“And I saw three unclean spirits like frogs... go forth unto the kings of the earth and to the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty.” — Revelation 16:13,14.

Liberal philosophies today resemble the spirit of the ancient barbarian Franks. This influence is...

GATHERING THE NATIONS!
How This World is to be Changed

John Thomas wrote of the great changes to be seen on earth shortly, and how they form a central aspect of the Gospel involving all nations.

Spirits Like Frogs Gather the Nations...

Paul Billington comments upon Revelation 16:14, following a recent visit to Rheims in France where he found a new and most remarkable depiction of frogs associated with the Barbarian king, Clovis.

Arabia, Jordan and Israel.

Graham Pearce wrote many helpful pieces of exposition in the Milestones series. This extract is relevant to developments in the Middle East today.

RESURRECTION and JUDGEMENT

The fundamental Bible teaching concerning resurrection and judgement are discussed in this article by Ron Kidd. He explains the whole logical process which leads to an immortal nature for those who are approved by Christ at his coming.

The Inheritance

By teaching others we can leave an inheritance far more precious than material wealth, wrote Ron Abel.

The Making of A Saint

Art Bull looks at the Roman Catholic doctrine concerning saints, and at the process involved in making saints. He also leads us to scripture where we find a direct reference to this feature of the Roman religion.

A ROYAL PARDON through Jesus Christ.

“Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.”— John 17:17.
The purpose of God in fitting up the earth as described by Moses, and in bringing the world to its present political constitution by checking and restraining the full manifestation of the evil that exists, is that he may found a kingdom and empire, literally “universal” (Dan. 2:44; 7:14), under the government of which all nations may be blessed (Gen. 7:3; Psa. 72:11).

The Hebrew nation established in the Holy Land will be the kingdom (Ex. 19:5, 6; Mic. 4:6-8; 5:2; Ezek 37:21-28), and all other nations the empire attached to that kingdom. The Jewish and other nations will constitute a family of nations of which Israel will be the firstborn; Abraham the federal patriarch; and Christ his seed, the King. This divine family of nations will be so highly civilized that the present state of society will be regarded as intensely dark and barbarous; for then “the knowledge of the glory of the Lord shall cover the earth, as the waters cover the sea.”

The blessedness of this divine civilization is detailed in the gospel which is therefore styled “the glad tidings” or “gospel of the kingdom of God” (Matt. 4:23), while the divine civilization itself is “The economy of the fulness of the appointed times,” (Eph. 1:10, 21) or “world to come;” styled also “the Age to Come.” The Bible is full of the glorious things pertaining to this, the real “golden age” of the world. The government of the nations in that period which will continue a thousand years without change, will be such as their necessities demand—just laws and institutions, civil and ecclesiastical; and perfect and righteous men to administer them.

To fulfill these requirements the government of mankind will be committed to Christ and to those whom he may account worthy of association with him. The Bible expressly declares that the rulers of the world shall then be immortal kings and priests (Rev. 1:5,6; 5:9, 10; 2:26, 27; 22:5), and however sectarian or religious infidelity may cry out against the idea of mortal and immortal men living contemporaneously upon the earth, no truth is more plainly patent fact and Bible truth makes a contest between Christ and the Powers that be, variously symbolized in the Scriptures by Beasts, Horns, Frogs, Dragon, Rivers, etc., the heraldry of the Bible—an unavoidable necessity. The divine oracle is, “These shall make war upon the Lamb, and the Lamb (Jesus, ‘the Lamb of God’) shall overcome them;” in other words, “He shall destroy them that destroy the earth” (Rev. 17:12-14; 19:11-16, 19, 21; 11:15, 18).

This is the doom of the world’s tyrants—destruction, not by popular fury which is merely an embarrassment, but by the military power of Jehovah’s Servant, even of Jesus the future Lord of armies, whom he has prepared and whom he will send into the world again for this very purpose. He will take possession of the kingdoms, empires, and republics of the nations “under the whole heaven” and blend them into one universal empire which will constitute the secondary dominion, “the first dominion” consisting of the “kingdom restored again to Israel,” in the Holy Land (Mic. 4:8; Acts 1:6).

Herald of The Kingdom, 1854.
The world today is in the grip of an insane and corrupt influence which is disintegrating and destroying the fabric of society. This spirit of liberalism constitutes a challenge to the honour and supremacy of God Almighty and to the great truths of His Word—and it is preparing the world for that great confrontation which is “called in the Hebrew tongue Armageddon” (Rev. 16:16).

The counsel of the Lord to us all is to “watch”—and we can only do this if we understand the matters that are being referred to. Let us then consider what the Bible tells us about these “spirits like frogs”.

Out of Pharaoh’s Mouth!

The key to the understanding of the book of Revelation is to be found in the rest of the Bible—for the Scriptures are their own interpreter. So it is then, that in considering the “spirits like frogs” in Revelation, we must turn to that other occasion where frogs are mentioned—the plague upon Egypt recorded in Exodus chapter 8.

Associated with the plague of frogs upon Egypt we note two main effects. The first effect is seen from what comes out of Pharaoh’s mouth when he says “I will let the people go...” Here was a promise of freedom and liberty—although it was broken when a respite was gained. The second effect is seen from the words of verse 14, “...and the land stank”. This was due to corruption—and doubtless the literal stench and corruption also reflected the spiritual and moral state of the land of Egypt. These two ideas then, the promise of liberty and the stench of corruption, are the two features which accompany the plague of frogs.

Psalm 105:30 says “Their land brought...
forth frogs in abundance, in the chambers of their kings.” These kings or rulers, together with Pharaoh, were like certain false teachers mentioned in the New Testament, of whom it is said: “While they promise them liberty, they themselves are the servants of corruption...” (2 Peter 2:19). As we shall see, this is the character of the sign referred to in Revelation 16:13, 14.

Barbarian “Freemen”

It is quite remarkable that the barbarian tribes that invaded the Roman Empire and brought about its destruction were also champions of so-called liberty. Gerald Simons in the book Barbarian Europe (Time-Life Books) says:

“...they stubbornly clung to their tribal attitudes toward law and the rights of the individual—and thereby preserved a priceless tradition until the time for democracy was ripe...(they) led all others in personal freedom...The very concept of progress—the belief in the inevitable and continuous betterment of man—can be traced to ideas born in the barbarian epoch.” (page 13).

Edward Gibbon in his Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire tells us that “the love of liberty was the ruling passion” of the Frankish barbarians who originated in Westphalia, Germany. “They deserved, they assumed, they maintained the honourable epithet of Franks or Freemen” (Chapter 10). The name of the Franks is from the Latin francus, meaning free. Gibbon describes the way in which these Franks framed their laws, appointing four venerable chieftains to compose them and then submitting these draft laws for approval by “three successive assemblies of the people” (Chapter 38).

It was those “free and warlike barbarians” as Gibbon describes them, who overran Gaul and established the nation that we now know as France. They overcame the mighty Roman empire, but not the sagacious and wily priests of Catholic Rome. As the conversion of Clovis to Catholicism illustrates, those who sought liberty and freedom actually became the servants of corruption—that is, they became servants of a spiritually corrupt Roman Church.

Frogs to Lilies

The tapestries that can be seen in Rheims today demonstrate the connection between the barbarian Franks and the emblem of frogs. We had been aware for many years that a tapestry there depicted a banner of Clovis bearing three frogs—but what we found was several of these tapestries, so that it was not just an isolated case. Clearly, those who designed these tapestries had good reason to believe that the ancient Franks did use frogs (and sometimes tadpoles) in their heraldry. Can it just be coincidence that the features of Exodus 8—frogs and freedom—are seen associated with these barbaric Franks?

