

The Nazarene Fellowship Circular Letter No. 109

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Editorial

Dear Brothers and Sisters and Friends, Greetings in the Name of Jesus Christ our Lord.

“The tongue is a little member, and boasteth great things. Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth! And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity... the tongue no man can tame; it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison...” (James 3;5-8).

How true we have seen this to be over the past few weeks! Whatever we may think about the rights and wrongs of publishing Salman Rushdie's book, it has had a most remarkable effect in dividing the nations overnight and shows just how quickly the political scene can change. Are we to see here the hand of God at work among the heads of States fulfilling His purposes and aligning the nations on the world's stage in preparation for the greatest event of all times?

Events are moving fast, and faithful followers of Jesus Christ of a hundred years ago would be thrilled if they could see the things which we see in our day. How excited we should be knowing His coming is so close and whether or not we see that more events are likely to take place before Jesus comes again we must always be ready in case it is today.

Ray and Eileen join with me in sending our Best Wishes to all our readers with Sincere Love in the Master's service.

Russell Gregory.

Note 1.) It is a great pleasure to receive correspondence from so many of you but recently I have fallen a long way behind with my replies and would ask you please to be very patient with me and I will reply to all of you in due course. As far as possible I will enclose my letters with your monthly Circular Letter.

Note 2.) Last month I mentioned I was compiling an essay on the Revelation from notes which my father left. This is proving to be a sizable task and may take much longer than at first thought.

Note 3.) The last copy of “The Two Sons of God” by Edward Turney has been sent out. This is the largest of our publications consisting of over 130 pages. It is such an important work I have made enquiries regarding a re-print and will let you know next month how things stand.

Russell.

Letter from Brother Harry Laver to :-

Dear Brother and Sister Moore, Eric and Lillian, Loving Greetings in Christ Jesus

I cannot put into words the joy and happiness I had when reading your article “Why We Changed”. It really thrilled my soul for everything in your article I hold dear in my heart.

As you know that after joining with you in the “Berean Fellowship” I had grave misgivings, for I could not accept that Christ had to die for the sin within His own body, so I had to fall away from those who I was beginning to love and also those I had always loved, namely my Brother and Sister Moore.

No way could I ever believe that God could Father a Son who had sin in His life for God’s plan was to have a perfect sacrifice, a spotless Lamb, the Lamb of God to take away the sin of the world. Christ did indeed take upon Himself your sin and mine, He who had no sin of His own. He took our sin and it was nailed with Him on Calvary’s tree, to be remembered no more.

We do indeed accept this great gift of salvation when we hold Christ to be our Lord as we go through the Waters of Baptism. Could we find a better more wonderful, loving teaching? Is there any wonder I could never let go of this wonderful teaching? Of course not. Christ Jesus is even more wonderful, for He is now our Mediator, our Intercessor to the Father, and through Him we can cry “Abba Father.”

I believe that God also brought me out from among the Pentecostal Assemblies of God because I could not take in the teaching of a triune God after hearing the truth on this subject through the teachings of the Christadelphians that God is the Father and Christ the Son, the Holy Spirit being God’s power, for did not Christ Himself say “My Father is greater than I”?

These truths I hold dear as I also believe that you, Eric and Lillian, are now again at one with me in these truths. Therefore I can now call you Brother and Sister.

Yours in His Name. Harry Laver. 15th January 1989

Correspondence:

What will the Kingdom Age be like? I am sure we all have a picture in our minds of a time of peace and joy, and the following letter from Brother and Sister Woodhouse asks:

“What is the average conception of those of us who are looking to that wonderful new order of things, soon to take shape, when Jesus Christ, along with the saints will begin that task of restoring this earth to its former beauty and glory. This brings to mind the thought that Jesus is now at the “door”. If He does not intervene soon (but of course, we know that He will) this earth will soon be little better than a lifeless piece of matter floating through space. We know that man’s rule everywhere on this earth is to be dramatically curtailed, and those who do not abide by God’s very reasonable laws, and treat this wonderful creation with

all the respect which is due to it, will find that there is no room for them: "...and shouldest destroy them which destroy the earth." Revelation 11:18.

This is a little part of a mental picture I have formed regarding the Kingdom of God. Of course, there will be much work to be done at the beginning of Christ's reign. All that is unsightly, the works of mankind, will be removed and in their place, all will be pleasing to the eye and the environment will be joy to live in. The day of the cement jungle and all the horrors which go with such creations will cease to exist for ever.

Paul reminds us, in 1 Corinthians 13:12 that we now look through a glass darkly. A certain brother was quick to draw my attention to the above quotation, inferring that we were not to know the full beauty of the Kingdom yet. I quite agree. In our probationary period we will be unable to see and hear the full impact of what God has in store for them who love Him. I do think, however, that God's ward gives us numerous pen pictures of what the new order will be like. Surely the scripture requires us to develop a lively and sensible picture which will make us strive more fervently for that joy set before each one of us.

When the law goes forth from Jerusalem, corrupt and evil governments will no longer be dispensing laws which very often cause unrest, divisions and the wealthy becoming wealthier. These people in high places cater for the wealthy, leaving no doubt which god they worship. The god of gold. According to these blind leaders of the blind, the god of gold is the only source of life! If you think about it, what would the answer be of any average person if asked what is their conception of a Heaven on Earth? They would perhaps tell you: "A big healthy Bank Account" or that which is equivalent to the god of gold. People will say "We must have money to buy our necessities" This is quite true, but society everywhere gears its way of life which allows a certain section of their society getting far more in access of what is fairly due to them.

The love of money is the root of all evil which while some covet after, they have erred from the faith and pierced themselves through with many arrows. 1 Timothy 6:10. I think we all at some time or other have said "What would I do if I came into a lot of money!" I feel sure experience has taught us that the Father in Heaven sees to our needs. He will never see us want and will grant us all those requirements which we are in need of in this life. Consider the lilies how they grow! I think this wonderfully sums it all up.

But to come back to our first thought. It would be interesting if brethren and sisters were encouraged to write to know their thoughts about what the Kingdom of God will be like."

"Ye that make mention of the Lord, keep not silence and give Him no rest, till He establish, and till He make Jerusalem a praise in the earth." - Isaiah 62:6 & 7.

More on the Devil....

Following on last month's topic concerning the devil, we have received a letter from Sister Lily White which was written by our late Brother Fred Pearce and sent to her in 1957. At the time. Sister Lily was "engaged in endless and fruitless argument with some Jehovah's Witnesses" and wrote to Brother Fred for support. Here, then, is that letter:-

"Demonology is a big subject and when you have read both sides (that is, "Jehovah's Witnesses" and what we believe) you are left in doubt. If you have Smiths Dictionary of the Bible, he deals very fairly with for and against. It is only when people like us who wish to see all things, and God being just, that you can come to a right conclusion. If only reading of demons with no understanding, you can believe in them just as a Roman Catholic would persuade anyone who does not know the truth.

I have gone into it years ago and what I am writing now is only impressions from then.

I am fully convinced that there are no such things as evil spirits, or demons.

First of all, God is One and none else. "I kill and make alive" Deuteronomy 32:39. Compare Jeremiah 12:12-17, "...if they will not obey, I will utterly pluck up and destroy that nation, saith the Lord." Isaiah 45:7, "I form the light, and create darkness; I make peace, and create evil: I the Lord do all these things. Isaiah 66:4, "I also will choose their delusions, and I will bring their fears upon them..." 2 Thessalonians 2:11, "And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie." Ezekiel 14:2,4,& 9 "...I, the Lord will answer him that cometh according to the multitude of his idols." "I the Lord have deceived that prophet, and I will stretch out my hand upon him, and will destroy him from the midst of my people Israel." (Note verse 23 "...and ye shall know that I have not done without cause all that I have done in it, saith the Lord." Psalm 125:5, "As for such as turn aside unto their crooked ways, the Lord shall lead them forth with the workers of iniquity..."

