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Introduction

IN THE HISTORY of nations we read that, when their terms of living became unacceptable, mankind sought alternatives. It was always assumed that alternatives were there for the finding. At worst, when a nation or even an empire weakened and crumbled to decay, peoples from without would move in and take over. However unpalatable to some, there were always alternatives, and with them, hope for our kind.

The puzzling and often frightening thought which continually asserts itself today is that the world of our times is fast running out — or has already run out — of alternatives. There are now no peoples from “without” to turn to since all nations are being drawn into the one world model by such influences as the advance of modern technology, the world-wide flow of information and communication, and the shift of corporate business and financial interests from a national to a global scale. Whole populations are disturbed, no longer able to control affairs within their own national boundaries. Governments are not in truth masters of their destiny. They feel increasingly exposed to menacing situations and the effects of unmanageable crises of many kinds which, in recent years, have spilled out across traditional borders to encompass the whole world.

In spite of its immense power, the United States, at the spearhead of efforts to control the spread of dangerous weapons and to contain diverse groups hostile to its global interests, is now threatened on its own shores — a relatively recent phenomenon. Without effective international cooperation the “war on terror” is unlikely to be successful. Militant groups of fanatics assemble and train in remote regions, fostered by rogue states who turn a blind eye to their activities. Mobile and flexible in their operations, such groups can defy elaborate plans to corner them, and, if threatened by armed attack or economic strangulation, they can readily replicate their structure in other countries sympathetic to their noxious philosophies.

The recent devastating attack on a commuter train in Madrid and the punishing attacks against coalition forces in Iraq are but two heads of the terrorist hydra, and follow in a long line of attacks by disparate groups against western countries over the past several decades.

Of all the troublesome flashpoints in the modern world, none is perhaps more dangerous than the simmering cauldron which is the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Once the object of sympathy from around the world, Israel has in the past 20 years lost much of the goodwill it had gained as the underdog, the scrappy fighter against overwhelming odds. Politically, much of the world is allied against it. As yet it is faced with only modest military opposition — its attackers, such as Hamas, lacking the weapons necessary to wage full-scale war with the state. Israel’s often heavy-handed tactics against the Palestinians — now perceived to be in the oppressed condition that the Israelis themselves used to occupy — have earned it the censure of many in the world-wide community of nations.

So far, Israel’s superior traditional and nuclear military power, and the support of the United States, have kept at bay a full-scale military assault of Israel. But the Scriptures tell us that this will change. At some point the nation of Israel will be “surrounded” — how, we are not told — and threatened with national extermination. From this threat she will be delivered by God, not for her righteousness — for Israel is prone to the faults which afflict other national entities — but for “the fathers’ sakes” (Rom. 11: 26-29).

This issue of *The Bible Standard* examines this question and points to the silver lining in the dark cloud which at present hangs over the world.

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All Scripture references are to the King James Version, unless otherwise stated.

“Lift up a standard for the people” — Isa. 62: 10 Contents — May 2004

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Unique Among the Nations

“Zionism is, in sum, the constant and unrelenting effort to realize the national and universal vision of the Prophets of Israel.”

*Yigal Allon, Israel's Foreign Minister
at the U.N. General Assembly,
September 30, 1975*

IT IS AGAINST THIS ominous setting that an event of truly historic proportions has thrust itself, against all precedent and probability, upon the world scene. The regathering of the scattered people of Israel to their ancient homeland from all the countries in the world where they had been driven in exile, and their sudden, dramatic rise to nationhood and influence in world affairs, is unique in world history.

Hope among the Jews has appeared at a time when hope in the Gentile world is crumbling away, as uncertainty, fear, and growing despair take over. Leaders of nations from both ends of the political spectrum, as well as economic gurus of the political and economic middle ground, have experimented with various schemes to gain and maintain economic and political stability and to secure future prosperity. Thus, the wise of this world are seeking by new economic measures, new forms of industrial growth, new social patterns, new political devices and alliances, new technologies, gigantic business and financial mergers, and by every other means they can conceive, to stabilize and control national and world conditions. But the news each day is a depressing catalogue of their failure.

THE PAST THE KEY TO THE FUTURE

Much to the contrary of all their understanding, the answer — the only answer — to the world's problems is not in present schemes and philosophies but is buried in the past, where neglected truths have been lost — submersed under the traffic and turmoil of our present civilization affairs.

It is vital that the Jew, the Israeli Jew in particular, should understand this situation, for these neglected truths are his. At the present time, when many Gentile nations are losing confidence in the value of their traditions, institutions and inventions to hold the line against disintegration, Israel is arising out of her checkered historic and religious past to the vision of a future bright with promise and a prophetic hope — though the strife and chaos that besets the Middle East today obscures this. Under attack by terrorists and threatened by military forces with weapons of mass destruction at their disposal; vastly outnumbered by sworn enemies without; torn by political, religious, and ethnic factions within, where is that hope?

The best and probably the only possible answer to such a perplexing question is a simple one. Israel's hope, which in turn enshrines the hope of the whole world of mankind, is summarized in just one single, much-maligned word — Zionism. Even as it is written: “The joy of the whole earth is Mount Zion . . . city of the great King.” “And many nations shall come and say, Come and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, and to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for the law shall go forth of Zion, and the Word of the Lord from Jerusalem. And . . . nation shall not lift up a sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more” (Psalm 48: 2; Micah 4: 2, 3).

Origins

Four thousand years have passed since Abraham, at the time of his father Terah's death, passed from Haran into Canaan that there he might secure and bind the blessings that had been proposed to him by God, granting to him and to his seed the Land of Canaan for an everlasting possession (Genesis 12: 1-4; 17: 1-8). Later, on Moriah's mountain, a unilateral covenant was made with Abraham and sealed with God's oath, revealing God's purposes in calling him, and pledging that in Abraham's seed should all the nations of earth be blessed (Genesis 22: 15-18).

Thereby was the foundation of Zionism laid, 1,000 years before the word even entered the Hebrew language. In embryonic form the idea lived on and grew in Joseph's request of faith to have his bones removed to Canaan, the Land of Promise (Genesis 50: 24, 25); but the “birth” was long delayed. From Joseph's day, 200 years were to pass before the birth pangs began in Moses' return to Egypt, the night of the Passover and Israel's coming out from that troubled land. They intensified in Sinai's Law and Covenant, and in the wanderings of 40 Tabernacle years under the leadership of Moses. Then came the birth, as Israel, crossing the Arnon river to conquer the lands East of Jordan, shortly thereafter under Joshua's leadership issued forth through the breach of Jordan's parted waters to take over Canaan, the Land of Promise.

ZION RISES

Yet it was a nameless birth. It was indeed the Land of Promise when Judges ruled, but it was not yet Zion. Five hundred years rolled by in changing fortunes before David came, the man after God's own heart (1 Samuel 13: 14). From the Jebusites he took by siege and storm the fortress-hill of Zion, and removed that reproach from the midst of the land (Joshua 15: 63; Judges 1: 21). He called the place the City of David, but its citadel was Zion and remains so to this day, epitomizing to every believing Jew his inalienable right to the Land of Promise.