Further evidence of the frog emblem being used by the pagan Franks can be seen from the bronze figure at Innsbruck in
Austria representing Clovis (pictured on page 8). His shield shows three frogs on one side and three fleur de lis on the other. Also, according to *Encyclopedia Britannica* (11th edition), the tomb of Childeric (father of Clovis) was discovered at Tournai (in Belgium) in 1653. In his tomb were found several objects, one of which was a medal bearing the emblem of the frog. This confirmed earlier statements which made the same connection.

It seems that when Clovis converted to Catholicism he began to introduce the emblem of three fleur de lis (as seen on his shield at Innsbruck). In ancient Egypt the fleur de lis was supposed to be an attribute of the god Horus (a member of the Osirian trinity), and it is significant that Charles V of France dedicated this emblem to the honour of the Catholic trinity in 1376 (*Encyclopedia Britannica*, 11th edit.). It is quite reasonable therefore to see the barbarian spirit of the Franks represented by the frog heraldry, and Catholic France represented by the fleur de lis.

*The Spirits of Devils...*  

The “three unclean spirits like frogs”, says the text of Revelation 16:13,14, “are the spirits of devils”—or, as the word should be rendered, demons.

Demons are not some kind of evil genie with magical powers, as some imagine them to be. Scripture says that they are in fact the false gods and idols of pagan mythology—see Deut. 32:16, 17 and Psalm 106:36-38. The apostle Paul, writing in 1 Corinthians 8:4-6 says that such mythical creatures are “nothing...and that there is none other God but one. For though there be that are called gods, whether in heaven or in earth, (as there be gods many, and lords many,) but to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things...” The truth about these pagan gods is clearly stated in Psalm 115:4-7 and again in Psalm 135:15-17. They are conspicuously man-made.

The Bible uses the terminology common to the environment in which it was written, without necessarily endorsing the popular superstition attached to it. Notice for example, Acts 16:16 together with the K.J.V. marginal note about the god Python. The passage does not teach the existence of a god by that name (that would conflict with other Scriptures, such as those referred to in the above paragraph). The terminology of the day was merely being used to describe a mental condition—just as we today may use the word pandemonium, without endorsing the existence of a demon called pan!

So it is then, that in the New Testament we frequently find that mental disorders are described in this way. A person who is mentally sick is said to be under the control and influence of an unclean spirit, or demon. “Spirits of devils” or demons, then, suggest madness. It indicates a confused state of the mind. James 3:15,16 describes human wisdom as being like this—he says: “This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, demoniacal. For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work.”

The word that is translated “confusion” in this passage is from the Greek akatasthasia. Vine’s Expository Dictionary says that the word means “instability...denotes a state of disorder, disturbance, confusion, tumult...revolution or anarchy.” So then, as the individual demoniac was a person suffering from mental sickness, confusion or derangement—so also a group, a community or society at large could be found in a state of disorder or upheaval.

This is interesting. According to *Encyclopedia Britannica* (15th Edition), one of the gods of ancient Egypt “sometimes with the head of a frog” was Nu (or Nun). According to Larousse *Encyclopedia of Mythology* this god represented chaos!

Further, we may note the fact that it was the wild and untamed spirit of barbarianism that wrought havoc and disorder upon the civilisation of Rome, eventually destroying the empire. Such is the character of “spirits of demons”, and therefore of the spirits like frogs.

*A Teaching or Philosophy*  

That which comes out of the mouth is normally in the form of words. So here in Revelation 16, the “unclean spirits like frogs” are said to come out of the mouth of certain ruling powers. What are these “spirits”?

In 1 John chapter 4 we are warned: “Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God, because many false prophets are gone out into the world” (verse 1). From this it is clear that John’s use of the word “spirits” has reference to teachings. John says that we must learn to discern between “the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error” (verse 6). A spirit then, in this sense and usage, refers to a teaching or doctrine.

Now in Zechariah 13:2,3 God says: “I will cause the prophets and the unclean spirit to pass out of the land.” The context shows us clearly what is meant by this unclean spirit—it is associated with prophets who uttered “lies in the name of the Lord.” So here, an unclean spirit is a false teaching—a deceptive vision or philosophy. In Revelation 16 unclean spirits are said to come out of three mouths, one of which is that of a false prophet. The parallel is most striking, leaving us with a clear understanding of what is meant by unclean spirits coming out of the mouth. It is a teaching, philosophy or policy of some kind that will gather and unite the nations against God Almighty.

*A Reign of Falsehood and Repression*  

Under the rulership of the fleur de lis, France was intensely Catholic with its people being kept in virtual servitude. Some of the most appalling episodes of persecution against Protestants took place with thousands of people losing their lives during this period. Religious liberty was often non-existent. The conditions under which ordinary people lived and worked were terrible, whilst the ruling classes in Church and State lived in splendid wealth and decadence. An idea of this opulence was seen on our recent visit to Rheims—the Clovis tapestries are on display in the former palace of the Archbishops; a massive penthouse attached to the Cathedral. In its day it would have been lavish—whilst the peasantry lived in poverty and squalor.

It was in this environment that men like Jean-Jacques Rousseau and Francois Marie Arouet (known as Voltaire) developed the French philosophies. Their social doctrine was to become familiar to the world under the slogan of ‘Liberty, Equality, Fraternity’—it was in fact a re-birth of the spirit of the ancient barbarian Franks, or “Freemen”. It was also demoniacal.

*A Plague of Frogs*  

The *Times* newspaper for October 12th,
1789 commented.

“At this moment, the fate of Europe depends on the actions —of a BARBAROUS and UNRESTRAINED MOB!— a mob, which has shown itself so licentious, that the country which claims it, blushes at its cruelties.”

The French Revolution had begun to convulse that nation in what was to be the most significant social upheaval in the history of Europe. “What then is this Thing, called La Revolution?” asks Thomas Carlyle (1795-1881) in his literary work on The French Revolution. He answers: “It is the Madness that dwells in the hearts of men. In all men... Each man, enveloped in his ambient-atmosphere of revolutionary fanatic Madness, rushes on, impelled and impelling, and has become a blind brute Force; no rest for him but in the grave!” (Book VI, chapter 1). Certainly this was a demoniacal spirit producing strife, confusion (or tumult) and every evil work— James 3:16. No description could be more fitting.

Carlyle echoes the cry of the Revolutionaries in Paris: “Ye must bestir yourselves, O Friends; ye dull Frogs of the Marsh... even you now must croak or die!” This “croaking” rose to a terrible crescendo in the slogan: “Unity, Liberty, Equality, Fraternity or death!” The Reign of Terror — rather than liberty— resulted from the frenzied zeal of these people. The only freedom was to be found, as Carlyle intimated, in the grave (compare the words of Job 3:17-19).

The plague of frogs that came upon Egypt brought corruption: “...and the land stank.” A comment in Psalm 78:45 emphasised this. The KJV reads “frogs, which destroyed them.” As we know, the frog plague was only the second of ten plagues, it did not actually destroy them. The word translated “destroyed” is better rendered corrupt (from the Hebrew shachath—to cause decay, ruin). Now as corruption was a by-product of the plague upon Egypt, so with the philosophy that gave rise to the French Revolution; in the name of liberty it brought corruption. Referring to the situation in France The Times of March 14, 1791 commented: “Insults and the most gross licentiousness are now considered as proofs of the existence of the Liberty of the Press. Nothing is sacred—nothing escapes calumny.” A delusion of liberty brought corruption into the very vitals of that society.

This was “the unclean spirit” that was to permeate Europe, entering the chambers of their kings. It was first spread by Napoleon Bonaparte. Like Pharaoh, Napoleon used the deceptive cry of liberty to enhance the glory of France— and himself. Vincent Cronin in his book Napoleon writes: “Napoleon’s guiding purpose in the Empire was to export liberty, equality, justice and sovereignty of the people, and since these were French ideas, indirectly to contribute to the glory of France” (Page 269). It was a liberty that brought godlessness, corruption... and terror.

