesus is recorded to have written anything, and what he wrote must remain a matter of conjecture. It would soon have been obliterated in any case. Some manuscripts add *me prospoioumenos*, 'pretending not (to hear)', i.e. 'taking no notice', which may be the origin of the AV addition, '*as though he heard them not*' - but the AV indicates the poor attestation of this clause by printing it in italics.

John 8:7, 8 *When they kept on questioning him, he straightened up and said to them, 'Let him who is sinless among you be the first to throw a stone at her,' Then he bent down and wrote on the ground again.*

In cases of execution by stoning, the ancient prescription ran: 'The hand of the witnesses shall be against him first to put him to death, and afterwards the hand of all the people' (Deut. 17:7; cf. 13:9; also Lev. 24:14). (That is why it was necessary for someone to hold the outer garments of the witnesses against Stephen, as recorded in Acts 7:58.) Jesus made no modification

in the Mosaic law which demanded death by stoning for the type of offence which this woman had committed. He simply rules that only those that were guiltless themselves (guiltless, presumably, with respect to this particular category of sin) could with any propriety take the responsibility of carrying out the sentence. No exception could be taken to this ruling, but in practice it made it impossible for the execution to take place. We may recall Jesus' own words about the lustful look which constitutes adultery in the heart (Matt. 5:28), but more was involved in his ruling than that. The law dealt more severely with women than with men. For a betrothed or married woman to have sexual relations with a man other than her bridegroom or husband was a capital offence; for a married man to have such relations with another woman than his wife was relatively venial, provided the woman was not betrothed or married to another man. It was possible for men to maintain public respectability in spite of certain irregular incidents in their lives; Jesus' ruling therefore came as a challenge to the conscience of each man who heard him. The embarrassment was no longer his, but theirs. His ruling about adultery, like his ruling about divorce, amounts to a redressing of the unfavourable balance in favour of the underprivileged sex. But by his appeal to the consciences of the witnesses, he takes the question off the judicial plane altogether and raises it to the moral level where it properly belongs, in accordance with his regular attitude and teaching.

Some manuscripts amplify verse 8 by stating that what he wrote on the ground was 'the sins of each one of them' (one manuscript, indeed, inserts this in verse 6). The addition was no doubt designed to gratify a natural curiosity about what he actually wrote.

John 8:9 When they heard that, they went out one by one, beginning with the oldest, and he was left alone, with the woman still in the midst.

The 'received text' and the AV say that they were 'convicted by their own conscience', which is no doubt true, even if it is not part of the original text of the passage. The description of their departure implies that the eldest went out first, and so on till the youngest. Some witnesses to the text make this more explicit by adding 'even unto the last'. The omission of this phrase makes it

possible to suppose that those of them who were 'elders', i.e. members of the Sanhedrin, went out first; but this is unlikely. Verse 3 probably means that they formed a ring around the woman; if she is still said to be 'in the midst' after they were all gone, all that is meant is that she remained where they had set her.

John 8:10, 11 *Then Jesus straightened himself up again, and said to her, "Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?" She said, 'No one, sir.' Then said Jesus, 'Neither do I condemn you. Be on your way: from now on do not sin any more.'*

Not until all the woman's accusers had departed did Jesus look up from his writing on the ground. His ruling on who was entitled to take action against her was sufficient for them: he would not embarrass them further by looking them in the eye. There is nothing discourteous in his addressing her as 'Woman'; he addresses his mother thus in **John 2:4** and **18:26**, Mary of Magdala in **20:13**, and the woman of Sychar in **John 4:21**. She addresses him as *kyrie* (vocative of *kyrios*), which may as readily be translated 'Sir' as 'Lord'; there is no hint that she had any idea who he was. Evidently he accepts her accusers' charge against her as true; his refusal to condemn her does not mean that she was not guilty of adultery, but he 'came not to judge the world, but to save the world' (**John 12:47**; cf. **3:17**). He discharges the sinner without condoning her sin. With his command to her not to go on sinning we may compare his similar command to the man who was cured at the pool of Bethesda (**John 5:14**).

Whatever textual problems are raised by this passage, 'the account has all the earmarks of historical veracity', so says F.F.Bruce, quoting many other authorities. We may safely recognize the incident as taking place in the temple precincts during Holy Week, a companion piece to those which are related in **Mark 12:13-34**, and especially to the incident of the tribute money.

THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD

John 8:12 *Then Jesus spoke to them again: 'I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in the darkness,*

but will have the light of life.'

As the ceremony of the water-pouring provides an effective setting for Jesus' proclamation about the living water in verses 37 and 38, so the setting for his further claim to be the light of the world may be provided by another feature of the festival of Tabernacles: the temple precincts were brightly illuminated according to the *Mishna*.

In the OT God is his people's light (Psalm 27:1); in the light of his presence they enjoy grace and peace (Numbers 6:24-26). The Servant of the LORD is appointed as a light to the nations, that God's salvation may extend to the end of the earth (Isaiah 49:6). The word or law of God is also described as a light to guide the path of the obedient (Psalm 119:105; Proverbs 6:23). So Jesus, as the Son of the Father, the Servant of the Lord and the Word incarnate, embodies this OT language. Even before the Word became incarnate, the life which he eternally possessed, says John, '*was the light of men*' (John 1:4); now by his incarnation the true light has come into the world, providing illumination for all (John 1:9; 3:19).

The two realms, of darkness and of light, are clearly distinguished. It has already been shown how the sons of light and the sons of darkness inevitably declare themselves for what they respectively are with the coming of the true light into the world (John 3:19, 21). The sons of light come to the light and follow the light; those who will not do this must remain in the darkness, because there is no other light than the light of the world. The light which he imparts is the 'light of life' because it is life-giving.

'*With thee is the fountain of life*', says the psalmist to God; '*in thy light do we see light*' (Psalm 36:9). In the Qumran *Rule of the Community* it is said that 'by the spirit of God's true counsel the ways of man, even all his iniquities, are atoned for, so that he can behold the light of life'. Our Evangelist would have agreed with this, but would have insisted that the language, to have any effective meaning, must be understood personally, in relation to the living and life-giving 'light of the world'.

John 8:13 The Pharisees said to him, 'You are bearing testimony to yourself; your testimony is not true.'

The Pharisees' objection harks back to Jesus' own words in John THE COVENANT VISION.

5:31, 'If I bear witness about myself, my witness is not true.'
Ostensibly, their present objection had a point.

John 8:14-16 *Jesus said in reply to them, 'Even if I do bear testimony to myself, my testimony is true, because I know where I came from and where I am going. As for you, you do not know where I came from and where I am going. You judge according to outward appearance; I judge no one. And if I do judge, my judgment is true, for I am not alone; along with me there is the one who sent me.'*

If Jesus makes a statement about himself, such as '*I am the light of the world*', that statement is not necessarily unsupported. Evidence given in a court of law must be confirmed by more than one, but the Son of the Father always speaks by the Father's authority, whether the Father's authority is expressly invoked or not. Jesus knows where he has come from - from the Father (cf. **John 5:36 f.; 16:28**) - and where he is going - to the Father (cf. **John 13:1; 16:28**). Meanwhile, by an eternal 'coinherence', he is in the Father and the Father in him (cf. **John 14:11**). Therefore if, by the formal letter of the law, his testimony need not be admitted if he seems to be speaking for himself, in fact it is always substantiated by the Father and so always to be admitted - and accepted. To the Pharisees he is at best 'a teacher come from God' (**John 3:1**) and therefore not entitled to speak in his own name. They did not know his true origin or destiny; they could judge only 'according to the flesh' - by outward appearance (cf. **John 7:24**) - and so their judgment about him was misguided. He was indeed the one to whom all judgment was committed by the Father (**John 5:22**), even if at present he did not exercise his prerogative of judgment; he had come to bring salvation, not to pronounce judgment (**John 3:17; 12:47**).

Bruce tells us that the verb 'to judge' (*krino*) is used here in two senses - the judicial sense ('I judge no one') and the sense of coming to a well-informed decision. In the latter sense their judgment was wrong, because it was superficial (cf. **1 Samuel 16:7**); his judgment was right, because he reached it in fellowship with the Father. There is the implication here that, while they were sitting in judgment on him and his claims and reaching an adverse verdict, it was in reality he who was judging them, and judging them beyond the possibility of error because

of his oneness of mind with the one who had sent him.