For the next 300 years of alternating prosperity and failure according to their keeping or neglecting of God's law, they occupied the whole land, but not as one nation. Following the death of Solomon, David's son, 10 tribes rebelled and founded the separate, Northern Kingdom of Israel. There, apostate and ruled by their chosen, non-Davidic kings from Jeroboam to Hoshea, and notwithstanding the prophets' warnings, they degenerated, until by God's final judgment they were by Assyrian invaders carried away into captivity and obscurity (2 Kings 17: 20-23).

In the south of the land, Divinely ordained kings of David's line (2 Samuel 7: 12-17; Psa. 89: 3, 4) remained on Judah's throne, and although they lasted another 100 years they fared little better. Kings ruled in pride, the people forgot their Covenant and sinned. In consequence the land failed and foreigners oppressed.

Calamities

In spite of Jeremiah's pleas and dire predictions, Judah did not keep the commandments of the Lord. Finally, the king of Babylon attacked with a great army and destroyed Jerusalem. King and people together followed their northern brethren into captivity (Jeremiah 18: 15-17), but not into the same historic obscurity, for although God would surely punish His people, He would not forget them (Isaiah 49: 15). Among the captives, the faithful mourned as God in righteous anger thus moved against His people. Exiled in the land beyond the great river Euphrates they wept when they remembered Zion (Psalm 137: 1).

Yet even here a question must be raised – how many wept? They were but few indeed. And how many, soon pre-occupied in worldly pursuits, sought assimilation in advan-

tageous Gentile conditions, forgetting their spiritual allegiance to Jerusalem? It was by far the great majority.

Release

After 70 years of exile there came the great King Cyrus, founder of the Medo-Persian empire and the conqueror of Babylon. He had been named by the prophet Isaiah many years before, at a time when Hezekiah had ruled in Judah, as the one who would bring release from this captivity (Isaiah 44: 28; 45: 1). Those who wept set forth in joy with Zerubbabel and his small company, armed with the Persian King's authority to return to the Land and to rebuild the fallen Temple. Yet who set out upon that journey of faith and hope? Only 50,000 souls from all of those scattered across a vast empire; and most of them from but two tribes, Judah and Benjamin. Some women, some children, and some old ones who longed to lay their bones to rest with

Joseph's in the Land would be numbered among them (Ezra 3: 12), the faithful few from among a forgetful people.

In due time under Ezra's persuasion the people raised the Temple, albeit in a still broken, neglected city and a desolate land (Ezra 8: 1-36).

The faithful Nehemiah next returned, armed with the King's letters. He raised the spirits of the people. By him were the walls of the city rebuilt in the teeth of heathen opposition, and its gate was fastened securely in its place. Jerusalem and Zion stood up again to reassure

the faithful, to reprove and warn the unfaithful, and to announce to the world that God's promises were sure, and that He will never cast off His people Israel.

Even so, Jerusalem was not yet free. In due time Persian overlord gave way to Greek and then to Roman, as God maintained the pattern of His judgment in Ezekiel 21: 26, 27. So passed another 400 years, during which time yet again, although possessed of City, Temple, Priest, and Prophet, the Law fell into disuse among the many.

At length, again besieged, this time by a Roman army, the city fell and the Temple was destroyed. Roman generals, Vespasian and Titus, featured briefly but bloodily in the reduction of Jerusalem and the fortress of Masada, as once more Jewish aspirations were crushed by a Gentile power. It was at this time that the years of the great eclipse set in, as Jews fled the Holy Land to join their brethren in the Diaspora. Bar Kokhba's revolt some 60 years later raised brief

ISRAEL TODAY

- Population: 6.4 million (UN, 2003 estimate)
- Seat of government: Jerusalem, though most foreign embassies are in Tel Aviv
- Major languages: Hebrew, Arabic
- Major religions: Judaism, Islam
- Life expectancy: 77 years (men), 81 years (women) (UN)
- Monetary unit: 1 new Israeli shekel (NIS) = 100 new agorot
- Main exports: Computer software, military equipment, chemicals, agricultural products
- Average annual income: US \$16,750 (World Bank, 2001)
- Internet domain: .il
- International dialing code: +972

hopes but, suppressed after two years with severe losses on both sides, it served only to intensify the rigor of the exile, for Jews were subsequently forbidden even to enter the Holy City. From that time Zion became merely a word on prayerful lips and a longing in the heart of the faithful among an exiled people; this time not for 70, but for 1,800 years.

No Resting Place

Who can tell the miseries of Israel since that day? Gone was the Temple with its altar in the Holy Place. Gone was the Priesthood. Gone was the Bullock of Atonement. Gone was the ancient city; its people were scattered and the land lay desolate (Isaiah 64: 9-12).

In the many lands to which they went, Jews found sometimes brief but no lasting respite from bitter persecutions of religious bigotry. Harried and hounded from city to city and from nation to nation, a target for every insult and a convenient scapegoat to carry any blame, the history of their treatment brings shame upon their great traducer and oppressor, Christendom. Yet for all that, Jewish intellect flared up here and there in the gross darkness of Medieval Europe, only to be followed by further periodic spoliation, violence, and expatriation.

As their homeland lay wasting under successive rule of Arab, Crusader, Kurd, Mameluke, and Turk, the minds of Jewish intellectuals elsewhere were largely preoccupied with the Kabbala and the Talmud. The Torah's guiding light (Psalm 119: 105) shone but dimly through the mysticism, the intellectual exercises and endless commentaries that were penned in those dark days. Yet the force of each new wave of bitter persecution broke through the flimsy shroud thus spun by human intellect to expose its worthlessness (Isaiah 55: 8, 9), and again the Abrahamic Promise and the Torah came into focus as the only sure basis for their hope. With each new onslaught, seeing once more the true needs and the destiny of Israel, many of the faithful cried out for their Messiah, and the people turned their hearts and minds again to Jerusalem, to Zion.

Temporary Respite

Dark Ages superstition retreated before the advance of Renaissance thinking, and much of Europe was transformed in the upheavals of the Reformation. As Europe settled into its changed religious pattern there came new liberties to the people, new freedoms of which a large part of Jewish society took full advantage. Hasidism in Eastern Europe clung to piety, to the traditions and to the Yiddish language, but elsewhere the more liberal minds of Haskalah embraced the principles of the European Enlightenment, and much of Western culture. Of special benefit was that spiritual emancipation which first emerged with the adoption of the Virginia Statute of Religious Liberty of 1786 by the newly

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constituted United States of America. At the same time, the growing movement of Reform Judaism, together with greater opportunities for assimilation in more tolerant lands, broadened the nature of Jewishness in Western society still further.

The First "Aliyah"

In a further violent eruption of anti-Semitism, the Pogroms (*pogrom* — devastation) of 19th- and early 20th-century Russia brought terror to the Jewish people there, and led to another mass migration. While many sought liberty in lands where prosperity was established and Jewish emancipation was won, among the faithful few it was not so.

Groups such as the Bilu (Hebrew initials for "House of Jacob, come ye and let us go"), and Hibbat Zion (Hebrew for "Love of Zion") promoted a return to the Holy Land, and developed schemes for settlement there, and the year 1882 saw in Palestine the start of a wave of immigration as the first "Aliyah" (ascent) got under way.