**Dismantling the Old Order**

The French Revolution was a watershed in European history— and it truly was the frog-spirit of liberty that overthrew the Catholic fleur de lis, and then entered into the chambers of the kings of Europe (which is spiritually called Egypt). It marked the beginning of the end of what the French called “The ancien regime”. Larousse Modern History says:

“In a political sense it is still proper to date the age in which we live from the French Revolution. The shock carried by that Revolution and the spread of its principles has produced repercussions ever since.”

It is the going forth of those principles during the past two hundred years which has brought about such vast changes in the world. These principles have performed “miracles” in the fields of politics, economics, education, inventions, industry, the arts, science, ethics and religion. As men have sought “liberty” every avenue of social and political life has been transformed. We only have to compare life today with what it was a century or more ago— the standard of living, mode of transport and power, lighting, health care, social benefits, education, communications... it is a different world— a world in which “miracles” are common-place. Yet, in spite of these ‘miracles’ men still have not found true liberty. The truth alone can make us truly free. What this ‘liberal’ philosophy has produced however, is a putrid and evil corruption in society— a corruption that must inevitably lead to the collapse of civilisation as we know it. This process is fulfilling the word of God, for He has said that He will consume and destroy it unto the end— Daniel 7:26; 2 Thessalonians 2:8.

The unclean spirits of Revelation 16 are “like” frogs. They are not Frankish or French, but resemble that model. They come in various ideological and political shapes. Their one common feature is that they (like Pharaoh of old) falsely promise —or speak in the name of— liberty of the people.

These “spirits” are part of the sixth vial (Rev. 16:12-16). The vials are “the vials of...


**SPIRITS LIKE FROGS GATHER THE NATIONS...**

the wrath of God” (Rev. 16:1) and are His 
judgements (verse 7) upon the wickedness of men —and upon the worshippers of the 
Beast, and of his image, in particular. Thus, in the first phase of their operation, they have wrought chaos among the governments of Europe, consuming and destroying the old systems in both East and West. We may highlight some of their most outstanding achievements upon the political scene during a period of 100 years, as being illustrative of their destructive and judgmental work:

- 1848 The “Year of Revolutions” throughout Europe initiated a period of turmoil and disintegration.
- 1870 Fall of the temporal power of the papacy.
- 1914-18 Fall of the Kaiser’s Germany, the Ottoman Empire, the Russian Czarist regime together with the Orthodox Church were consequences of the First World War.
- 1939-45 In attempting to turn the tide against liberalism, Nazi Germany finally destroyed hopes of ever reviving the old order in Europe.

**Gathering Nations**

Since the Second World War the unclean frog-like spirits of liberty have been going forth in the second phase of their work, which is to gather the nations. It is during this phase of the work that the Lord Jesus Christ returns, therefore he urges:

“Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame.”—Rev. 16:15.

The process of “gathering” the nations in order to form a united Europe is a clearly discernable pattern in events since the end of the 1939-45 war. Rev.16:14 is quite specific: the demoniacal spirits are to gather, or bring together—unite, assemble—these nations. There is both a political and religious aspect to this because the Dragon and the Beast (political powers) as well as the false prophet (a religious power) are actively involved. That this is precisely the pattern of things that has been seen upon the European scene over the years:

- 1949 saw the formation of The Council of Europe
- 1957 saw the Treaty of Rome signed (EEC).
- 1963 saw Vatican Council 2 promote ecumenism.
- 1989 Gorbachev’s call for a “Common European Home”.
- 1990 Unification of Germany
- 1992 Maastricht Treaty signed

This pattern continues as Eastern European countries are prepared for membership of the European Union and as Russia is accepted as a member of the Council of Europe —and in a papal encyclical entitled UT UNUM SINT (May 1995) calling for religious unity in the whole of Europe—including Russia. This is exactly what the frog-like spirits are to achieve—and if we examine the underlying political and religious philosophy that is guiding these developments, it will be seen to be that familiar spirit of liberty.

While this pattern continues, Christ will come to his followers and will then reveal himself to Israel. He will gather the nations to “Armageddon” and demand the obedience of the whole of the world. The world however will not want such a restriction placed upon its precious “liberty” and so the frog-like spirit will come out of the mouth of rulers saying, “Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us” (Psalm 2:3). But the King of Heaven will declare the Decree, His king will reign upon the holy hill of Zion—the nation and kingdom that will not serve him shall utterly perish.

**A Spurious Liberty!**

Never before, in all the ages of history, has the world been in the grip of such an evil spirit as it is today. In the name of liberty, every vice and moral perversion imaginable has become not only permissible, but “politically correct”. The character of society is polluted with ‘Women’s Lib’ movements, laws that actually forbid restraining children, the so-called ‘Gay’ (Sodomite) movement and their “rights”—the whole social organism that makes up civilisation is hurting out of control as it staggers towards the abyss. This so-called liberty—which is far too wide in its scope to fully describe here—is no liberty at all. It is a ruse, vocalised for the purpose of keeping the people in bondage to the system of falsehood and hypocrisy that governs them for its own profit and pleasure. Thankfully its days are numbered and the mask will soon be ripped off the grotesque and hideous faces of the political and ecclesiastical wearers. Their artfully woven deceptions will be discovered by all, for the king of Israel will destroy “the face of the covering cast over all people, and the vail that is spread over all nations” (Isa.25:7).

In the name of liberty men speak of “Freedom of Religion”—by which they often mean freedom from religion. The concept is a challenge before God, declaring that men have the right to believe whatever they like—or nothing at all. Well, it is true that God has permitted men to choose their own way—but they reject the Truth of God and embrace falsehood at the cost of their own lives. As it is written: “...he that believeth not (the true gospel) shall be damned”—Mark 16:16. When a man rejects the record that God has given concerning His Son (and that record is Scripture), he constitutes himself a false accuser, making out that God is a liar (1 John 5:10). Men have no right to such a freedom, it is an insult to the King of Heaven and blasphemes His Holy Name. The Almighty will not turn a blind eye to such for ever—He will avenge His good Name and destroy His enemies. Nowhere does the Bible grant freedom for false worship—and the exercise of such worship is not freedom, it is a bondage of the worst kind. True freedom, or liberty, can only be found through the knowledge of the Truth of Jesus Christ—John 8:31-36. This is the liberty that we should diligently seek, and avoid like the plague, the frog-like spirits that are uniting the world against God Almighty.
Today the name ‘Arabs’ is used loosely of nations that have adopted the Moslem religion. But it is the descendants from Abraham’s two wives, Hagar and Keturah, those who inhabit Arab-ia, who are true Arabs. The twelve princes of Ishmael and the six sons of Abraham by Keturah are listed in Genesis chapter 25. They were sent away “unto the east country” by Abraham before he died. Some of the better known names are Midian, Sheba, Dedan, Kedar, Nebaioth, Duma, Tema. These people occupied Arabia and came under the influence of Mahomet in the 7th century A.D.

The ‘Bible’ for the Arabs is the Koran which Mahomet produced. This is derived from the Bible, and both Jew and Arab look to Abraham as their father. They both accept the Old Testament and the promises in Genesis. There are two fundamental articles of faith in the Koran. First, it holds the same Genesis. There are two fundamental articles to Abraham as their father. They both accept from the Bible, and both Jew and Arab look which Mahomet produced. This is derived in the 7th century A.D.

And came under the influence of Mahomet and Jews are closer together than Christians of the original Muslim faith, that Moslems and Arabs both hate and scorn the position as the Jews that God is One and of faith in the Koran. First, it holds the same

Ishmael, the prime progenitor of the Arab people was blessed by God because he was a son of Abraham—Gen. 17:20. In contrast, Esau (Edom) had no blessing of God, and disappeared as a nation. The area occupied by Edom is now part of Jordan.