Next, we reap what we sow. Sin is transgression of law. No law - no transgression. It can be seen that "devils" or "demons" refer to idols of man's making. The plagues of Israel were against their false gods. In Psalm 78:49, the Revised Version puts it "angels of evil". This is the evil God created for their sin.

He drowned the world of Noah's time; burnt the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. God used Balaam, Pharaoh, Nebuchadnezzar, Caiaphas, the high priest, and others - Deuteronomy 13:1-3, "If there arise among you a prophet, or a dreamer of dreams, and giveth thee a sign or a wonder, and the sign or the wonder come to pass, whereof he spake unto thee saying, Let us go after other gods, which thou hast not known and let us serve them; thou shalt not hearken unto the words of that prophet, or that dreamer of dreams; for the Lord your God proveth you, to know whether you love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul." Also see Deut. 18:22, "When a prophet speaketh in the name of the Lord, if the thing follow not, nor come to pass, that is the thing which the Lord hath not spoken, but that prophet hath spoken presumptuously: thou shalt not be afraid of him."

The Apostle Peter was a Satan, and also the angel which withstood Balaam (Numbers 22:28). God used the witch of Endor to bring upon Saul "therefore hath the Lord alone done this thing unto you today."

The most succinct and apt definition of "devil" which we have seen,
is "The will of man when opposed to the will of God."

MELCHIZEDEK

Hebrews Ch. 7

Among a number of old papers of our late brother Fred Pearce was a letter dated 15th October 1906 written by one C.W.Clarke; it appears to have been written in answer to an enquiry as to who was Melchizedek? Some of the matter expressed could prompt thought and comment by brethren and sisters which we shall be glad to hear. The wording of the letter is as follows:- "You ask, who was Melchizedek? and state that you should like to know, so indeed would many more. Very much has been written upon the question but opinions are various.

The introduction of Melchizedek into history occurs when Abraham and others rescue Lot with others from their captors and their spoil and is subsequently met by Melchizedek described to be "priest of the most high God". The story occurs in the 14th chapter of Genesis and is the only place where any historical record occurs of him, (verses 18-20) and it is said that he is the first individual who was called a priest in

the Divine record, and he was a king as well as a priest, a combination that did not apply under the Levitical order.

Now, in regard to the difficulties in Hebrews 7 where he is said, in verse 3, to be “without father, without mother, without descent (or pedigree), having neither beginning of days nor end of life” the following remarks have been made upon them. In the first place, to take the phrase “without father or mother” literally, he could not have been a man which he is stated to be, as referred to above. At the time the epistle to the Hebrews was written it is stated that allegory was carried so far as to imperil the plain sense of the sacred narratives and such phrases as “fatherless”, “motherless”, etc., were not only in Rabbinic Hebrew but even in classical Greek and Latin writings where speaking of certain individuals whose parents and ancestry were simply unrecorded are spoken of as being parentless; for example, a celebrity in Grecian history calls himself “motherless” when he supposed himself to be the son of a slave woman; again, a Pagan writer speaks of himself as sprung of no ancestors, and a Jewish Rabbi refers to a Gentile as having no father, that is the father of a proselyte is of no account in Jewish pedigree.

The above throws considerable light upon the expression “fatherless” and “motherless” as applied to Melchizedek, there is no record of his birth, appointment, or his death and therefore it seems that the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews was speaking in a language which would be well understood in those days that the Melchizedek order of priesthood was “without descent” or pedigree. For this reason Philo, a Jewish mystical philosopher, in those days draws a lesson that Evil never dies among the human race because of the non-mention of the death of Cain, adopting the idea in the case of Melchizedek, that order of priesthood never dies for the same reason, and it is suggested this view is probably what was in the mind of the writer when using the words in the 8th verse of the 7th chapter “of whom it is witnessed that he liveth”. Again, with regard to “descent” or pedigree, it will be remembered that the Jewish priests were obliged to keep most careful genealogies, and some families were even excluded from the priesthood in Ezra’s day, because they could not adequately prove their priestly descent (Nehemiah 7:64), therefore they were “without descent” or pedigree. It is said that one of the objections of the Jews against the legitimacy of the priesthood of Christ is that he came from no particular stock and not a Levite.

The following are one or two renderings of Hebrews 7:3 which go to strengthen the views expressed above:

The OLD SYRIAC VERSION translates it as follows - “Whose father and mother are not inscribed among the genealogies.”

The ARABIC - “He hath neither father nor mother, the genealogy not being reckoned.”

The ETHIOPIC - “He had neither father nor mother upon earth, nor his genealogy known.”

The REVISED VERSION gives “without genealogy” in place of “without descent.”

The whole design and object of the Epistle to the Hebrews is to show, as you doubtless are aware, the superiority of the Messianic dispensation over the Mosaic, hence in treating of the Priesthood of Christ, shows and proves how much it was exalted in its nature, being of the order of Melchizedek, which order has never been abrogated like the Levitical one; that in the latter order priests were constituted without an oath, but in the former one by an oath; that the Levitical was not a perfect or permanent institution and therefore it is superseded by the Melchizedek, and as the Mosaic law appointed priests only of the tribe of Levi, Christ being of the tribe of Judah; of which Moses spake nothing pertaining to the priesthood, the priesthood being changed, the whole system of the Mosaic economy and its priesthood, over which it presided is done away in Christ. (Hebrews 7:11-21).

I would counsel you to read and study carefully the seventh chapter of Hebrews, turning up the marginal references. You will find it a profitable study, although the matter is stated to be difficult and likened to strong meat. (Hebrews 5:10-14).

Just a few odd remarks and I close. Take particular notice of the point in the seventh chapter, verse 4, as to the dignity of Melchizedek, that even Abraham paid him tithes. That Levi, the father of the Levitical

tribe, it is stated, paid tithes in a figure, to this man. If Melchizedek himself is still alive, where is he? And where does he exercise his functions? In conclusion, I told you at the start the subject is somewhat profound and more than equal to my powers of dealing with it. Hence if I have not put the matter as clearly as others could I have done my duty in endeavouring to throw as much light upon the problem as my abilities permit.”

Affectionately Yours in Christ, Fred Pearce.

“We Know a Land Where the Streets are Paved with Gold. So do The Russians!”

At the bottom of the sea lies one of the greatest sources of wealth and trouble in the world today.

Gold, oil, diamonds, food, minerals beyond your wildest dreams. For the first time, new technology is allowing us to tap these resources. But there’s a greater problem than technology. Ownership! How does one go about staking a claim in the middle of the Pacific Ocean? If two little countries disagree on a copper field under the Arctic Ocean, do the big countries go to war? Wouldn’t the “finders keepers” principle of ownership give all the ocean to a few nations, to the consternation of the rest?

In no other field are the legal questions so knotty. And the answers so necessary. Because if we don’t set up some international agreements soon, we’ll be stuck with “to the victors belong the spoils.” Not only is agreement crucial for governments, but for private corporations as well. Because oceanography is one of the major growth industries of our time.