And so, while the forgetful many sought quick prosperity and, frequently, assimilation in established and prosperous Gentile society, the faithful few sought their neglected land with its ancient Promise. On desolate, stony earth, with a few primitive tools, a handful of men cleared, dug, irrigated, and planted in faith; and by these, Zionism began to move from its occluded past into the promise of a bright new era. The time had come for God to bless Zion. "But thou, O Lord, shalt endure for ever; and thy remembrance unto all generations. Thou shalt arise, and have mercy upon Zion: for the time to favour her, yea, the set time, is come. For thy servants take pleasure in her stones, and favour the dust thereof" (Psalm 102: 12-14).

THE MODERN MOVEMENT

The Zionist movement was built on the unshifting foundation of Jewish longings for their homeland. From the early 18th century the "Rebbes," charismatic leaders and rabbis of the Yiddish-speaking Hasidim, aided by the weariness of spirit, the constant danger of persecution and the grinding poverty of their flock among the Eastern exiles, had kept alive the hope of a Return.

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Thus prompted, a few from time to time made courageous but largely ineffectual attempts to re-settle in their ancient land; but these were early days. The “set time” (Psalm 102: 13) was yet future and this religious imperative of largely Hasidic origin, having no logistic support, made little headway in promoting effective resettlement. Even so, it kept alive a vision, and a hope.

Herzl

In 1878 the Berlin Congress of Nations, especially as a result of Benjamin Disraeli's efforts, decreed an amelioration of restrictions imposed on Jews in Palestine. Then from Vienna and Haskalah's influence in Central Europe came a new approach in the Statesmanship of Zionism's great champion, Theodor Herzl. His view, that the founding of a sovereign Jewish State was the only solution to the Jewish problem (expressed in his book, *Der Judenstaat* – The Jewish State, published 1896), began to emerge as a realistic political concept from the time of the first Zionist Congress in Basle in 1897. The modern movement was thus initiated as a *political*, not a *religious*, solution to the age-old problem of Jewish homelessness.

Russell

Herzl's early death in 1904 caused the Zionist movement to falter, but it was given new life by a message from an entirely unexpected quarter. In 1910 a Christian, Pastor Charles Taze Russell, Gentile friend of the Jewish people and a deep student of Hebrew prophecy, penned 12 articles under the title “God's Chosen People,” which aroused great curiosity and interest among the Jews. Nineteen years earlier, which was six years before the first Zionist Congress took place and when even Herzl's work was little known, C.T. Russell had included in his book *Thy Kingdom Come* a chapter headed “The Restoration of Israel.”

These articles, which appeared in the widely read *Overland Monthly* magazine (published in San Francisco by the journalist and author, Francis Bret Harte), led to his being invited to address a Jewish public meeting at the

New York Hippodrome in that same year. More than 4,000 representative Jews attended and were uplifted and inspired as he spoke to them of their own Hebrew prophecies, assuring them of God's returning favor and a glorious future for a future Israel.

Responding to the widespread interest among the Jews, Pastor Russell published a special newspaper in Yiddish, *Die Stimme* (The Voice). Thus he and his co-workers aroused fresh interest in the prophecies and kindled again the fires of Zionistic zeal along religious (but not conversionist) lines.

First World War Begins

In 1914, the Great War broke out in Europe and hostilities spilled over into the Middle East. 1917 saw the Turk, a ruthless overlord to the Jews, fleeing Palestine before the advancing British Expeditionary Force (BEF) from Egypt under the command of General Allenby. There was no engagement of forces and, seemingly by a miracle, the city of Jerusalem was left intact.

From the Pripet Marshes of Minsk, a Yiddish society, and the abject poverty of Russia's Pale of Settlement, came the boy destined to be the next champion of the Zionist cause. Chemist, inventor, life-long Zionist and later friend of British Statesmen, Chaim Weizmann used every available argument and opportunity to secure a national home for the Jewish people.

In 1917, in spite of opposition from influential assimilated Jews, Weizmann's efforts were rewarded in the Balfour Declaration, formally issued by the British Imperial government which “viewed with favor” the Zionist cause. Thus from that same year, while the blood and wealth of Christendom drained away on Flanders fields, the land promised to Abraham and his seed was cleared of hostile occupation, and the Jews, supported by the power of an alien empire as in Cyrus' day, were directed to consider a return to the Promised Land.

After years of negotiation, in 1922 the newly constituted League of Nations approved a Mandate under which Britain would supervise the establishment of a national home for the Jews, in Palestine.

The Inter-War Years

Between the wars, violent Arab opposition, British hesitancy, European intransigence, and the indifference of many rich, assimilated Jews, vitiated the purpose of the Mandate. Weizmann testifies that the land was bought from profiteering Arabs on the open market — not with the wealth of millionaires, but with money from the pockets of the Jewish poor. (Zerubbabel and Nehemiah would no doubt have sympathized, remembering their own “Aliyah” experiences in the days of the Persian kings). Militant and uncompromising Zionists such as Trumpeldor and Jabotinsky

worked tirelessly in support of the hard-pressed, faithful Jews and their still visionary purposes in the land during those years of British vacillation.

Second World War Begins

And then came Hitler, the war, the Holocaust. Before the war the call of Zionism, even in the face of rising German anti-Semitism, had not been popular among the Jews. The wealthy were so closely woven into the fabric of European society that they felt secure, seeing the spread of Zionist ideas as zealotry, extremism, and a threat to their comfortable situation. The workers were hampered, the work faltered, and then it was too late. Hitler struck.

As the world recoiled from the horror of 6,000,000 dead, the Jews of continental Europe who had survived the death camps received a vital thrust toward their ancient homeland. Where the call of Zionism had failed, the terrors of Nazi Germany succeeded and European Jews poured south to reach Palestine by any means available. They crossed the Eastern Mediterranean waters in unseaworthy, dangerously overloaded ships and, in spite of British attempts to stem the tide — often by harsh and uncaring methods — many of the refugees got through. They came ashore, surging past harassed British soldiers to kiss the earth they would soon be fighting for. World opinion turned against the British, who terminated their mandate and withdrew their administration in 1948.

The United Nations

On November 29, 1947, the General Assembly of the United Nations adopted a resolution calling for the establishment of a Jewish State in the land, and on May 14, 1948, in Tel Aviv, and against all historic precedent and probability, the Zionist leaders, with David Ben Gurion at their head, proclaimed the State of Israel. Five Arab states invaded the next day and quickly learned the first of a series of bitter lessons — that Israel had come to stay.

Surely, since the pre-war Zionists had failed to persuade their Jewish brethren to return by “fishing” for them with the bait of a Zionist revival, the “hunters,” brutal as they were, had done their work (Jeremiah 16: 14-16). The world looked on in wonder; the Arab feared and Russia breathed out threats, but all to no avail, for the time had come for God to favor Zion.

Accusations of Racism

From that time, the aims of Zionism have been the subject of much political misrepresentation. “Racism” is quite rightly repugnant to, and condemned among, the many nationalities gathered in the United Nations, and in that august assembly one may not overtly attack the Jew for being Jewish, or for having a homeland. And so, those nations and individuals that hate the Jews attack them — not as Jews but

as Zionists. Among the many strident voices raised against the Jewish state, the unlikely partners of Marxism and Islam have been made bed-fellows in their shared misunderstanding, fear, and hatred of the Zionist cause. “Zionism,” they say in justification, “is Racism,” and the United Nations forum has long been used as a platform for this attack.