In the future we anticipate the descendants of Ishmael will be subject to Israel. If the boundaries of Israel then extend to the Persian Gulf, all these people of Arabia—Midian, Kedar, Duma, etc.—will be subject to Israel. They will fulfill the words concerning Ishmael, “He shall dwell in the presence of all his brethren” (Gen. 16:12). Isaiah indicates that these people will be among the first to submit to Christ. In chapter 42 the redemptive work of Christ in his first coming is clearly set out: “I Yahweh have called thee in righteousness, and will hold thy hand, and will keep thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, for a light to the Gentiles”. His work was to “Open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the prison, and them that sit in darkness out of the prison house.” The last phrase is expressive of resurrection—to bring out of the prison house of death. See also Zechariah 9:11.

With Christ’s return and the resurrection, the time has come for the next verse: “I am Yahweh: that is my name: and my glory will I not give to another, neither my praise to graven images.” This will be Christ’s challenge to the world. Now we come to the part that interests us at the moment. God declares He is speaking of new things before they come to pass. And the first items mentioned are verses 10 and 11:

“Sing unto the Lord a new song, and his praise from the end of the earth, ye that go down to the sea, and all that is therein; the isles, and the inhabitants thereof.

“Let the wilderness and the cities thereof lift up the voice, the villages that Kedar doth inhabit: let them shout from the top of the mountains”.

The reference in verse 10 is probably to the conversion of Britain at an early stage; and next, verse 11, the inhabitants of Arabia are brought into subjection to Christ and sing his praises also at an early stage. Arabia Petra is the mountainous region of the Sinai peninsula, and the region lying between the Gulf of Elath and the Dead Sea. After this, verse 13:

“The Lord shall go forth as a mighty man, he shall stir up jealousy like a man of war”.

This will be Christ manifesting his power at Armageddon in the land of Israel.

Psalm 72 confirms what we read in Isaiah. Verse 8 reads:

“He shall have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth”.

Then notice the detailed progression verses 9 to 11:

“They that dwell in the wilderness shall bow before him and his enemies shall lick the dust. The kings of Tarshish and of the isles shall bring presents: the kings of Sheba and Seba shall offer gifts. Yea, all kings shall fall down before him: all nations shall serve him”.

So the first mentioned are those that dwell in the wilderness. Jordan today occupies the area of ancient Moab and the region of Arabia Petra. Isaiah chapter 16 refers to “the land from Sela (margen Petra) to the wilderness” and to Moab and calls on them to respond to the needs of Israel in their time of distress, just before the extortioner is at an end. So, from these scriptures it is fairly clear that those in the Arabian peninsula will accept Christ, even before those in Israel are delivered.

This sketch of matters relevant to the Arabs, past and future, may help us not to consider it too surprising if some truce is agreed between Israel, Saudi Arabia and Jordan.

From Milestones 1981.
When we appreciate it or not, Christianity is faced with a serious contradiction. If, as is generally alleged, people pass on to a better life in heaven at death, why does the Bible place so much emphasis on the resurrection of the dead? If, as is suggested at funeral services, the deceased is now in the presence of God, is there any need for a resurrection at all, the individual is already enjoying the blessings of eternity?

These are reasonable questions. No one relishes the prospect of death and very few like to talk about it or take the trouble to find out what really happens at death — or if there is a hope beyond the grave.

Job was a man who had more than his share of trouble. His life was turned upside down in an instant and his conclusions about life are recorded in chapter 14: “Man that is born of a woman is of few days, and full of trouble. He cometh forth like a flower, and is cut down; he fleeth also as a shadow, and continueth not...For there is hope of a tree, if it be cut down, that it will sprout again, and that the tender branch thereof will not cease... But man dieth, and wasteth away: yea, man giveth up the spirit, and where is he?” (ch. 14:1,2,7,10).

As far as Job was concerned this present life offered very little lasting happiness; an individual can reach the pinnacle of achievement only to be cut off in a moment. The world is not unfamiliar with such tragedies. Because of this Job posed a question which must cross everybody’s mind at some time in life— he asked, “If a man die shall he live again?” His response was immediate, “...all the days of my appointed time will I wait, till my change come.” (verse 14). Job showed no confidence in the idea of departed souls or immaterial beings, continuing some form of existence in the heavens. Job’s hope was clear, “I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God”— Job 19:25-26. Job believed in a bodily resurrection from the dead.

This belief is not an isolated view, everywhere we look in the Bible, people link their future hope with the resurrection: The Psalmist commented, “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” (Psalm 71:20).

Isaiah confidently affirmed, “Thy dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise. Awake and sing, ye that dwell in dust: for thy dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead” (Isaiah 26:19).

The prophet Daniel, when discussing the time of the end said, “And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt” (Daniel 12:2,3).

The Lord Jesus Christ taught, “Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation” (John 5:28-29).

The apostle Paul described his hope in the following terms, “And have hope towards God... that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and the unjust” (Acts 24:15).

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**Resurrection: A Hope Beyond**

“...And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.”

Daniel

**States Outline**

- A Mortal lifespan of approximately 80-100 years
- A Period described as a “sleep” in the ground
  - Psa 13:3; John 11:11-14.
- An “awakening” or revival
  - Isa 26:19; 1 Cor 15:23
- A Judgement at which truth is revealed
  - Rom 14:10; 2 Cor 5:10
- A Change of nature (for those who are approved)
  - 1 Cor 15:50-54; Philippians 3:21.
The Importance of the Subject

Before we proceed any further it is important that we examine why the Bible places so much emphasis upon the resurrection. The answer becomes quite evident when we realize what the Bible has to say about death.

The Bible describes death as being final and irreversible:

“For the grave cannot praise thee, death can not celebrate thee: they that go down into the pit cannot hope for thy truth” (Isaiah 38:18).

“Man that is in honour, and understandeth not, is like the beasts that perish.” (Ps 49:20).

“For in death there is no remembrance of thee: in the grave who shall give thee thanks” (Psalm 6:5).

“Put not your trust in princes, nor in the son of man, in whom there is no help. His breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth; in that very day his thoughts perish” (Psalm 146:3,4).

Nothing could be clearer; at death the body starts to decay and return to the ground, the thoughts of an individual perish and all opportunity for life ends.

Nowhere in scripture is there any suggestion of death being a transition to a better life in heaven. In fact immortality is always described as a promise, not a possession, as the following testimonies will illustrate:

“Paul, a servant of God, and an apostle of Jesus Christ, according to the faith of God’s elect, and the acknowledging of the truth which is after godliness; In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began” Titus 1:1-2

“And this is the promise that he hath promised us, even eternal life” I Jn 2:25

“Who will render to every man according to his deeds: To them who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honour and immortality, eternal life” Rom 2:6-7.

Eternal life is a future blessing to be given at the resurrection of the dead. The apostle Paul was willing to risk everything in order to be a participant at the resurrection: “I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord... That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings... If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead. Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect” —Phil 3:8-12. Paul recognized that this life offered nothing and that death, without the hope of the resurrection, meant eternal oblivion; “...they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable” 1 Cor 15:18-19.

The Teaching of Jesus Christ

We have already noted that the gospel message taught by Jesus included the resurrection of the dead (John 5:25-29). Further investigation into the Lord’s teaching will reveal some interesting conclusions.

Towards the end of his ministry Jesus lost a very close friend named Lazarus. Upon hearing of the tragedy Jesus visited Martha and Mary, Lazarus’ two sisters. Both said to Jesus, “Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died” (John 11:21, 32), to which Jesus replied, “Thy brother shall rise again”, (verse 23). Neither Martha nor Mary were startled by this statement, they both believed in the resurrection of the dead — “Martha saith unto him, I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day”, (verse 24). Not once during the course of the conversation did Jesus attempt to console Martha and Mary with the suggestion that Lazarus was now free from the sorrows associated with mortality and with God in heaven, rather the tone of the conversation centred on the fact that the same Lazarus that had been alive was now corrupting in the grave. Consider the terminology, “Where have ye laid him?” (verse 34); “Lord, by this time he stinketh: for he hath been dead four days” (verse 39); “And he that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot with grave clothes” (verse 44). They were discussing Lazarus, the individual, not some part of him that had been discarded at death.