John 8:17,18 *'Moreover, in your law it is written that the testimony of two men is true, I am one who bears testimony about myself, and the Father who sent me also bears testimony about me.'*

Jesus reverts to the argument of John 5:37. The principle of the law which he invokes is laid down in Deut. 19:15: *'only on the evidence of two witnesses or of three witnesses, shall a charge be sustained'* (cf. Deut.17:6). The law is called 'your law' because they acknowledged its authority and were bound to admit the force of an argument based on it. Indeed, it was on the basis of the testimony now quoted by Jesus that they had refused to admit his testimony when he (as they said) bore witness about himself (verse 13). But, Jesus insists, there is a second witness to the truth of his claims, and that is the Father who had sent him: the Father's testimony carries absolute authority.

John 8:19 *'So they said to him, 'Where is your father?' Jesus answered: 'You know neither me nor my Father. If you knew me, you would know my Father also.'*

On the earlier occasion in Jerusalem when Jesus had appealed to his Father's testimony, he told those who were debating with him that they had never heard the Father's voice nor seen his form (John 5:37). Now in response to their question, "Where is your Father?" he makes a similar statement. They might claim to know where Jesus came from, thinking on an earthly level (John 7:27), but they were incapable of conceiving his eternal origin. If they knew him as he truly was, they would know his Father also, for he had come to reveal the Father. (cf. John 14:9).

John 8:20 *'He spoke these words in the treasury while he was teaching in the temple. No one arrested him, because his hour had not yet come.'*

The 'treasury' was that part of the Court of the Women where thirteen trumpet-shaped containers were placed for the reception of various dues, six of them being for voluntary offerings. It

was in this neighbourhood, 'opposite the treasury', that Jesus sat on the occasion during Holy Week when he saw the widow put her two 'mites' into one of the containers (**Mark 12:41-44**).

Jesus does not say whether or not an attempt was made to arrest him on this occasion, as had been done a short time before (**John 7:32, 45 f.**). He does say that no one in fact arrested him because (as was said in **John 7:30**) 'his hour had not yet come' - not simply the 'hour' of his arrest, trial and execution, but the 'hour of his departure from this world to the Father' (**John 13:1**). The arrest, trial and execution, when at last their time came, were but stages on his return journey to the one who had sent him into the world.

'I AM HE'

John 8:21 *So he said to them again, 'I am going, and you will look for me, but you will die in your sin. Where I am going you cannot come.'*

Again Jesus makes a statement which his hearers cannot quite grasp. Their uncomprehending response to it then provides him with an opportunity to explain it and apply it to their condition. The incarnate Word is to be on earth in a visible form for a limited period only. This limited period is their opportunity; if they accept him for what he is, then they will receive the right to become God's children; eternal life will be theirs. But if they let the opportunity slip, it will not recur. The time of his visible presence with them will have passed, and they will seek him after that in vain. Instead of enjoying eternal life through faith in him, they will die in their sin - without having their sin removed. The 'sin' (singular) is preeminently their failure to believe in him (cf. **John 16:9**), their refusal to come to the light while it is available (cf. **John 3:19-21**).

The language here is in large part a repetition of **John 7:33f.**; it also anticipates in measure Jesus' words to the disciples in **John 13:33-14:4**. They too are told that he is leaving them, that they will look for him but not be able to follow him - not yet, at least, for in fact he is going to prepare a place for them so that they may be where he is.

John 8:22-24 *So the Jews said, 'Will he kill himself, that he says, "Where I am going you cannot come"?' He said to them, 'You belong to the lower realm; I belong to the upper realm. You belong to this world; I do not belong to this world. That is why I told you that you will die in your sins. Unless you believe that I am He, you will die in your sins.'*

On the former occasion when Jesus used such language, his hearers wondered if he was meditating a mission to the Greeks in the lands of the Dispersion (John 7:35). On this occasion some of them wonder if he is meditating something more drastic - suicide, no less. John's readers can savour the irony of this because they know that Jesus did indeed meet a violent death, but at his enemies' hands, not at his own.

Jesus once again cuts into their debate with a peremptory declaration. He and they belong to two different realms, as is shown by the different presuppositions and perspectives of their very different thought and language. Bruce tells the story like this: they were 'from those below' (*ek ton kato*), he said; he himself was 'from those above' (*ek ton ano*). The genitive plural *ton* may be either masculine or neuter; which is it here? Is he relating his hearers to 'the persons below' (*hoi kato*) or to 'the things below' (*ta kato*)? And is he relating himself to 'those above' (*hoi ano*) or to 'the things above' (*ta ano*)? Elsewhere in this Gospel, when Jesus' origin is designated by means of the preposition *ek* or *apo* followed by a personal noun, the personal noun is always singular, denoting God or the Father (cf. John 13:3, 16:28). It is more probable, then, that he speaks of himself here as coming from 'the things above' - the upper realm. And if this is so, his opponents will similarly be described as coming from 'the things below' - the lower realm. This, indeed, is confirmed by the words immediately following, where 'the lower realm' is replaced by 'this world' and 'the upper realm' is said to be 'not...this world' (but rather the heavenly world). 'This world' is the *kosmos* of John 1:10, which gave the divine Word no recognition when he came to it, the *kosmos* of which Jesus said to his brothers, 'it hates me, because I bear witness concerning it that its deeds are evil' (John 7:7). Jesus has described himself as 'the light of the *kosmos*', but it is only those who follow him that have the 'light of life' and avoid walking in darkness verse (verse 12). By following him they

show that they, like him, are 'not of this world'. The others choose darkness and accordingly die in their sins. The plural 'sins' is used in verse 24, as against the singular 'sin' in verse 21; if the singular expresses the root sin of unbelief, the plural expresses those particular attitudes, words and actions which make up its fruit.

Those who belong to the lower realm cannot by themselves make the journey to the upper realm; they cannot even grasp the language of the upper realm. 'What is born of the flesh is flesh, and what is born of the Spirit is spirit (**John 3:6**). The only possibility for those of the lower realm to be transferred to the upper realm is if someone descends from the upper realm and then 'ascends back where he was before' (**John 6:62**), opening up a way - indeed, himself constituting the way - by which others may ascend there too (**John 14:6**).

But has someone in fact descended in such a manner that others may ascend with him? The answer of this Gospel is that Jesus, 'the Son of Man whose home is in heaven', has done so (**John 3:13**). But only those who recognize him to be what he is, and commit themselves to him in faith, can make the ascent to life through him. The others go on living on the lower plane, and there, in due course, they die. As Jesus' words are rendered in the NEB; 'If you do not believe that I am what I am, you will die in your sins'.

The words, *ego eimi*, which NEB renders 'I am what I am', are capable of a wide range of meaning in this gospel. On the most pedestrian level, they mean 'It is I', as when Jesus identifies himself to the disciples on the lake (**John 6:20**). But when Jesus uses these words in this Gospel one wonders whether the Evangelist's thought is moving on two planes simultaneously. In the present context, at any rate, there is no question of simple self-identification: Jesus is saying something important about his person.

The NEB rendering is reminiscent of the revelation to Moses at the burning bush: When God commissioned him to go back to Egypt and tell his people that the God of their fathers was about to deliver them, Moses said, 'What name shall I give you when they ask for one?' and God said, '"I am who I am"; tell them that

"I am" has sent you' (Exodus 3:13 f.). In the Septuagint of Exodus 3:14 God's reply to Moses is, ' *Ego eimi ho on* (I am the one who is)", tell them that "*ho on* (The one who, is)" has sent you'. If a direct reference had been intended to Exodus 3:14 in the present passage, one might have expected *ho on* rather than *ego eimi*. It is more probable here that *ego eimi* echoes 'I am He' (*ani hu*), used repeatedly in Isaiah 40-55 and translated *ego eimi* in the LXX (Isaiah 41:4; 43:10, 13, 25; 46:4; 48:12). This affirmation *ani hu* may be the origin of the unusual divine name *ani w hu* (literally 'I and He) which was used in later days as a substitute for the ineffable name *Yahweh*, especially in the processional singing of Psalm 118:25 at the feast of Tabernacles. The conjunction *w* ('and') was taken to convey the close association, amounting almost to identification, of the God of Israel and his people. It may well be that *ego eimi* here and in verse 28 below suggests that Jesus embodies the link binding God and his people together.