The Power of Oil

As oil supplies from Islamic nations become ever more vital to sustain the economies of the United States and western Europe, even Israel’s potential allies take fright and speak against her, or keep silent when they should speak in her defense. For many years there has been both overt and covert Arab pressure brought to bear on oil-hungry nations, to alienate Israel. This pressure accounts for peculiarities observable in the political stance of many nations, in the course of many international councils, in commercial and financial dealings, and in heavily biased news reportage and opinions which often appear in much of the world’s press.

Ethnic Combustion

Can Israel survive? With all these external difficulties, she has also religious and secular factions of her own population warring in the streets, and a racial, cultural mix that defies evaluation. Yet as its people are lovers of Zion, so will the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob prosper Israel, and He will reveal Himself to them through mighty works that are yet to come. Each difficulty they face will eventually be turned to good account as they learn, through the hard lessons that He is sending them, to return to the principles of their Covenant Law and to the pronouncements and promises of their inspired Prophets.

What about the so-called “Anti-Zionist Jews.” Is this a contradiction in terms? Where will such Jews stand when God delivers Zion (Psalm 69: 35; 102: 13-16; 132: 13; Isaiah 2: 3; 30: 19)? So far, this “deliverance” has just begun. As we survey that part of prophecy which is not yet fulfilled we see that Israel’s future is assured, and although her case seems fraught with many perils now, her prospects are indeed glorious.

“But thou, Israel, art my servant, Jacob whom I have chosen . . . fear not, for I am with thee . . . I will strengthen thee . . . help thee . . . uphold thee” (Isaiah 41: 8-10).

THE FUTURE OF ZIONISM

As we have seen, the guide to the future lies partly in the past, a point made quite clear in Isaiah 30: 20, 21. Those holy men of old, the prophets, had written as they were moved by the spirit of God. Through them we have the Divine assurance that all of the Bible’s prophecies and promises must be fulfilled (Isaiah 55: 10, 11). There we read not only promises of joys to come, but also warnings of judgments against the sin and selfishness that pervade the

affairs of mankind. We note their allusions to waves of trouble that will afflict the earth, shaking terribly and eventually destroying all of those institutions which, over many centuries, man has set in place to direct and control his affairs (Psalm 107: 23-27; Isaiah 34: 1, 2, 8; 66: 16; Daniel 12: 1; Joel 1: 15; Zephaniah 1: 14-16; 3: 8; Malachi 4: 1).

Here in this day of trouble, distress, and spiritual gloom, dark forces of international terrorism are active across the world. They work in secret, many plotting not only the destruction of Israel, but also the downfall of Western culture. From another quarter, politically radical revolutionaries with their hard core of anarchists are on the march against the powers and plans of global capitalism, seeking to destroy them. Under this threat, angry but fearful nations unite to withstand the onslaught.

Israel Divinely Protected

God has promised that He will save Israel in the hour of her greatest need and that He will break the nations that come against her in that day (Zechariah 14: 2, 3). Those awesome prophecies from Ezekiel 38 and 39 and Zechariah 14, long the focus of eschatological studies, began to emerge from the mists of chronological obscurity with the setting up of the Jewish state in 1948, since for 2,000 years before that time there had been no nation of Israel to be attacked. With today's reporting of world events, especially those that focus on Israel's plight, the import of these Scriptures comes ever more clearly into view. The signs of the prophetic times in which we live are plainly to be seen.

As for those among the Jews who do not love Zion, but have sought assimilation and found forgetfulness in their new promised lands of America and Europe, there can be little appreciation of these signs. The special blessings promised to the nation of Israel may be lost to them.

The great, unprecedented Time of Trouble foretold by Daniel has been building up and gathering force since it set in with the outbreak of world-wide warfare in 1914 (Daniel 12: 1). Its awful climax may be some years away, but is certain. Yet just beyond these clouds of trouble the joys, the promised blessings, shine brightly. The eye of faith sees the time when men, then under Divine guidance and supervision, will beat their weapons of war into the tools of prosperity, and abandon the arts of war (Isaiah 2: 4; Micah 4: 3). God has promised that He will establish a new world order, wherein the people will learn to do that which is right (Hosea 2: 18; Psalm 46: 8-10; Psalm 67; Isaiah 26: 9). Then, "All the ends of the Earth [*will*] have seen the salvation of our God" (Psalm 67: 7, *italics ours*).

From Despair to Prosperity

How is such a transformation to be achieved? Since this question is far beyond the wit of man to answer, again we turn to God's Word, as given through the ancient prophets.

The Scriptures inform us that the Jewish people in their desperation at the height of "Jacob's Trouble" (Jeremiah 30: 7), will cry out to God for help. God will hear them in that day and will save them miraculously from seemingly inevitable destruction (Psalm 107: 19-21; Zechariah 12: 1-10). As the significance of these things dawns upon them and, much chastened, they turn their hearts again to the God of their Covenant and apply their minds to their Scriptures — the undiluted words of the Law and the Prophets — so their true Messiah will be revealed to them. They will joyfully accept Him as their Deliverer and He will begin His reign over them in great power and glory (Isaiah 9: 6, 7), marking the great turning point in the affairs of Israel and, shortly thereafter, of all mankind.

Then, Zionism will be in the forefront of every Jewish mind. The New Covenant foretold by Jeremiah will be made between God and the Jewish nation in the land of Israel (Jeremiah 31: 31-34; Isaiah 44: 23). Under its terms, those who keep it will be led as individuals into the way of peace, prosperity, and everlasting life (Ezekiel 36: 26-28). Thus will the "still small voice" of Divine reason (1 Kings 19: 12; Isaiah 55: 7-11) begin to be heard and heeded — first by the nation of Israel, and then, gradually and through the agency of Israel, it will go out to the whole world.

THE PROMISED BLESSING

The very essence of Zionism will be revealed at a time when not only the nation of Israel, but the whole world, is directed to look back to that original, Oath-Bound Covenant which God made with Abraham. As many nations come to see Israel in a new light, Micah 4: 2 will be fulfilled, and the Word of the Lord expressing the Law of this new covenant will be extended from Jerusalem to all nations for their blessing (Isaiah 2: 2-5; Genesis 22: 18). Both Jew and Gentile, humbled and chastened by their terrible experiences and ashamed of the things that they have done in the excesses of the Time of Trouble, will earnestly seek righteousness and peace (Zechariah 8: 20-23; 2: 9-13).

As earth's inhabitants gradually come under the terms of the New Covenant, the curse of dying and death will be repealed by Messiah's power. The full force of the love and compassion of God will be revealed to wondering mankind as in a remarkable display of Divine power earth's dead are raised (Ezekiel 37; Isaiah 38: 18; Hosea 13: 14). Evil will begin to be eradicated and a vast work of rehabilitation will be directed toward the population of the world (Isaiah 25: 6-9). All shall be brought to a full and accurate knowledge of God's Truth (Isaiah 11: 9).

The Testings of that Age

As time and events progress under the great Messiah's reign, with every possible aid freely given, the heart of each individual will be carefully and surely tested. When all this work is done, those found in harmony with righteousness and Truth will be granted the joys of everlasting life in a perfected earth (Isaiah 35: 10). Those who have deliberately and persistently opposed, neglected, or despised the salvation offered by God's perfecting laws and arrangements will be removed, entirely and forever from the land of the living. But even for these there will be no hell of torture, no limbo of waiting; but simply oblivion, extinction. As it is written, "They shall be as though they had not been" (Obadiah 15, 16).