Jesus’ comments were in complete harmony with Bible teaching: Where was
Lazarus?—he was in the grave; what was happening to him?—he was corrupting or returning to the dust; where did he come from when Jesus spoke?—from inside the tomb; what was his hope?—he would be raised in the last day.

Will all be Raised?

One final thought emerges from Jesus’ remarks, we read: “Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me shall have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day” John 6:40. The promise of eternal life is conditional. The apostle Paul says, “By grace ye are saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God” (Ephesians 2:8). However this does not suggest that God’s grace is extended to all, regardless of the life they might lead, grace is extended on the basis of faith; it is “he that believeth...” according to Jesus Christ.

Closer examination of Bible teaching reveals that two classes of people are described; those who are ignorant of God’s ways, and those who have been enlightened by God’s word. Jesus refers to both groups when he said, “Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because straight is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it” (Matt 7:13-14). According to Jesus, the vast majority are traveling down the broad way. What happens to this group at death? The writer of the Proverbs supplies the answer: “The man that wandereth out of the way of understanding shall remain in the congregation of the dead” (ch. 21:16). The same message is given by the psalmist, “He (the man out of the way of life) shall go to the generation of his fathers; they shall never see the light. Man that is in honour, and understandeth not, is like the beasts that perish” (Psalm 49:19, 20).

Faith in the word of God is essential for life. The scriptures teach that those who are ignorant of God’s way are “alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them” (Ephesians 4:18). Again Jesus stresses the importance of faith: “And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one who seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day” John 6:40.

The Judgment Seat of Christ

The resurrection is the first step to receiving the gift of immortality and it is reserved for the enlightened only. Many of the scriptures already quoted have described two groups of people present at the resurrection—the just and the unjust (Acts 24:15). The resurrection will be a time of accountability for those who have claimed to have committed their life to God; Jesus said “Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity” (Matt 7:21-23).

These are sobering words and not to be taken lightly. The purpose of the judgment is to bring to light the hidden things of darkness (1 Corinthians 4:5), to expose our real motives. Again the Bible is quite clear on this account: “But why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ, so then every one of us shall give an account of himself before God” Rom 14:10-12. “For we must all appear (Greek, be made manifest) before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad. Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men” (2 Cor 5:10-11).

A Change of Body

Immortality is described in the Bible as “partaking of the divine nature”—that is God’s nature (2 Peter 1:4), as receiving a “body of redemption” (Roman 8:23), as having our vile body changed (Philippians 3:21). The Psalmist could rejoice in the prospect of “awaking with God’s likeness” (Psalm 17:15, and Paul said “this mortal must put on incorruption and this mortal must put on immortality” (1 Corinthians 15:53).

In order to obtain immortality the body must undergo a change. The Bible states in clear terms that “flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God” (1 Corinthians 15:50), but this does not mean, as popular theology suggests, that the body is but a clothing of the soul, to be discarded at death. When Jesus rose from the dead he was given an immortal body, his disciples touched his hands and feet and he said, “a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have” (Luke 24:39). And so it will be with those given immortality at the judgment seat of Christ, “we shall be changed” (1 Corinthians 15:51).

The apostle Paul described our mortality as a “bondage of corruption” (Romans 8:21), he cried out in desperation to be delivered “from the body of this death” (Romans 7:23), but Paul wasn’t speaking of discarding his body at death, rather he looked forward to the resurrection when his body would be changed, note his comment in 2 Corinthians 5:4 “For we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened: not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life”.

Resurrection—When?

Martha’s response to Jesus made reference to the resurrection taking place in “the last day” (John 11:24). The vast majority of people live for today, without any concern for tomorrow, to them the “last day” is some remote time period in the far distant future. People hear these words at funerals but no one takes them seriously. This is very sad because according to the Bible the events leading up to this event are identical to the times in which we are living. The prophet Daniel was given a vision of the last days, in which he described the nation of Israel occupying her ancient homeland at a time when unprecedented trouble was rampant in the earth (Daniel 11:40 - 12:1). Daniel warns us that when these circumstances are manifest then the resurrection will take place (Daniel 12:2,3).

The apostle Paul describes the same time period—“This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, Without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; Having a form of godliness,
The Inheritance

By Ron Abel

The Lord’s Portion

What do you expect to leave as your inheritance? To this question most people would probably answer, “possessions”, “things”. There may, in fact, be some personal effects which will survive our life of mortality, but the inheritance which should arrest our attention is the inheritance of Christ which has nothing to do with things, but everything to do with people.

Paul wrote:

“That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ,... may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him: The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints” (Eph. 1:17, 18).

This passage is rooted in the words of Moses in the Old Testament:

“Yet they are thy people and thine inheritance, which thou broughtest out by thy mighty power and by thy stretched out arm” (Deut. 9:29).

“For the Lord’s portion is his people: Jacob is the lot of his inheritance...he kept him as the apple of his eye” (Deut. 32:9, 10).

The call of discipleship is the call to preach.

In another epistle, the apostle Paul developed a similar thought when he spoke of bearing the Thessalonian believers as a coronal wreath into the Kingdom:

“For what is our hope of joy or crown of boasting before our Lord Jesus at his coming? Is it not you? For you are our glory and joy” (1 Thess. 2:19, 20, R.S.V.).

What contribution are you making to Christ’s inheritance? The original owners of houses and possessions are forgotten after several generations of time. However, when names are inscribed in the Lord’s book of life, these are retained in the memory of the Almighty.

Pride, Surfeit of Food and Prosperous Ease?

How your time is spent now, how your money is spent now may reflect the vision you have for the future. Are your pursuits largely materialistic—barely discernible from the unenlightened? Jesus said that the time of his return would be like Sodom:

“Behold, this was the guilt of your sister Sodom: she and her daughters had pride, surfeit of food, and prosperous ease...” (Ezek. 16:49, R.S.V.). This was also the failure of Jeshurun: “But Jeshurun waxed fat, and kicked: thou art waxen fat, thou art grown thick thou art covered with fatness; then he forsook God which made him, and lightly esteemed the rock of his salvation” (Deut. 32:15).

Faith enables a believer to translate a future promise into a present reality. This is the significance to the apostle Paul’s request that “the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling...” (Eph. 1:18). In essence, this is the dynamic power of faith.

A great building is now being put together as the dwelling place of God;

“In whom (Christ) the whole structure is joined together and grows into a holy temple in the Lord; in whom you also are built into it for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit” (Eph. 2:21-22, R.S.V.).

Our contribution to this building is, to begin with, an act of grace on God’s part (Eph. 1:5, 6). It will inevitably require “quenching all the flaming arrows of the wicked” in preaching, for which the clothing with the armour of light will prove more than sufficient if a labour of love and work of faith is accompanied by a steadfastness of hope.

The call of the Ephesian epistle is to have “the eyes of your heart enlightened” (Eph. 1:18, R.S.V.) to know the hope of his calling, and then “to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called...” (Eph. 4:1, R.S.V.).

Aliens and Sojourners

Jesus left no inheritance to others except his glorious instruction imparted to people. Paul left no inheritance except his instruction to others. In this, there is a lesson. We are aliens, strangers, sojourners in this life. Our citizenship is in heaven from where we look for the Saviour. Our attention, too, must be directed to teaching and instructing others:

“As poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things” (2 Cor. 6:10).
Our survey of the Signs of the Times looks at events in Russia and Israel.