John 8:25, 26 So they said to him, 'Who are you?' Jesus said to them, 'I am what I have been telling you all along. I have many things to say about you, many things to pass judgment on, but he who sent me is true, and what I say to the world is what I have heard from him.'

The question 'Who?' is the natural response to the claim 'I am He' if the meaning of the claim is not properly understood. And we have seen that *ego eimi* is an ambiguous utterance in itself.

Jesus' reply to his questioners' 'Who are you?' is perhaps the most difficult clause to translate in this whole Gospel; so F.F.Bruce tells us, and I trust that you will forgive the difficulties involved with these passages and their translation, but Bruce puts the case with authority and he is worth hearing out. The translation "Why should I speak to you at all? (NEB) conveys the meaning put upon the words by most of the Greek writers who dealt with them in the early centuries AD, who might be expected to know their own language. The phrase translated 'at all' is *ten archen*; it is usually in negative clauses that it has this meaning, but the negative idea may inhere in the sense ('Why should I speak to you at all? Is equivalent to 'I should not speak to you at all'). The phrase *ten archen* literally means 'the beginning', in the accusative case. The accusative

cannot well denote the object of the clause here; it must be taken as an adverbial accusative. It is so taken by those who translate it 'at all'; it is so taken by those who translate it 'from the beginning', as in RSV. ('Even what I have told you from the beginning'). The accusative is hardly the case to express '*from* the beginning' (which in Johannine Greek is *ap' arches*, as in 1 John 1:1); it might mean 'at first', as though Jesus' reply to the question 'Who are you?' were 'Precisely what I tell you (or "have been telling you") at first (cf. NEB margin: 'What I have told you all along'). The Latin version makes Jesus claim to be 'The Beginning' (cf. Col. 1:18). This is possible in Latin, where the word for 'beginning' (*principium*) is neuter and so makes no distinction between nominative and accusative; the Greek cannot be made to yield this sense.



The Light of the World being dimmed.

The following appeared in The Times of London, July 2, 1999.

"Sikh Chosen to Lead Methodist Church."

Richard Hoskins, in his monthly report #304, has this to say;

"Sikhism is a hodgepodge religion from India combining elements of both Hinduism and Islam. The Times reports that the Rev. Inderjit Bhogal has been elected the next President of the Methodist Conference in Great Britain. The Rev. Bhogal ministers to his Methodist Church in Sheffield on Sundays, and then goes to a Sikh temple nearby. His two children are being raised both Sikh and Methodist.

Bhogal adds Methodism to his mishmash of Hinduism and Islam, and is rewarded by liberal Methodists in Britain who make him their leader. The Methodist Church declared, according to The London Daily Mail of June 11, "that belief in God is now an optional extra for its members."

England's Methodists have been the denomination which has been praying to God "our mother" in services. (Story in New Oxford Review).



THIS PRESENT EVIL WORLD.

By C. R. Dickey.

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When the Apostle Paid began his letter to the Galatian Christians, he greeted them with this statement:

"Grace be to you and peace from God the Father, and from our Lord Jesus Christ, who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father: to whom be glory for ever and ever." (Gal. 1: 3-5.)

It is not surprising that Paul should refer to the world of his day as evil. He lived in the dawn of the Christian Era. The Light that came in Christ Jesus was only beginning to shine in a dark world. There had not been time for the power of His Gospel to penetrate society as a whole and overthrow the established systems of that day.

But how does it happen, as sceptics like to remind us, that nineteen centuries after Paul's time we must still admit that this present world is evil? Does it mean that Jesus Christ has failed? That His Gospel is powerless to do what He and His Apostles claim for it? Even the most indifferent Christian believers among us are not ready to concede that Christ failed and that His Gospel is inadequate; they will agree with the more plausible explanation that we have failed Him, both in doctrine and in works.

After Paul's greeting to the Galatians, he continues by saying: "I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the Gospel of Christ" (Gal. 1: 6-7). Here is the crux of THE COVENANT VISION.

the whole matter: "**O foolish Galatians, who bath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth?"** (Gal. 3: 1).

This present world is in the grip of wickedness because professed Christians themselves are not obedient to the truth of the Gospel and the demands of their high calling in Christ. Much of church history from the start is a record of schism between opposing factions within the various church groups.

Contenders for the faith once delivered to the saints have always had to battle with those in their midst who would pervert the true Gospel. Unfortunately, the situation has changed little in this respect since Jude wrote as follows to those first century church members:

"Dear friends. I was just on the point of writing to you about our common salvation, when it became necessary for me to write and appeal to you to come to the defence of the faith that has once for all been entrusted to God's people. For some people have sneaked in among us - their doom was foretold long ago - godless persons, who turn the mercy of our God into an excuse for immorality, and disown our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ." (Jude 34, *Smith & Goodspeed Trans.*)

Evil is riding high in English-speaking lands today because we have not contended earnestly enough for the faith that is in Christ Jesus alone.

We have been too ready to compromise, too willing to accept the subtle suggestion that it doesn't matter what a man's faith is, just so he believes in something. This deadly notion is the mainspring of all interfaith movements and subversive cults, that are now deceiving millions of nominal Christians - men and women who ought to be defending the true faith. These unstable people have been ensnared by an easy tolerance of error, as predicted in 11 Peter 2: 1-2:

"But there were also false prophets among the people, as there will be teachers of falsehood among you also, who will cunningly introduce fatal heresies, disowning even the Lord who has redeemed them, and bringing on themselves swift

destruction. And in their immoral ways they will have many disciples, through whom the true way will be brought into disrepute." (*Weymouth*)

We of the twentieth century have watched this vain philosophy, these fatal heresies, these bold traditions of men, come to full flower. At the same time we have watched "evil men and seducers wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived." We have watched the blind lead the blind - and now we see both falling into the ditch. We have already passed through two wars of unprecedented scope that promised much and settled nothing; and at this very moment we find our nation the chief target in a third war which, in many respects, is more treacherous and terrifying than anything the world has ever known.

What is happening to us? And why? What is the explanation of these distressing conditions, which no one seems able to understand or control. The answer for us, if it is to be found at all, is in the Bible. The tremendous issues involved -the problems to be solved - are too vast for human comprehension and ingenuity.

Is God dealing with this present evil world? And if so, how? We believe that Peter gives us some light on these questions. In the fourth chapter of his First Epistle, verses 17-18, he writes:

"For the time has come for the judgment to begin with the household of God, and if it begins with us, what will be the end of those who refuse God's good news? If it is hard for the upright man to be saved, what will become of the godless and sinful?" (*Smith & Goodspeed Trans.*)

Then in 11 Peter 2: 20-21, the Apostle pens an indictment which is peculiarly applicable to our own perverse generation:

"For if after men have escaped the corrupting influences of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they again become entangled in them and are overcome by them, their final condition is worse than their former one. For it would have been better for them never to have known the way of uprightness than after knowing it to have turned their backs upon the sacred command with

which they have been intrusted." (*Smith & Goodspeed Trans*)

It should be plain to all by this time that God is dealing with the world in judgment, and that He is beginning with His own household., that is, with nations predominantly Christian in faith and claiming, however unworthy, to be His people. Indeed, it cannot be denied that the tumult of war and distress which has occupied the attention of the Western nations for the past half-century has come at the very time of their most deplorable moral and spiritual deterioration. Surely this strange pattern of history has developed by God's design and not by accident. The whole world groans in tribulation because God's own redeemed people have been entrusted with sacred obligations to which they have not been faithful

Isaiah 9 contains the great prophecy pertaining not only to the birth of Christ but also to His Second Advent as King (vv. 6-7). Beginning with verse 8, the scene changes to prophecies concerning the non-Jewish ten tribes of Israel - often referred to in the Scriptures as Ephraim - after they had received the Gospel of Christ which was rejected by the Jews. These Christianised clans of Israel are the people to whom Christ gave His Kingdom when He took it from the Jews (Matt. 21. 43). The prophet visions a day when these people, too, will not endure sound doctrine. He says that "the leaders of this people cause them to err; and they that are led of them are destroyed- (v. 16). Therefore the Lord shall have no joy in them:

"For wickedness burneth as the fire....Through the wrath of the Lord of hosts is the land darkened, and the people shall be as the fuel of the fire....Manasseh, Ephraim; and Ephraim, Manasseh: and they together shall he against Judah. For all this his anger is not turned away, but his hand is stretched out still" (Isa. 9: 18-21.)