Thus will the earth be cleansed of the corrupting influence of those incorrigibly depraved ones who, in spite of every opportunity and encouragement to turn from their wickedness and live (Ezekiel 18: 32), choose to fight against the God-given, generous, right, proper, and only terms by which mankind can secure peace, prosperity, and everlasting life. "The soul that sinneth, it shall die" (Ezekiel 18: 4). In this as in all things, the decree of God is unchanging and absolute.

But what about those who will learn to love the Lord and seek righteousness? The power and beauty of expression in prophecies such as those from Isaiah 35; 65: 17 and Psalm 67 is such that the believing heart is uplifted in joyful anticipation and praise to God at the glorious prospect. There, in words of timeless grace, we are told of things we otherwise could never have known: how that just beyond the storm-clouds of trouble now breaking over the world in this evil day there shall come, from the presence of Messiah, the glorious fulfillment of all God's promises for the eradication of evil and the blessing of all mankind. In that day Abraham will return and walk again on this earth. He, and all Israel with him, will see the great Oath-Bound Promise kept. And he, and they, will be glad.

"Sing praises to the Lord, which dwelleth in Zion: declare among the people his doings" (Psalm 9: 11). "Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth, is mount Zion . . . the city of the great King" (Psalm 48: 2).

* * *

of interest . . .

According to an annual poll conducted by the Jaffee Center for Strategic Studies at Tel Aviv University, a majority of the Jewish population in Israel supports Prime Minister Sharon's plans for unilateral withdrawal from the Gaza Strip. Though the public harshly opposes concessions bound to a peace agreement with Syria, and the majority of the public rejects the Geneva Accord as a basis for a peace agreement with the Palestinians, the disengagement plan is supported by 56% of the Jewish population, and is viewed as a means to improve security and ensure the Jewish nature of the state of Israel. Support for the disengagement plan dropped to 50% when those being polled were told that the plan would involve dismantling a number of settlements.

The results of the 1,088 individuals who were interviewed in January and February, and who comprise a representative sample of the Jewish population in Israel, further indicate that if a national referendum is held, 83% of those asked believe that Israel's Arabs should not take part in fateful decisions, including those concerning the return of territories and determining the country's borders. As to the possibility that disengagement will obligate dismantling settlements, 76% of those polled said that Israel Defense Forces troops cannot refuse orders to evacuate settlers.

— *haaretzdaily.com*

* * *

Former Soviet Jews who moved to Israel when the USSR began to crumble are trickling back to Russia. About 50,000 have made the move in recent years, with numbers rising sharply during the Putin era. Some cite as reasons for their return, identity angst — the difficulties of being recognized as Russian and not as Israeli, disappointments with life in Israel, economic hardship, and the threat of terrorism since the second intifada began three years ago. Others stress the opportunities that have opened up as post-Soviet Russia has stabilized, merged with the world market, and entered a period of rapid economic progress.

About one million Soviet Jews emigrated to Israel in the decades after the first cracks appeared in the Iron Curtain in the early 1970s. The exodus continued through the turbulent 1990s, as Russian society veered toward anarchy and there were signs of anti-Semitic revival. The number of Jews in Russia plummeted to 230,000 from 540,000 between the censuses of 1989 and 2002. Some observers suggested that Russia might, like Germany or Poland, become a land whose deep Jewish traditions are mostly gone and buried in the past. But the outflow, which saw as many as 100,000 Jews leave Russia annually in the '90s, fell to 10,000 last year, says the Israeli Embassy in Moscow.

The surge of reverse migration has raised hopes among some community activists that the historic Jewish presence in Russia may not be ending after all, and that Jews may be realizing that they can live in Russia at the same level as anywhere else in the world.

Many of those returning are attracted by opportunities in fields where native Russians lack experience, such as marketing or the Internet. However, traditional Russian anti-Semitism remains a worry for some, particularly older returnees. There is no official anti-Semitism in Russia as was once the case, but anti-Semitism still exists, and some fear that it could rise to the level of state ideology again at any moment.

— *Christian Science Monitor*



‘TO THE JEW FIRST’

Q Please explain the expression “to the Jew first” in Romans 1: 16. Does this not show partiality on God’s part?

A Let us consider the second question first. Partiality suggests the favoring of one person or side over another or others, or having a particular liking or fondness for something or someone. However, partiality may be exercised justly or unjustly.

God is a God of justice. The Scriptures tell us that equity is the foundation of His throne (Psa. 89: 14). Some falsely contend that God is therefore obligated to treat every one of His creatures exactly alike. However, His office as the Creator of and Provider for His creatures grants Him the right to favor some of His creatures over others (Rom. 9: 21). God’s partiality, or favor, is never exercised contrary to His justice.

The Jews Favored

That God has favored the Jews in designated periods of time is taught in the Scriptures, and facts corroborate this conclusion:

- Amos 3: 2: “You only have I known of all the families of the earth.”

God here states that He recognized only the nation of Israel during the Jewish Age (1,845 years, from 1813 B.C. to A.D. 33), the Gentile nations being permitted to go their own way during that time. Though the Jews were subsequently dissolved as a nation during the Gospel Age (an equal period of 1,845 years, from 33 to 1878), favor has increasingly been returning to them since 1878, beginning at the Berlin Congress of Nations.

- Rom. 3: 1, 2: “What advantage then hath the Jew? Much every way: chiefly because that unto them were committed the oracles of God.”

This Scripture indicates the great advantage of the Jewish nation — their receiving the Old Testament, sometimes referred to as “the Law and the Prophets.” God’s Word was intended to prepare them to receive Christ, their Messiah, at the First Advent.

- Rom. 11: 28: “As concerning the Gospel, they are enemies for your sakes: but as touching the election, they are beloved for the fathers’ sakes.”

The Apostle here gives the reason for God’s special dealings with the Jews. It was not because of their inherent worthiness, but because of His promise made to the patriarchs — Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, and others, spoken of in Psa. 45: 16 and Heb. 11.

Coming back to Rom. 1: 16, let us consider what “to the Jew first” means:

- All of God’s blessings begin with the Jews. They were given the first opportunity to receive the promises and benefits of the Abrahamic Covenant.

- The Jews living at the time of our Lord’s First Advent were given the first opportunity to become members of Christ’s Church — spiritual Israelites. This offer was open to Jews alone for the first 3½ years after Pentecost.

- The New Covenant (the antitype of the Old Law Covenant) will be made with the nation of Israel first, giving them the opportunity to receive the initial blessings of the New Covenant during the future Mediatorial Reign of Christ (Jer. 31: 31).

God Looks Upon the Heart

It is important to emphasize that God does not favor all Jews simply because they are such according to the flesh. Rom. 2: 28, 29 reads: “For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: but he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God.”

This text tells us that God looks especially kindly on those Jews who hold to the promises of the Abrahamic Covenant and who endeavor to live up to the Law to the best of their ability. Natural Jews who have lost hope in the promises are by God viewed as Gentiles. This does not mean total loss for them, for in the times of restitution, under Messiah’s guiding hand, both Jews and Gentiles will be richly blessed (Acts 3: 19-21).