Russia

In the last issue we mentioned the Russian Law on Freedom of Conscience and Religious Associations which threatened to put a clamp on religious minorities. The original bill was passed by both houses of the Russian Parliament, but Boris Yeltsin refused to sign it to enable it to become law. Instead the bill was sent back to be modified and made a little more lenient. The so-called Compromise Bill finally received the Presidential signature at the end of September. The headline in the Catholic Herald was Russia tolerates Catholicism— but only just. (3/10/97). Always, where the Catholic Church is in the minority, she campaigns for religious freedom, but when in a majority, she shows little toleration herself. It bodes ill for religious minorities, especially those who would witness against the state church.

The Orthodox Church holds great power in Russia. Although there is no longer a formal relationship between church and state, both sides see the need to support each other.

“It is now de rigueur for Russia’s secular leaders, most of them former atheists from the heart of the old Communist Party, to attend Easter and Christmas services. In turn, most of them quietly—sometimes not so quietly—support the church in its struggle against Western evangelisers. Many local governments have enacted laws that bluntly discriminate against, even virtually outlaw, non-Orthodox missionaries.” The Economist 5th April 97

This was of course written before the Law was passed. The article was illustrated with this amusing cartoon (opposite page).

An interesting example of the power of the Orthodox Church was illustrated recently in an incident which took place in Hebron. The Russian Orthodox Patriarch, Alexis II visited the West Bank in June. He was, however, barred from visiting Hebron’s only Christian church. This was originally a Russian Orthodox church, but had been run since the 1920’s by a breakaway group, which did not recognise his authority. Three weeks later Yasser Arafat sent in his police to forcibly evict the current occupants and then handed it back to the Orthodox Church! (Sourouzh — The Journal of the Russian Orthodox Church)

‘THE RUSSIAN TIGER IS READY TO ROAR’

That was the interesting headline to an article in the London Times recently. The

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THE MISSION & FUTURE DESTINY OF THE ENGLISH-SPEAKING PEOPLES OUTLINED IN THE BIBLE

Cry of The Prophets

HOLY SCRIPTURE

Page 14
writer, William Rees-Mogg, was showing the remarkable recovery already apparent in the Russian economy. It takes many years, he argued, for a country to recover after a disaster. It took Germany 10 years to recover from the Second World War, before the "economic miracle" began in 1955. He anticipates that soon Russia will be growing strongly. Inflation is under control—it is now down to about 15%, the budget deficit is reasonable, tax reforms are under way and state ownership is greatly reducing. This will lead to a vast market on the borders of Western Europe, wanting goods at a time when the West is still suffering an economic downturn. The subheading to the article was:

‘Economic reform and growing stability offer the opportunity of a wider European homeland.’

“The map of Europe will be turned to the east, with a new economy, numbering more than 200 million people, growing three or four times as fast as the EU itself, and maintaining that rate of growth for perhaps a generation”.

“ If the European Union could use its power to create a free-trade area of the whole European homeland, that would constitute a single market of 800 million people. It is a more attractive objective than sealing the borders of Europe in order to protect the Renault car workers from competition.” Times 9/6/97

Another indication of how Europe, east and west, can work together to fulfill the Bible prophecy of a united Europe coming as a great power against the land of Israel at the time of the end.

Israel

For Bible Students the information that Israel, Jordan and the Palestinians have expressed interest in membership of the Commonwealth, makes interesting reading. It seems that in the event of a more stable situation being established, membership is a real possibility. The Palestinians must first become a sovereign state in order to qualify. The Commonwealth is now open to any nation —there are currently 53 members. It is described as a desirable club to be a member of, and embraces a market 25 times as large as the European Union. They meet every two years, the last meeting was in New Zealand. It is traditional for the Queen to make the end of conference speech. English is used as the common language.

It is interesting to learn of the new Labour government’s attitude to the Commonwealth. Before the British elections in May, the Trade ministers for the Conservatives and Labour set out their respective overseas policies in the Export Times. The Conservative minister made no mention of the Commonwealth, whereas the Labour minister stressed the importance of it.

“The keynote is internationalism. ‘We want to make better use of the UK’s overseas assets. The Commonwealth, the British Council and the BBC World Service could all strengthen our efforts abroad, but they are currently under-utilised.’

“A Labour government would look for closer contacts with Commonwealth partners on economic matters, using the Commonwealth conference in trade and investment to be held in London this autumn as a starting point.” Export Times March 97

The first Labour ministerial visit to Israel took place in September, Gavin Strang the Transport Minister led a 14 strong delegation of British businessmen to study joint venture possibilities and prospects for increased participation in Israeli projects.

Two proposed railway schemes are being looked at. A $200 million line to connect the port of Haifa to northern Jordan, and a $500 million line from the Israeli and Jordanian Dead Sea chemical works and the port of Eilat.

After a difficult economic year last year, Israel’s economy is booming again, reporting a staggering 11.9% increase in industrial exports for January to August, compared with last year. Britain’s bilateral trade (ie import and export volumes added together) with Israel has also grown rapidly in recent years. From a base of virtually nothing in 1960 it has now risen to $3.5 billion a year, and expected to reach $4 billion by the end of the year. Israel is now Britain’s 23rd largest trading partner, and second only to Saudi Arabia as her biggest regional trading partner. What a contrast to the situation just 50 years ago when Britain was washing her hands of her responsibilities towards the Jews! Yet Bible students, long before, were able to see Israel’s remarkable trading partnership with Britain and also with India—readers are referred to the editorial in the March issue.

The Pope sent a personal letter to both Mr Netanyahu and Mr Arafat at the end of June, asking them to resume the peace talks. He wants to visit the Holy Land in the year 2000 and hopes for peace! The peace talks have indeed just recommenced (early October). They were suspended seven months ago when Israel started the Har Homa construction in Jerusalem. The American Middle East Coordinator, Dennis Ross opened the talks in Jerusalem with Israeli and Palestinian representatives. Then, Benjamin Netanyahu and Yasser Arafat met for 90 minutes in private before being joined by representatives from both parties. It is proposed that nine joint committees will discuss proposals covering such matters as: enhanced security, the construction of a Palestinian airport and seaport in Gaza, safe passageways through Israel linking Palestinian areas, and the promotion of joint projects.

Meanwhile the Israeli President is in America to discuss the setting up of talks to proceed to the final step of the Oslo Agreement—the status of Jerusalem. President Weizman is proposing negotiations in a format similar to the Camp David talks which led to Israel’s peace accord with Egypt. So, in spite of the suicide bombings, Israel is ready to negotiate. Yasser Arafat, on his part, has at last begun to take action against the terror infrastructure. Both sides have seen that nothing has been gained by this 7 month stalemate. The Palestinian economy has been badly undermined by the closure of Israel to Palestinian workers, following the bombings. Like it or not, the Palestinians are dependent upon Israel to keep their fragile economy going. Mr Arafat is reported to be a sick man, and speculation on who is to succeed him is already taking place! However we have learnt from Mr Yeltsin that we can’t write anyone off too soon!

Those on the Internet, wishing to receive daily reports on Israel, can have a three page newsheet posted into their E mail mailbox five times a week. Simply send a message to:
listserv@pankow.inter.net.il

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or the past several years my wife has given me a handy pocket sized diary, which up to now has been made in England. But this last time her usual source could only provide one made in Italy. As might be expected, there is a lot of Italian used in it, but also English, French and German—the principal languages of the European Community. But along with the usual worthwhile features, the publisher, Cangini Filippi, has added the saints and holy days of the Italian religious calendar. The top of the year, January 1st, is given to Madre di Dio (the Mother of God); February 14th to S. Valentino (St. Valentine), March 17th to St. Patrick, and St. Nicholas has his day as well. In fact, every one of the 365 days is dedicated to some saint or festival. Many of the names are obscure, but some are well known even among our youngest children at school. Doubtless the Italian publisher would feel that my old diaries were missing something important.