Urethane foam for undersea recovery operations. Hydrazine chemicals for floatation systems and exploration at the very lowest depths of the ocean. Power-tools for underwater construction. Cold weather starters for off-shore oil rigs. Chemicals that can help heat up the water around divers. Others that help make glass hard enough for deep-sea storage and housing at fantastic pressures. Fuel cells able to power deep-submergence vessels at depths of 20,000 feet and below. With all this at stake, we have a more than passing interest in seeing law and order prevail under the high seas. It could determine what happens on top!

From The National Geographic Magazine.

EVERY WORD OF GOD IS PURE

Therefore Handle it not Deceitfully.

It is on the importance and basis of respect for the pure word of God that He has continually set before His servants the Blessing and the Curse as recorded in Deuteronomy 11:26, “A blessing if ye will obey and a curse if ye disobey’. The results of these blessings and cursings are recorded further on in Deuteronomy 28 and also the fact of God knowing that later on they would desire a king, like the other nations, instructs them in the manner of the king and that he would not be of their own choice, also certain conditions would be laid upon him. See Deuteronomy 17:14-20 “When thou art come unto the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee, and shalt possess it, and shall dwell therein, and shall say, I will set a king over me, like as all the nations that are about me; thou shalt in any wise set him king over thee, whom the Lord thy God shall choose: one from among thy brethren shalt thou set king over thee: thou mayest not set a stranger over thee, which is not thy brother. But he shall not multiply horses to himself, nor cause the people to return to

Egypt, to the end that he should multiply horses: forasmuch as the Lord hath said unto you. Ye shall henceforth return no more that way. Neither shall he multiply wives to himself, that his heart turn not away: neither shall he greatly multiply to himself silver and gold. And it shall be, when he sitteth upon the throne of his kingdom, that he shall write him a copy of this law in a book out of that which is before the priests the Levites: and it shall be with him, and he shall read therein all the days of his life: that he may learn to fear the Lord his God, to keep all the words of this law and these statutes, to do them: that his heart be not lifted above his brethren, and that he turn not aside from the commandment, to the right hand, or to the left: to the end that he may prolong his days in his kingdom, he, and his children, in the midst of Israel.”

In reading from Psalm 119:97 to 160, and further, if you choose, we appreciate the knowledge, understanding and respect David had for this Divine instruction through Moses concerning the study of the law and general conduct as the God-appointed king of Israel. David had his weaknesses and faults, but he acknowledged them to the God whom he served realising God had taught him from his youth, if he had added to or taken from that word of purity, he could not have penned the words of Psalm 71:18-20 “Now also when I am old and grey-headed, O God, forsake me not? until I have shewed thy strength unto this generation, and thy power to every one that is to come. Thy righteousness also, O God, is very high, who hast done great things: O God, who is like unto thee! Thou, which hast shewed me great and sore troubles, shalt quicken me again, and shalt bring me up again from the depths of the earth.” No immortal-soulism with David. “Add not to his words lest he reprove thee and thou be found a liar.” Proverbs 30:6.

Respect for the Word of God enjoins upon those related to Him to keep the commandments which are applicable under whichever dispensation they find themselves, whether from Adam to Moses, Moses to Christ, or Christ Jesus onwards. David said of these Divine precepts, “They make me wiser than my foes, and keep me in thy way.” There is no justification for failure by quoting Paul out of context in Romans 7, “God is not mocked, whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap...” The Apostle John had much regard for the word of God and the Son of God who manifested that Word, both in teaching and conduct, so that he commences his record of events with a positive declaration, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and the Word was God.” This word was Power. So that John the Baptist was moved to say concerning Jesus the Word made flesh, “He that cometh from above is above all... and what he hath seen and heard, that he testifieth; He that hath received his testimony hath set to his seal that God is true, for he whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God: for God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto him.” (John 3:31-34). Though the Apostle John is looked upon as the disciple whom Jesus loved because of his devotion to the Master, he was no weakling, but a very strong character, and Statesmanlike, as can be learned from his epistles, which possibly were written, as also the Revelation, in A.D 85-90 after the destruction of Jerusalem. John had many problems to resolve with the Ecclesia with whom he was involved, and was as forthright in his condemnation as his praise. One particular trouble he was forced to rectify concerning the Gnostics, whose views had become a problem to the believers, and they needed instruction. Gnosticism considered matter as evil, and thus Christ could not have a human body. Thus their doctrinal theory which taught that Christ only appeared, or seemed to have a body, had to be confronted. Gnosticism also taught that only by knowledge (gnosis) could one get from the world or material and evil, to Spirit which is good. Thus John emphasised in contradistinction, the true knowledge, or great certainties of the Christian faith which alone can save man. Note the frequent use of “know” in his first letter, where John uses it over twenty-five times. John wrote the gospel to prove the Sonship of Jesus in relation to the Deity, and why his mission as the “Ransom for many” demanded he be of the same nature as Adam, yet Son of God (Like Adam before sin) un-alienated from God. John ever demonstrated the fact of Jesus as Lord and Son of God, and also of flesh and blood, and nowhere does he teach that nature as being evil. It might be as well to remember that about 115 years ago someone seized on the Gnostic theory as a convenient weapon to combat the Truth but later, facts and history has shown it to have “boomeranged” on its very advocates. This is what comes of handling the Word of God deceitfully; we should not add or take away from it in order to bolster up theories that are alien to it, for then it becomes the word of men, yet, nevertheless the Word of God remains pure at the source. John showed the Gnostics to be Anti-Christ in believing a materialistic body to be evil when in fact Jesus came in that very nature which God pronounced “very Good”. The “changed Adamic flesh” theorists are not unlike the Gnostics in regarding the material flesh as evil, consequently the Gnostics invent a theory that cannot accept Christ in the flesh and blood; and the “changed flesh” theorists cannot accept a Christ who was holy, undefiled, un-alienated by Adamic sin, and a true Son of God from the womb of Mary. We, who profess to know the Son of God, know that we are of God as a result of rightly dividing the Word of Truth and not handling it deceitfully. Like John,

therefore, “We know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, even in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life. Amen. “He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son.” 2 John 1:9.

Your Brother in Christ Jesus, Phil Parry.

BAPTISED FOR THE DEAD

The statement “baptised for the dead” in 1 Corinthians 15:29 has caused much misunderstanding. One group has even made baptism for the dead an important doctrine of their beliefs. They actually baptise living people in the name of a dead relative, so the person who had died, perhaps a hundred years before, might have an opportunity of blessing. Others interpret this scripture to mean that living believers are baptised to take the place of those who have died, and are no longer able to carry on the Lord’s work.

The immediate context of the verse in question does not seem to offer much help in understanding the meaning. However, as we follow Paul’s line of reasoning, we can place verses 29 and 30 in their proper context to gain a better understanding.

Paul found there were some believers in Corinth who did not believe in the resurrection of the dead. (1 Corinthians 15:12). In verses 13-19 Paul tells of the dire consequences for the believer if Christ is not risen from the dead. We read statements such as “If Christ be not risen then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain. We are false witnesses (liars) because we testified that God raised up Christ, whom He raised not up if the dead rise not. If Christ be not raised your faith is vain, ye are yet in your sins. Those who have fallen asleep in Christ are perished. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable.”

Paul did not stop his argument with these words but stated, “But now is Christ risen from the dead and become the firstfruits of them that slept.” He could state that truth so firmly because of his experience on the Damascus Road which he referred to in 1 Corinthians 15:8.