MAIN PURPOSES OF JEWISH AGE

Q What was the purpose for the Jewish Age? And did it succeed in its purposes?

A The Jewish Age was that period of time in God's Plan in which He dealt exclusively with the Jews through the medium of a covenant — the Law, or Mosaic Covenant — so called because Moses was its mediator. That Age began with the death of Jacob and lasted until the death of Jesus — a period of 1,845 years.

The Jewish Age was not a failure. On the contrary, it was a complete success and accomplished everything that God desired of it. God always brings to pass everything that He desires (Isa. 46: 9, 10). Neither the opposition of men nor devils can derail the successful completion of any of His purposes.

Purposes of the Jewish Age

God had many purposes for the Jewish Age, all of which came to pass. We enumerate some:

- He provided a written revelation of His Plan in what we speak of as the 39 books of the Old Testament. His Old Testament revelations began to be put to writing by Moses at Mt. Sinai in 1615 B.C. and were completed by Malachi about 400 B.C. These revelations were given in the form of types, which were later made more clear by His New Testament revelations.

- God selected a people to be the custodian of His written Word given during that Age. The descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to whom God gave the Abrahamic Covenant, were selected to be such a custodian (Rom. 3: 1, 2). After the exile, they guarded the Old Testament with most jealous care, so that when the time came to transfer that stewardship to the Gospel Age Church, the Old Testament was transmitted in its entirety.

- God demonstrated that none of the fallen race could keep God's Law perfectly, therefore none could be found worthy of everlasting life, and that thus all stood in

need of a Savior (Rom. 7: 5-12, 24, 25). Though God already knew this, He desired to prove it by an actual experiment. Accordingly, He selected a people — Israel — and accorded them many advantages, yet still they failed by their disobedience and lukewarmness. As a result, their failure produced in the more faithful among them an earnest longing for a delivering Messiah.

- God intended to reveal the righteousness of any one who would fulfill the Law. But as none of Adam's fallen race could do so, God sent His only-begotten Son into the world, born of a Jewish mother. Since God was His Father, Jesus was perfect. He maintained His perfection, enabling Him to fulfil the Law perfectly, and was entitled to the Law's reward — everlasting life on the human plane. Jesus thus earned the right to confer this blessing on all who would accept Him by faith.

- God won the remaining Ancient Worthies, for not enough of them were gathered in previous Ages to supply the required number for their work during Christ's Millennial Age Kingdom and their work in the Ages of glory to follow. Some of the more prominent worthy individuals are listed in Hebrews 11.

- In the end of the Jewish Age, God gathered the faithful Israelites through the ministry of Jesus, the Apostles, and their co-workers and made them the nucleus of the Christian Church. That gathering is termed a harvest (John 4: 34-38). This work began at our Lord's baptism and continued for 40 years until its close in 69, at which time Jerusalem was surrounded and largely destroyed by the Roman armies, and Israel was destroyed as a tributary nation, and scattered as a people.



* * *

Servants of God and Man

The fifth in a series of articles on godly men and women from around the world, whose lives have shaped the cultures in which we live.

Harriet Tubman

(c.1820–1913)

“The Moses of Her People”

HARRIET TUBMAN was a runaway slave from Maryland who became known as the “Moses of her people.” Over the course of 10 years, and at great personal risk, she led hundreds of slaves to freedom along the Underground Railroad, a secret network of safe houses where runaway slaves could stay on their journey north to freedom. She later became a leader in the abolitionist movement, and during the Civil War was a spy for the federal forces in South Carolina, as well as a nurse.

Early years

Harriet was the fifth child of Harriet Green and Ben Ross, both slaves of pure African descent. Through her mother’s ancestry she can be traced back to the Asanti tribe of the Gold Coast in West Africa. At birth she was named Araminta, shortened to ‘Minty’ Ross.

During her first two or three years, Minty’s family had a comparatively stable existence living on the timber plantation owned by Ben’s master, Anthony Thompson, where Ben worked as timber inspector, supervisor, and manager.

The situation changed when Edward Brodess, Thompson’s stepson, claimed ownership of Harriet Green and her children and took them to his own farm about 10 miles away. The family were scattered as Brodess hired them out to other masters or sold them illegally to out-of-state buyers. Araminta, even at four years of age, was hired out for indoor work and was expected to stay awake all night watching the baby, being whipped if she fell asleep or the baby cried. As she grew older Araminta was hired out to work in the fields. She preferred outdoor work in spite of harsh conditions and ill treatment. Although a hard worker, she had a reputation for being insolent and unruly.

Scarred for life

At age 13, Araminta suffered a severe head injury from an iron weight thrown by an angry overseer at a slave trying to escape. The weight missed the slave but hit Araminta. The blow nearly crushed her skull and she was unconscious for days. When she recovered, the wound healed but left a deep scar, and for the rest of her life Araminta suffered serious after effects such as headaches, seizures, and sleeping spells.

In about 1844, Araminta married John Tubman, a free black man, took his surname and adopted her mother’s first name, Harriet, choosing to be known thereafter as Harriet Tubman.

Escape to freedom

Marriage to a free man did not automatically bring her freedom. Harriet continued as the slave of her current master, but was allowed to stay in her husband’s cabin at night. Always in the background was the fear of being sold and sent to work on cotton plantations in the deep South, regarded by the majority of slaves as a death sentence.

When Edward Brodess died in March 1849 leaving unsettled debts, it seemed highly probable that many of his slaves would be sold to pay off his creditors. By the Autumn of that year Harriet decided to wait no longer and planned her escape. She confided only in her sister, fearing her husband would betray her plans.

The journey

Harriet knew she had to travel North. Travelling by night to avoid discovery, she walked through swamps and woodland, following the North Star. She was helped on her way by kindly folk — black and white — sympathetic to runaway slaves, who had set up an escape route known as the Underground Railroad.

At the end of her journey Harriet settled in Philadelphia, where she met William Still, Philadelphia Stationmaster on the Underground Railroad. He introduced her to other members of the Philadelphia Anti-Slavery Society, and from these people she learned how the organization operated.

THE UNDERGROUND RAILROAD

This is described in *Encyclopaedia Britannica* as “A system existing in the Northern states before the Civil War by which escaped slaves from the South were secretly helped by sympathetic Northerners, in defiance of the Fugitive Slave Acts, to reach places of safety in the North or in Canada.

Though neither underground nor a railroad, it was thus named because its activities had to be carried out in secret, using darkness or disguise, and because railway terms were used in reference to the conduct of the system. Various routes were lines, stopping places were called stations, those who aided along the way were conductors, and their charges were known as packages or freight.

The network of routes extended in all directions throughout 14 Northern states and “the promised land” of Canada, which was beyond the reach of fugitive-slave hunters. Those who most actively assisted slaves to escape by way of the “railroad” were members of the free black community, Northern abolitionists, philanthropists, and such church leaders as the Quaker, Thomas Garrett.



Harriet Beecher Stowe, famous for her novel Uncle Tom's Cabin, gained firsthand knowledge of fugitive slaves through her contact with the Underground Railroad in Cincinnati, Ohio.