In chapter 10, Isaiah tells us how God is going to deal with Manasseh and Ephraim when the time comes for judgment to begin in the household of God. His plan is to raise up Israel's ancient enemies and use them as a rod of chastisement until His people are ready to walk with Him and do His will. After

charging them with unrighteous decrees and grievous practices, the Lord says through the prophet:

"And what will ye do in the day of visitation, and in the desolation which shall come from far? To whom will ye flee for help? And where will ye leave your glory? Without me they shall bow down under the prisoners, and they shall fall under the slain....O Assyrian, the rod of mine anger, and the staff in their hand is mine indignation. I will send him against an hypocritical nation, and against the people of my wrath will I give him a charge, to take the spoil, and to take the prey, and to tread them down like the mire of the streets." (Isa. 10: 3-6.)

Thus God proposes to use the rod of Assyria to chastise His erring children. Asshur or Assyria, as used here in regard to latter-day prophetic events, probably refers to Israel's enemies collectively rather than to one specific people, just as Babylon is used in the Book of Revelation to symbolise all nations and systems that set themselves in opposition to God and His Covenant Race. We are inclined to forget that Israel's foes were never exterminated. Their descendants are in the world today. We do not know them as Philistines, Canaanites, Amalekites, Hittites, Edomites, Moabites, Assyrians, Babylonians, *etcetera*: but under other names they are among the nations, stirring up trouble for the Lord's people just as they did in former days. And, as we see in Isaiah's prophecy, God still uses these antagonists to discipline His wayward Israel.

When the Bible became an open book, available to people in their homes, it produced most amazing results. There followed in its train a marvellous spiritual awakening, a revival of learning that led to the rise of great universities and the creation of the noblest art and music the world has yet known. Under the inspiration and power of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the world's finest civilisation was born. A new energising spirit seemed to take possession of the souls of men, giving them the courage to initiate an epoch of thrilling exploration and colonisation throughout the desolate heritages of the earth.

Now when all these developments were well under way something else happened. Alien groups with adverse intentions
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"sneaked in" among these Christian people and began to turn their minds and hearts away from the truth. They were not merely unbelievers, but worse; they were persons with distinctly antichristian motives. Being avowed enemies of Christ, they set themselves to stem the tide of truth, which was spreading abroad rapidly through the ever-increasing circulation of the Scriptures. When driven out of one country, they promptly ensconced themselves in another.

For example, in 1632, twenty-one years after the publication of the King James Bible, Baruch Spinoza, a Jewish philosopher, was born in Amsterdam- his parents belonged to a group of emigrants who fled from persecution in Portugal and Spain and sought refuge in the Netherlands. No one man has been more responsible for the widespread sabotage of the Bible, in great universities and theological seminaries, than Spinoza. Professor George Burnian Foster, himself a faithful disciple of "liberalism," tells us something of Spinoza's methods in a Decennial Publication of the University of Chicago. He writes:

"Spinoza, who after all is the father of modern speculation, is also the father of Biblical criticism. He found it advisable to limit his investigation and doubt to Old Testament books. His merit lies, not in the finality of his findings - for almost none of them were final - but in his method, and in the necessity which he imposed upon the modern world of critically investigating each book anew. He pointed out the marks of the later origin of the Pentateuch and of the historical books. He detected the contradictions, aberrations, and gaps of these writings. He considered the prophetic books as 'incomplete and unordered collections of older fragments.' Subsequently the English and French freethinkers took their cue from him....

"But the successors of Spinoza did not limit Biblical criticism to the Old Testament. The peculiar relation of the first three gospels to one another, and to the fourth, invited criticism to the gospels. In reference to the first three, Eichom's hypothesis of an Urevangelium, Gieseler's of a common oral source, Schleiermacher's of several written sources - these, with their permutations, limitations, and combinations, shattered faith in the orthodox conception, partly of the genuineness, partly also of the trustworthiness, of the synoptics. In addition the outer

evidence for their genuineness was thought to be anything but satisfactory." (*The Finality of the Christian Religion*, pp. 94-95)

Does this seem irrelevant and unimportant for our modern age? If so, consider the fact that Spinoza's system influenced the trends of theology and philosophy which developed in the large universities of Western Europe through such men as Kant, Hegel, Schleiermacherl, Strauss, Graf, Wellhausen and many others. The once great Christian nation of Germany - the Germany of saints and martyrs, of peerless Christian poets, musicians and artists - succumbed to the sweeping apostasy of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, which gripped the Protestant churches like a deadly plague. From there it spread to the educational centres of the British Isles and the United States. Spinoza's influence on Christian theology has been so evident that in the latter half of the past century Professor Henry B. Smith said, "The great alternative of our time is Christ or Spinoza."

Now multiply the influence of Spinoza by literally thousands of the same type of false teachers who, at the present time, occupy top posts in leading educational institutions all over the globe and you will begin to understand why 'Justice standeth afar off, for truth is fallen in the street" (Isa. 59: 14).

By deceptively creating the impression that they alone have enough ability to cope with such subjects as the political and social sciences, economics, and the fine arts, these antichristian teachers have been able to invade, even our church-supported colleges and universities, to the everlasting shame of trustees and parents who call themselves Christians. As a result of this intrusion, our young people have been indoctrinated with Marxian theories under the guise of political science. Constitutional government, as the basis of a free society, is ridiculed and debased by these intruders; on the other hand, Socialism is exalted as the chief end and glory of mankind.

Ancient Israel's enemies have moved in on modern Israel. The remnants of Philistia, Canaan, Assyria, Edom and Amalek are with us yet; though they are minority groups in all nations. They remain as of old aggressive, domineering, and possessive. Any country that permits them to rise to power loses its freedom and
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its soul. It has happened already to many countries in Europe and Asia, both large and small. It is happening here in America.

The whole movement has developed now into a gigantic worldwide conspiracy. Read Psalm 83 for the plan and a list of the peoples involved in it. There you will find the very same enemies, which were absorbed in Jewry by intermarriage (Ezra 9-10 and Neh. 13) and by conquest. The Psalmist pleads with God not to keep silent about this matter. He says:

"For lo, thine enemies make a tumult: and they that hate thee have lifted up the head. They have taken crafty counsel against thy people, and consulted against thy hidden ones. They have said, Come, and let us cut them off from being a nation." (Ps. 83: 24.)

Unquestionably these "hidden ones" are the Christian branch of Israel who do not know they are Israel; they cannot be Jewry, for the Jews have always claimed to know their identity.

It is the work of these conspirators, which Isaiah describes in his tenth chapter. See how the Assyrian boasts of his victory over God's people:

"For he saith, By the strength of my hand I have done it, and by my wisdom; for I am prudent: and I have removed the bounds of the people, and have robbed their treasures, and I have put down the inhabitants like a valiant man: and my hand hath found as a nest the riches of the people: and as one gathereth eggs that are left, have I gathered all the earth; and there was none that moved the wing, or opened the mouth, or peeped." (vv. 13-14.)

Now drop back to 1914 and review the steps by which the international plotters have carried out the villainy outlined in this prophecy. Using the military prowess of the Prussian element of Germany as a spearhead, these conspirators set out to destroy Christian civilisation. Step by step they removed the bounds of free nations, robbed them of their treasures and put down the inhabitants. Only divine foreknowledge could have so accurately pictured the economic power of the shrewd Internationalists who have surreptitiously bankrupted all nations

and now hold virtually all governments at their mercy. Note the statement- "my hand hath found as a nest the riches of the people"; this indicates that the plotters are in position to steal the resources of a country and use them to further their own schemes through manipulation of federal controls, trumped up emergencies and confiscatory taxation. "I have gathered *all the earth*"; thus the conspiracy is worldwide in scope. "There is none that moved the wing, opened the mouth, or peeped"; here is a perfect description of the intimidation and fear which is so effectively silencing opposition in all nations, including our own.

These destroyers, many of them holding high government positions, have stolen our resources and put them at the disposal of our enemies in Russia, China and elsewhere. The American taxpayer's money is being used to bolster Communism and Socialism all over the world. When Congress was debating the question of giving Britain four billion dollars of so-called Marshall Plan aid, Winston Churchill urged Washington officials not to grant the request. He said it would be used to establish a Socialist regime - and how right he was!