Paul continues to explain the purposes of God in the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ, even into the future kingdom and beyond, until God will be all in all. Instead of breaking into this complete line of thought regarding the purposes of God in the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ, Paul finishes that complete revelation in verse 28. Then Paul again returns to his argument of the resurrection of the dead of verses 13-19. We could place verses 29 & 30 in the context of verses 15 & 16 and they would fit perfectly “...if so be that the dead rise not, for if the dead rise not then is not Christ raised. Else what shall they do which are baptised for the dead (Christ) if the dead rise not at all, why are they then baptised for the dead (Christ)?” Then Paul continues with his argument about resurrection. Why stand in jeopardy if the dead rise not? Let us eat and drink for tomorrow we die (with no resurrection).

Origin not known.

Christ’s Work For God

I would like you to consider what I believe to be the most important truth of scripture, that is, Christ’s work for God.

Let us begin with Ephesians 5:1&2, “Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children; and walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savour.”

We note first that Christ gave himself up. He was the priest in charge of this offering. This fact is stressed in the book of Hebrews 7:26 & 27: 9.-11 &12, “For such an high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens; who needeth not daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins, and then for the people’s: for this he did once, when he offered up himself.” “But Christ being come an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building; neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us.”

The Priestly work in general, and specifically in regard to “presiding over” his own offering and sacrifice, is dealt with in much detail in Hebrews 5,7,8,& 9. Hebrews 9:13 & 14 says, “For if the blood of bulls and goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh: how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?”

At this point, the familiar passage of John 3:16 is considered, “For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him, should not perish, but have everlasting life.”

I do not believe it is correct to view God as the High Priest, offering up His Son as the offering and sacrifice. God gave up, or delivered over His beloved Son to the machinations and plottings of evil men and into a situation that eventually put His Son into the state of death, but He Himself did not offer up Christ.

ON OUR BEHALF.

Words cannot be clearer. Christ’s work, prompted by His love, was on behalf of others. The scriptures speak of the many benefits that accrue to others due to the work of Christ. We think of redemption from sin and death, forgiveness, justification; we are familiar with these, we rejoice in them. They are ours as free gifts of the grace of God. The work of Christ is the supreme expression of the love of God. Consider also Romans 5:8, “But God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.” 1 John 4:9 & 10, “In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.” No truth in scripture seems to be clearer than that Christ’s death was substitutionary. It was on behalf of others and accepted by God on the behalf of others. This had been stated in the several references above, and I add a few more for emphasis, Hebrews 2:9, “But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that He by the grace of God should taste death for every man.” 1 Peter 2:24, “Who His own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye are healed.” 1 Peter 3:18, “For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit.” 1 Timothy 2:6, “Who gave Himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time.”

We are reminded of the offering in Leviticus 1:4 “And he shall put his hand upon the head of the burnt offering; and it shall be accepted for him to make atonement for him.” The idea of the offerer being identified with the offering cannot be made plainer and God accepting this offering.

Though the consent of the substitute is missing in the sacrifices of old, it is symbolised in the kinds of animals used. No carnivorous animal or beast of prey could be used. An animal that would have to be dragged or carried “kicking” to the altar would not do. The selection had to be from grazing animals that are easily led and are in a sense cooperative. This teaches us volumes concerning the offering of our Lord. Redemption could not be accomplished by a mere killing and blood-shedding. If Christ had been an unwilling victim, if He had struggled to get free, or argued back against His accusers. His death would have been worthless, accomplished nothing. We read and re-read those accounts of His betrayal and trial,

and marvel at His calm disposition and exhibition of quiet confidence and tremendous inner strength. How appropriate are the words of Isaiah 53:7 “He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth.”

Likewise, as the old sacrifices had to be perfect offerings, so Christ’s had to be and was. Hebrews 9:14, “How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?” 1 Peter 1:18 & 19, “Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot:” 1 Peter 2:22, “Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth:” 2 Corinthians 5:21, “For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.” and Hebrews 4:15, “For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.”

He did not need to offer up sacrifice for any sin of His own, as did the priests of old. If He needed to die for any fault in His nature, we might well question, and doubt the value of His sacrifice and offering on our behalf. If He had sinned, or been under Adam’s sentence of death, then, concerning His death, there would always loom the thought ‘He got what was coming to Him; He got His wages in full.’ But we have read from the above that this was not so.

What a great transaction it was. God dealt with our Lord for what we are, and then God deals with us for what Christ is! We became righteous before God in Him. God has consented and assented to the value of that sacrifice; we consent also and embrace Him. The transaction is complete and we are in Him. His acceptance is our acceptance.

We bow our heads and give thanks unto our Lord, knowing it is because of the work Christ accomplished for God that it could accomplish what it has for us.

Brother Eric Moore.

Note: Rotherham translates Leviticus 1:14 thus: “I shall be accepted for him to put a Propitiatory covering over Him.”

PHARAOH: WYCLIFFE: LUTHER:

Who were these men, and are they of any consequence to us today, seeing they have all lived their natural lives and gone the way of all flesh, as Job tells us in the 34th chapter and at verse fifteen, all return to dust?

Pharaoh, we know, was raised up for a specific purpose for the generation in which he lived. Romans 9:17 “For the scripture saith unto Pharaoh, Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might show my power in thee...” As we know, Pharaoh was a very proud and stubborn man. In a recent contemporary religious magazine we are given details concerning the Pharaoh who enslaved Israel. In 1898, Loret, the French archaeologist was taken to a sarcophagus wherein lay a mummy. This was the tomb of Amenhotep 11, the Pharaoh who confronted Moses more than 33 centuries ago. Much discussion has taken place among many regarding the historical setting of the Biblical Exodus. The article states “A careful consideration of all biblical and extra-biblical evidence that the Exodus occurred in the middle of the 15th century B.C. - Specifically, in the year 1443 which would be in the reign of Amenhotep 11. An exodus date of 1443 harmonises with material recorded in Armarna Letters of ancient Egypt, which tell of “Habiru” (Hebrew) incursions into Canaan around 1400B.C. - after the forty years of wandering in the wilderness.” This same Amenhotep 11 was a mighty person in the eyes of the Egyptians. He was regarded

as second to none, a man of great strength and numerous are the records of his many achievements chronicled in many monuments and wall coverings and the like found by archaeologists especially in Egypt. He is described as “a terrible lion against his enemies,” “the good god”, “lion over Egypt”, “lord of might, giving life like the sun.” Never in his life was he required to submit to anyone and he was accustomed to getting his own way, and no one ever questioned his authority. But pride goes before a fall. No wonder we have that recorded in Exodus 3 when God told Moses “And I am sure that the king of Egypt will not let you go, no, not by a mighty hand. I will stretch out my hand, and smite Egypt with all my wonders which I will do in the midst thereof, and after that he will let you go.”

This un-resilient pharaoh had to learn that there was a far more powerful personage than himself, dire distress at last moved him with the slaying of his own son, the heir presumptive, but even then pharaoh after a while, having told the Israelites to get out, changed his mind again, and pursued them to the Red Sea. Whatever the dates of these events were we cannot be certain, but we accept them as given in the article. It is the aftermath of what took place at the time we are concerned with and its effect upon Israel and their future - the keeping of the Passover; for it was at the Passover that a more important event took place. The memorial gathering took place wherein not the death of the Egyptians takes place, but the death of the Lord Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us.

One final matter concerning the pharaoh of Egypt in the time of the Exodus from Egypt. There is no mention of this particular pharaoh in any records extant after the incident of the Red Sea crossing when no doubt the flower of his army were destroyed at the hand of God.