Saint Worship

Who are these “saints” and what role do they play in the Roman Catholic religion? A member of their clergy, H. Thurston, says: “The Roman Church... considers the doctrine of the veneration of saints to be an integral part of Catholic tradition.” One of their catechisms says that these “saints” are “standing on the highest steps of approach to God”, and that they intercede to “purify, strengthen and offer before God the prayers of the faithful living upon earth”. The Council of Trent, which was convened by the Roman Church during the Protestant Reformation, confirmed the Catholic tradition of saint-worship: “…the saints reigning with God are to be venerated and invoked….their relics are to be venerated”. “The holy bodies of holy martyrs… are to be venerated by the faithful, through which bodies many benefits are bestowed by God on men... the images of Christ, of the virgin Mother of God, and of the other saints, are to be had and retained particularly in churches, and that due honour and veneration are given to them…”

Christianizing Paganism

Thurston goes on in his article to admit that “The reproach has constantly been made against the veneration of saints... that it differed little... from the pagan worship of gods and heroes.” His defence is perhaps more revealing than he might have intended. Speaking of the conversion to Catholicism of European Pagans, he says: “The almost ineradicable tendency among the rude and uneducated to cling to their primitive customs led beyond doubt to a certain amount of compromise in matters which were not judged to be distinctively pagan. It was the advice of (Augustine and others) that an attempt should be made to Christianize their popular observances if not absolutely evil in themselves, rather than to extirpate them. If a particular day had been kept as a holiday, let it be transformed into a Christian festival...”

On this subject there is an interesting section in Eureka, by John Thomas (vol.2 pp 490-499) of which the remainder of this paragraph is a brief summary. The ancient Pagans worshipped the souls of dead heroes, which they called demons. Plato had defined demons as an intermediate order of beings between God and mortals. Although some demons were regarded as evil, bringing illness, accidents and other misfortune, they believed that the good ones were able to protect their persons, families, property and country—therefore they are referred to as “tutelary deities”, which means divine guardians. Lucian, a Greek Pagan, wrote concerning these:

For thrice ten thousand wait upon our earth; Jove’s everlasting guards for
mortal men, Who roam the world in robes of air conceal’d.

“Demons”

Socrates taught that the Deity mingles not directly with the human race, but through the demons who mediate between them. Apotheosis was the deification of pagan heroes and other great men. Canonization of Christian martyrs and others is the Christianized form of the same process. When the Pagans became Catholics they did not give up their demons, but gave them Christian names. The name and prominence of Jupiter was given to St. Peter. That of Juno, Jupiter’s wife (queen of the universe) was given to St. Mary, and so on. In his history of Rome, Edward Gibbon observed, “...The sublime and simple theology of the primitive Christians was gradually corrupted; and the monarchy of heaven, already clouded by metaphysical subtleties, was degraded by the introduction of a popular mythology, which tended to restore the reign of polytheism”.

The heading of this section in Eureka, An Exposition of the Apocalypse, is from Rev 9:20: “But the rest of mankind, who were not killed by these plagues, did not repent of the works of their hands, that they should not worship demons, and idols of gold, silver, brass, stone, and wood, which can neither see nor hear nor walk...”

With reference to idols and images, the 2nd of the Ten Commandments is, “Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath... thou shalt not bow down thyself to them; for the Lord thy God is a jealous God.” But in the ordinary catechisms (church instruction manuals) used by the Roman church, the 2nd commandment is removed from the list of the Ten Commandments, and the 10th is split into two, to preserve the total number of ten.

Development Foreseen

The apostle Paul foresaw the development of “saint” worship in 1 Timothy 4:1: “Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons, speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their own conscience seared with a hot iron, forfending to marry, and commanding to abstain from foods which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth.”

But Paul was not the first to be shown this by the Spirit. He says “the Spirit expressly says,” implying that this fact had already been revealed before his time. And so it was—by Daniel:

“And the king shall do according to his will; and he shall exalt himself, and magnify himself above every god, and shall speak marvellous things against the God of gods, and shall prosper till the indignation be accomplished: for that is determined shall be done. Neither shall he regard the God of his fathers, nor the desire of women, nor regard any god: for he shall magnify himself above all. But in his estate shall he honour the God of forces: and a god whom his fathers knew not shall he honour with gold, and silver, and with precious stones, and pleasant things. Thus shall he do in the most strong holds with a strange god, whom he shall acknowledge and increase with glory: and he shall cause them to rule over many, and shall divide the land for gain.”—Daniel 11:36-39.

Introduced by Emperors

This “king” was Roman. Sir Isaac Newton, in his Observations upon the Prophecies of Daniel, writes: “As soon as the empire became Christian, the Roman emperors began to call general Councils out of all the provinces of the Empire, and by prescribing to them what points they should consider, and influencing them by their interest and power, they set up what party they pleased. Hereby the Greek Empire, upon the division of the Roman Empire into Greek and Latin Empires, became the King who, in matters of religion, did according to his will; and in legislature, exalted and magnified himself above every God: and at length, by the seventh general Council, established the worship of the images and souls of dead men, here called Mahuzzims.”

It is a remarkable fact, Newton also notices, that the emperors saw to it that by calling the general church Counsels, the Catholic doctrine and practice, including saint worship, was imposed upon the whole of Christendom.

“The most strong holds” of Daniel 11:39 is from two words in the original: the first is maoz, meaning fortress, a strong place affording defence and protection; and mibsar meaning fortification. While the key concepts in the expression are safety and fortification, Parkhurst saw words derived from mibsar in the Persian Bazaar (a kind of covered market-place among eastern nations), and the Byrsa at Carthage, equivalent to the French Bourse (stock exchange, literally, coin pouch). But the context of the passage in Daniel 11 also connects the “most strong holds” (verses 39) with the riches of “gold and silver, and with precious stones” (verse 38). The “most strong holds” of Daniel’s prophecy can be seen in the churches, chapels and cathedrals which are dedicated to the “saints” or guardians.

To be continued
Jesus of Nazareth has drawn our attention to the fact that Abraham “rejoiced” to see the day of Christ (John 8:56). Not only so but the patriarch had such a vision of that glorious day (Jesus says that he “saw” it) that it made him “glad”—that is, cheerful. The exciting and inspiring vision that Abraham saw was undoubtedly formed in his mind by the great promises of which we read in Genesis.

**Abraham’s vision**

In order to catch some of the delight that Abraham must have felt, perhaps we can try to put ourselves in his shoes. Just read Genesis 12:1-3 and think of it from Abram’s perspective. A land and a nation, a great name, blessing upon himself and friends, enemies put to shame—and the whole human race blessed because of him. What a future!

In Genesis 13 and 15 the promised territory turns out to be better than imagined—virtually the whole of the Middle East! The family of Abraham would be like the innumerable stars of heaven—and in chapter 17 we see that the whole package includes a permanent relationship with God Himself—an everlasting covenant and everlasting possession! That assures Abraham of a never-ending life. No wonder he rejoiced and felt cheerful about its fulfillment—who wouldn’t?

This vision must have occupied Abraham’s mind—he could peer into the future and “see” a day when all these blessings would be his. We are told: “...he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God” (Hebrews 11:10). A city that is, not of bricks and mortar, but of people—a society of God’s making which elsewhere in Scripture is termed “a city of Truth” (Zech. 8:3).

Abraham, and also Isaac and Jacob (named Israel) did not receive the promises. They saw them afar off and embraced them (Heb. 11:13). They looked forward with joyful anticipation to the things promised—because they had each been given an assurance of their personal involvement. It is this personal connection or relation to the precious promises of God that makes them such a thrilling prospect.

**Future Rulers**

The immediate followers of Jesus had the same incentive. The Lord told them: “I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me, that ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel” (Luke 22:29, 30). This was quite an appointment to look forward to! It is no wonder that we find these disciples, after the resurrection of Jesus, having the question burning within them: “Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?” (Acts 1:6) Their personal interests were involved—and no doubt they rejoiced at the vision of their hopes being realized.