As we have seen, it was Germany that became the centre of international intrigue and supplied the military might for waging two devastating wars against Ephraim and Manasseh (Britain and the United States). What a price the German people have paid, and are still paying, for that defection from their glorious Reformation heritage! So it is with all peoples who consort with Christ's enemies after they have once known the way of uprightness through His Gospel.

New York City, Washington, D. C., and Moscow are now the centres of world intrigue. It is here on the soil of our own beloved America that the United Nations Organisation has been set up to abolish the sovereignty of this great Republic and make every citizen subservient to a super world government ruled by godless tyrants. How can we expect God to spare us from the tribulations of war abroad, revolution at home, and economic ruin, when we are so reckless with our safety as to permit such a conspiracy right in our midst? Be aware, also, when the international clique begins to build up an "indispensable" man with the idea of inveigling both Republicans and Democrats to THE COVENANT VISION.

nominate him for President. If this happens, the United States will be plunged headlong into a military dictatorship.

Be assured that God will continue to flog us with the rod until we come to our senses. The tragedy is, however, that so many of our sons must perish before professing Christians discover the cause of our troubles. How many more are yet to be sacrificed? Only God knows! Isaiah 10: 16-19 indicates that we shall be brought still lower into the valley of slaughter and despair before the day of God's intervention.

Nevertheless, the time will come when Manasseh and Ephraim will cry out to the Lord, "It is enough," and call upon Him for deliverance. When that day comes, God will deal with the destroyers who imagine they are lords of the whole earth. When they have accomplished His purpose God declares that He will punish them for their arrogant boasting and "high looks." Therefore, thus saith the Lord, the God of hosts:

"0 people of mine who dwell in Zion, be not afraid of Assyria, when he smites you with the rod, and lifts up his staff against you, as did the Egyptians! For in a very little while my fury shall cease, and my anger shall come to an end. Then shall the Lord of hosts brandish over him a scourge like that with which he smote Midian at the Rock of Oreb: and his staff that was over the Sea shall he lift up against him, as he did against the Egyptians. And on that day shall his burden pass from your shoulder, and his yoke be removed from your neck." (Isa. 10: 24-27, Smith & Goodspeed Trans.)

The important thing here is - What is this scourge that is to be brandished over the enemies of the Lord's people" It is to be like the scourge, which was used to smite the Midianites at Oreb and the Egyptians at the Red Sea. A review of these stories shows that Divine intervention is the scourge which subdues the enemy and saves Israel. Concerning Midian at Oreb, it is stated in Judges:

"The Midianites and the Amalekites and all the children of the cast lay along in the valley like grasshoppers for

multitude; and their camels were without number, as the sand by the sea side for multitude." (Judges 7: 12.)

Gideon, of the tribe of Manasseh, was directed of the Lord to use strategy by which he routed the great host with three hundred men - and *never lost a man*. The clever use of trumpets, pitchers and lamps threw the enemy into such confusion that "all the host ran, and cried, and fled ... and the Lord set every man's sword against his fellow, even throughout all the host".

What consternation and remorse await the people of God when they realise that the bloodshed of these past fifty years has been a needless sacrifice! Then we shall see that our bitter losses are the result of carelessness and stupidity - of our refusal to repent and ask God to show us the way to peace and safety. At any moment during these agonising years of wars without and treason within, God would have brandished a scourge over our foes, if only we had known His Word and believed Him and called upon Him. Read Psalm 81.

Besides the necessity of repenting and turning to God in wholehearted obedience, is there anything else we can do as individuals to help this present evil world? Two things come to mind. First, know the enemies of Christ, find out who they are and watch their trends; learn to recognise the anti-Christ spirit. Second, consider Isaiah's statement that the leaders of this people cause them to err." Since this is the case, obviously we should throw out these faithless leaders - *all of them* - in both state and church. By clinging to petty party labels and loyalties in state affairs, and blind allegiance to denominational programs in the church, good men and women have unwittingly promoted and financed the downfall of Christian civilisation. When will we ever wake up and grow up?

The hour is late, the night is far spent. Evil has progressed beyond human control. The job is too big for us. But it was to this very end that our Lord Jesus Christ -*gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world.*" It is our blessed privilege to accept Him and His deliverance. It is our privilege to pray. At least we can let Him know that we are willing to help, for he may yet use us in cleansing the land, as He used Gideon at the rock of Oreb. □

OUR PROTECTIVE GOD.

By Bruce Horner.

PART 9.

THE GREAT AWAKENING.

Part Two.

When Whitefield returned to America, Wesley took up the task and began traversing the land, mightily endued with the Holy Spirit. Up and down the country he went, riding on horseback, sometimes proclaiming salvation through Christ to savage Cornish smugglers, and at other times to drunkards and prostitutes in London. He preached to colliers at their pit-heads. To the down-and-outs in the Bristol slums. To the dockers and sailors of Liverpool, and to the 'wild, staring, blasphemers' of Newcastle upon Tyne. Soon this Gospel of salvation was being preached in every town and village in England; and everywhere Wesley's preaching, like Whitefield's, was being accompanied with great spiritual power. He constantly called for repentance and faith - repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ - and numerous conversions followed.

Wesley was at home on horseback; disregarding rain and tempest, highwaymen and footpads, he journeyed unceasingly all over Britain. Often he was forced to dismount and lead his horse 20 miles to the next village because the roads were in such appalling condition. In all, he covered some 250,000 miles in the saddle, crossing no less than forty-two times to Ireland. He pursued this ministry for 50 years, and during his lifetime delivered some 40,000 sermons amongst people where they were - in the market places, on the commons, anywhere in the open where people would congregate. An ever-enlarging band of evangelists worked with him, and, as his converts mounted, he gathered them into groups - every group, when once it had grown spiritually strong, becoming a centre from which the new

life in Christ spread to other lives. Thus through the simple testimony of common people to their new-found faith, longing souls were set alight everywhere. And all the time it was the pungent doctrines of uncompromising biblical Christianity which Wesley, like Whitefield, was consistently setting forth. He was therefore continuing methodically to re-lay Britain's Christian foundations. In fact, Sir C.G. Robertson, in his Oxford History of England, has written: 'At a time when Bishop Butler asserted that Christianity was wearing out of the minds of men, Wesley kept the English people Christian.'

Eventually it was not just Wesley who was doing it. Wesley had a vision, and the vision was that every convert should become a soul-winner; every Christian should be a crusader for Christ. This vision was based on the New Testament teaching of 'the priesthood of all believers', and Wesley so put the teaching and the vision into operation that eventually he had an army of no less than 8,600 bringing the impact of the Gospel to bear upon the people of England. That was one of the secrets of the revival's great spiritual depth, and of why it spread so quickly.

We need to remember that Wesley's Christianity was a Bible-based Christianity. Wherever the revival spread, its first avowed aim was to dispel the appalling spiritual ignorance which was abroad. A Bible religion demanded a thorough knowledge of the Scriptures. Wesley himself taught that one could never be a 'thorough Christian' without extensive reading. This conception set thousands of converts to the task of teaching themselves to read, so that they might search the Scriptures and other books which were designed to strengthen their moral and spiritual lives.

The Bible therefore became central to countless people's lives. To the individual Christian it was the handbook of moral and spiritual guidance, and because it was, his personal Bible became very much underlined. To the family and Christian household, the Bible was the medium of family worship. To evangelical Christian society as a whole, the Bible was regarded as both chart and compass in the journey through life.

Wesley and Whitefield's ministry, therefore, together with that of other spirit-filled preachers, ushered in a period of great
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spiritual revival and strength, the like of which had never been experienced in this country before. Historians speak of it as 'the great work of grace which transformed England in one of the darkest periods of its history.'

It was a time when 'evangelical Christianity, that is, Bible-based Christianity, laid hold on multitudes of Englishmen with a firmer grasp and in a greater number of instances than ever before.' With regards to its far-reaching effects, one assessor of this period has said: 'The fires of the Revival had been kindled from heaven, and before the accession of George III the churches had caught the flame. Their ministers were beginning to preach with a new fervour, and their preaching was followed by a new success. The religious life of the people was becoming more intense. A passion for evangelistic work had taken possession of church after church, and by the end of the century the old meeting-houses of non-conformity were crowded; many of them had to be enlarged, and new meeting houses had to be erected in village after village, in every part of the country.'

So great, in fact, was the permeating influence of this Evangelical Revival, that Non-conformity, with its primary emphasis on the New Testament and on the Spirit of the Gospel, became again a power in the land and a force to be reckoned with at the very highest levels.