Now we come forward some many centuries but well before our time, to LUTHER & WYCLIFFE: Have they or did they leave us anything? Yes, they most certainly did. Much of the scriptures in their native language. English and German. These two men, along with others, were not raised up by God for a special purpose but at the same time, with their ability to think and act for themselves against officialdom were used by God with the result many of the masses were able to read the scriptures for themselves. These two gentlemen had a common belief in their early lives; they were both of Roman belief as regards religion. It was their fight against the many and varied practices of Rome. Wycliffe (1320-1384) is the one we wish to look at mainly. He read and studied the scriptures intensely and was very outspoken concerning his findings. During the 1350's he obtained his M.A. Degree. About 1356 a major step in his career was when he was appointed Master of Merton College, Oxford. Only four years later he had made such progress in his office that he was appointed as Master of Balliol College, Oxford. A rare distinction - Master of two of the prominent Oxford Colleges. This gave him much influential power among his students. Here we must remember, however, that the major influence as regards authority lay with Rome and their Pontiff, the Pope. Because of his studies and teaching at Oxford, Wycliffe brought about much opposition from many other masters at various colleges at Oxford and elsewhere. He resigned in May 1361, barely a year after his appointment at Balliol. Why did he take such a drastic step so soon? We find that a little earlier in that year the Pope had issued instructions as a result of things Wycliffe was advocating and calling in question, to all his bishops and officials who at that time controlled all the major events and appointments at Oxford, that this man, Wycliffe, must be silenced. As we know, the Word of God cannot be silenced, nor destroyed, “But the Word of the Lord endureth for ever.” 1 Peter 1:25.

We well remember from our schooldays the efforts made by the Papacy in the Middle Ages to destroy the scriptures. And even long before then. The authorities at Oxford offered a sop, as it were, to Wycliffe for they did not wish to lose such a man. It was given in the form of making him Rector of Fillingham, the richest living at Oxford among the colleges. But the Rector here had little authority with the masters or students. But still Wycliffe would not be silenced; he continued among the few students he was allowed, to put forth his understanding of the scriptures as opposed to the Catholic theology. The next move against him was to deny him the use of the library, in efforts to make him tow the line of Catholicism. But he would not be silenced, though may be he continued a little more subdued, but like others in days past who found as Jeremiah did in his day “but his word was in mine heart as a burning fire, shut up in my bones...” Jeremiah 20:9.

About 1370, because he still rejected “transubstantiation” and other matters as indulgencies, etc., he was removed from any office at Oxford. At this stage his opponents proceeded against him at a “Papal Court”. It was with sadness that Wycliffe must have left Oxford. He must have been encouraged, however,

by two of his students who accosted him as he left, to be told by them that they had copied most of his writings and thesis in full and it was their intention, when they returned home after completing their studies, to take them with them. It is reputed they were students from Germany.

We now move forward about 150 years to the time of Martin Luther, who was also a keen Bible Student and very well read. Looking at the dates of these two men - Luther 1483-1546, Wycliffe 1320-1384, it would seem very likely that Luther would have known a lot about Wycliffe and studied copies of the material brought to Germany by the two students. We also understand that Wycliffe was partly encouraged by John Huss (1373-1415), a Bohemian religious reformer who wrote extensively in opposition to Rome, but was burnt at the stake for his beliefs and convictions.

His followers were later known as Lollards, who in their day, took an active part in the Reformation. So with these two leaders who opposed Rome a span of two centuries, brought forth portions of the scriptures in the native tongue. Wycliffe is known to have translated the four Gospels into English and other parts of the Bible. While in Germany, Luther did the same for that nation. Later, Luther formed the Lutheran Church, one of the cardinal doctrines is "Justification by Faith." Under the hand of God we have much to thank these men for, and during the past and present century we are thankful God has revealed His Redemptive Plan of Salvation in which we now rejoice. According to the promise of life which is in Christ Jesus.

Brother E.H.Linggood.

The Beginnings of Apostasy

Many of our readers do not have access to any libraries of much size. You might be interested in what some of our earlier writers believed. Such a study will show the beginnings and spread of apostasy and the creeping of heathen philosophies into the churches.

In "The Duration and Nature of Future Punishment" by Henry Constable (1868) we find a little table of early writers and their views on this subject. The death date of each is given:

Barnabas (90)
Clement of Rome (100)
Hermas (104)
Ignatius, Martyr (107)
Polycarp, Martyr (147)
Justin, Martyr (164)
Theophius of Antioch (183)

All held to the scriptural view that the supreme penalty for all who did not have life was eternal death.

Then came a couple of minor writers: Athenagoras (190) and Tatian (200), who were steeped in the Greek philosophies of Plato and Aristotle. The Greeks got their ideas from Babylon. So these two advanced the idea of the immortality of the soul ("Thou shalt not surely die" - the lie of the serpent). Their writings were not taken too seriously and they were considered more or less as heretics.

Two more writers, true to the Word, came in about this place. They were Irenaeus, Martyr (202) and Clement Alexandrinus (212).

Then the Greek influence was felt. Tertullian (235) not only came out with the theory of the immortality of the soul, but he also taught the eternal conscious torment of the lost. This idea came especially from the Greek myths, which they themselves did not believe. They were simply stories to entertain. Hippolytus (240) followed with the same ideas.

This was so revolting to Origen (253) that he invented the idea of universal restoration because he accepted the theory of the immortality of the soul. Something had to be done with the soul. Since man had become as God, and had immortality and could not die, even God not having power to destroy him, there was a question of what to do with man.

Arnobius (303) still held to the teaching of the Scriptures. He was about the last of those who had the truth. Then followed Augustine (430). He fastened both false teachings, the immortality of the soul and the eternal conscious torment of the wicked, on to the church and it has stuck till now. It is so strongly imbedded that no reformation can eradicate it.

Now you begin to see why there is so little said today about resurrection. It is not needed by an immortal soul. Why bother with a body?

Origin on known but we thank Brother Eric Moore for sending in the above cutting.

FROM BONDAGE TO LIBERTY

Moses, in his last words to the children of Israel, said “The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken.” (Deut. 18:15). In what respect was Christ, for he is the Prophet spoken of, like unto Moses? Many examples could be given and comparisons made. But one is to my knowledge, often overlooked. It is a thought by our late brethren Fred Pearce and Fred Lea, and our late sister Lottie Lea, and which I now want to pass on to you.

Moses was one of the children of Israel, but he was not under Egyptian bondage as the other Israelites were, since he was brought up as Pharaoh’s son. Therefore he was able to redeem them. In fact, he was the only Israelite who possessed the power, and God brought about the circumstances of his rescue from the ark of bulrushes, for this very purpose. And Christ was our flesh, our nature, but again, because of his miraculous conception being Son of God, was not under bondage to sin and so had the power to redeem mankind from this bondage, and moreover, just like Moses was the only one able to redeem his brethren from the Egyptian bondage, so Christ was the only one able to redeem man from bondage to sin.

Let us now see how the children of Israel reacted to their liberation: not always favourably. Rather, when Moses and Aaron first spoke to Pharaoh, things rather went worse. Their burdens were increased; they had to make the bricks without straw being given them. In fact, the phrase “to make bricks without straw” has become proverbial in our language, meaning “demanding the impossible”. Then after they left Egypt, at every difficulty in the wilderness they wanted to return thither. It seems, when reading the account of the exodus and the Israelites subsequent experiences, that at first they were not all that keen to be liberated. It seems that after some 400 years of sojourn in Egypt they regarded Egypt as their homeland. Bear in mind, not all 400 years were they under bondage. They were free at Joseph’s time. Just how many of these 400 years were spent in bondage is not revealed. But after all this time, some four to six generations after Joseph, it seems that many were influenced by the heathen worship of the Egyptian deities, and the reason for their stay in Egypt was forgotten by all but a few faithful ones which included Moses and his parents. They seem to have settled down quite comfortably, accepting the bondage as something just to be put up with. And when they eventually were set free, how much discontent and grumbling! Moses truly had a lot to put up with. He must have had a lot of patience.