Estimates of the number of black people who reached freedom vary greatly, from 40,000 to 100,000. Although only a small minority of Northerners participated in the Underground Railroad, its existence did much to arouse Northern sympathy for the lot of the slave in the antebellum period, at the same time convincing many Southerners that the North as a whole would never peaceably allow the institution of slavery to remain unchallenged."

Let my people go!

In Philadelphia Harriet found domestic work and saved her wages so that she could help others of her family to escape. In 1850 she returned to Maryland and helped her niece Kessiah and her two children to escape. In succeeding years she returned to slave-holding states many times to help others escape, leading them safely to the northern free states and to Canada.

It was very dangerous to be a runaway slave. There were rewards for their capture, and whenever Harriet led a group of slaves to freedom, she placed herself in great peril. A bounty was offered for her capture as a fugitive slave herself, and for breaking the law in slave states by helping others escape.

If anyone ever wanted to change his or her mind during the journey to freedom and return, Tubman pulled out a gun and said, "You'll be free or die a slave!" If anyone turned back, it would put her and the other escaping slaves in danger of discovery, capture, or even death. Harriet Tubman became so well known for leading slaves to freedom that she was dubbed "The Moses of Her People." Many slaves dreaming of freedom sang the spiritual "Go Down Moses," hoping a savior would deliver them from slavery just as Moses had delivered the Israelites from bondage.

THE CIVIL WAR

Harriet worked for the Union army as a nurse, a cook, and a spy. Her experience leading slaves along the Underground Railroad was especially helpful as she knew the land so well. She recruited a group of former slaves to hunt for rebel camps and report on the movements of Confederate troops. In 1863, she went with Colonel James Montgomery and about 150 black soldiers on a gunboat raid in South Carolina. Because she had inside information from her scouts, the Union gunboats were able to surprise the Confederate rebels.

At first when the Union Army came through and burned plantations, slaves hid in the woods. But when they

realized that the gunboats could take them behind Union lines to freedom, they came running from all directions, bringing as many of their belongings as they could carry. Harriet later said, "I never saw such a sight."

A brief word portrait by historian Benjamin Quarles (*The Negro in the Civil War, 1989*) brings to life Harriet Tubman in one of her many roles:

"As a scout, Mrs. Tubman's deceptive appearance was a great asset. Who would have thought that this short, gnarled black woman with a bandanna wrapped around her head was engaged in such a bold venture as entering Rebel-held territory for the purposes of urging slaves to take to their heels, appraising military and naval defenses, and taking in with a knowing eye the location and quantity of supplies, provisions and livestock? Rufus Saxton, Brigadier General of Volunteers, recorded that she 'made many a raid inside the enemy's lines, displaying remarkable courage, zeal and fidelity.'"

HUMANITARIAN WORK

With that same zeal and courage Harriet Tubman lived her entire life dedicated to freedom for all. Her bravery and steadfastness sparked the imaginations of those who knew her or came in contact with her. She formed friendships with abolitionists, politicians, writers, and intellectuals. After the war, Harriet settled in Auburn, New York, and began a new career as a community activist, humanitarian, and suffragist. John Tubman

had been killed in 1867, and Harriet married Nelson Davis, a war veteran, in 1869. That same year, Sarah Bradford published a short biography: *"Scenes in the Life of Harriet Tubman,"* bringing brief fame and some financial relief to Harriet and her family. But she struggled financially the rest of her life and, denied her own military pension, she eventually received a pension as the widow of Nelson Davis, and later, a Civil War nurse's pension.

Her humanitarian work triumphed with the opening of the Harriet Tubman Home for the Aged, located on land abutting her own property in Auburn, which she successfully purchased by mortgage and then transferred to the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church in 1903.

Active in the suffrage movement since 1860, Harriet Tubman continued to appear at local and national suffrage conventions until the early 1900s. She died in her 90s on March 10, 1913 in Auburn, New York. Brave, determined, tenacious, and generous, a woman who devoted her life to selflessly helping others, she would be considered a most remarkable heroine in any generation.

* * *

Acknowledgments: www.americaslibrary.gov/cgi-bin/page.cgi/aa/tubman
www.harrietubmanbiography.com; www.harrietubmanstudy.org/about.htm



“HEREIN DO I EXERCISE MYSELF, to have always a conscience void of offence toward God, and toward men” (Acts 24: 16).

The Apostle Paul before Felix, accused by the Jews of sedition and of profaning the temple, did not merely state that his conscience was clear, but declared that he *exercised* himself to be always diligent in this respect.

Our consciences require regulating

Who among us can claim we have never sullied our conscience by a word or deed — or even a motive — less than honorable? The white lie, the secret fault, the personal pride, the judging of others, the half-hidden compromise with the permissive society — all violate the conscience of the true child of God, offending His goodness and deceiving our companions in the faith, as well as those outside, who hold us in respect.

Experience surely teaches us that *exercise* of conscience is vital. Our standards of right and wrong need to be kept in good order and constantly checked against the master pattern. And our Heavenly Father does know our weakness and acknowledges the strength of the great Adversary who “as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: Whom resist stedfast in the faith” (1 Pet. 5: 8, 9).

Today’s permissive society

Everyone must agree that standards of conduct have fallen, particularly in the western world. There is a common attitude which assumes that most people will lie, steal, cheat, commit adultery, break any law — if they can do so without being discovered. Conscience has been ruefully defined as “the inner voice which warns us that somebody may be looking.”¹ *Somebody is looking*: “The ways of man are before the eyes of the Lord” (Prov. 5: 21). Nevertheless, a so-called 11th commandment has been added to the Word of God: “Thou shalt not be found out.”

But even public exposure of moral misconduct does not necessarily in our day bring public shame. Sexual promiscuity seems to be the rule rather than the exception, and is widely accepted in secular society. And what were once secret faults, practices mentioned only in whispers, in these last days are widely tolerated. There are of course voices raised against abuse of the innocent, but the attitude prevails that one may do as one wishes, so long as nobody is harmed.

Situation Ethics

This popular title is given to a philosophy which became prominent in the 1960s, though rooted in antiquity. *The American Heritage Dictionary* defines it as “A system of ethics that evaluates acts in the light of their situational context rather than by the application of moral absolutes.” Under this theory you may commit adultery (or almost anything else) if it is done in love and no one is hurt by it; you may lie to spare the feelings of another; you may steal to help a needy person. There is nothing you cannot do if,

in *your* judgment, the action is for a good cause and you have the proper motive for performing it. The situation dictates the ethics and justifies the action. There is no absolute right or wrong, but the determining of one’s course of conduct is flexible according to circumstances.

Anything goes?

Even among some regarded as the Lord’s people, human reasoning is seen as more enlightened and relevant to the needs of society, than a faithful adherence to what has become in their view an archaic system dictated by an unyielding Lawgiver. Their popular concept that “love changes everything” overrides the Bible as the sole source of faith and practice. We therefore find that many churches throughout Christendom turn a blind eye to the breaking of marriage vows, to homosexual practice in their midst, to fornication, gambling, drunkenness and drug abuse, immodesty of dress and behavior — just so long as their numbers can be maintained.

What should we allow?

This is a serious problem. The “new morality” has crept into our own homes and families. How can we bear to alienate those we love because they follow human reason rather than Divine law? Children are of course under parental control, but become legally free while still relatively young and vulnerable. There is no easy answer, but for the sake of conscience, the *least* we can do is withhold approval. If a vocal disapproval would do more harm than good, then our silence, and the absence of pleasure at such circumstances, should be sensed by all involved, and our own conscience will remain “void of offense.”