The apostle Paul, who was not one of the original twelve, shared the same expectation and hope, saying: “...we shall also reign with him” (2 Tim. 2:12). Again he said: “...there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing”—2 Tim. 4:8.

Peter told believers: “ye are...a royal priesthood” (1 Pet. 2:9); a fact confirmed by the words of Revelation 5:10 where it is stated that they will be “kings and priests” reigning on earth.

As if such a vision of future glory were not enough, the Spirit addresses all true believers in Revelation 21:7 saying: “He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son.” These “all things,” together with the relationship described, places all genuine believers in the same position as Abraham who rejoiced to see Christ’s day. They all have as much reason to be “glad,” for they are to inherit the same things—Galatians 3:29.

**The Coming Kingdom**

The purpose of God is to bring into being a kingdom on earth which will radiate truth and righteousness to the honour of its Creator. This kingdom is to be the restored and reformed ancient kingdom of David and Solomon—it will be revived as the kingdom of Israel under Jesus Christ (who was promised the throne of David—Luke 1:31-33). This kingdom is to shortly make its impact upon the modern world and will trigger the greatest upheaval ever known in the affairs of men and nations. The administrators of it, working under the direction of King Jehoshua (or Jesus) will be Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, David... the apostles of Jesus who left their testimony before the world in the New Testament... as well as believers of their word from various periods of history. All will be revived and raised from the sleep of death to inherit what was promised to them—and the time will come for the saints to possess the kingdom (Daniel 7:22 and 27). This is the “day” that Abraham rejoiced to “see” and which many prophets and righteous men have likewise desired with longing hearts.

Scripture provides us with many pictures of the coming kingdom. Read for example Psalm 72 and note the dominant principles in operation—righteousness, justice, peace, deliverance. What a contrast to the world as we know it today! Read Isaiah 65:17-25 and note the conditions of the society...
Our interest in, and attraction to God’s purpose is pleasing to Him. He is especially
honoured when men and women place their absolute trust in Him — when they are
willing to commit their lives totally to his way — in full confidence that what God has
promised, He is able also to perform (c/p
Rom. 4:20-24).

Our interest is attracted by the invitation to become personally involved in this great
purpose of the ages. Sometimes it may seem to be a very lofty ambition for common men
and women to aspire to — especially when (as is often the case) we carry the shame
and disgrace of sins and wrong-doing. Yet God has invited us to share in this glorious
plan — and furthermore He has mercifully provided a means whereby we can do so,
provided there is a willingness to submit to His requirements (baptism and the
remembrance of His Son as appointed). Believers can receive a Royal Pardon for their
sins. They can be accounted righteous as Abraham was and so qualify for the
blessings in Jesus Christ.

Let no one despair, or lose confidence in
Christ because of their past sins. He has
overcome that great enemy; but we must
trust him, for he is able to reform us and
transform us by the power of his word, if
only we will co-operate — See for example,
Romans 14:4; Philippians 4:13; Acts 20:32;
Hebrews 7:25 and 10:14-19; 1 John 1:9 and
5:4; Philippians 1:6.

So it is that the apostle informs faithful
believers: “all things are yours” (1 Cor.
3:21).

The Coming Take-Over

For most of this century we have seen
Jews returning to their ancient homeland—
the Promised Land. We have seen the
development of the revived nation — but as
yet, no returned king or princes of Israel: yet
the scene is set according to the requirements
of Scripture, for their appearance. All things
are ready for the most startling and
comprehensive world event of all time.

Behind the scenes — backstage as it
were — preparations will soon be under-way
in the organisation of a new regime whose
immediate task it will be to take over the
government and administration of the Holy
Land. Many of those who sleep in the dust
of the earth shall awake, and the faithful ones
among them will be made fit for the great
work ahead — Dan. 12:2; 1 Thess. 4:16, 17;
Psa. 50:4, 5; Psa. 31:20; Psa. 83: 2, 3; Isa.
40:3.

At the command given by the LORD of
hosts, “the saints of the Most High shall take
the kingdom” (Dan. 7:18). “The Lord Jesus shall
be revealed from heaven with his mighty
messengers, in flaming fire taking vengeance”
upon the corrupt and unbelieving modern world — 2 Thess. 1:7-10. The Lord Jesus Christ shall be “glorified in his saints,” whose honour it will be to
execute the Lord’s vengeance upon the
nations, bringing their rulers to account for
their irresponsible and outrageous behaviour
(Psa. 149:6-9). It will be a time of terrible,
yet just, judgement — Rev. 18:20; 19:2.

The question then remains. “How long O
Lord...?” We live in hope and anticipation—
we are excited in view of our times, yet
patient. Our prayer is: “Give the king thy
judgements, O God, and thy righteousness
unto the king’s son...” (Psalm 72).

A Royal Pardon

Some years ago when countries such as Great Britain
administered the death penalty for certain crimes, a convicted
criminal could appeal for clemency to the Crown. The law may
have sentenced the offender to be hung by the neck until dead —
but there was an authority that was above the law, and that
authority resided in the sovereign (king or queen as the case may
have been). According to the royal pleasure then, the fate of the
condemned person would be decided. This illustrates the position
that Scripture places before us as to the forgiveness of our sins.

By the law we all stand condemned, because we have offended
against the law — yet God has made His mercy available to us
through His son, King Jesus (or, Yehoshua, as his name really is).
This King of Israel is the only living person through whom a
pardon may be either requested or granted — consequently a belief
in him is absolutely essential in order to receive the divine mercy.

Now the terms upon which we, the condemned, may become
eligible for the Royal Pardon are explained by the King himself
saying that repentance and remission of sins were to be taught in
his name among all nations (Luke 29:47). He told his disciples:

“Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in
the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy
Spirit: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I
have commanded you...” (Matt. 28:19, 20).

Having thus commissioned the disciples to this work of
preaching the gospel, Jesus said that “He that believeth and is
baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be
condemned” (Mark 16:15, 16).

Here then are two basic conditions which the King has decreed
as essential: belief and then baptism. The baptized believer in
Jesus Christ sees in his Lord and his teaching a way of life, and
he strives to follow that way in faith. In this frame of mind the
believer is assured of the King’s Pleasure and can say with the
Apostle Paul: “There is therefore now no condemnation to them
which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after
the spirit. For the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made
me free from the law of sin and death.” (Romans 8:1-2).

From the book Warnings from the Dust
The twentieth century has seen momentous events — events which are clear evidence of God’s hand at work as He brings together the strands of history to conform to those things spoken through the prophets in ancient times. These events are thrilling and encouraging, confirming faith — and at the same time providing grounds for conviction in those who may yet come to share in Israel’s Hope. This march of events is leading to the coming Millennial reign of Christ and the saints on earth, and it is therefore appropriate that, at this time, we draw attention to the drama that is unfolding before the world.

This series of video tapes has been produced in order to focus attention upon the developing scene—to make the vision plain, that he may run that readeth it! The events themselves, spread out as they are over a century, can often be lost sight of—so we must bring them together showing the hand of God at work as He uses nations and leaders to bring about His purpose. An outstanding feature of the century has been the restoration of the nation of Israel—and also the way in which English-speaking nations have been employed to establish this national home and then protect its existence in a hostile environment. The tapes show how this has all been done in accordance with the prophetic word.

In Europe also, events—sometimes dreadful events—have fulfilled God’s infallible Word. Today, events are progressing on that continent which will lead to the building-up of a great confederacy which is to oppose Israel in the latter days. Video can bring us in touch directly with some of the amazing activities that are currently going on, and which are fulfilling the word of God.

We are living at a crucial time in history—a time when our warning is urgent. The words of Jesus ring out to us: “Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked and they see his shame.” (Rev. 16:15).

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