This mighty baptism of fire also revived spiritual vision and kindled a great Christian initiative among thousands in the national church; but what is even more important, it reclaimed, for God, multitudes outside the churches who had long been beyond the pale of any immediate spiritual influence. So countless numbers both inside and outside the churches were ultimately affected by the Awakening. Indeed the revival finally transformed the whole tone of the national life of the country. All areas and departments of life were cleansed, which, as we have seen from the earlier description of England's appalling decline and condition, was the country's direst need.

But it is necessary, in view of a great deal of wrong thinking today, to maintain a clear understanding of exactly how this great national transformation of Wesley's day came about. For Wesley and Whitefield did not believe, as do some in high

ecclesiastical and governmental positions today, that it is a man's environment, surroundings and social circumstances which largely determine his character and the way he behaves. Rather they saw that it was the other way about, because they knew that the teaching of the Bible and their own experience of the new birth clearly showed that this was the case. It was not a question of changing society in order to change the behaviour and character of men, but rather a matter of changing men, and then they would do something about changing their society. Both Whitefield and Wesley saw what the Lord Jesus Christ had clearly taught before them, that the real problem was the human heart. It is out of the heart of a man, out of his innermost being, said Jesus, that all evil things proceed. So the eighteenth-century revival centred Christianity in the individual human heart, not in the state or in the environment, and not even in the church.

To go even deeper, Wesley and Whitefield saw clearly that men's hearts, because of inbred sin, were estranged and cut off from God; so both of them constantly sought, first and foremost, through the preaching of the cross of Jesus Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit and through its message of atonement, to bring individual souls into an abiding, personal communion with God. This was why their emphasis all the time was on preaching.

They knew that the central promise of God in the glorious news of the new covenant was "A new heart will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you", and they knew that for the individual who believed, it was preaching that would bring that promise about.

1 Corinthians 1:21. "It pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe."

Personal conversion, therefore, not social revolution, was Whitefield's and Wesley's primary aim.

As to changes in society, it must be realised that England, before Whitefield's Awakening commenced, was almost totally bankrupt of strong moral and spiritual convictions. Wesley, as much as anybody else, was deeply concerned about the evils and

injustices which surrounded him in his day: perhaps even more so, if the truth were known. It is not widely known that Wesley maintained a diary, but as yet, nobody has been able to read its contents, because he kept it in code. Obviously much of what he recorded was very politically incorrect, and for people in high places to know his opinions could have been dangerous for him. So far, all efforts to crack the code have failed. So he devoted himself wholeheartedly to travelling his 250,000 miles, preaching his 40,000 sermons in the open, amongst people where they were. Multitudes of people came to a new faith in Jesus Christ, and that new faith gradually created a new conscience as, in all parts of the country, the revival of Christianity changed hearts and gave a new sense of direction and purpose to the lives of great numbers of people. There arose an abiding concern for righteousness, as newly awakened consciences became more and more aware of the moral evil and social sin which was all around them, and at the same time an overwhelming desire and determination to put things right. And that is what led to change.

As we all know, a whole series of reforms was ushered in. But it should never be forgotten that these reforms were brought about by changed men. It was through changed men that the abolition of the slave trade came about. William Wilberforce, Zachary Macaulay, Henry Thornton, John Venn, and the other leading champions who fought for the abolition of the British Slave Trade, were all products of the eighteenth century revival. Each one in turn had been born again of the Holy Spirit under the Spirit-filled preaching of the revival, and it was from a personal Christian faith that they all received their initial inspiration and drive for this courageous venture.

It was through changed men and women that our British prison system became more humanised, and that our British penal code became drastically reformed. Men had been led to see the spiritual value which man must put on his fellow man.

More than any other religious movement which the English-speaking world has yet known, the Great Awakening emphasised the equal and priceless value in the sight of God of every person, and that the individual is responsible to God for the way his fellow-man is treated. England had a particularly

ferocious and cruel criminal code. Wilberforce repeatedly joined others in crying out against it, and thorough-going evangelical Christians worked steadfastly with the robust humanitarian radicals of the day to remove the inhuman and grossly unjust features of our vicious and tyrannical penal system.

John Howard, the champion of prison reform and another evangelical Christian, was a zealous disciple of John Wesley and a Spirit-filled man. That is why he travelled thousands of miles to inspect the jails of the entire United Kingdom, and that is why he expended much of his personal fortune in furthering the prisoner's cause and in bringing about reforms.

That is why Elizabeth Fry followed closely in John Howard's wake, spending a great deal of her time in reading the Bible to some of the most depraved human beings in prison, and praying with them. She caused true Christianity to have a miraculous effect on the most degraded of prisoners, and particularly in London's Newgate Prison.

It was through changed men that great advances were made in the realm of education. The moral and spiritual decline which was in progress at the time inevitably caused education to reach an extremely low ebb. Multitudes of adults, let alone children, could not even read. With revival came a great longing to read the Bible, and that craving Wesley was determined to satisfy. He set thousands of his adult converts the task of teaching themselves to read, and made ceaseless use of the printing press to supply them with good Christian literature. Tens of thousands must have taught themselves to read from these publications. Every home which had been deeply affected by the revival had its little collection of much read books, and some of these collections are still in existence today. Wherever Wesley's teaching penetrated, parent's first desired that their own children should be educated; then they had a similar desire for the neglected youngsters around them. The result was a steady increase in schools. The establishment of the Sunday Schools movement is an example. Sunday Schools first taught reading and writing as well as a knowledge of the Bible; and in the process they grew amazingly. Wesley reported in 1784 that he found these schools springing up everywhere he went, and he

lived to visit and examine local Sunday Schools with nearly 1000 children in attendance, and with about one tenth of that number of voluntary teachers. George III, a promoter of the revival, gave the movement a further impetus when, in 1805, he made his famous statement: 'It is my wish that every poor child in my dominion shall be taught to read the Bible.' The movement continued to grow until it became first national, and then international.

When children employed in the factories were eventually set free from child-labour by Lord Shaftesbury's Factory Act in 1847, one of the principles central to that piece of reform was 'that children should be freed, and educated nobly to take their place as intelligent, useful, healthy and happy citizens in a Christian State.' Voluntary schools had by this time already come into existence. When the Board School Acts of 1870 were passed, they had as their purpose 'to complete the voluntary system and to fill up the gaps, but not to supplant the voluntary system.'

It was to changed men that Britain owed its voluntary hospital system. Sir George Newman observed that 'an unprecedented improvement in public health accompanied the progress of the eighteenth century revival', and it was due to the effect of this revival upon it that 'the splendid, voluntary hospital facilities of modern England came to be more associated with a spiritual rather than a materialistic concept of life.'

J.W.Bready says: 'The British voluntary hospital system - the only major hospital system in the world which was supported almost exclusively by the free will gifts of an appreciative public - was a product of the Evangelical Revival.' It was John Wesley who started the first free medical dispensary in England. It was he who established the first centres offering free electrical treatment to the poor. He it was who constantly emphasised the sanctity of the human body as the temple of the living Spirit of God, urging the Christian duty of keeping it healthy and pure.

Dr Barnado's Homes, the Shaftesbury Society, the National Society for the prevention of cruelty to Children, the Salvation Army, and the London City Mission are but a few more. The crusade was led by Lord Shaftesbury, a thorough-going

Christian, who profoundly influenced the social welfare, not only of the British people, but of English-speaking peoples everywhere, and became known as 'the Great Emancipator', but only because he himself had first been set free by Jesus Christ,

The statue of Eros in London's Piccadilly Circus is a memorial to the monumental work of the great Shaftesbury. It depicts an arrow of Christian love piercing the world. Gladstone's tribute can be read inscribed round the base of the memorial: 'During a public life of half a century he devoted the influence of his station, the strong sympathies of his heart, and the great power of his mind, to honouring God by serving his fellow-men; an example to his order, a blessing to his people, and a name to be by them ever gratefully remembered.'

He was the inspiring, impelling, and sustaining force behind the Factory Act, the Mines and Collieries Act, the Chimney Sweep's Act, and scores of other Acts of Parliament. He also founded the Protestant Federation which still exists, but to which no-one listens.