And what about our redemption from bondage to sin, from being sons and daughters of Adam to sons and daughters, by adoption, of God? There are quite a few parallels. I think we all came to the knowledge of God and His Word through talking to friends, or we learned it from our parents. But what of our attitude while still servants to sin? To most of us religion was just a Sunday matter, something to keep a person occupied. Few of us, if any, denied the existence of God. We all had some sort of belief, mostly misguided or incomplete, but we were quite happy to leave things as they were, leaving religion to the minister and

ourselves going about our daily tasks. Then, by and by, or suddenly for some of us, our position, as servants to sin, dawned on us. We began to realise that knowledge brought responsibility, that we had to take the step of coming out and submitting to baptism, and that persisting in sin knowingly, incurred the wrath of God on the day of judgement. There was one difference, though, between the Israelite's liberation from slavery to Egypt and ours from slavery to sin. They had no choice when the hour came. They were thrust out of Egypt in a great hurry. We, on the other hand, left service to sin of our own free will. It was our decision, and was and is and will be to the end of our probation, our responsibility.

But then, what about the Israelite's subsequent discontent and their desire to return whenever things went wrong? I don't think any of us who embraced the truth has a desire to turn back completely, but things do go wrong for us, and we are still living in this world among unbelievers, or at least, people who have not fully comprehended the truth. There were things many of us had to give up, and if we are honest with ourselves, I think we all feel, or felt, tempted at times to take part in the world's pleasures. We are still human and it is not the desire that is sin, but will become sin if through lack of faith and character, we give in to it. We are always walking on a tight rope, the necessity of balance between showing ourselves friendly and helpful to the people we live with, but not sharing in their actions if these are against God's commandments, or tend to pull us away from the straight and narrow way to eternal life. Moses, as I said before, had a lot to put up with and needed great patience. But are we sure that with our faults, and we all have some, that our Great High Priest will not often have something to put up with and needs a great deal of patience with us? I am sure we stretch Jesus' patience quite often, too. Again there is a difference, though between Moses and Christ. Moses' patience snapped once, at the waters of strife so that he was not allowed to enter the Promised Land (referring to the land of Israel, not the future Kingdom, where we all hope to meet him). Christ's patience with us never snaps provided we sincerely repent. This assurance we have. But bear in mind that wilful sin and utter defiance can still bar our entry into the Kingdom.

Christ Himself laid down the pattern of forgiveness. He said to Peter once. Not until seven times, but until seventy times seven." Come to think of it, this may be very hard when we feel badly wronged, or when somebody persistently annoys us. Yet, our High Priest does just that to us. We can be one hundred per cent sure of His forgiveness and His patience, a patience that never fails if we do our part: sincere repentance and a resolve to do better next time. And just think of this too, when next time comes, we might fail again, in spite of our earnest resolve, and again we need forgiveness. So how true is his precept to forgive again and again! God is patient. But one thing He hates: drawing back after we made our decision to become Christ's servants.

Let us not be like the children of Israel. They at least had the slight excuse of leaving Egypt not entirely of their own free will. They were thrown out. We made our decision of our own free will, and so have no excuse to go back on our word. Let us conclude with God's dim view of those who draw back. We read it in the Epistle to the Hebrews, chapter 10 and verse 38 and 39, "Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him. But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul."

Brother G. Leo Dreifuss.

THE MIRACLE OF ISRAEL

by Leslie Johnson

The causes of the rise and fall of nations is the subject for historians to analyse and explain. "For want of a nail, a shoe was lost; for the want of a shoe, a horse was lost; for the want of a horse, a rider was lost; for the want of a rider, a battle was lost; for the want of a victory, a kingdom was lost" or so they say.

Once it was said that the battle of Waterloo was won on the playing fields of Eton, or now it may be said that Israel's War of Independence was fought in the ghettos of Central Europe. Having said such things though, a hundred other ideas for and against these explanations can be produced.

Evidence, true or false, interpretations of evidence, right or wrong, all lead in different directions to different conclusions. One historian follows “these” clues and another follows “those” clues, and we are left to decide for ourselves why “this” or “that” happened and one nation fell and another took its place.

It may be, of course, that to the majority of people it may seem irrelevant why history twists and turns across the mountains of time - we have our living to earn today, our family to raise today, our taxes to pay today; whatever may have happened in the past, whatever the causes, it is gone, but we are here and we cannot change it, so why bother? Whatever the sources of political power or the direction leaders dictated in their short, brief authority, why bother to try and analyse what was never in our experience?

Some may look back wistfully to “the good old days” which to others were times of suffering and horror, but none can alter what happened. There may be lessons to be learned from history, but generally, the only lesson we learn from history is that we never learned any lessons from history - or so the cynic says. Life can so easily be seen as a child’s game of Snakes and Ladders depending on the smile or frown of Lady Luck or an arbitrary, purposeless chance.

Some may look forward to the Messianic Age, the Kingdom of God, Utopia, Paradise, Heaven, Happy Hunting Grounds, Elysian Fields, or whatever our political, religious or philosophical leaders may promise us - but where are the guarantees that tomorrow will be any different from yesterday, and who will be the guarantor?

So those with food and drink say, “Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die,” and those who have no food and drink just struggle and dream; the revolutionary wheel may turn but generally it does little more than replace one with the other and the situation remains the same. Is there really nothing new under the sun?

“All rivers run into the sea; yet the sea is not full; unto the place from whence the rivers came, thither they return again. All things are full of labour; man cannot utter (measure) it; the eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear filled with hearing. The thing that has been, it is that which shall be; and that which is done is that which shall be done: and there is no new thing under the sun” Ecclesiastes 1:7-9.

Is that really all there is to our lives? Is there no plan or purpose? Is there no ground for hope except baseless optimism?

There is indeed! It is to be seen in The Miracle Of Israeli

Whatever has Israel got to do with our past, our present, or our future? What is today’s State of Israel? It is an enigma to the majority of people; a paradox, stubborn, inflexible, and possibly frightening, to very many, especially its Arab neighbours. To others, perhaps only a few, it is a unique sign to which many events in history have pointed; to those the road ahead, though leading through many dangers, is marked with hope, confidence, optimism and faith.

Why do not all see the State of Israel in this light? Because in the past some have obliterated the sign posts indicating the direction, so that many have lost their way; some have tried to remove them, out of failure to understand the way they indicated; others, because of selfishness, greed, conceit, and evil intentions have preferred to hold their fellowmen in ignorance by hiding the facts of history.

Even Israel itself, because of fear and persecution, has hidden the good news which is implicit in its own existence. In four thousand years, other nations have risen, fallen and disappeared, but the Children of Israel have survived in spite of attempts at genocide by their enemies and proposed assimilation by their own false guides.

What is the State of Israel? Is it a political state like all others? Is it a religious state seeking the solutions to its problems in laws formulated three and a half thousand years ago? Is it just an idealist’s refuge from the storms of world-wide persecution? If the latter, some may be forgiven for thinking that there is little difference between the frying pan and the fire.