The situation may of course be much worse. Because we are followers of Jesus, *we are not ourselves invulnerable to temptation*. We can be trapped by human frailty, by Satan’s devices, by worldly friends, into behavior unbecoming to our profession of Christian faith. It is a common experience. King David, though described as “a man after God’s own heart,” was as prone to sin as any man, yet had a tender conscience, and many times called on the Lord to blot out his transgressions (Psa. 51). The godly conscience can fall asleep for a while, and unless rescued may become permanently hardened, as though “seared with a hot iron” (1 Tim. 4: 2).

Maintaining the accuracy of one’s conscience

The conscience is like a clock whose dial is properly marked with the hours, and whose accuracy depends upon the proper regulating of its mechanism. So our consciences can only be relied on to guide us as to what is right and what is wrong so long as they are properly adjusted to the standards and measurements laid down by Him who leads us through the hours, the days, the weeks, and the years of our Christian journey. A lively conscience reflects a faithful heart. “Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life” (Prov. 4: 23).

* * *

my conscience is clear—or is it?

Sources: www.oldpaths.com; ¹A *Little Book in C Major*, H.L. Mencken (1880–1956)

THE MAIL BOX



Dear brethren,

I would like to give my condolences to the family concerning Bro. Hedman's separation to rest, until his resurrection.

The Lord has blessed me and led me by the spirit to the truth, as I prayed for in faith, which surely glorifies God's Word. Ask and ye shall receive.

There are now three of us reading and studying the *Studies in the Scriptures*, even though our Adversary tried to influence differently. I thank God that He would lead these men into all truth as He has me. Just as the wisdom of the Apostle Paul so has the wisdom given to Pastor Russell kept me from twisting the Scriptures to my own destruction. I thank God for all things.

God bless your work!

W. K., Georgia, U.S.A.

Dear beloved in Christ,

I am sending greetings from the brethren in Ghana to you. By His grace we are all well in Christ's name. We do believe the same for the brethren over there in the U.S.

I have been receiving every book and handout. They help me and the brethren a lot in our studies. People who read them keep on asking, "How do you find these people — they explain things clearly to our understanding." I was in the Baptist church before hearing about you and I have now increased in knowledge and spirit of God's Word.

I always thank God, and you brethren for helping the poor to receive the good news.

Yours in Christ,

E. N., Ghana

* * *

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Where are the Dead? • *Life and Immortality* • *What is the Soul?* • *The Resurrection of the Dead* • *Spiritism is Demonism* • *Why Does A Loving God Permit Calamities?* • *The Sabbath Day* • *Faith Healing* • *Baptism* • *Speaking in Tongues — Is it of God?* • *The Kingdom of God* • *Mormonism — A Modern Delusion* • *Preservation of Identity in the Resurrection* • *The Evolution Theory Examined* • *Why We Believe in God's Existence* • *The Rapture* • *Future Life By Resurrection — Not Reincarnation* • *Must Christians Pay Tithes?*

FREE LEAFLETS FOR GENERAL DISTRIBUTION

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SMALL LEAFLETS FOR GENERAL DISTRIBUTION

Titles vary from time to time; items in stock may change.

Bible Standard Ad • *Coming By and By* • *Christ's Glorious Reign* • *Close Your Eyes/DP Ad* • *Desolation/Restoration* • *Father Take My Hand* • *A Good New Year Recipe* • *How Readest Thou?* • *Nearing God's Kingdom* • *My Lord and I/ Picture* • *23rd Psalm* • *Salvation/All Things New* • *Scripture Studies Ad* • *Watchman, What of the Night?*

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announcements

GENERAL CONVENTIONS FOR 2004

At-a-glance

France: *(All at Barlin)* July 30-August 1; October 30, 31
Germany: *Velbert*, May 29-31; *Altleiningen*, October 1-3
Nigeria: *Umunkiri*, June 25-27; *Osusu Amukwa*, September 26; *Aba, Abia State*, November 26-28
Poland: *Poznan*, May 1-3; *Susiec*, July 9-11; *Rzeszow*, July 12-14; *Wroklow*, July 16-18; *Bydgoszcz*, July 19-21; *Katowice*, August 27-29
United Kingdom: *Hyde*, August 6-8; *Sheffield*, October 30, 31
United States: *Michigan*, May 29-31; *Philadelphia Area*, July 3-5; *Ohio*, August 13-15; *Illinois*, October 1-3; *Oklahoma*, November 12-14.

Details

United States

Michigan, May 29-31 (Saturday-Monday)

Site: Comfort Inn Muskegon, U.S. Route 31 at Sherman Boulevard, Muskegon, MI 49444; tel.: (231) 739-9092
Rates and Reservations: For 1-2 people, \$59.95; 3 people, \$65.49; 4 people, \$71.04 (11% tax included); children 18 and under stay free with parents; Continental breakfast included (served in motel lobby). *Please make your reservations with the hotel by May 2. Request the discount rate for the LHMM, and for a confirmation number.* Each room must be individually guaranteed as early as possible by credit card or check; you may cancel with 48 hours notice. For further information contact Mrs. Carlla Olson: telephone: (231) 894-4131; e-mail: colsoncjo@juno.com

Philadelphia Area (Lionville), July 3-5 (Saturday-Monday)

Site: *The Inn at Chester Springs* (formerly known as *Best Western*), Route 100 (south of route 113), Lionville, PA 19353; telephone: (610) 363-1100 *Rates and Reservations:* Details will appear in our June issue. Our address is 1156 Saint Matthew's Road, Chester Springs, PA 19425-2700; telephone: (610) 827-7665

SERVICES BY VISITING MINISTERS

The General Editor, Ralph Herzig

Michigan Convention, May 29-31; Philadelphia Area Convention, July 3-5

Richard Blaine

Chicago, Illinois, May 23; Michigan Convention, May 29-31

Robert Herzig

Boston, Massachusetts, June 27

John Wojnar

New Haven, Connecticut, May 16; Pittsfield, Massachusetts, June 13

Leon Snyder

Nelsonville, Ohio, May 1, 2; Michigan Convention, May 29-31; Chicago, Illinois, June 12, 13

Baron Duncan

Springfield, Massachusetts, June 6

Tom Cimbura

Michigan Convention, May 29-31

Don Lewis

Michigan Convention, May 29-31; Muskegon, Michigan, June 26, Grand Rapids, Michigan, June 27

Jim Shaw

Michigan Convention, May 29-31

Jack Zilch

Michigan Convention, May 29-31

Evangelists' Services

Robert Branconnier, Keystone Heights, Florida, May 9; Boston, Massachusetts, May 23; Norfolk, Virginia, June 13

Harry Hammer, Minneapolis, Minnesota, May 1, 2

Jon Hanning, Cincinnati, Ohio, May 8, 9; North Canton, Ohio, June 13; Beechgrove, Tennessee, July 24, 25

David Lounsbury, New York City, June 20

Richard Piquene, Mustang, Oklahoma, May 2; Independence, Kansas, June 27

Robert Steenrod, Cambridge Springs, Pennsylvania, June 13

Edward Tomkiewicz, Minneapolis, Minnesota, July 18, 19