The campaign to change factory conditions was conducted on Christian lines, without violence, either of speech or of action. Strikes, lock-outs, mob tactics, intimidation and threats were all 'out'. A deeply religious and Christian spirit permeated the humblest ranks of the crusade, and when a national conference of factory operatives was held in London shortly after the passage of the 1847 Factory Act, a note of thanksgiving to Almighty God was struck. The following resolution was unanimously passed at the conference. 'That we are deeply grateful to Almighty God for the success which has hitherto attended our efforts, and now that the object of our labours for the last thirty years is about to be brought to a happy consummation, we pledge ourselves to promote by every means in our power those religious and social blessings which it was the object of the Bill to extend to the factory worker.'

The 1847 Factory Act and the Ten Hour Programme embodied in it was the Magna Carta of the Industrial Worker's Liberty. It included the closing down of factories between 6pm and 6am, with no night work. It suppressed 'shifts' and 'relays'. It guaranteed evening leisure; established immunity from Sunday

labour; enforced a weekly day of rest; and won for British Factory workers the Saturday half-holiday, thus providing a prolonged weekly period for recreation and rest long before any other country had ever dreamed of such a benefit. It suppressed the vicious practice of the 'free' use of women and children as 'fodder for industry', and the central principle was 'that women should be freed from the tyranny of industry, and be educated to raise home-making to the standard of a Christian art or skill.'

The Act also initiated compulsory education, both juvenile and adult, when once it had freed the children from child labour. Chiefly under Lord Shaftesbury's leadership a whole programme of other social welfare began to flow from it. Innumerable friendly and benefit societies and co-operative movements, as well as workers institutes, temperance guilds, literary and debating societies, and indeed, the sane, self-governing British Trade Union Movement.

How many people today appreciate that our British trade-unionism was a direct product of the Evangelical Revival, and that it has its very roots in Christianity? Under the impact of Wesley's preaching, Nonconformist chapels all over the country grew and multiplied. The British Trade Union movement grew directly out of these very chapels. What is more, the majority of the early leaders were Christians, and were not only members of their local Free Churches but were also either preachers of the Gospel or were doing other active Christian work in their neighbourhood.

The great Lloyd George testified to this, and then added. 'I never realised the effect which Methodism has had upon the national character so much as when I attended international congresses...and it is all due to the great religious revival of the eighteenth century.'

This was made very evident in 1910, when British unionists entered into international conference with the leaders of organised labour on the Continent. 260 British trade union delegates visited Lille in the north of France. Like their continental comrades, the British deputation carried the socialist flag and many trade emblems. But when they appeared in the streets the continental labour leaders were dumbfounded! For the British deputation also carried a banner which read: 'We represent 500,000 English workmen! We proclaim the Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of Man! Jesus Christ leads us and inspires us!' Moreover in the conference, some of

the veteran British leaders, quoting freely from the Bible, declared stoutly that it was their Christianity which had made them trade unionists, co-operators and socialists, and this was in 1910, over 90 years since trade unionism had arisen in England in the years immediately following 1815.

Much more could be said, but perhaps the greatest testimony to the Great Awakening in England is to be found engraved in marble just inside the north doors of Westminster Abbey. There on the huge memorial to William Pitt we can read these words: 'During whose administration, and in the reigns of George II and George III, Divine Providence exalted Great Britain to an height of prosperity and glory unknown to any former age.'

It has been truly said that Wesley saved England from the horrors of the French Revolution. Or, rather that God in his mercy dealt with us differently than as we deserved, giving us grace rather than judgment.



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ZEPHANIAH.

Part Two.

A Study by
Frank W. Dowsett.

Chapter One, Part Two.

As we turn to the second portion of this first chapter of Zephaniah's prophecy, from verses 7 to 18, we note that it is dominated by one great theme. That theme is:-

"THE DAY OF THE LORD".

There would be very few Christians who have not heard of this phrase, nor have formed some degree of opinion regarding it. But I'm fairly sure that not too many realise the extent to which it is quoted in the Bible, nor the significance of the phrase, especially for the days in which we now live. It is mentioned exactly 31 times, and the significance of this number will not escape many readers. Furthermore, it is referred to by exactly 12 different writers within the Bible. As well as Zephaniah, they are Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Zechariah, Malachi, Luke, Paul, and Peter. But as if this is not enough, the phrase "in that day", used in reference to this "day of the Lord", is mentioned no less than 130 times. The phrase "a day of", in relation to the description of this "day of the Lord", is also used 12 times. I think that we can conclude with some assurance that this subject must form a very real, important, and significant factor in our study of the present day fulfilment of prophecy.

Just for the record, I might add that at this present time I am engaged in a fairly in-depth study of this subject in my Sunday morning services. I have completed four one-hour messages to date, with at least a further four to follow. The Lord willing, I hope to make these messages the subject of a future series of articles in this publication, probably following

the conclusion of this series on Zephaniah. But because of the magnitude of the subject, we will restrict ourselves, in this series, to the main features of this study.

However, a short introduction is necessary. Even a casual study of the subject reveals that many of the events associated with this "day of the Lord" are to occur after the return of our Lord, and not before, as generally thought. Many very sincere folk are wondering how the Lord is to return in the very near future, as indicated by so many prophecies, when it seems that so many things are yet to happen. The simple answer to this is that many, if not most of those events which we know are yet to be fulfilled, are to occur after the Lord returns, and not before. Peter informs us that "one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day". (2 Peter 3:8). This phrase, "a thousand years", is only mentioned twice in the Old Testament, and has absolutely no connection with our present subject. The phrase is only used on six other occasions in the New Testament, all in the Book of the Revelation, and all referring to the period of our Lord's Kingdom Reign, or millennium, as we like to call it. It thus becomes obvious, at least to me, that "the day of the Lord" is no other than the 1,000 year Kingdom Reign of our Lord Jesus Christ, ruling in conjunction with those who are called to reign with Him as kings and priests. This being the case, it can then be realised just how many of the events and conditions yet to occur will actually take place during this millennium period and not before it.

So with this in mind, let's look more specifically at what Zephaniah has to say. He introduces the subject in verse 7;

"Hold thy peace at the presence of the Lord GOD: for the day of the LORD is at hand: for the LORD hath prepared a sacrifice, he hath bid his guests."

There are four factors to note here.

1. "We must hold our peace at the presence of the Lord". The phrase means "hush - to be silent". Other similar usages of this and similar phrases give the intention of listening to the Lord, and not arguing with what He is saying or doing. In other words, we are to keep our own personal views and opinions to ourselves. This is now a time to listen to God.

2. “The Lord hath prepared a sacrifice”. It is most interesting to note that a few translations render the word ‘sacrifice’ as a “feast”. Dr. C. J. Ellicott, in his commentary, says that the word includes the idea of the feast in which it was customary to consume the remains of the sacrifice. We also should note that this is no ordinary sacrifice. As translated in the Septuagint, this is His sacrifice, or feast. Now we should be asking ourselves what feast is associated with the return of Christ and His Kingdom Age reign? Could this be a reference to Rev. 19:9? I certainly think so.

“And he saith unto me, Write, Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb. And he saith unto me, These are the true sayings of God.”

3. “He has bid His guests”. This literally translates as “He has sanctified, set apart for Himself, His invited ones”. Who can these set apart, invited, special guests possibly be if they are not those whom He has chosen to rule and reign with Him during the time when He will totally destroy His enemies. Don’t forget that the overcomers will also rule with a ‘rod of iron’ as stated in Rev. 2:26-27;

*“And he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations:
And he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers: even as I received of my Father.”*

4. We are also told that this day “is at hand”. This does not mean that the events referred to are necessarily about to immediately happen. The phrase is often used in a symbolic or prophetic sense, which indicates its certainty at the time appointed. The context will determine which usage is applicable. In this instance, there was obviously a fairly immediate fulfilment, but the end-time fulfilment is clear from the entire context of this and other statements by the various prophets. This is an excellent example of the short-term and the long-term fulfilment of prophecy. Take for example the prophesies relating to the “latter days”, the conditions of which are exactly the same as stated by Zephaniah.

Let us read from Jeremiah 30:24 and Daniel 10:14;

"The fierce anger of the LORD shall not return, until he have done it, and until he have performed the intents of his heart: in the latter days ye shall consider it."

"Now I am come to make thee understand what shall befall thy people in the latter days: for yet the vision is for many days."