There are Jews in the USSR for whom Jerusalem spells Peace and Security, for whom Israel spells longed-for freedom. But there are those in both the USSR and in Israel who would prefer the fish, the cucumbers/the melons, the leeks, the onions, and the garlic in the Egypt of the USA or Europe. These attract their imagination more than the miracles which lead to the Promised Land, because they fear their neighbours and have no faith in God. It is surprising that history tells us the Jews have gone through all this before, three thousand years ago, but the lessons of history do not seem relevant perhaps.

Only one word describes Israel throughout its nearly four thousand years of history; unique - without parallel in the past or present.

In the past forty years it has absorbed - or artificially glued together - communists and capitalists, artisans and peasants, from the west and from the east, scholars of all the arts and sciences, escaping refugees fleeing for religious and political freedom, everything from Torah students on its far right to agnostics and atheists on its far left. In the last one hundred years, land which “devoured men” by barren sand dunes or malaria-infested swamps through nearly two thousand years, has become a land of kibbutzim and moshavim, community managed farms and factories, supplying food, goods, and technology to the rest of the world, even to countries which will not recognise its political existence.

Inside Israel there are Jews who deride its political existence as blasphemy; others wish to return to previous occupiers what Israel has taken when its enemies attacked them; there are those outside Israel who pour billions of dollars and other currencies into the country to maintain and beautify the land and its cities and support its people.

Israel is surrounded by Arab nations officially sworn to destroy it, but Arabs live in Israel working alongside Israelis in reasonable harmony until they are inflamed by agitators. Some Israelis themselves are not immune to the effect of religious and political agitators of their own. Israel has friends who support it but at the same time supply its enemies with devastating weapons which they know can be used against it. Great Britain has lost all its vaunted greatness after willingly accepting the responsibility for making in Palestine a national home for the Jews and then blatantly breaking its promises.

Israel is unique regarding its establishment, continuing existence, and in its relationships with other nations.

On ancient maps Jerusalem, as Israel’s capital city, was placed at the centre of the world - the crossroads of three continents. It may be dismissed as a primitive idea; but, take a world map showing lines of latitude and mark Washington DC, Peking and Moscow, the capital cities of the three most powerful nations of our modern world. Where is Jerusalem? Draw a line south from Moscow to ‘join a line of latitude joining Washington and Peking, and there is Jerusalem, at the balance point, the pivot, of the power complex of our world, still at the centre even as it was in ancient times.

Millions of tourists visit the cities of the world to stand and stare at public maps displaying the layout of these cities. Where but in Jerusalem can you see such maps with the heading “Pray for the Peace of Jerusalem”? Does London ask you to pray for the peace of London?, or Moscow ask you to pray for the peace of Moscow? Or Washington or Paris or any other city? What has the peace of Jerusalem got to do with the rest of the world?

Why is the history of this nation recorded in a book - the Bible - which has been translated into nearly two thousand languages and dialects; which is consistently, year-by-year, printed in greater numbers than any other book; which has provided the best foundation for moral and social standards throughout the civilised world; a book for which both Jews and Gentiles have sacrificed everything, even life itself, to preserve and study its pages; a book which has inspired more revolutions, great art, literature, films and television epics than any other book?

Why do nine hundred and fifty million Gentiles worldwide claim to follow this book’s central character - Jesus of Nazareth, a Jew - yet his fellow Jews deny his claims and authority, and many who claim to follow him have ruthlessly murdered those who do not?

Can anyone name the first Englishman from whom all Englishmen are descended? Or first American? The first Russian? The first German? The first Frenchman? The first Irishman, Dutchman, Italian, Spaniard, Turk, Indian, Japanese, Chinese, Australian? Why is it, then, that almost everyone knows who was the father of the People of Israel, and the names of his sons and his grandsons? Who in the educated world has not heard of Abraham, Ishmael and Isaac, Esau and Jacob, of Joseph, Moses, Aaron, Joshua, Samson, Samuel; of Saul, Israel's first king; David, Solomon, and many of the prophets?

Many nations gained their independence after World War 11 as did Israel; but which of them, apart from Israel, had already been a world power for a thousand years - three and a half thousand years ago - had suffered invasion, occupation for five hundred years, and its people worldwide dispersion, persecution and almost annihilation for nearly two thousand years before returning to their ancestral land and becoming a world power for a second time? Has it happened to any of Israel's contemporaries in the ancient world? Where are the Assyrians, the Babylonians, the Egyptians, the Medes, the Persians, the Greeks and the Romans against which the first State of Israel struggled during its first fifteen hundred years? Are they likely to be resurrected to stand again amongst the world powers as Israel has done?

How are all these unique features explained? They are undeniable facts of history and present experience. What significance have they for the world today?

The atheist - Jew or Gentile - cannot say they are all facets of a miracle, for that requires acknowledgement of the existence of a miracle-working power. The theory of race survival through persecution does not even begin to approach an explanation of all these apparently disconnected facts of the past and the present.

The agnostic sits on the horns of a dilemma because he cannot appreciate that there is more than enough evidence to rescue him from his most uncomfortable situation.

The Muslim, as a believer in God as a worker of miracles, dares not admit this is the explanation lest, in seeking the destruction of Israel, he finds himself fighting against God.

As the Pope does not recognise the State of Israel, the hundreds of millions of his Catholic followers cannot even begin to consider that Israel's existence is a miracle, for would the Pope then not commend it to their support?

The Protestant may be puzzled by the regathering of the Jews and their national resurrection because, in his missionary zeal to convert the Arabs, he is embarrassed to find that his Bible foretells the re-establishment of the State of Israel as an "end-time warning" which requires him to commend his Arab convert to acknowledge this miracle and support Israel.

But we have not exhausted the miracle of the uniqueness of Israel. The State of Israel is not only a 20th Century phenomenon. The remarkable history of Israel was written from the time of its conception. All nations eventually have their history recorded, but only after events of sufficient importance have transpired. No other nation has had its history written before the events happened which distinguished it from other nations. It would be too easy to dismiss that assertion had not that history been so widely distributed, read, studied, and translated in to nearly all the languages of the world. What better way of putting before the nations of the world the uniqueness of Israel in this undeniable manner?

The most widely distributed book in the world is that which has the four thousand years of Israel's history in it, written before Israel was a nation.

Would that not be even more verifiable evidence of the Miracle of Israel?

The great advantage of this is that not only all the world know - if it wishes to do so - but if the evidence is false, then all the world will know that also.

It is not a matter of evidence being in only one document hidden away in some secret place where only one person, or a selected few, can read it and interpret it for the rest of mankind. There are more copies of the Bible in existence than any other book. What is even more significant is that it has not been the Jews themselves who have published the Bible for all mankind to read; it has been their “enemies”, the apostate “Christian” church which has translated and distributed the Bible on a worldwide scale.

So this is another unique feature in connection with Israel. But it becomes even more strange when we remember that the Bible was written by Jews, but it was never their policy or intention to have it translated into all the languages of the world. That has been the work of their enemies; but the Roman Catholic Church persecuted not only the Jews but also the Christian scholars who worked to translate the Bible. To possess a Bible, to read a Bible, to teach from the Bible, were punishable offences - punishable by imprisonment, torture, and death.

So we have justified our title “The Miracle of Israel” in ten ways, but what is the significance of all these unique features which cannot be related to any other country, nation, or book?

The answer to that question is in the Book, in many places, too many for them all to be quoted in this short review. For example, Isaiah 43:10 states, “Ye are my witnesses, saith the Lord...”

Now “witnesses” have a vital role in our society. They are required to give evidence which may be weighed to ascertain its value. They may need protection to preserve their evidence.