The next portion of this chapter, verses 8 to 13, relates, in the context of "the day of the Lord", to the judgments associated with the period of the Lord's sacrifice, or feast. We commence at verse 8;

"And it shall come to pass in the day of the LORD'S sacrifice, that I will punish the princes, and the king's children, and all such as are clothed with strange apparel."

We find here that two groups are to come under very severe judgment from God.

1. The princes, or rulers and leaders, together with the 'king's children', including those of the Royal House who have not, or are not, doing that which is right in the sight of the Lord. Being a direct descendant of David is not a licence to defy the Law of God which they have sworn to uphold. It is interesting to note that there were far more kings of Israel of old of whom it was said that "they did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord", than those of whom it was said that "they did that which was right in the sight of the Lord." Things are no different today. Whether they be Monarch or President, most of them, right up to our present time, have disobeyed God and allowed His people to be taken into terrible bondage. God will not forget it.

2. Those that are clothed with strange apparel. The word "strange" means "nokriy, nok-ree'; strange, in a variety of degrees and applications (foreign, non-relative, adulterous, different, wonderful):—alien, foreigner, outlandish, strange. (Strong's #5237). How applicable. The true Israel nations today have not only broken this cardinal rule of remaining THE COVENANT VISION.

separate from the other nations, but have virtually written the necessity to do so into our several constitutions as being mandatory! We have literally clothed ourselves with the trappings of every form of foreign idolatry, culture, and thought process that could be imagined. We are now walking in the way of the heathen and their gods, and not in the Way of our God. Laws are now being forced upon us to make us conform in every conceivable manner to the alien who has taken control of our once-Christian nations. They are the laws of MULTICULTURALISM. And as God warned us, the stranger in our midst has become higher than ourselves, and we are now totally controlled by their heathen manners and customs. God is definitely not amused at our deliberate stupidity. If we are interested in God's opinion of all this we need look no further than the following references;

Lev. 10:1-2. *"And Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, took either of them his censer, and put fire therein, and put incense thereon, and offered strange fire before the LORD, which he commanded them not. And there went out fire from the LORD, and devoured them, and they died before the LORD."*

Deut. 32:16. *"They provoked him to jealousy with strange gods, with abominations provoked they him to anger."*

Ezek. 44:6-9. *"And thou shalt say to the rebellious, even to the house of Israel, Thus saith the Lord GOD; O ye house of Israel, let it suffice you of all your abominations, in that ye have brought into my sanctuary strangers, (Strong's #5236 "nekar", alien, heathendom), uncircumcised in heart, and uncircumcised in flesh, to be in my sanctuary, to pollute it, even my house, when ye offer my bread, the fat and the blood, and they have broken my covenant because of all your abominations."*

Continuing in verse 9, we read of a third group to come under God's rod of punishment; **"The corporate thieves"**;

"In the same day also will I punish all those that leap on the threshold, which fill their masters' houses with violence and deceit."

Does this sound familiar? Do we now live in a society of legalised robbery and deceit? Do we now live under conditions where servants, or agents, of banks and financial institutions enter into peoples' farms and homes and with force and violence re-possess all that they have? Well, we have some very bad news for those who engage in these despicable practices. Read the nature of the Lord's punishment which follows in verses 10 and 11.

"And it shall come to pass in that day, saith the LORD, that there shall be the noise of a cry from the fish gate, and an howling from the second, and a great crashing from the hills.

Howl, ye inhabitants of Mactesh, for all the merchant people are cut down; all they that bear silver are cut off."

Here we are introduced to another group who are destined for punishment and destruction; namely, "The Merchants".

The 'fish gate' was the entrance through which traders brought their fish to sell - the fish market. The noise of a cry came from this place of trading. 'The second' refers to the second, or lower part of the city from whence comes howling. 'The hills' possibly refers to the vineyards with their associated trading, from whence come a great crashing. It could also apply to the sites of the old Davidic city and the Temple, which is included in this judgment, almost certainly for their financial trading. 'Maktesh' means 'mortar'. From various sources, such as Dr. Bullinger, Dr. Ellicott, the New Bible Dictionary, and Josephus, it was a noisy place, full of houses, where foreign merchants gathered. This local headquarters of commerce, with all its merchants, is to be cut down or destroyed, and the source of their financial wealth is to be cut off. That really makes my day! It's the best news I've heard for a long time. The Lord gives us confirmation of this judgment in Rev. 18:3 and 11;

"For all nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication, and the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth are waxed rich through the abundance of her delicacies."

"And the merchants of the earth shall weep and mourn over her; for no man buyeth their merchandise any more."

Verses 12 and 13 go on to give us a picture of what is to happen to this generation of "self satisfied people".

"And it shall come to pass at that time, that I will search Jerusalem with candles, and punish the men that are settled on their lees: that say in their heart, The LORD will not do good, neither will he do evil.

Therefore their goods shall become a booty, and their houses a desolation: they shall also build houses, but not inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards, but not drink the wine thereof."

We have read of the judgments to fall on evil leaders, on those that that rob the people of their inheritance, and of the entire commercial system that has placed all of God's people in bondage. But what of the people themselves? They have become complacent. They no longer fear God. As Peter said, their attitude is that all things continue as before, so why worry. God is in His heaven, and as long as He stays there, all will be well. Wrong! When "the great day of the Lord" arrives, all their plans for power and wealth; all their social standing; all their worldly treasures by which they have measured their prosperity; will collapse around their ears. They will end up with absolutely nothing. They will at last realise, when it is too late, that people cannot flout and ignore God's Word and His Laws and get away with it. As we proceed to read in verse 14, all this evil will be destroyed by the arrival of ;

"The Great Day of the Lord".

"The great day of the LORD is near, it is near, and hasteth greatly, even the voice of the day of the LORD: the mighty man shall cry there bitterly."

The assurance and certainty of this vision is given in Habakkuk 2:3;

"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."

We are told in verse 12 that these judgments will come to pass "at that time", that is, at the time of "the day of the Lord" which is the subject of the entire prophecy.

But what will this "day" be like? Well, one thing is for sure. It will be nothing like what most people, even most Christians, think. Read about it in verses 15-17 and weep;

"That day is a day of wrath, a day of trouble and distress, a day of wasteness and desolation, a day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness, A day of the trumpet and alarm against the fenced cities, and against the high towers."

In Joel 2:1-2, this prophet adds his testimony to this;

"Blow ye the trumpet in Zion, and sound an alarm in my holy mountain: let all the inhabitants of the land tremble: for the day of the LORD cometh, for it is nigh at hand; A day of darkness and of gloominess, a day of clouds and of thick darkness . . ."

The final two verses of this chapter, verses 17 and 18, leave us in no doubt whatsoever as to the certainty, and total extent, of God's judgment upon the evil people and organisations who have imposed this evil system upon His people, and that have for so long destroyed the peace and security and blessing which He has always intended for us.

"And I will bring distress upon men, that they shall walk like blind men, because they have sinned against the LORD: and their blood shall be poured out as dust, and their flesh as the dung.

Neither their silver nor their gold shall be able to deliver them in the day of the LORD'S wrath; but the whole land shall be devoured by the fire of his jealousy: for he shall make even a speedy riddance of all them that dwell in the land."

They shall stagger as blind men, until their very lives shall be forfeited. Their ill-gotten wealth will become totally worthless, until at last both they, and their evil ways, will be removed for ever from His perfect Kingdom.

Is it any wonder then that the Lord has commanded us to come out from among them, and not be a part of these unclean things!

We look forward with great anticipation to that great day when we will experience the fulfilment of the promise contained in Rev. 18:20-21;

"Rejoice over her, thou heaven, and ye holy apostles and prophets; for God hath avenged you on her.

And a mighty angel took up a stone like a great millstone, and cast it into the sea, saying, Thus with violence shall that great city Babylon be thrown down, and shall be found no more at all."

(This series to be continued).



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With our Christian love,

Frank and Betty Dowsett.

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God be merciful unto us, and bless us;
and cause his face to shine upon us; Selah.
That thy way may be known upon earth,
thy saving health among all nations.
Let the people praise thee, O God;
let all the people praise thee.
O let the nations be glad and sing for joy;
for thou shalt judge the people righteously,
and govern the nations upon earth. Selah.
Let the people praise thee, O God;
let all the people praise thee.
Then shall the earth yield her increase;
and God, even our own God, shall bless us.
God shall bless us;
and all the ends of the earth shall fear him.

Psalm 67.

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