What evidence has Israel to offer? Firstly, evidence of the existence of God; secondly, evidence of God’s concern that men and women should learn the right way to find happiness and fulfilment; thirdly, that God’s purpose in creation may be known and understood.

Included in the history of Israel written before the events occurred is the provision that even when the Jews were unfaithful to God, they would not be allowed to “disappear” but would continue to be His witnesses. Even their restoration from dispersion and return to the Promised Land would not primarily depend on their “goodness” but would be justification of God’s promises to restore them. So their continued existence, in spite of their enemies’ avowed intention to annihilate them, and their continued presence today in the Land of Israel, both witness to the existence of God who has stated His intention to maintain them as His witnesses.

Along with the preservation and worldwide scattering of God’s witnesses has been the preservation and distribution worldwide of the Bible. Not only does it present the significance of Israel, but it also provides the highest standards of relationships between people and with God. There is no higher code of personal or national conduct.

Just as no one in the civilised world can be unaware of the existence of the Jews, so no one needs to be ignorant of the existence of the Bible and its teachings.

As God has preserved His witnesses - the Jews and the Bible - then all mankind has the opportunity to learn that His purpose is to allow men time to try to justify their imagination that they do not need Him and that the gods of their imagination can replace Him and provide the happiness, satisfaction, and fulfilment they seek.

When mankind reaches the edge of self-destruction/it is God’s revealed purpose to intervene to rescue the remnant of Israel and the Gentiles who have taken the trouble to examine the evidence of His witnesses and act upon the lessons of that evidence while the rest of the world has ignored it or tried to destroy it.

The remnant of Israel and the gentiles who have been so prepared by their knowledge and experience will become, under the promised Messiah, the rulers of that rescued world to teach others what they themselves have learned - that God is the One God whose concern for all mankind has preserved indestructible witnesses for the enlightenment of all seeking truth and understanding; and whose purpose is to fill the earth with righteousness and peace.

Had all this not been the significance of the miracle of Israel, then both the Jews and the Bible would have disappeared long ago as evil men sought to destroy the evidence of God and His purpose.

But that significance has a warning for us all, Jews and Gentiles alike. When God works miracles, it is also so that we should learn that He has a right to our attention.

Pharaoh failed to pay attention to the miracles God wrought through Moses and paid for his foolishness. The Children of Israel failed to pay attention to the miracles of their Exodus from Egypt and paid for their foolishness. They ignored the warnings of their prophets and were taken captive into Babylon. They failed to learn the lessons of the restoration under Ezra and Nehemiah and the prophets who succeeded them, and lost their independence to Greece and Rome. The majority failed to recognise their long promised Messiah when He was sent by God and, again, they lost their land and carried their witness, even in unbelief, throughout the whole world.

During their long absence, the Land of Israel has mourned its lost people; it became barren through the neglect of those who occupied it, exactly as had been prophesied in the history-written-before-the-events-happened.

But then, as a last warning to an increasingly ungodly world about to destroy itself, God began to regather His witnesses to the Land promised to Abraham and his seed. One hundred years ago they began to come as refugees from Poland and Russia, and the Land rejoiced and responded, again exactly as the prophets foretold.

Forty years ago, the State of Israel was re-established, about two thousand five hundred years after it was first destroyed by Babylon. Have the Gentiles responded to this miracle and turned from their false gods and thankfully learned of the one true God? No. They have not; instead they join hands to destroy God's witnesses. Have the Jews in Israel or the rest of the world responded to this miracle and opened their hearts and minds to welcome their Messiah who is about to return to take over the rulership of Israel and the whole world? There may be a small minority, as there was before, who are so preparing themselves, but the majority have much to learn about their own part in the purpose of God.

Nearly three thousand years ago, their fathers were addressed by God in the following appealing words: "...Today if ye will hear His voice, harden not your hearts as in the provocation and as in the day of temptation in the wilderness, when your fathers tempted Me, proved Me, and saw My works. Forty years long was I grieved with this generation and said, It is a people that do err in their heart and they have not known my ways: unto whom I swear in My wrath that they should not enter into my rest." (Psalm 95:7-11).

That generation died in the wilderness because of their unbelief in the purpose of God and His almighty power to accomplish it. It has remained on record as a solemn warning to every generation, and today (still the same "today" of opportunity!) both Jews and Gentiles can listen to His voice, look at the evidence in the miracle of Israel, and learn how God teaches us to live to honour Him and find happiness, satisfaction, and fulfilment for ourselves to share with others.

"Therefore prophesy and say unto them. Thus saith the Lord God: Behold, O My people, I will open your graves and cause you to come up out of your graves, and bring you into the land of Israel. And ye shall know that I am the Lord, when I have opened your graves, O My people, and brought you up out of your graves and shall put My spirit in you and ye shall live and I will place you in your own land; then shall ye know that I the Lord have spoken it and performed it, saith the Lord." (Ezekiel 37:13,14).

"Moreover I will make a covenant of peace with them; it shall be an everlasting covenant with them; and I will place them and multiply them and will set My sanctuary in the midst of them for evermore." (Ezekiel 37:26-28). "And in the days of these kings" (previously identified in the chapter) "shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed; and the kingdom shall not be left to other people but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms and it shall stand for ever." (Daniel 2:44). "But as truly as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord." (Numbers 14:21; Isaiah 11:9; Habakkuk 2:14).

“...at the mouth of two witnesses, or at the mouth of three witnesses, shall the matter be established,”
(Deut 19:15).

Those three witnesses testify today - they are the Jews, the Land of Israel, and the Bible.

From The Mount Zion Reporter:-

You have probably heard in the news about Offeq 1 - the satellite that Israel has launched. It is considered quite a technical achievement for such a small nation to succeed in doing this, but at the same time it points out the urgency of the times we live in. An increasing number of small countries, including Israel, now have, or soon will have, atomic weapons, and many are also working on programs to develop missiles. Here in the Middle East, billions are being spent on projects to do this.

Saudi Arabia has purchased medium-range Chinese missiles capable of reaching any country in the area, and it is reported that Syria is planning to add similar Chinese missiles to its already impressive Soviet-supplied array of ground-to-ground missiles. Egypt and Iraq are deeply involved in a joint project to develop their own advanced medium-range missile. Both Syria and Iraq already have lethal nerve gas warheads, which are sometimes termed “the poor man’s atomic bomb.’ Libya and Pakistan are cooperating on an atomic bomb program which is nearing completion. And the list could go on and on.

Already the Arab nations, in the wake of the successful launch of Offeq 1, are calling for renewed effort to meet the “Zionist threat”, and, given their monetary resources, they will probably be able to do so. People often ask what the Bible has to say about this, and where it will all lead. Well, the Bible says quite a lot on this subject, and we know what it is leading to. Without getting into a lengthy subject, the short book of Obadiah does sum things up quite well: “Though thou exalt thyself as the eagle, and though thou set thy nest among the stars, thence will I bring thee down, saith the lord.” Verse 4, “For the day of the Lord is near upon all the heathen: as thou hast done, it shall be done unto thee: thy reward shall return upon thine own head.... but upon Mount Zion shall be deliverance, and there shall be holiness: and the house of Jacob shall possess their possessions. And the house of Jacob shall be a fire, and the house of Joseph a flame, and the house of Esau for stubble, and they shall kindle in them, and devour them; and there shall not be any remaining of the house of Esau; for the Lord hath spoken it.... and saviours shall come up on Mount Zion to judge the mount of Esau; AND THE KINGDOM SHALL BE THE LORD’S.”